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THEATRICAL SUBJECTS: PERFORMING ON THE MARGINS IN HARDY,
KIPLING, JAMES, AND WHARTON

by

Lisa Nakamura

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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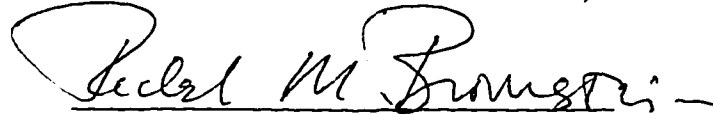
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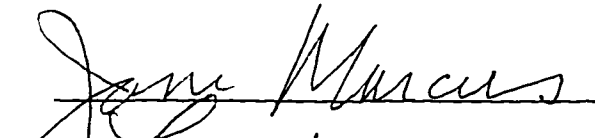

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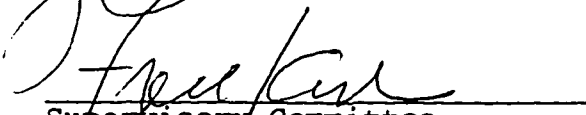
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Abstract

THEATRICAL SUBJECTS: PERFORMING ON THE MARGINS IN HARDY,
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by

Lisa Nakamura

Adviser: Professor Mary Ann Caws

This dissertation examines four British and American novels written between 1787 and 1913, Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native, Rudyard Kipling's Kim, Edith Wharton's The Custom of the Country, and Henry James's The Golden Bowl.

These authors engaged in narrative strategies which utilize vocabulary and metaphors borrowed from the stage with which to describe new forms of female identity, subaltern identity, class identity, and personal identity. Writing about social life and its cultural matrix as if it were itself a stage and figuring identity as a performance-in-process afforded novelists a strategy for exploring the link between performance and identity.

Performances in which women pass as men, whites pass as natives, and members of the working class pass as upper class mark the place where categories of gender, race, and class become destabilized and reveal some of the tensions and ambiguities with which these categories were fraught during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century in

America and England. These narratives do not write about femininity, race, and class as if they were stable and immutable identities, but rather as roles or masquerades which can be performed, parodied, and critiqued. This emphasis on gender, race, and class as a constructed and historically contingent role or act prefigures the concerns and critical vocabulary of anti-essentialist contemporary theorists such as Judith Butler.

These novels displace theatricality from the conventional dramatic stage to the social one. The authors utilize theatrical metaphors to describe identity and social behavior in their narratives to demonstrate how the mobility which performance affords can allow subjects to temporarily cross and challenge those social borders which differentiate male from female, white from non-white, lower from upper class, and inner self from social persona.

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Chapter One

Introduction

She felt that she could do things if she only had a chance. How often had she looked at the well-dressed actresses on the stage and wondered how she would look, how delightful she would feel if only she were in their place. The glamor, the tense situation, the fine clothes, the applause, these had lured her until she felt that she, too, could act--that she, too, could compel acknowledgment of power. (136)

In Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie (1900) Carrie's first encounter with the theater arouses her desire for material comfort -- the showiness, glamor, and fine clothes of the actress -- but, more importantly, the passage above identifies Carrie's desire to "do things" in the world by changing her place in the social order as an obscure factory girl for a higher one with the actress's power to project a different, more glamorous identity. Carrie's yearning for mobility is not conditioned solely by class dissatisfaction, but rather by a deeper yearning, the yearning to represent her self more differently and more powerfully than is possible in everyday life. Acting is both expressive and constitutive for Carrie, for it allows her to express not only what she is but what she wants to

be. Her performances negotiate the tension between materiality and desire which exists in the theatrical interface between reality and representation. Carrie's subjectivity is conditioned by a commitment to fluid identities, shifting personae, and mobility -- she only feels alive while on the stage -- and theatrical metaphors are used to describe not only her professional aspirations but her psyche. She possesses a type of subjectivity which can only be expressed by acting and theatrical metaphor. In Sister Carrie acting is depicted as far more than a profession: it expresses a mode of being which is mobile, fluid, and enabled by theatricality to change places both on and off the stage. Carrie's attraction to the theater is, from the outset, conditioned less by the desire for money than by the recognition that acting itself represents the power to change one's place, both literally and figuratively.

Dreiser depicts Carrie's affinity for the theater as the hallmark of a particular type of modern consciousness which he noticed in America at the turn of the century. This consciousness, which I call theatrical subjectivity, moves between classes, genders, and races, and in so doing exposes turn-of-the-century tensions, fractures, and conflicts within identity categories. Early modern feminism and the New Woman, changing immigration patterns and new forms of class mobility, and late imperialism all altered the ways that race, class, and gender were

perceived in turn-of-the-century England and America. The use of theatrical metaphor in novels of this period to describe mobile identities which could move across the axes of class, race, and gender off the stage reveals the ways that theatrical subjectivity could both question categories of type and illuminate them. Narratives which use theatrical metaphor to describe the act of passing across and between these categories construct a notion of identity as multiple, fluid, and unable to be fully contained.

What happens in novels of this period in which women pass as men, Anglo-Indians pass as Indians, and rich, provincial American girls acquire noble European titles through marriage? How is this mobility represented in narrative terms? What are the cultural meanings and repercussions of these acts, and what do critical readings of these occasions reveal about identity, the way it is constructed, acted out, challenged, and contested? Some of the answers to these questions can be found in non-literary sources, but I look to four novels written in England and American during the period between the latter part of Queen Victoria's reign and the First World War, Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native (1878), Rudyard Kipling's Kim (1901), Edith Wharton's The Custom of the Country (1913), and Henry James's The Golden Bowl (1903), for readings which illustrate the powers and limits of theatricality to destabilize fixed categories of identity such as race, class, and gender. These novels provide opportune

occasions for analyzing the particular nature and promise of theatrical subjectivity within a specific historical period whose attitudes toward identity possess important parallels with our own. My subtitle, "performing on the margins," refers to my decision to concentrate my attention on manifestations of theatrical subjectivity in texts which have rarely been viewed by other readers as theatrical.

Hardy, Kipling, Wharton, and James were all fascinated with the theater, as were many of their contemporaries; all but Kipling wrote plays and were involved in their production, and all wrote novels which deal overtly with the theater, actors, and acting as a profession.¹ Their familiarity and engagement with the language and imagery of the theater supplied not only sources for topics, characters, and situations, but also innovations in narrative form. James characterized his late style as "scenic," meaning that he consciously strove to emulate the structure, dialogue, and scenarios of a play in his novels. In a notebook entry of February 1889, he speculates:

Has a part of all this wasted passion and squandered time (of the last 5 years) been simply the precious

¹See Hardy's The Hand of Ethelberta, Kipling's "His Wedded Wife" in Plain Tales (1890), Wharton's The House of Mirth, and James's The Bostonians and The Tragic Muse for examples of narratives about the theater and actors. The Return of the Native, The House of Mirth, Daisy Miller, The Other House, and The American were all produced as plays, and James wrote "Guy Domville" for the stage. See The Scenic Art for examples of James's theater criticism.

lesson, taught me in that roundabout and devious, that cruelly expensive, way, of the singular value for a narrative plan too of the (I don't know what adequately to call it) divine principle of the Scenario? (188)

In The Dramatic Analogy Wiesenfarth defines the dramatic novel's structure as the "manipulation of pictures, scenes, and centres" (42). While the case can be made that the novels I examine do possess a dramatic structure, I have instead chosen to focus on the ways the authors use theatrical metaphors to describe identity. Thus, "performance" is on the margins of each narrative in the sense that it is not portrayed in the context of the theater but rather as a mode of being in everyday life and a type of subjectivity. Theatrical subjects such as the characters Eustacia Vye, Kim, Undine Spragg, and Maggie Verver are conscious of occupying marginal positions and desiring the power to act in the world which attracts Carrie Madenda, and perform themselves in the world as something other than what they are. The success of these performances attests to the potential flexibility of identity categories, which are revealed as a reiteration of codified behaviors rather than an essence. The ability to change one's social place through theatrical behavior and ways of conceiving of the self challenges the notion of identity as fixed and immutable. Instead, identity is the range of things that you can become, the power to change

your place within social, racial, and gender hierarchies by conceiving of the self as mutable, performative, and theatrical.

The vocabulary used in current philosophical investigations into identity, by people such as Judith Butler, Homi Babha, Jean Baudrillard, and Paul Armstrong,² is replete with terms borrowed from the theater. These theorists make explicit many notions of the subversion of identity which are present in more complex and nuanced narrative forms in the novels. While critical writing about theatricality as a means of envisioning, repositioning, and questioning identity makes intriguing and often compelling claims for its ability to redress political and social imbalances, it cannot depict the consequences of passing across gender, class, and racial boundaries within historically contingent situations. Hardy, Kipling, Wharton, and James do not depict theatricality at the turn of the century as an unconditionally effective means of challenging rigid categories of identity. Instead, they depict the consequences of theatricality in everyday life; they examine how it can call the notion of an authentic or

²See Butler's Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990) and Bodies That Matter: on the Discursive Limits of Sex", (1993) Babha's "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" in The Location of Culture, (1994) Baudrillard's Simulacra and Simulation (1981) and Armstrong's "Play and Cultural Differences" in Kenyon Review, 1991, Winter v.13(1), 157-71.

"core" self into question, and, most importantly, ask what sort of a life can be lived in the absence of this notion. Because their narratives are concerned with the depiction of interior states of being as both a technical and a substantive narrative goal, they can show the often painful disjuncture between the self performed and the self experienced. It is important to understand the cultural meaning of theatricality at the fin de siècle to gain insight into the nature of this crucial disjuncture.

Nina Auerbach asserts that because the Victorians valued authenticity, sincerity, and "character" above all things, they "shunned theatricality as the ultimate, deceitful mobility. It connotes not only lies, but a fluidity of character that decomposes the uniform integrity of the self" (4). Indeed, the notion that those qualities which confirmed type could be feigned or dissimulated did pose a threat to the idea of a stable identity. The enclosure of theatrical performance by the proscenium arch served to bracket off disturbingly fluid manifestations of self into a separate realm, well defined by the separation between performer and audience. Conventional theatrical performance served as a hiatus from everyday life, a sometimes uncanny but nonetheless entertaining and temporary departure from the more rigid notions of character underwritten by both science and sentiment. Even if theatrical performances of "ladies" by women from the lower classes proved dangerously convincing, the audiences'

consciousness that they were watching a play served to partially assuage fears that dangerously "real" simulations of one type by another could radically confuse the idea of a stable and immutable self altogether.

The spectacle of actors "passing" as members of types to which they did not legitimately belong by status or birth provoked a frisson of anxiety about the firmness of identity categories which could be laid to rest at the curtain call when the actors took their bows at the play's conclusion. Therefore, the disturbing mutability and fluidity of identity manifested on the stage could be contained.

Successful impersonations of men by women, Indians by whites, and members of the upper classes by the lower classes which took place off stage were another matter. These were more threatening because they demonstrated that people could slip out of their assigned places in the social hierarchy outside of the frame of the theater. Recent scholarly investigations into the period have resulted in many case studies of people who "passed" across type boundaries, and our fascination with their stories demonstrates how our differing values regarding social, class, and gender mobility condition us to read them in a more sympathetic light than they received in their day.³

³See Foucault's biography of the hermaphrodite Hercule Barbin and essays on Hannah Culwick, the Plessy v. Ferguson case, the film "Princess Caraboo," etc.

Feminists in particular have put much effort into this project, as they are intensely concerned with the dynamics of identity and its constructedness and historical contingency.

If you go straight away from Levees and Government House Lists, past Trades' Balls--far beyond everything and everybody you ever knew in your respectable life--you cross, in time, the Borderline where the last drop of White blood ends and the full tide of Black sets in...The Black and the White mix very quaintly in their ways. Sometimes the White shows in spurts of fierce, childish pride--which is Pride of Race run crooked--and sometimes the Black in still fiercer abasement and humility, half-heathenish customs and strange, unaccountable impulses to crime. (91)

This passage from Rudyard Kipling's story, "His Chance in Life" (1890), describes both character and type as determined by "blood" or biological facticity; behavioral traits such as pride, humility, and greater or lesser propensities towards crime are linked with visible physical traits such as skin color. This linkage between physical "type" and character was legitimated and supported by the scientific establishments of the period as well.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, American and British sociologists, anthropologists, criminologists, physiognomists, physicians, and historians were devising formulae for classifying a taxonomy of human types, superior and inferior, which could fix and classify the "nature" of each specific human being, as well as his or her place within a social and biological hierarchy. Visible, tangible, and measurable bodily attributes such as skull size, ear shape, hair color and distribution, coloring, and body shape were cited as evidence that one belonged definitively to one type or another, as were more abstract qualities such as temperament, aesthetic preferences or "taste," courage, and intelligence. Thus, from the point of view of these social scientists, the feminist New Woman was physically distinguishable from the prostitute and the lady; the Asiatic looked and therefore was different from the white; and the lower classes were visibly different from the upper classes because they possessed the bodies which conformed to their types.⁴ In addition, one could scrutinize the array of differences signifying gender, racial, and class

⁴Martha Banta asserts that turn of the century America was "a society that placed increased emphasis on physiognomy as the direct reflection of the health of one's mind, one's soul, and one's biological stamina" (109). She also claims that the "flush of renewed interest" which physiognomy received in this period is related to increased immigration by non-Western Europeans; these immigrants, who represented "the wrong type," could have their features analyzed as confirmation of their categorization within a devalued type.

categories which manifested themselves in speech, dress, bearing, and other style choices if one wished additional evidence to confirm a judgment about where any individual ought to be placed. Science legitimated the idea that every person had a place, a fixed and unchangeable position in the chain of being which was underpinned and proven by both the body and the mind. Today, we would call this identity.

British and American narrative literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century both shaped and reflected cultural conventions used to make sense of gender, class, and racial differences by helping readers to "see objects and persons in the form of generalized types" (Banta xxix). Novelists utilized many of the stereotyped attributes listed above in order to convey character as a manifestation of "type." The relation between individuality and type was seen as mutually reinforcing; one was able to perform actions in the world and project a socially coherent and recognizable individual personality because of the type one belonged to, and these actions in their turn confirmed the idea of "type."

In this study, I focus upon literary representations of occasions in which characters successfully "pass" across the boundaries which differentiate one type from another. Moreover, these disruptive acts will be examined in light of their social consequences. For not every act of passing depicted in a novel serves to question or challenge the

symbolic or scientific legitimacy of type. Indeed, many romantic novels of the period often depicted female-to-male cross-dressing as a vehicle for a conventional happy ending, serving to unite men and women who "belonged" together by virtue of belonging to the same class or caste. These novels were akin to the conventional theater in that they presented narratives which were "both satisfying and soothing: satisfying because they allow the imagination to toy with the pleasures of change; soothing because whatever has been upended is returned to its proper place by the story's conclusion" (Banta 252). Instead, this study examines those occasions when passing destabilizes social hierarchies.

This late nineteenth century impulse to press science into service as a means of defining identity through the enforcement of types is currently in the process of being discredited. Contemporary gender studies and ethnic studies, two disciplines undreamed-of a century ago, can be characterized by a generally anti-essentialist bent. During the current *fin de siècle*, ambiguity, indeterminacy, instability, and overdetermination have become privileged terms not only in the realm of literary criticism, but also in the influential field of critical theory. Identity has always been a politically-understood notion; in the late nineteenth century, public policy was made with recourse to "scientific" knowledge of the "types" of criminals,

immigrants, women, and others.⁵ But the enormous cultural energy which went into defining, stabilizing, and fixing the different kinds of identity has been redirected, in our time, to destabilizing and questioning both the scientific and philosophical bases for gendered, racial, and class categories. The technology of philosophy, in its manifestation as contemporary critical theory, has been pressed into service by theorists of identity as a means for resisting the notion of identity as fixed and essentially unchangeable.

In other words, our fin de siècle wants to take apart what the previous one had so laboriously put together. This deconstructive process identifies the labor of classifying types as politically conservative, regressive, and insidious. Both gender studies and ethnic studies, under the rubric of critical theory, question the foundation of gendered and racial identities. The language these critics often use to describe essentialist type-classification reveals this bias: identity is "policed," "enforced," part of a scheme of compulsion and regulation which permeates the social body. Rather than seeing race, class, and gender as "natural" categories which we are born with and must perforce consent to, they see these

⁵In 1888 and 1893 the physician Pauline Tarnovsky and the scientist Cesar Lombroso published studies of the prostitute which asserted that prostitutes were visibly and biologically different from "normal" women, visually identifiable by attributes such as the Darwin's ear, enlarged genitalia, obesity, and misshapen noses.

classifications as historically contingent, infused with bias, and, most importantly, responsible for a wide-ranging array of different varieties of oppression, which not only can but must be resisted and subverted through individual acts of disobedience to the type-driven roles which culture offers us.

Their self-stated project is to initiate a "radical inquiry into the political construction and regulation of identity itself" (Butler Gender ix). The preceding quote is characteristic of contemporary feminist thought as represented by theorists such as Judith Butler, Diana Fuss, and Donna Haraway. The assertions that "'female' no longer appears to be a stable notion" (Butler Gender ix) and "the very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms" (Butler Gender 1) is as much a wish as it is a statement of fact; it is a pro-spective and predictive assertion that the stable notion of femininity be laid to rest in the service of a progressive political project which would, in the feminist tradition, lead to increased autonomy for women.

Anti-essentialist feminists assert that "woman does not exist," and in fact cannot exist if women are ever to achieve both political and psychological self-determination. Butler takes this notion a step further when she questions the basis of biologically determined sex as well as gender, and extends the idea of sex/gender as an act or behavior rather than an essence by calling

sex/gender a performance. Performances of gender which cross gender lines, such as drag, "produce subversive discontinuity and dissonance among sex, gender, and desire" (ix, italics mine). Drag performers are producers of alternative versions of gender which subvert and critique the idea of gender as biologically fixed and immutable. Butler calls this kind of strategic theatrical passing "performativity."⁶ In Bodies That Matter, Butler claims that performativity subverts another essentially-understood category of identity--race.⁷ In this book she takes pains to be clearer about the limitations of performativity as the cure-all or panacea to identity problems; subversive

⁶One of the consequences of both Butler's and Derrida's formulations of "performativity" has been a "heightened willingness to credit a performative dimension in all ritual, ceremonial, scripted behaviors" (Parker and Sedgwick 2). As Parker and Sedgwick note, this has resulted in significant change in disciplinary definitions--many academic departments formerly known as "Theater" have changed their names to "Performance Studies," and the study of performance has been incorporated into many other fields as well, such as anthropology, folklore, literature, and psychology. (see Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life; Victor Turner, From Ritual to Theater; Nina Auerbach, Private Theatricals; Joseph Litvak, Caught in the Act; Peter Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination; Randall Knoper, Acting Naturally: Mark Twain in the Culture of Performance; and Marjorie Garber, Vested Interests.).

⁷See Anthony Appiah's article "The Uncompleted Argument: DuBois and the Illusion of Race" for a different approach to the same thesis. Appiah focuses on the notion of race as a politically-charged construction rather than a biological fact. Sander Gilman's article in the same collection, "Black Bodies, White Bodies," also deconstructs race as a fiction rather than a fact, and analyzes the iconography of race in late nineteenth-century painting and biology.

acts such as passing, the act of performing a different race than the one conferred on you by birth by the policing mechanisms of pseudo-science which were established in the 1890s, challenge constraining notions of type without entirely doing away with them. Her project of de-essentializing both race and gender has been enormously influential for both gender studies and critical theory because it seems to offer a politically salient answer to the nagging question of essentialism.⁸ She considers the pragmatic question of what people can do in the world to subvert constraining and policing essential types, and her answer is that they can perform themselves as something else and reveal themselves as exceeding the category to which they "belong." Her selection of the trope of performance as the metaphor for characterizing certain types of privileged subversive behaviors which challenge fixed identity roles opens up a space for the individual to be theatrical as a mode of resistance.

This line of thought, and this particular solution to this particular problem, is by no means new. The

⁸See Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a critique of Imperialism," Critical Inquiry 12(1): 243-61 for an alternative method of dealing with the question of essentialism. Her formulation of "strategic essentialism" posits the idea that the abuses of the system of enforced or policed identities under which we now live can be mitigated by the political alliances which are made possible by these categories. "Woman" is, to her, a banner under which communities can be strengthened and exploited for progressive political change. See also Julia Kristeva, "Woman Can Never Be Defined," trans. Marilyn A. August, in New French Feminisms, for a similar point.

identification of theatricality as an effective means of questioning "type" was already in place in a few of the scientific and aesthetic productions of the fin de siècle and the modernist periods, though it was not part of the orthodoxy. Post-Freudian psychoanalysts explored the idea that theatricality in everyday life could be a powerful mode of behavior which can question type. Contemporary theorists such as Butler acknowledge their debt to the feminist psychoanalyst Joan Riviere, who identifies gender as an act or set of behaviors. In her influential 1929 article, "Femininity as Masquerade," Riviere asserts that intellectual "women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared by men" (35). By positing the idea of "womanliness" as a "mask," Riviere is evoking a theatrical model of gender; women do not behave as women because it is in their nature to do so, but rather because they have learned to do so. The "mask" of gender is figured here as part of a performative strategy which is available to women. The donning of the mask of gender may not always be a conscious act or series of acts, but it has the potential to be knowingly utilized in the same way that theatrical roles are performed.

Riviere defines this strategy using theatrical metaphors and language. Indeed, the anecdote around which she focuses her essay relates the story of a woman whose severe anxiety is evoked specifically by the act of "public

performance, such as speaking to an audience" (36). The stress of having to consciously perform a role considered inappropriate for her gender, i.e. public speaking, causes the woman to seek an unconscious solution to that problem; she corrects the transgression by performing herself as a woman to correct the dissonance between her actions and her assigned gender role. De Beauvoir's famous statement that "one is not born a woman, rather one becomes a woman" places the emphasis on the feminine gender known as "woman" as a series of socially-codified behaviors, an act, rather than as an essence or biologically determined form of being.

Hardy, Kipling, Wharton, and James prefigured Butler's and Riviere's ideas about the power of theatricality to upset the order of things. Their novels, however, present a disturbingly mixed picture of the subversive potential of passing. Theatricality is depicted as, at best, an ambivalently powerful mode of being, and, at worst, a temporary escape from constraining identity categories which, rather than being subverted, seem to be reinforced as a result. Theatricality across boundaries of type can operate as a disruption which calls type into question but does not entirely dismantle it.

Hardy's late Victorian novel, The Return of the Native (1878), examines cross-gender performance in the form of cross-dressing, and shows its limited power to disrupt notions of gender and women's roles. Eustacia Vye's

appearance in drag temporarily disrupts gender roles and foreshadows Hardy's preoccupation with the Woman Question and the New Woman. Eustacia is a precursor to early feminists and New Women who wanted to challenge essential notions of what women were. Her cross-dressing casts gender in a performative light, but her experiment in leaving her place in the gender hierarchy results in tragedy, for the novel graphically depicts the rigidly inscribed rules governing gendered behavior in conservative English communities such as Egdon. Eustacia, and other rebellious, ambitious, and dissatisfied women like her have no place in Egdon outside of the conventionally understood role of "woman," and her experiment in cross dressing sets off a chain of tragic events having to do with disastrous misreading and misunderstandings. Her deviation from the lady's role during her cross-dressed performance as a male mummer is the textual epicenter of a tragic plot which ends with gender restored to its proper place.

Kipling's Kim is a product of late imperialism in India -- he is a new type of multicultural colonial subject who occupies a position on the borders between white and black, English and Indian, colonizer and colonized. Kipling relied upon theatrical metaphor to describe how this hybrid subject negotiates its transitions between the various manifestations it chooses. Kim is drafted as a spy, whose job it is to pass between cultural borders dividing white and native, and he is uniquely fitted to

perform this work because his identity is hybrid, split between the worlds of whiteness and blackness.

Though Kipling's texts are often read as examples of high imperialist ideologies, the novel Kim calls fixed boundaries of type into question by showing how they can be crossed, and how the Anglo Indian could fluidly shift between different tongues, different costumes, and different cultural idioms. Kipling describes Kim's transformations and transitions between identities in theatrical terms which challenge essential ideas of white and black. Kim's theatricality is not episodic, but extends into his whole life, and provides a metaphor for the hybrid bicultural subject's negotiations with identity.

In this chapter, I read the Indian female figures in Kim as a way of understanding the production of the split subjectivity of the colonial Anglo-Indian boy in the novel. These women, whose very existence has been ignored by Kipling scholars writing on this novel, are its most abject and invisible group. They function in the novel as theatrical assistants to Kim, supplying him with disguises, cosmetics, and other props and aids which he uses to transform his appearance and move between cultural worlds. These surrogate mothers to the orphan Kim help to shape his identity by both providing assistance in performing culturally theatrical acts and by incorporating him within a non-instrumental, non-exploitative women's context, the zenana, a place of "plain love" which constitutes the only

location in the novel which exists outside of the context of imperial espionage and political struggle. The question of the nature of Kim's identity, an issue with which almost all critics of the novel have concerned themselves, is one which I analyze in this chapter by reading Kim as a theatrical subject, that is, a subject constituted by theatricality. My analysis of the dynamics of Kim's racial and ethnic hybridity is linked to my reading of gender; Kim's theatricality is enabled and encouraged by Indian women.

Wharton wrote The Custom of the Country on the eve of World War I, and in her depiction of Undine Spragg, a social climber who is eager to emulate images of social celebrities she reads about in the newspapers, she identifies and critiques the radical redefinitions of class in Old New York. The arrival upon the social scene of industrial tycoons had a profound impact on the entrenched upper classes who reluctantly included them in their ranks. Undine, a character whose behavior, self image, and subjectivity are all described in theatrical terms, is depicted as a threat because her relentless obsession with image, rejection of privacy in favor of a promiscuous publicity, social climbing, and desire to be a celebrity prefigure the anomie and alienation of modernity. The notions of authenticity, privacy, and sincerity so highly valued by those formed by the culture of late Victorianism, such as Wharton herself, are threatened by the culture of

celebrity which Undine, Wharton's satire of the modern woman, personifies. Undine is the society woman as star, public and accessible through the apparatus of public relations. Undine's rise to stardom from humble beginnings, in the provincial but quintessentially modern town of Apex, through marriages to an aristocratic New Yorker, a French Marquis, and a Wall Street tycoon is enabled by her ability to mimic and perform herself as the image which seems to be desirable on the marriage market.

For James, consciousness is defined as the ability to see yourself within the social matrix and its immensely complex web of interpersonal relations. Henry James's The Golden Bowl depicts theatricality as an integral part of the formation of consciousness. Maggie Verver's transformation from a naive and innocent American girl to a Princess is an act she learns to perform by modeling herself on "public and popular notion[s] of such a personage" (374) and the paradox of this performance is that it makes her more herself by making her self-conscious. Learning to fill out "her appointed, her expected, her imposed character" (374) as if it were a theatrical role shifts her position in the pattern of marital and familial relations from one of ignorance and abjection to one of power and knowledge.

Turn-of-the-century science codified and confirmed the legitimacy of type but the novels of this period which I analyze in this study anticipated later developments in

theorizing identity by describing a kind of subjectivity which exceeded the bounds of type. Valerie Smith speculates that

Stories of racial passing have long captivated the attention of American viewers and readers...because they force readers and viewers to confront conflicts raised but inadequately explored in the classical texts within the genre (Smith 43).

These classical texts by Hardy, Kipling, Wharton, and James locate conflicts in ways of conceiving and representing identity by depicting theatricality in the everyday world as a possible means of escaping its bounds. Their singular capacity for re-envisioning the world present captivating occasions for readings which resist rigid definitions of type.

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Chapter Two

"This Strange Way of Meeting": Theatricality and the New Woman in Hardy's The Return of the Native

In his preface to Jude the Obscure (1894), Hardy refers to a letter from a reviewer which he received subsequent to its serial publication which claims that his novel was "the first delineation in fiction of the woman who was coming into notice in her thousands every year -- the slight, pale 'bachelor' girl -- the intellectualized, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing" (vii). Hardy's Sue Bridehead, Doctor Prance and Olive Chancellor in James's The Bostonians, and Rhoda Barfoot in Gissing's The Odd Women were all read by contemporary audiences as examples of this new type of woman who was emerging in British and American fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹ The New Women desired "education, work, and mobility" (Showalter 39) and their struggle for emancipation from stereotyped gender roles which restricted women to the domestic sphere was described sympathetically by writers such as Mona Caird and Sarah Grand, lampooned in newspaper cartoons, and critiqued and defended in numerous cultural productions. The ideological struggle over the true nature and essence

¹French historian Michelle Perrot claims that "the image of the New Woman was widespread in Europe in from Vienna to London, from Munich and Heidelberg to Brussels and Paris...on the eve of the twentieth century" (quoted in Showalter, Sexual Anarchy, 39).

of womanhood was a conflict about the nature of female identity; New Women worked to destabilize fixed notions of "woman" and open up a space where new definitions could be mobilized and put into play.

The "tall ... full-limbed ... somewhat heavy" (74) Eustacia Vye in The Return of the Native (1878) does not physically resemble the neurasthenic, pale, intellectualized "girl" Hardy's reviewer describes; nonetheless, she is an important precursor to the New Woman in that she desires mobility; she wants participation in "what is called life -- music, poetry, passion, war, and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world" (142). When Eustacia disguises herself as a boy in order to perform the role of the Saracen in Egdon Heath's Christmas St. George Play, her performance demonstrates that gender is not an immutable and permanently fixed essence, but a performance which can be feigned and convincingly simulated, at least temporarily. Thus, her cross-dressed performance questions and interrogates the idea of gender itself. This interrogation is rendered ambivalent and complex by the cross-dresser's tragic marriage and demise; Eustacia's rebelliousness motivates her to daringly cross gender boundaries on stage, but her desires for an unconventional heroine's life are painfully thwarted by a marriage which, contrary to her hopes and plans, does not allow her mobility but rather fixes her even more firmly in a woman's

role, that of wife and lady. The temporary and episodic nature of cross-dressed theatricality in this novel illustrates the partial and complicated nature of gender mobility and cross gender performance. Her multilayered performance as a female heroine impersonating a man playing a male villain's role demonstrates how this woman's desire to possess the privileges and freedoms of a man off the stage may be theatrically acted out and narratively articulated, often with great sympathy on Hardy's part, but cannot be satisfied in the cultural context of rural Egdon Heath. This temporary mobility allows for nuanced expressions of textual ambiguity; Eustacia bears so little resemblance to a traditional Victorian heroine that at times she seems to be a villain, and she does not fit into any of the roles of "lady," wife, or heroine available to her. She is a decidedly anomalous creature on Egdon Heath, for her modern desires for emancipation and mobility contrast starkly with the nature of rural northern England, described as a monolithic, unchanging, antique culture in the first chapter entitled "a Face on which Time makes but Little Impression" (11).

Her cross dressing performance appears in this novel in the context of carnival mummery, and thus it disrupts the conservative functions of performance rituals within the community of Egdon. The mummer's play is a "fossilized" relic performed during carnival time in a late nineteenth-century house and all of its performers are

village men dressed in extravagantly feminine outfits except for Eustacia Vye, who is disguised as a boy. The time is carnival, the liminal, festive period in which inversion is not only permitted but valorized. As Terry Castle, among others, has pointed out, carnival and masquerade were often directly associated in the European public mind with transvestism (Garber 381). Though Eustacia's cross-dressed performance is not socially validated, and we are to read it as a measure of her lack of "moral training" that her grandfather does not reproach her more strongly for her exploit. This is because gender inversion in the context of the mummer's play is in keeping with the dynamics of carnival.

While theater depends upon delineation between performer and audience, carnival depends upon the eliding of these categories. As Mikhail Bakhtin writes:

carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people.

Carnival is "life itself, but life shaped according to a certain pattern of play" (Bakhtin 7). Rural English practices, such as skimmity-riding, charivari, May-Polings,

market festivals, and gipsying, figure largely in The Return of the Native and The Mayor of Casterbridge, and perform some of the functions mentioned by Bakhtin.

Mummers' status as both spectacle and performance positions it in a liminal space between carnival and theater. The appearance of these carnivalesque rituals signals something quite different in Hardy than it does in Rabelais, the subject of Bakhtin's study, because by the nineteenth century these rites had become "survivals," like the barrows and roads left in Hardy's Wessex by the Romans. Though they were still **used**, they had acquired a different character. Critics have long debated the question of the significance of folk ritual in Hardy. Some attribute a certain type of cynicism to Hardy's treatment of ritual, classing it as "dead" and therefore merely quaint, a remnant or souvenir of the past but otherwise "no longer accessible to contemporary man," (Squillace 172) while others envision it as a potent, if latent, force in the modern world. Carnival's subversive power, its licensing of social inversion and parody, definitely includes gender inversion and gender parody. In contrast to Rabelais' world, in which carnival was omnipresent, robust, and an essential part of life rather than merely its adjunct, in late nineteenth century England carnival had been relegated to isolated incidents in modern life. Keeping this crucial difference in mind, one can see how carnival incidents in Hardy mediate between the antique and the modern world, and

how they provide opportunities for gender inversion and other transgressive gender behavior while containing this behavior in a bracketed-off theatrical space.

Bakhtin claims that carnival constructs a "second world" in which people lived during a given time of year; he by no means intends to understate its importance in the lives of its inhabitants by emphasizing its "secondness." It presents a potent alternative to "officialdom" by "celebrating temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions" (10). The Christmas party at Mrs. Yeobright's embodies the carnival spirit first by suspending and inverting official social hierarchy. At this party, the Yeobrights, the only gentlefolk in town besides the Vyes, act as servants to their servants. This party is opposed to the "parlour-parties" given for her peers; instead "she's asked the plain neighbours and workpeople without drawing any lines, just to give 'em a good supper and such like. Her son and she wait upon the folks" (Hardy 140). This practice redraws social lines and temporarily liberates the "plain folk" and gentlefolk alike from the "established order" by switching their roles and privileges. The comic father and son duo of Christian and Grandfer Cantle partake of this festivity, but more importantly, they embody it in their persons. They are examples of comic rural types whose

appearance in a text signify the carnival spirit, even in the absence of a carnival occasion. As Bakhtin notes:

clowns and fools...were the constant, accredited representatives of the carnival spirit in everyday life out of carnival season. Like Triboulet at the time of Francis I, they were not actors playing their parts on a stage, as did the comic actors of a later period, impersonating Harlequin, Hanswurst, etc., but remained fools and clowns always and whenever they made their appearance. As such, they represented a certain form of life, which was real and ideal at the same time (8).

Their clowning and foolery serve as both a foil to the tragic content of the novel and an embodiment of an anachronistic carnival past, encompassing both real and ideal, in which no distinction is made between the self and its performances.

Bakhtin identifies carnival as a politically subversive practice which, by temporarily licensing various forms of social inversion, parodies of existing structures of authority, and indulgences in bodily pleasure enabled an authentic form of resistance to an increasingly centralized, oppressive state apparatus. It is important to distinguish between Bakhtin's notion of carnival and the theater. Carnival is a genuinely egalitarian experience which involves every member of a community in play, and

theater more closely resembles a commodity which is produced by one group of people for consumption by another.

Mummery occupies a uniquely liminal space between carnival and theater. As Squillace notes,

The plays originated in a pagan ritual, performed around the time of the winter solstice" and "the rural poor...maintained the mummers' play long after it lost fashion at court in the sixteenth century (173).

Though the play differs from true carnival in the sense that there some who play and others who watch, there the resemblance to theater ends. The play is performed by local lads who are known by all, rather than professionals from outside the village, and its preparation includes literally everyone in the community. Performance occurs in a private house during Christmas festivities rather than a theater, and the source of illumination is the hearth rather than footlights. Most importantly, the repetition of the St. George mummer's play constitutes a "traditional pastime," of which not a word changes from year to year; it is a "fossilized survival" rather than a "mere revival" (129).

Depictions of mummery are quite rare in nineteenth or twentieth-century fiction. This antique practice is seldom written about; while there is George Moore's A Mummer's Wife and Charlotte Yonge's The Christmas Mummers, The Return of the Native is by far the most famous novel which features a mummer's play. The Fifth Edition of the Oxford

Companion to English Literature's entry under mumming mentions only Hardy's novel as a source of references to the practice.

There are, on the other hand, many Victorian novels which deal with both public and private theater. Jane Austen, George DuMaurier, Wilkie Collins, Mary Braddon, Henry James, Louisa May Alcott, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and of course Charles Dickens all wrote novels dealing with modern performance, theater, and actresses. While references to the theater in the novels of this period are so common as to be almost commonplace, references to mummary are strikingly rare. This can be accounted for by the fact that mummary was an outmoded form of performance, no longer practiced in most parts of England, while the theater was an extremely popular form of entertainment which enjoyed a great deal of visibility. It is more difficult, however, to explain why Hardy revived this moribund practice and placed it at the center of The Return of the Native. Though some critics have cited Hardy's well-known fascination with rural practices and customs as the most likely reason, and tend to lump mummary in with skimmity riding and gipysing as occasions for "local color," the particular type of performance characteristic of mummary requires that it be considered separately from other forms of theatrical performance.

Women were absolutely barred from mummer's plays, a theatrical form whose status as a marginal and practically

dead practice had afforded it immunity against change. E.K. Chambers notes that "Mummers' Plays, Plough Plays, and Sword Dances are exclusively male performances. I owe to Dr. Marett the saying of an Oxfordshire participant, 'Oh, you wouldn't have women in that; it's more like being in church'" (5). Thus, the appearance of Eustacia Vye in drag in the St. George play signifies the crossing of a gender boundary which had already been partially overcome in the modern theater. By placing a performing woman in the context of mummary Hardy reinvests the performance with transgressive import. While many fictional representations of professional actresses both denied and affirmed Victorian conceptions of "proper" womanhood by showing that women could indeed excel as artists on the stage, if sometimes at the expense of their virtue, they always posed the debate as one between privacy and propriety. Could a "public" woman be a good one as well? The appearance of a cross-dressing heroine in an exclusively masculine form of theater poses a different but closely related question, that is, could that man up there on the stage be...a woman? In The Return of the Native, Eustacia's cross-gender theatricality shifts the emphasis from the issue of feminine propriety to an interrogation of the nature of gender itself.

Hardy's views on the "Woman Question" follow a continuum of development towards an increasingly radical

gender politics which can be traced through the novels. While his novels of the 1870s, such as Far From the Madding Crowd and Return of the Native, were warmly received as pastoral novels of rural life which dealt with the issue of feminism obliquely, in the 1890s his novels Tess and Jude the Obscure were read by scandalized readers as works endorsing free love and the abolition of conventional marriage. Jude was attacked by the press as immoral, and as Hardy later remarked, was "burnt by a bishop--probably in despair at not being able to burn me" (Jude vi). Jude was not the first New Woman novel, though some modern critics consider it the "greatest" of his novels, and it is the most widely read today (Beckson 146).²

In 1909, Hardy and "hundreds of other male advocates, such as William Archer, Arthur Wing Pinero, and James M. Barrie, signed a petition favoring suffrage which was published in the Times," and in 1922 Hardy finally revealed that "I have for a long time been in favour of woman-suffrage" (quoted in Beckson 157, 147). In fact, many of Hardy's ideas concerning the enlargement of women's spheres appear, though less explicitly, in his novels published twenty years or so before this pronouncement. Though many

² Though many critics imply that Hardy and Gissing created the category of the New Woman novel by writing *Jude* and *The Odd Women*, in fact the first, and most popular, New Woman novels were written by women. Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) and George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893) were both widely read and enjoyed in their day, but in ours, have been relegated to, in E.P. Thompson's words, "the lost continent of the female tradition" (quoted in Showalter 11).

feminist discussions of Hardy focus upon his later novels, which are more overtly concerned with the Woman Question, and to some contemporary readers became identified with it, early novels like The Return of the Native and The Hand of Ethelberta contain a type of feminine heroine for which there was not yet a name. Though Eustacia Vye is not a New Woman, as the term wasn't coined until 1894, she is certainly a new kind of woman whose rebelliousness, ambition, and transgressive antisocial acts make her a threat to the commonwealth of both local community and nation, just as the New Woman was to be perceived twenty years later.

Eustacia Vye is a most singular heroine. Compared to Heloise, Cleopatra, the Sphinx, Artemis, Athena, Hera, Sappho, Mrs. Siddons, the oracle at Delphi, and the "raw material of a divinity" (73), she seems an amalgam of "splendid," ill-fated, and decidedly improper Pagan women. Her singularity merits an entire chapter, entitled "Queen of Night," devoted to heroine description. Indeed, hers is not the "fair, sweet, and honest country face" of Clym's sister Thomasin, and the "Queen of Night" chapter abounds in exuberant metaphor rather than contenting itself with serviceable adjectives. While David Eggenschwiler has interpreted phrases such as "her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies and tropical midnights" (40) as purely satirical in mode, these passages also confirm this heroine's status as radically other,

semiotically linked to the exotic, oriental, and foreign. Eustacia is a romantic and anomalous presence on the Heath; she conceives of her relationship to it as actively combative and oppositional, saying that it is "my cross, my shame, and will be my death!" (93). While the common folk of Egdon are referred to as "natives," as is Clym Yeobright, who returns to Egdon to stay, Eustacia is a disrupting and disruptive presence in the novel. She has elected to "remain a stranger to all [such] local gatherings" (131) and remains so far outside the pale of the community that she is believed to be a witch by many of its members. Her singularity, her separateness from the community of which every other character in the novel is a part, functions as a contrasting mechanism which delineates "native" customs.

Eustacia's actress-like ability to appear in different guises through the use of costume and performance sets her apart from the stable, respectable citizens of Egdon. This type of self-transformation and mobility of character and role are characteristic of the theatrical mode.³ Her mobile countenance is presented to the reader in progressively revealing glimpses which are distributed throughout the early chapters in tantalizing paragraphs.

3. Indeed, in *Private Theatricals* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1984) Nina Auerbach identifies mobility and transformativity as the primary elements of theatricality responsible for its demonized status in Victorian culture, which valued "sincerity" as the most important, indeed constitutive, element of character.

This teasing strategy telescopically reveals first her distant silhouette on the barrow, closer views of her outlined figure, partial outlines of her face, and culminates in the chapter entirely devoted to metaphorical heroine description, "The Queen of Night." While all of these views are typified by their partiality, the theatrical mode, which reveals mobility of features and the transformation of one facial expression to another, is credited with engendering a superior understanding of character. "In respect of character a face may make certain admissions by its outline; but it fully confesses only in its changes. So much is this the case that what is called the play of features often helps more in understanding a man or woman than the earnest labors of all the other members combined" (63). The visual interrogation of faces is a search for the supposed truth, or "full confession," of character which is linked with the notion of play or playing, in contrast to the futile and stodgy "earnest labor" associated with limning character by other means.⁴

4. Mary Ann Doane's article "Veiling Over Desire" in her collection Femmes Fatales situates the "close-up" shot of the female face as a symptom of the connection between visibility and knowledge in narrative cinema. "It almost seems as though all the fetishism of the cinema were condensed onto the image of the face, the female face in particular" (47). The face, close up, is a valorized site of meanings about and attitudes towards femininity in this medium. The telescopic rendering of heroine description in this novel functions as a fictive form of close up to a degree, and can be analyzed in some of the same ways.

This idea that character is something which can be seen by observing the play of the face close-up constructs the world as a stage upon which players both constantly enact themselves, and observe the performances of others. Gazes circulate reciprocally between players and audience, effectively erasing the distinction between the two positions, as in carnival. The presence of drag performance in this arrangement subverts the notion of a knowable, essential gender which can be apprehended by the eye. Drag confounds the eye's search for truth in appearances.

Important claims have been made regarding the social subversiveness of the transvestite. Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar identify female cross-dressing as an important part of the modernist woman's larger project to "define a gender-free reality behind or beneath myth, an ontological essence so pure, so free that 'it' can 'inhabit' any self, any costume" (332). They argue that for these women, "cross-dressing became a way of addressing and redressing the inequities of gender categories" (347). They assert that though female cross dressing is "radically revisionary," male modernist costume imagery and transvestitism is "profoundly conservative" (332). Elaine Showalter, in her article "Critical Cross Dressing: Male Feminists and the Woman of the Year," makes more cautious, if more confusingly historicized, claims about the Eustacia's two companions in her walks, the telescope and the hourglass, also evoke comparisons with cinema.

conservative function of the cross dressed man. Though she acknowledges that in

nineteenth century feminist literature, cross-dressing is the redressing of an emotional debt owed to women, and dressing like a woman is the hero's penitential and instructive immersion in humility, impotence, and subordination,

she ultimately appeals to psychoanalytic theory to confirm her point that, for men, "cross dressing is a way of promoting the notion of masculine power while masking it...the male transvestite is not a powerless man...he is a 'phallic woman'" (123).

Marjorie Garber, while affirming and extending the subversive function of transvestitism for **both** genders, asserts that the transvestite was often conceived of as a "third sex," or the "third term" which disrupts **all** binary arrangements, including but not limited to gender. She asserts that

one of the most consistent and effective functions of the transvestite in culture is to indicate the place of what I call 'category crisis,' disrupting and calling attention to cultural, social, or aesthetic dissonances (16).

Garber's impressively flexible formulation embeds transvestitism in a larger epistemological discourse, as does Eve Sedgwick in The Epistemology of the Closet, linking the figure of the transvestite/homosexual to the

structures of knowledge and revelation in any text. If, as in the case of The Return of the Native, transvestitism only appears in one or two seemingly peripheral episodes, the possibilities for "reading" the transvestite as a sign of category crises elsewhere proliferate rather than contract. As Garber puts it:

the apparently spontaneous or unexpected or supplementary presence of a transvestite figure in a text (whether fiction or history, verbal or visual, imagistic or 'real') that does not seem, thematically, to be primarily concerned with gender difference or blurred gender indicates a category crisis elsewhere, an irresolvable conflict or epistemological crux that destabilizes comfortable binarity, and displaces the resulting discomfort onto a figure that already inhabits, indeed incarnates, the margin (17).

Garber's formulation, which situates the transvestite as a marker of category crises not necessarily overtly related to gender roles, clarifies the relation between two very uncomfortably paired terms in The Return of the Native, that is, modernity and antiquity, whose instability is revealed in cross-dressed ritual performance. The tensions between and competing claims of the antique and modern worlds constitute the "epistemological crux" in this text which is displaced onto its most marginal and theatrical figure--the modern New Woman.

Though the mummer's play in general is "fossilized," several modifications to the play occur which call attention to its potential for category subversion. Though the play partakes of the antique tradition of prohibiting women from the stage, the mummers are totally dependent upon local "sisters and sweethearts" to create the costumes, which are called "dresses." These costumes, which the women decorate with "loops and bows of silk and velvet in any situation pleasing to their taste," defy "tradition" (129) both by making it impossible to distinguish one knight from another, and by feminizing them with the addition of "brilliant silk scallops and ribbon tufts" (130), thus ensuring that each player appears in a form of drag. This category confusion on the level of clothing effectively confuses other categories as well: "Saint George himself might be mistaken for his deadly enemy, the Saracen" (130). In the St. George play as performed in this novel the hero may be confused with the villain, just as Eustacia Vye is taken for a man during her performance.

The mummers' plays often included, according to R.J.E. Tiddy's 1910 study, a grotesque character called the "man-woman, which is now played by a boy in woman's clothes," (76) thus indicating that though women did not perform in the plays, gender confusion was a distinctive feature of the ritual. Distinctions between pagan and Christian, antique and modern, tradition and innovation, and masculine

and feminine are all temporarily confounded as a result of theatrical dress. The mummer's play is an occasion of "category crisis," a play of transgressive behaviors and carnival excesses.

As Jann Matlock puts it:

transvestism is, after all, dressing across gender boundaries, not just disguise (Verkleidung). In its most subversive moments, female cross-dressing plays on the boundaries between gender, translating the lines that divide into sources of excitement, teasing difference into desire (58).

Certainly, Eustacia Vye signifies desire in the novel. She is its most desirous character, vying to live the life of a heroine which the romantic novels she read as a schoolgirl describe, and she teases desire into those who watch her both on and off the stage. Eustacia's performance depends upon the contrast between the self and the role it chooses to perform; she disguises herself as a boy playing a role in the mummer's play as a means to appeal to Clym Yeobright sexually. Shock at transgressive cross-dressed performance carries a charge of erotic titillation; while Clym Yeobright is chagrined by seeing "a cultivated woman playing such a part as this," simultaneously "his eyes lingered on her with [a] great interest," (152) an interest inseparable from this "strange way of meeting."

While I have been concentrating primarily on the mummer's play as a drag performance, I now want to refine

the argument by discussing another important dimension, that is, its status as veiled performance. An examination of the function, theory, and epistemology of the veil will aid in understanding the complex relation between transvestitism, femininity, and male desire.

Mary Ann Doane's work on feminism, film studies, and masquerade analyzes the eroticism of the veil. The veil simultaneously provokes the gaze and blocks it; "in its translucence, [it] both allows and disallows vision" (49). The village participants who perform in the mummer's play wear veil-like headpieces which hide the countenance "by reason of the strips of ribbon used to cover the face in mumming costumes, representing the barred visor of the mediaeval helmet" (135). This strange garment is a "survival" which, like the mummer's play itself, is pressed into textual service to evoke an erotics of knowledge and desire. While the knight's masculine costume changes Eustacia's sex temporarily, the veil's scrim evokes femininity and mystery, interposing a diaphanous barrier which marks the precariousness of the visible and the knowable. As Doane writes, "the magnification of the erotic becomes simultaneous with the activation of objects, veils, nets, streamers, etc., which intercept the space between the camera and the woman, forming a second screen" (49). Though Doane's analysis is specific to the study of film, she does at different points use the term "spectator" interchangeably with "camera" (48), thus indicating that

its terms are applicable to situations involving performance and audience. The activation of the veil in the mummer's play continues and reduplicates the type of heroine description which I have identified as a visual "tease," and it embeds this tease in a discourse of carnivalesque gender transgression and inversion. The doubled audience of reader and (male) spectator respond to this category crisis with a powerful fascination mingled with anxiety; while the second screen of the veil invites and confuses the gaze, the spectacle of female drag performance, woman "playing" man, evokes fears of "New Women" taking over the roles and privileges of men on the political as well as the literal stage.

The chapter entitled, "The Two Stand Face to Face," has an ironic dimension, for Eustacia never removes her mask for Clym during her performance or their talk afterwards. Squillace claims that the mask

is an emblem of what makes their love possible; indeed, the flirtation Eustacia and Clym conduct at the party centers on Eustacia's hidden identity, which she does not reveal even in their culminating interview (180).

While he concludes that the mask emblemizes the imperfect understanding between the two, overlaid with illusion and deception, which leads to their unhappy union and Eustacia's tragic death, it has yet another function which relates to larger issues of seeing and mis-seeing, reading

and mis-reading. Eustacia's mask hides her face from the audience's as its semi-transparency permits her to observe the audience unseen. After the Turkish knight has fallen, she "found leisure to observe the scene around, and to search for the form that had drawn her hither" (143). Thus, she becomes the audience, and the audience becomes the play; her mask permits her to "read" Clym's face unobserved. The veil, a metaphorical form of the theatrical curtain, serves to reverse the theatrical dynamic by hiding the performer and permitting her to peruse the faces of the audience; it reverses the roles of the spectator and the performer, just as the play itself switches the roles of men and women.

The veil permits Eustacia to be both a member of the audience who possesses the gaze, as well as a spectacle which is possessed by the gaze. This reversal results in the theatrical tone of the language used to describe Clym as he appears to Eustacia from behind her theatrical mask. His figure is a "spectacle...in Rembrandt's intensest manner," and his face is a "countenance overlaid with legible meanings" (145). The face is like a text in that it invites study and interpretation, and it is also like a spectacle to be appreciated and perused like a painting by an old master by a spectator. Eustacia's contemplation of Clym's face during the performance parallels the "Queen of Night" chapter -- it provides an occasion for close-up hero description. While Clym's character is described by means

of an analysis of his countenance from Eustacia's point of view, her countenance remains unreadable to him; she "still sat covered, only the sparkle of her eyes being visible between the ribbons which covered her face" (149). The ribbons tantalize by drawing attention to that which is behind them. When Eustacia accepts wine because she can consume it without revealing herself, "the glass vanished inside the ribbons" (149) which tease the gaze into speculation and fascination; Clym "looked at her wistfully, then seemed to fall into a reverie."

The ribbons, like the veil, conceal a secret, which is in this case the secret of Eustacia's gender. Clym's first question to Eustacia, "are you a woman--or am I wrong?" indicates the mystery which has been haunting him during her performance; he is irked not by the fact that he doesn't know who she is, but rather that he cannot be sure **what** she is.

The transgressiveness of her cross-dressed performance is foregrounded in his question, "do girls often play as mummers now? They never used to." She replies, despite the fact that she is wearing the Turkish knight's outfit and has just performed his part in the play, that "they don't now." Her adventure is figured as a masculine one, something that a "young buck" might do. This sartorial transgression does not truly shock her grandfather, but it does cause him to characterize the exploit as something one of the "buck(s) I knew at one-and-twenty" might do, while

he warns her "no figuring in breeches again" (155). Male fears that women who took over the prerogatives of male status, such as masculine dress or breeches, would pose a threat to established sexual categories surface in these dialogues but are deflected by the presence of a carnival frame around Eustacia's cross-dressing episode.

It is astonishing how ineffective her male garb is; everyone who has extended or even brief contact with Eustacia finds her out in short order. The permeability of her disguise heightens what Garber calls the "transvestite effect"; in contrast to "passing" for male undetected, drag depends upon the revelation of artifice; the "doffing of the wig" after a male drag performance, for example.⁵ Drag's subversive effect "put[s] in question the 'naturalness' of gender roles through the discourse of clothing and body parts" (Garber 151). In addition, drag is a theatrical mode which exposes some of the mechanisms of gendered reading and mis-reading on and off the stage, and thus possesses political significance as well. The fact that any of the men are deceived even momentarily by Eustacia's theatrical ability calls into question their

5. Julie Andrew's doffing of the wig in the film "Victor/Victoria," in which she plays a woman passing as a man who does female drag performance, complicates this gesture in a way which illustrates my point here about the distinction between passing and drag. Another Blake Edwards film, "Switch," depicts the ultimate female cross dressing narrative--its fantastic premise asks the viewer to believe that the actress Ellen Barkin is playing a man sent back to earth to inhabit a woman's body as punishment.

ability to accurately read gender, and identifies gender at least initially as a function of clothing rather than of essential qualities.

The specter of "feminine essence" is invoked by Hardy, only to be debunked as a source of truth regarding either gender or appearances. "Did anything at this moment suggest to Yeobright the sex of the creature whom that fantastic guise inclosed...? When the disguised Queen of Love appeared before Aeneas a preternatural perfume accompanied her presence and betrayed her quality. If such a mysterious emanation ever was projected by the emotions of an earthly woman upon their object, it must have signified Eustacia's presence to Yeobright now" (150). The euphonious phrases "mysterious emanations" and "preternatural perfume" romantically abstract femininity into an essence or "presence" which transcends "fantastic guises" in order to reveal itself to Man. Of course, Clym is totally unable to detect the mummer's gender with the aid of "revelations" of divine feminine scent or savor; his prosaic question to the object of his puzzled gaze, "are you a woman, or not?" definitely leaves open the possibility that this "creature" is **not**.

Hardy envisioned this tension created by drag performance as central to the entire novel. When the Dorchester Dramatic Society dramatized The Return of the Native in November of 1920, Hardy's "respected alderman Mr. Tilley" sought advice from him regarding the representation

of the novel as a performance. Though the letters reveal that Hardy was flattered and amused by this scheme, his only correspondence to Tilley regarding his wishes relates specifically to the drag performance. In a letter to Tilley, dated November 1920, Hardy writes: "Reminder: To tell Clym and Eustacia to speak up very clearly when they first exchange words ('Are you a woman? & etc.) as it is the key to the whole action--" (Collected Letters 45). The fantastic guise of female drag performance provides the occasion for calling into question notions of gendered "presence" and quality by introducing the shadow of a doubt, a momentary disbelief, about "the sex of the creature."

The fact that female drag performance can be permitted, even enjoyed, by Hardy's audience can also be accounted for by historical and sociological factors. Upper-class women, "ladies," were historically permitted much more latitude in dress than their working class counterparts. Women who were "above the law, like Sand, Bernhardt, Eberhardt, or other women of the haute bourgeoisie ...could name their reasons for dressing as they pleased" (Matlock 51). Very few upper class women were "above the law," but theatrical events and balls did provide opportunities for cross dressing for a privileged few. It is important to stress that though mummary is a theatrical event, and as such permits certain forms of costume that would not be condoned in daily life, it is an

exclusively male form of performance, and its conventions do not include women as performers at all, much less cross dressed women. Nonetheless, Eustacia's status as a lady affords her more protection from censure than would have been available to a working class girl. She appeals to her status as a "lady" in requesting that others keep the secret of her adventure; by invoking this status and its privileges, she seeks to preserve it, for an exploit such as hers could damage even a lady's reputation.

The situating of the drag performance in a carnivalesque setting licenses and contains it in a finite space and time, bracketed off from everyday life. As Garber puts it:

cross dressing can be "fun" and "functional" so long as it occupies a liminal space and a temporary time period; after this carnivalization, however, whether it is called "Halloween" (in Provincetown) or "green world" (in Shakespeare), the cross-dresser is expected to resume life as he or she was, having, presumably, recognized the touch of "femininity" or "masculinity" in her or his otherwise "male" or "female" self (70).

An examination of the use of the term "liminal" is in order here. The root of this word, from the Latin lime, or threshold, indicates that the liminal defines that place of boundary, or drawing, "limning," of the line between two opposed terms or states of being. At the same time, the secondary definition of this word, "barely perceptible,"

gestures towards a blurring of these boundaries, a muddying or blending of two formerly separate and discrete terms such that perception itself is confused, rendered barely operative. Drag performance plays on the threshold of two terms, "male" and "female," by revealing the performative nature of these categories, and in so doing blurs them. Thus, life cannot be resumed as it was afterwards, especially not in this novel, whose singular heroine's desires are so far out of the ordinary as to constitute a major disruptive force in the commonwealth.

"Eustacia is the intruder upon the heath, the danger to the community" who is "an outsider by temperament as well as by history" (Meisel 56). Her adoption of the man's role in the play reflects her rejection of female domesticity; this aspect of her character has been interpreted by various critics as ambition, pride, discontent, passion, wildness, sensuality, and adolescent silliness. She tells Clym that "there is not that in Eustacia Vye which will make a good homespun wife" (206), and that "you don't know what you have got in me" (206). (This last phrase rings with a particular kind of truth; their first meeting together is fraught with misreading and misunderstanding, specifically in reference to gender. Clym honestly does not know what he has "got in her." Though her heroes are "William the Conqueror, Strafford and Napoleon Buonaparte, as they had appeared in the Lady's History used at the establishment in which she was

educated" (78) and Hardy compares her temperament to a general's in its boldness and resolve, her position as a woman relegates her to a commonwealth of "hands and hearts," a domestic sphere in which marriage is the most decisive act available to a woman. This dissonance between these idols, men whose prominence in public life placed them in history books, and the prospective accomplishments of a woman shaped by a nineteenth century "lady's" education is revealed in Eustacia's ambivalent attitudes towards domesticity. In the scene where Charley asks to hold her hand in exchange for his role in the play, the marriage contract is critiqued by means of performative parody.

Hands play an important role in heroine description, and can be read as part of an representational code signifying Victorian femininity. Charley wants half an hour of "what you forbade me at the maypoling, miss," that is, the privilege of holding and caressing Eustacia's hand. She successfully bargains him down to a quarter of an hour, but concedes him the right to kiss it as well. When the two meet to complete their contract, the emotion is all on his side; he holds her hand "with a tenderness beyond description, unless it was like that of a child holding a captured sparrow" (134), and she permits this "without the least emotion." This dutiful fulfillment of a contract is dissociated from all affect on her part; she views it instrumentally, as part of a strategy in a larger campaign.

This attitude is commented upon earlier in the text, and characterized as male; "she seldom schemed, but when she did scheme, her plans showed rather the comprehensive strategy of a general than the small arts called womanish" (80). This scene powerfully parodies the marriage contract, in which a woman bestows her hand upon a suitor in order to accept his offer of marriage. The hand synecdochally represents the heart and the body. As Helena Michie puts it:

asking for a hand is an entrance into the female body, the touch of a hand frequently the first touch between lovers. The disembodied hand, the hand without the heart and whatever it is that the heart itself stands for, is, in the terms of many Victorian novels, an unacceptable fragmentation of the female body (98).

Clym falls in love with a pair of sparkling eyes, half hidden by a mask; Charley contents himself with the use of his goddess's hand for fifteen minutes. Feminine seduction is here figured as a strategy relying upon the fetishistic power of body parts. Disembodied female eyes and hands have a power to provoke which the entire body does not. More importantly, this erotic deployment of female parts as a symptom of an "unacceptable fragmentation of the female body" points towards a reading of female theatrical behavior as equally unacceptable, since women who act portray another person with their bodies, thus "fragmenting" themselves into self and other, and

"embodying" a body other than their own. The most disturbing aspect of this comic scene in which a hand is traded for a favor lies in the actress's ability to physically accede to this act, normally imbued with romantic significance, while feeling nothing. The hand has become detached from the heart; the actress's ability to fragment her body into self and role has emptied the act of its Victorian significance as a symbol of romantic troth. The act which ought to stand for "the first touch between lovers" has become literally "an act"; a performance.

Hand and person she then withdrew to a distance of several feet, and recovered some of her old dignity.

The contract completed, she raised between them a barrier impenetrable as a wall (136).

The withdrawal of the hand signifies a transgressive reversibility of the act, for once a hand is given (in marriage), it supposedly cannot be taken back, as it has sealed a covenant between husband and wife. The notion that a wife could give her hand and heart, yet later raise a "barrier impenetrable as a wall" between herself and her husband defied Victorian moral codes regarding marriage.

Of course, this is what happens when Eustacia's hand is actually given to Clym in marriage. Subsequent misunderstandings lead to her retreating to her grandfather's home in disgrace and finally contracting to run away with another man in hopes of seeing the world; in other words, she tries to "take back" the hand she gave.

Thus, the comic vignette in which Charley sentimentally holds Eustacia's hand while she cynically tolerates the act for her own ends demonstrates the detachability of acts from feelings which the actress epitomizes. This theatrical separation or barring-off of feelings from acts, coupled with the heroine's "wanting what is called life -- music, poetry, passion, war, and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world" aligns her with a martial, masculine, instrumental approach towards life antithetical to the conventional Victorian ideal of womanhood.

It is worth restating that the New Woman did not appear in Hardy's fiction until the 1890's, about twenty years after The Return of the Native. At this time, women who were neither spinsters, nor the angel in the house, did not yet have a name. Eustacia's otherness in her community, along with her drag performance and singular ambitions, figure her as an "other" woman -- the New Woman's precursor. Ann Ardis comments on this negatively structured nominative technique: "the New Woman is always distinguished from the 'old' woman, the Victorian 'angel in the house,'" (13) in other words, she is at least initially defined by what she is not. A technique which Hardy uses to define the proto-New Woman prior to the 1890's appears frequently in his other novels as well; by opposing two women, generally sisters, one who is a domestic angel, and the other who is her Other, sympathetically portrayed but

generally bound for a tragic fate nonetheless, he is able to describe protofeminist heroines by opposing them to familiar stereotypes, thus showing what they are not. Mary Poovey writes that this technique of "doubling" female characters in order to show differences between women provided an opportunity not only to dramatize the negative counterparts of the heroine's perfect qualities but also to play at different roles, to explore, often through the characters of servants or lower-class women, direct actions forbidden to the more proper lady (43).

While Poovey maintains that nineteenth-century women authors used this doubling as a form of role-playing, in order to experiment with subject positions other than that of the "proper lady," Hardy employed female doubling between sisters towards different but related ends. Doubling protofeminist heroines, with their desire for "direct actions forbidden to the...proper lady" with their proper sisters, enables him to narrate female characters who deviate from the proper. And of all these deviations, the most striking is their propensity for the theatrical, a quality long figured as "improper" in other fiction of the period.

Often, his strategy is to oppose two sisters by giving them conflicting romantic interests. Though Eustacia and Thomasin are not sisters, they do become sisters-in-law, and their conflicting interest in the same man serves as a device for opposing them to and distinguishing them from

each other. Ethelberta, of The Hand of Ethelberta, a "woman of genius" who becomes a successful stage performer, marries a peer, and writes an epic poem, is interested in the same man whom her "homespun" sister Picotee loves and eventually marries. While Ethelberta is an actress by profession, and has chosen to support herself and her family in this way, Tess, of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, engages in far more subtle performative acts. Her staging of her own capture, confession, and renunciation at Stonehenge, a striking natural mise en scene, bespeaks an affinity with the dramatic. The doomed Tess dramatically offers Angel Clare her sister, Liza-Lu, who she says "has all the best of me without the bad of me," since she is "good and simple and pure." Tess's doings in the great world have rendered her too complex a heroine to be described without the help of the feminine double. Theatricality marks one of the differences between the "old" woman and her "new" sister, since it emphasizes the difference between the self and the roles it plays, rather than the identity between a woman's roles and her self, and thus establishes a space for a new conception of womanhood which displaces pure domesticity as the only privileged term.

Theatricality in Hardy's novels occurs in both overt and covert forms, and Eustacia's performances occupy several different registers. Her drag performance in the mummer's play overtly situates theatricality in a

recognizable, if anachronistic and thus problematic, dramatic setting. Her other performances, such as the mock-marriage with Charley, dramatic unveiling at Wildeve's wedding, and final death bed tableau as a close-up sublime image, occupy various positions on a continuum of significant theatrical behavior.

While Hardy's doomed but fascinating heroines such as Tess and Eustacia are characterized as theatrical, presenting themselves to be seen by different types of audiences, their "homespun" sisters occupy the opposite pole. Their abhorrence of performance, often described as part of a becoming feminine modesty, was part and parcel of the cult of domesticity which gave rise to the figure of the "angel in the house." In contrast to Eustacia, who is compared to Mrs. Siddons and Sappho, two infamous performing or "public" women, her "fair, sweet, and honest" sister-in-law Thomasin is characterized as a "private" woman, one not to be seen except by family members. When Diggory Venn is transporting her by wagon after her aborted marriage, he fends off a request by a passer by to peek in on her sleeping form by asserting that "it is getting too dark for you to see much of her; and more than that, I have no right to allow you" (18). Indeed, such is her status as a private woman that he feels that even he, a former suitor and her rescuer for the nonce, has no right to look at her, for "she was not made to be looked at thus" (45) and he "appeared conscious of as much, and while Mrs. Yeobright

looked in upon her, he cast his eyes aside with a delicacy which well became him" (45).

The sleeping face, like the deathbed portrait, is by nature "honest," for it lacks the theatrical play of feature which paradoxically both reveals character better than any other means and permits concealment and duplicity; it is static. The combination of the guileless feminine face and the delicately averted male gaze "doubles" the relation between Eustacia's promiscuously visible if disguised figure and Clym's fascinated spectatorship. The first foregrounds the privacy due and given the private woman; the second calls attention to the visual seduction and "fantastic guises" available to theatrical women. While Diggory forbears to look at Thomasin while she is sleeping, Mrs. Yeobright tells her son that "it was a bad day for you when you first set eyes on" Eustacia, and that looking at her has "blinding" him (200). Diggory carefully tucks concealing draperies around Thomasin's body in the van, so as to shield her completely from visibility; Eustacia assumes the veil only in order to dramatically lift it, thus appropriating an object used by proper ladies in the service of privacy and modesty and using it as a seductive tool, a "second screen," in Doane's words, whose permeability invites rather than obstructs the gaze. Eustacia's affinity for drag, for performance, and for visibility set her apart from the Victorian ideal of the proper lady. Her rebellion against conventional roles for

women and the marriage contract enacts itself by theatrical cross dressing because this type of performance radically critiques gender roles through parody and role reversal.

Eustacia's change of gender during her drag performance at the mummer's play, where she appears "changed in sex, brilliant in colors, and armed from top to toe" (135) challenges sexual hierarchies without entirely dismantling them by depicting cross-gender mobility in a ritual setting. Theatricality signifies something far more complicated than simple bad faith or duplicity, and operates in this text in far more subversive ways. Keeping Hardy's views on suffrage, marriage reform, and feminism in mind, one can see how the transgressive adoption of differently gendered theatrical roles both on the stage and in everyday life constructs Eustacia as a multiply selved, performative subject whose engagement in play temporarily removes her from the sequestered world of traditional womanhood. Eustacia's transgressive acquisition of forbidden roles both on and off the stage constitutes a defensive reaction against having to act a part dissonant with the self in everyday life, and more importantly indicates the emergence of a self, a New Woman, unrepresentable by traditional Victorian codes of femininity.

Chapter Three

Beneath the Skin: Theatricality and Boundary Crossings in Kim.

The eponymous hero of Kipling's novel of Anglo-Indian espionage is a spy, a person who performs multiple versions of himself for public consumption. Kipling's use of theatrical metaphors to describe Kim's education and performances as a spy also serves to describe his negotiations along the axes of racial identity. Kim is able to be a spy for the British empire precisely because his racial identity is not fixed; he appears to be Indian, but is actually an orphaned Irish boy raised by Indians in India--from the outset, his ethnicity is at odds with his race. This conflict between what he seems to be and how others read him poses a question to fixed notions of race and ethnicity; the challenge of reading this novel is related to the challenge of reading Kim as Indian or Anglo since he can be either at different times. Kim the character, as well as Kim the novel, defy categorization, and the trajectory of the novel traces the ways in which different racial categories fail to contain or adequately describe him. The novel metaphorically figures both spying and racial identity as varieties of theatrical performances; Kim can be a masterful spy because his

identity is not fixed within either of the two races represented in the novel.¹

Kim's theatrical abilities and gifts as a mimic and professional cultural border crosser make him a cultural bridge between the world of the Anglo-Indian colonizer and that of his Indian subjects. The occasions during which Kim passes as an English schoolboy, a Hindu beggar, and a Muslim child reveal the performative nature of race and ethnicity. The novel is populated by Bengalis, Hindus, Sikhs, Pathans, Hill Rajahs, Mahrattas, and Saddhoos; Kipling's fine eye for cultural detail enables him to vividly depict each group and its distinctive forms of dress, worship, and speech, yet for him, all Indians are "black" despite their often considerable ethnic differences, and therefore belong to a race which is biologically distinct from "whites."² Since Kim can pass as either white or different varieties of "black" when he chooses, both "whiteness" and "blackness" are exposed as positions which can be adopted at will and successfully performed. These performances of race are more than masks or disguises; Kim can pass as either white or Indian because his sensibility encompasses both positions. He

¹The notion of race is further complicated by Kim's Irish parentage. Though he is definitely considered "white" by the British who adopt him, he is also pointedly described by Kipling as Irish, and therefore occupying an already-liminal position in the empire of which Ireland was a part.

²Kipling's short story collection entitled "In Black and White" depicts color and race as the most basic qualities distinguishing Anglo-Indian from Indian.

possesses a bicultural subjectivity which cannot be pinned down or fixed in nineteenth-century categories of race.

As the "Little Friend of All the World," as he is called, he occupies the site where different worlds meet and a place where discourse between them can occur. Theatricality and cross cultural disguise provides opportunities for friendly border crossings between worlds which otherwise would remain irremediably separate.³ The dynamics of Kim's cross-cultural play affords him passage across both the geographical and ethnic borders of Kipling's Anglo-India. The relaxation of rigid uncrossable borders and irreducible cultural differences which occurs when mobility across them is enabled by Kim's theatrical performance reveals ethnicity itself to be performative rather than essential.

The episode in which Kim's demanding performances as a white man and a "native" cause the hero to break down reveals Indian women's role in helping Kim both to sustain his multiple cultural masquerades and formulate a sense of cultural identity. The strain of completing his mission for the Service as well as fulfilling his obligations as the lama's chela requires Kim to straddle different and opposing roles; the conflict between his mission and his loyal attachment to the gentle lama, and the contradictory

³Parama Roy notes that "The Indian (for the British imagination in the nineteenth century, the quintessential colonial subject) is identified as 'the most antipathetical companion to an Englishman'" (204).

demands of the Great Game and the Wheel of Life, reduce the vital and buoyant hero to his lowest point:

It was never more than a couple of days now, and Kim's shoulders bore all the weight of it -- the burden of an old man, the burden of the heavy food-bag with the locked books, the load of the writings on his heart, and the details of the daily routine. (319)

The Sahiba, a hill-rahah's widow, and her cousin's widow tend Kim after his nervous collapse and cure his ills with food, medicine, and massage. The burdens of sustaining simultaneous commitments to imperial espionage and filial piety engender psychic dis-ease as well as physical exhaustion in Kim. The two Indian women remedy the stresses involved in such sustained cultural performances by incorporating Kim into the female space of the zenana:

And the two of them, laying him east and west, that the mysterious earth-currents which thrill the clay of our bodies might help and not hinder, took him to pieces all one long afternoon--bone by bone, muscle by muscle, ligament by ligament, and lastly, nerve by nerve. Kneaded to an irresponsible pulp, half hypnotized by the perpetual flick and readjustment of the uneasy chudders that veiled their eyes, Kim slid ten thousand miles into slumber. (324)

The language which describes Kim's healing experience temporarily suspends and erases the boundaries of different types of identities which constrain and separate subjects

of different genders, ethnicities, and nationalities. While Kim is massaged by the women, he becomes a purely a "body" rather than a "sahib" or an Indian, a boy or a man; this body is composed of undifferentiated "clay" or "pulp" which is ungendered and de-racialized; it reduced to a body composed of muscles, bones, and ligaments. The hypnotic flicker of the women's veils, like the "bars of black and white, opening and shutting" which Kim sees in his delirium, represent both the mutability of identities, black and white, male and female, and the vertiginous effects of border-crossings between them.

The therapeutic hypnosis and re-formation of Kim is accomplished by deferring the problematic of identity-choice; the reduction of his contested body to common clay evades and challenges the necessity of an easily categorized subjectivity. When Kim lies down in the dirt for a long restorative nap after the Sahiba has adopted him as her son, this dirt or clay seems to embrace him like a mother. "And Mother Earth was as faithful as the Sahiba. She breathed through him to restore the poise he had lost lying so long on a cot" (332). The boy's adoption by the Indian surrogate mother, his proffering to her of the "title of plain love--'Mother'" (326) results in his becoming "clay of her clay," sharing her abjection as a colonized person and provisionally disavowing his status as a white sahib. This refiguration of the body as undifferentiated clay, ungendered, deracialized, and

denationalized, also allows Kim to find his poise or orientation along the different identities he has been straddling. His cultural identity, which is composed of different types of performances, is sufficiently problematic, so delicately poised on several types of ethnic and racial boundaries such that the only safe place for him to remain is on the border. While the Empire would require Kim to choose sides, the zenana's spirit of theatricality, transformativity, and "plain love" enables Kim to defer this choice by providing a space for play.

The coercive pedagogical workshop of Lurgan, which tries and fails to hypnotize and incorporate Kim, really does require him to commit himself to a side: the theatrical costumes and props available there are to be used in the service of the British empire, not in order to facilitate more numerous and enjoyable opportunities for cultural performance. The deferral of cultural fixity which is set into motion in the zenana extends to the novel's end and accounts for its unresolved closure.

Critics have long disagreed about the significance of the novel's end. Irving Howe answers the question of whether Kim will continue in the Service by asserting that "whatever he may do, Kim will forever and beyond forgetting be the old man's chela" (41). Wilson notes that "later critics...have still jibbed at Kim's service as a spy, trying to suggest that, at the end, Kim is not really committed to the Game, but simply to life in the busy,

teeming Indian world" (54). The difficulties in determining Kim's future created by the open ending mirror the critics' difficulties in assessing the novel's position in the literary canon. English criticism since the 1940s has tended to see Kim as forever a spy, and thus an affront to the "liberal anti-imperialist tradition" with which both Wilson and Howe align themselves. While Kipling's contemporaries greatly admired this very popular book, no doubt because they too read the hero as a spy and affirmed the necessity of both espionage and empire, "the apprenticeship of Kim to the Game was the greatest obstacle to the book's acceptance by serious critics and liberal-minded people in the first part of this century" (Wilson 51). The book's fortunes have varied according to changing political ideologies, but both imperialist and "liberal anti-imperialist" critics seem to have agreed that Kim will indeed continue as a spy, while continuing to disagree about the cultural value of spies and empire. In fact, it is impossible to tell whether Kim will remain in the Service or not; though we know that Mahbub has planned another mission for him, we do not know whether Kim takes it, nor do we see him definitively repudiate the Service or commit himself to the lama. In the end, the critics' question to the text, which they answer according to various ideological imperatives, is the same as Kim's to himself; that is, "what is Kim?"

The question could not be asked in the same way had not Kim's theatricalized cultural border crossings rendered his position an ambiguous one. We have seen him pass as a sahib, a chela, a Muslim, a Hindu, as the need serves. These performances constitute his subjectivity rather than mask or disguise an underlying and illusory racial or ethnic essence. Kim's identity is thus figured as a problem rather than a known or knowable quantity.

When Father Victor and Reverend Bennett discover the amulet which proves that Kim's father was Kimball O'Hara of the Irish Regiment, despite the boy's entirely native appearance, they tackle the problem of what to do with him. Colonial policy allows for only two ways of dealing with orphaned Anglo-Indian boys -- they are either kept in their fathers' regiment or sent away to school. Both military and pedagogic institutions work in this novel to reinforce fixed notions of what an English boy in India should do and be, thus Kim has always avoided them. They curb not only opportunities for free play as opposed to odious and repetitious schoolwork or chores; they restrict boys' behavior and shape and compel performances of "Englishness" which conform to recognized models. Conforming to British discipline and restrictions is certainly hard work for Kim. It is one of the purposes of colonial bureaucracies in this novel to fix and stabilize ambivalent cultural identities such as Kim's.

It is essential to address the issue of Indian women in this novel in order to work through the problematics of colonial identity, since both gender and race function in the "bureaucratization" of colonial rule. As Chandra Mohanty puts it, colonial rule "constructs and regulates a specific masculinity of rulers--a masculinity defined in relation to 'native women' (forbidden sexuality) as well as to 'native men'" (17). It is important to resist collapsing the examinations of race and gender together; as Judith Butler puts it:

It seems crucial to resist the model of power that would set up racism and homophobia and misogyny as parallel or analogical relations. The assertion of their abstract or structural equivalence not only misses the specific histories of their construction and elaboration, but also delays the important work of thinking through the ways in which these vectors of power require and deploy each other for the purpose of their own articulation. (18)

Race and gender do operate on different but complementary levels in *Kim*. Indian women's curtained and theatricalized bodies, hidden behind chudders and veils, represent possibilities for play and theatrical transformation which permit Kim to fluently change identities and ethnicities. This produces a challenge to the order of things, the given taxonomy of race and ethnicity, because Kim's body thus becomes unclassifiable,

either linguistically or conceptually: an unknown quantity. While theatricality is a part of imperialist hegemony at times, and can be deployed by this hegemony, as it is in Lurgan's workshop for training both native and English boys to become spies for the British Empire, cross-cultural theatricality also exposes the constructedness of this hegemony by foregrounding the inessential and performative nature of cultural identity. Finally, Kim's uncertainty about whether he is a sahib or not, and his willful alternations between disavowing and flaunting this title develops into a theatricalized form of agency.

Though it may be tempting to read Kim as indeed the "Little Friend of the World," since this makes it possible to find a utopian, open-hearted, democratic space in the text which admits and unites all castes, races, and peoples in the person of Kim himself, this would be a mistake.⁴ Readerly identification with this very charming hero encourages such utopian readings.⁵

⁴My thanks for Victoria Olsen for helping me to think this through.

⁵Irving Howe says that "most of us, I suppose, would be happier if Kim worked for a Gandhi or some forerunner of Gandhi rather than Colonel Creighton, the head of the British Secret Service, since that would ease our discomfort with that part of Kipling which, intellectually, we find insupportable" (38). Howe's emphasis on readerly "happiness" or "discomfort" seems to mark a psychological investment in addition to an intellectual one; in addition, Howe projects the temptation to rewrite the story so as to feel comfortable in liking and identifying with Kim upon a projected community of critics, the "most of us" he refers to.

Reading Kim's cross-cultural performances as manifestations of an empowered bicultural subject's ability to playfully control the conditions of its own reception while yet avoiding racialized self-hatred seems to enable both a satisfyingly emancipatory vision, and a way of theorizing theatricality in novels which would affirm the development of new, less monolithic and more performative notions of the self at the end of the nineteenth century.

Kim's ability to convincingly mimic and perform different types of ethnically coded behavior allow him to cross cultural and ethnic borders, and this skill represents both a danger and a privilege. It must not be forgotten that Kim's position is far from enviable; the theatrical skills that he possesses, such as his knowledge of multiple native dialects and idioms and ability to improvise costumes for both himself and other spies in distress, such as the Mahratta whom he transforms into a Saddhu with the help of a little turmeric powder, ash, and opium pills, cause the Secret Service to recruit and train him as the perfect spy. Kim's abilities make him an extremely desirable and co-optable commodity. Because Kim is an orphan and a member of a low caste -- "a poor white of the very poorest" (49) -- he is particularly vulnerable to exploitation by institutions such as the Service.

The mechanisms of patriarchal control and military discipline to which Kim has acceded by default, and which he finds so galling when they curb his freedom, are

unlikely to disappear magically in the end. The social and moral distinctions between white and black maintained by the colonizers while Kim continues to resist them condition Kim's performances despite the fact that he doesn't personally participate in them. As Judith Plotz points out, Kim can pass as both native and white because he is white; such mobility would be impossible to a native. Passing, then, is a privilege reserved for white males in this text. My reading of Lurgan Sahib's Hindu boy as Kim's native counterpart confirms this notion: this child, precocious as he is, is denied Kim's dramatic abilities. As a native, he doesn't have the option of "entering into the skin of" the ruling race. Hurree Babu's various clever disguises as a doctor and a tour guide deceive the Sahiba, the Russians, and even Kim, but that is because these disguises do not involve his changing his race; he never tries to pass for a Sahib. Kim's privileged mobility across cultural lines is made possible by his status as a "sahib," whether or not he chooses to "be" one.

Subjects are not always able to choose among a lexicon of possible identities, or even to have any effect upon the range of identities which exist as possibilities for them. Critics such as Judith Butler question the notion of a self which preexists the laws of social, racial, and gender positioning. For Butler, "performativity is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject" (95).

Butler's recourse to deconstructive and psychoanalytic theory enables her to temporize between what she calls determinist versus constructivist debates about identity; while radical constructivist theory would demand that the subject has no agency whatsoever and is entirely circumscribed by the norms, heterosexual, racial, and otherwise, which make up the available or culturally intelligible identity options available to it, essentialists would maintain the existence of the agent while affirming its groundedness in and identity with the material conditions of its race/sex/ethnicity. Her move, which entails an examination of disidentificatory processes which participate in the creation of "legitimate" subjects, focuses on readings of rejected or delegitimated identities, that is, the "abject." The abject, she writes, is a "zone of uninhabitability [which] will constitute the defining limit of the subject's domain; it will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which--and by virtue of which--the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life" (Butler 3). When the abject, which exceeds the bounds which define legitimate subjects in our culture, is read critically it can actually change the contours of those boundaries, in Butler's opinion. This form of analysis is "a critical resource in the struggle to rearticulate the very terms of symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility" (3).

It is difficult to read the Indian women who occupy the position of the abject in Kim because they represent the vanishing point of viable identities. The horror experienced by the men who watch Huneefa's witchcraft is similar to the "horror, the horror" which Kurtz suffers and imposes on the Africans on the Congo in "Heart of Darkness"; the confrontation with the "barely human" in the context of colonialism does provoke horror because it represents an unacknowledgeable, abject form of being which colonialism works to suppress. My reading of the Indian women in Kim acknowledges and examines the power of the suppressed and abject female native to challenge the contours of what constitutes official, legitimate identity. An examination of some of the theatrical modes of cultural border crossings at play, on the phantasmatic "stage" where the fields of the Orient and the West meet and fluctuate, both questions the borders of these fields and articulates a form of agency available through performance to abjectified subjects such as Indian women and Indian boys in Anglo-Indian fiction. Kipling's depiction of the multiple positions of the culturally divided self in colonialism enables productive critical rearticulations of race, gender, and identity.

Kim is a novel which contains a multitude of worlds. There is the world of women, cloistered on the rooftops in the zenana, and the world of men, the world of the Orient and the world of the white imperialist, the world of

spirituality and the world of barracks, the "black" world and the "white" world. Edward Said defines this dichotomization of the world as part of a cultural strategy known as Orientalism, a "strategy of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (2). The Orient is a cultural field produced by European culture which has a dual function. The academic study of the Orient by Western scholarship constructs it as a "field" of study, a discipline which purports to gather knowledge and in doing so, constructs an institutionalized version of the "Oriental." In addition, the Orient functions as a staged cultural performance, much like a play, which offers up a vision of the East as a phantasmatic spectacle produced for the consumption of a Western audience. This latter enterprise allows the Western viewer to define his own cultural project through a process of disidentification, much as the subject constructs its own identity through recognition of an Other. Said's language evokes this comparison through its emphasis on the formation of the self which is engendered through the bifurcation of the world into two discrete fields, the Western and the Oriental. "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (3). Orientalism, then, could be said to depend upon the construction of a divided self possessing a surrogate, or underground,

nature. One could say that the notion of the unconscious, or underground, self is written into the practice of Orientalism.

The emphasis on the Oriental as both an academic field of study and a categorical field which contains the West's unconscious calls attention to the dynamics of academic and cultural fields. Orientalism is a field of representation which is both rich and diffuse, possessing a "prodigious cultural repertoire" (63). This field's ability to signify simultaneously an incredibly diverse number of terrors, pleasures, and desires makes it a perfect device for containing the cultural unconscious of the West, whose anxieties and fascinations with Orientalism nourished its literary and artistic imagination while allowing it to sharpen and define its own conceptions of itself.

Said's struggle to define Orientalism as a field results in his producing a number of telling metaphors to do the crucial work of definition:

A field is often an enclosed space. The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. (63)

The field of Orientalism has borders, as does a theatrical stage, and these borders are "affixed to Europe." The effort of reading for borders, or points where the stage of Orientalism as a phantasmatic production meets up with Western writing and Western readers, offers the postcolonial critic access to the field of Orientalist representational practice by providing a point of entry and a line of demarcation, however provisional and contingent.

If, then, the Orient is indeed structured like a theatrical stage, an examination of the boundaries of this stage are in order. On the other hand, the points in the text where India is constructed as a fantastic stage reveal myriad opportunities to read theatricality, cultural performance, and the divided self as symptomatic of the construction of the Orient.

Theatricality functions as the "third term" which challenges the division of the world into Oriental and Western, black and white, female and male. The axes of nationalism, ethnicity, and gender confine and define the world and create borders within it which the theatrical self can at times transgress, thus exposing the points of untenability which exist along these borders. The deployment of theatricality as a third term complicates interpretation of the text by making it difficult to assign dominance to specific gender, racial, and national categories since it works to expose the fluctuating nature of the categories themselves.

Kim's status as a theatrical border crosser has led various critics to read him as an exploited and dis-placed subject, one whose slippery bicultural identity, as well as his position as a spy whose labor is exploited by others, denies him a legitimate place in any world. Robert Moss claims that Kim's dual identity makes him a "confused and disturbed" subject prone to psychological breakdowns; a pathological subject "whose sense of selfhood is so unclear (that he) experiences wild surges of joy when he is permitted to slip in and out of different identities" (93). Moss defines Kim as a "schizophrenic" subject, one whose "deeply divided personality" is a casualty of the violence inherent in imperialism and therefore to be pitied. Violence is indeed an integral part of the "Great Game" of imperialism, and Kim is ever-aware that his life is forfeit if he plays poorly or violates its rules. However, the notion that possessing a "divided personality" capable of border crossing along several axes results in a pathologized, schizophrenic, debased version of the self mislocates the violence of colonialism by implying that its existence is contingent upon the solidity of categorical borders rather than their subversion. Kim's divided self affords him a space on the borders of categories; as the "Little Friend of all the World," this theatricalized space between worlds permits a dis-oriented, multiply selved, performative subject to come into being.

Kim has been called a "road" novel, and Kipling himself describes it as plotless, a "picaresque" novel whose lack of conventional plotting shifts the narrative stress from satisfying "closed" endings to an emphasis on the vicissitudes of travel or wanderings, and the wonder inherent in the observation of new sights. Kim is a travel narrative: it is a novel about orientation, "plotting" or finding one's way along a wandering path, with the destination less the issue than the road itself. Life on the road is "life as he would have it--bustling and shouting, the buckling of belts, and beating of bullocks and creaking of wheels, lighting of fires and cooking of food, and new sights at every turn of the approving eye" (121). Said reads the "approving eye" as simultaneously the appropriative eye; for him, the above passage constructs India as a spectacle whose theatricalization as a restful yet vital, invigorating but safe world permits the white reader to engage in a form of narrative tourism. He reads Kim as part of an Orientalist project since it creates a deeply attractive, exotic yet sanitized version of the East for the appropriative eye of the West. The "relatively carefree meandering" (42) of Kim and the Lama implies, to Said, the absence of any urgency or danger along this road, and therefore the suitability of the Oriental field for enjoyment and specular recreation designed for Western consumption; the Westerner can see "life as he would have it"--the way he would like it to be.

While this on-the-road story may seem to permit the Western reader to indulge in a wish-fulfilling fantasy of orientation, a comfortable yet invigorating illusion of the Orient and a sense of security about its position and projected direction along the imperial continuum, a reading of the parallel plot of Kim's cultural dis-orientation provides a disruptive occasion, a roadblock to appropriative readings of the novel as pure spectacle. Kim is a travel narrative with a difference because it depicts mobility not only through space, but across identities. Readerly identification with Kim may seem initially to simply furnish a privileged front-row seat, a "tickkut" on the first class train with a window seat on the traveling show which is the Road, but this Road is like theatrical performance itself -- it challenges the notion that things are simply and only what they seem. Kim's position on the border between axes of nationalism, ethnicity, and gender results in a disorienting effect, which engenders both a loss of direction and a concomitant challenge to the notion of hermetic cultural borders.

Kim's value to the empire consists in his abilities to penetrate cultural and national borders by passing as a native. His secondary "British" education in mathematics, surveying, and cartography prepares him for the work of making accurate maps of territory behind enemy lines. He is trained to gather directional materials, "orienting" knowledge about both the contours of the land and

ethnographic ways of knowing, for cartography is a subset of Anglo-Indian anthropological study, and thus part of the Creighton's Ethnographic Survey. In addition to the tools of cartography, such as compasses, inks, and magnifiers, his body is turned into a tool of measurement; he is taught to measure his feet and use them also as a tool for pacing out distances. Yet while his Anglo-Indian education at St. Xavier's School teaches him to rationally conceptualize his body as a tool of empire, his parallel education with the spies and secret agents of imperialism problematizes his body by exploiting and foregrounding its theatrical transformability and its accompanying ability to "pass." Kim's value as a orienteer, or map maker, is always dependent upon and ancillary to his value as a dis-oriented or de-Orientalized subject; one supposedly salvaged from "going native." Institutions such as the church, the school, and the Service devote themselves to the work of cultural salvage by trying to turn Kim into a Catholic, a soldier, and an Englishman.

The three religious men who discuss Kim's fate, the Priest, the Anglican minister, and the Lama, all agree that Kim is a fit subject for salvage; as a boy, he does not yet possess a definable identity or essence. Their discussion takes his formability for granted, and concerns itself not with whether he can be made into something else, but rather what he should be made into. Kim translates the Lama's question to the Englishmen as "'You take him from me and

you cannot say what you will make him.' He says, 'Tell me before I go, for it is not a small thing to make a child' (141).

Kim's projected conversion into "sahibness" begins with clothing; he is put into a boy's uniform which is defamiliarized in the act of description. Kim wears this outfit as a costume, part of a coerced theatrical performance rather than a voluntarily chosen expression of cultural identity. When the English soldiers capture Kim after catching him spying in one of their tents, he conceives of himself as Indian, and lives so completely within that world that he has had minimal contact with the English. His knowledge of English is sketchy, his English accent is the "tinny, saw-cut English of the native-bred" (95), and his native dress, his skin color, and demeanor lead his captors to thinking that he is an Indian boy. He is "burned black as any native" and "consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazar" (49) in "the vernacular" which he speaks by preference; the only way that the soldiers can tell that he is an orphaned Irish boy is by accidentally discovered the amulet which contains his father's military papers, his "pedigree."

The first efforts which Kim's English sponsors make to transform him involve costumery -- he is given British clothes to wear, so that he can look at the part that they have determined he should play. The Hindu, Muslim, and other native clothing which he customarily wore, and

continues to keep as part of a repertoire of guises when he becomes a spy, are comfortable and loose on the skin. They allow his body to move freely both within their confines and within the native world. The sahib's uniform he is forced to wear marks him as an Englishman, and thus confines him to barracks; escape is out of the question. "Kim, newly washed all over, in a horrible stuff suit that rasped his arms and legs" (144) is an unwilling player in an unfamiliar type of play. The discomfort imposed upon the body by this new clothing reflects the loss of agency which Kim feels as part of the process of his dis-orientation; he vents his feelings upon the native sweeper who mistakes him for a "European boy" "in the tongue he knew best" (148), thus attempting to affirm his non-European self by means of his mother tongue. This act of ventriloquism terrifies the sweeper, who reports that "There is a white boy by the barracks waiting under a tree who is not a white boy" (148). The disjuncture between Kim's newly guised body and his native tongue can only be expressed in the form of a riddle, by negation and oxymoron, thus marking the always partial and provisional success of the salvaging-project. Indeed, the emphasis on nationality and ethnicity as a form of being which is imposed by institutions, and the "makeability" of boys, particularly orphaned boys, as fit subjects for such institutions always foregrounds the inessential nature of Kim as a subject eminently suitable to acts of cultural

conversion. Boyhood's mutability or "impishness," as both Father Victor and the Lama observe, make Kim an object of desire for practically everyone. Boyhood functions in imperialism as a blank canvas subject to rewriting or "making" by powerful men.

Boyhood's value shifts in relation to different worlds in the text. Creighton remarks that no boy is too young to be exploited by the Secret Service; in fact, the younger and more impressionable he is, the higher his value to the Empire. Lurgan Sahib's workshop is reminiscent of Fagin's in Oliver Twist, for the "healer of pearls" also stages dress rehearsals as a form of training for the boys he "makes." The games which he makes the boys play are sometimes accompanied by beatings, and his attempts to hypnotize Kim demonstrate his coercive nature; he both "makes" boys, and makes them see things of his choosing. This violence, perpetrated in the name of training, erupts on both sides of the pedagogical arrangement; Lurgan's other student attempts to poison the teacher with white arsenic. This ten-year-old Hindu boy, the only other "boy" in the text, is represented in such a way as to evoke comparison as to the relative values of boyhood along the axis of race and ethnicity. Kipling remarks that India functions as a forcing-house for boyhood, causing even young men who emigrate from England to fall prey to premature senescence, thus precipitating the dramatic psychological breakdowns he writes about in stories such as

"Bitters Neat," "Thrown Away," and "The Mark of the Beast." In these tales the hot weather, unfamiliar food, grueling work, and sense of dislocation all contribute to young men growing old before their time. Indian time is figured as both distorted and distorting because of this compression, for "in India, where life goes quicker than at Home, things are more obviously tangled, and therefore more pitiful to look at" (Plain Tales 57).

Temporality is represented as even more radically compressed for native boys. The prevailing myth that Asiatics mature much earlier than whites is corroborated in several places in this novel: Mahbub Ali remarks that at fifteen he had "shot my man and begot my man" and the Hindu boy goes to be married at the age of ten. The Hindu custom of arranged marriages tended to be read by Orientalists in order to propagate the myth that Indians were not only overly sensual and effeminate, but prematurely so, practically from birth, thus eliding the category of boyhood, a category cherished and mythologized in England partly since it was supposed to exclude these qualities from conceptions of the Orient altogether. Innocence, a fetishized quality of Victorian boyhood, is written out of Orientalist representations of Asiatic boyhood. Indeed, the uncannily passionate and violent relationship between Lurgan and his ten-year-old Hindu boy resembles that between two lovers rather than a teacher and his pupil. This boy, who out of jealousy wants to kill both Kim, his

rival, and Lurgan, his love-object, displays a passion and extravagance of emotion "which impressed even Kim" (204) in its vehemence. Extravagant displays of passion, eroticized violence, and a knowingness out of proportion to age were all qualities ascribed to the Oriental in the fiction of the period, and contributed to the "writing out" of Indian boyhood in Orientalist fiction.

Since this boy represents an opportunity to read an alternative version of Kim, that is, what Kim's story might have been had he not been born white, it is rather surprising that so few critics discuss him at all; for them, as for Kipling, there is only one boy in this novel. While this boy could be read as a debased version of Kim, secondary in every respect--younger, less adept, repellently aged and prematurely knowing, really neither innocent nor a child -- his debasement can be traced to the implied inferiority of the subject race, which resides in its inability to defend the autonomy of its own subjectivity. If some critics read Kim as a "schizophrenic" subject who suffers from the confusion and disturbance of possessing a divided self, the relative resilience afforded by this divided self represents a strategy for resisting the coercive powers of oppressive pedagogies such as Lurgan's. The Hindu boy, so adept at remembering jewels, lacks a "divided self"; though Kim excels at the game of "dressing-up" the boy plays this game "clumsily." "That little mind, keen as an icicle where

tally of jewels was concerned, could not temper itself to enter another's soul; but a demon in Kim woke up and sang with joy as he put on the changing dresses, and changed speech and gesture therewith" (207). The native boy's lack of a divided self, which can "enter another's soul," means that his soul is rendered vulnerable to penetration and possession by another's. The boy, who unlike Kim was successfully hypnotized by Lurgan by being made to look into pools of ink, is consequently a much less valuable commodity to both Lurgan and the Empire than is Kim. While possessing a divided self enables Kim to resist hypnotism by thinking of the multiplication tables "in English," thus drawing on a different cultural idiom which he can press into service in order to resist suggestion, the Hindu boy's lack of resistance to this technique dooms him to a life of abjection symptomatic of Western notions of the different and inferior nature of the Eastern psyche. Unlike Kim, who hypnotizes himself by repeating the mantra, "what is Kim?", the Hindu boy's psyche is so devalued that he lacks even the luxury of a name with which to mesmerize and thus save himself, for his name "varied at Lurgan's pleasure" (206). So extreme is the boy's abjection to Lurgan, so vulnerable is he to penetration by another's psyche, that he offers to be hypnotized as a punishment and symbol of his submission to the teacher: "I will look into the ink-pools--I will faithfully guard the jewels! Oh, my Father and my Mother, send him away!' He indicated Kim with a backward jerk of

his bare head" (204). The violent jealousy of the eroticized quasi-parent relationship, the metaphors of penetration, and the struggle against or succumbing to seduction by an older man which distinguish this portion of the novel evoke the dynamic of pedophilia. The invocation "Oh, my Father and my Mother" is striking in its futility; if this boy had a father or mother who could save him, indeed he would not be in this predicament, but he is an orphan and dependent upon the State. When Lurgan remarks to Kim, "you are the first that ever saved himself" (203) we are reminded of Kim's singular ability to exist in two worlds at once. The play of cultural difference within Kim has enabled him to set aside, or "save" part of himself by fragmenting his subjectivity.

Lurgan's workshop parodically reduplicates English pedagogical practice by overlaying it with a layer of Eastern mysticism, thus allowing the coercive aspects of its psychically violent method to be read as Indian. This masking of oppressive, hypnotic pedagogical systems is, however, incomplete; Lurgan's use of the phonograph machine to scare Kim, ejaculations in English such as "By Jove!", and his headmaster-like speeches about Kim's potential career reveal the functioning of English technologies in the service of a seemingly Eastern type of education. In the end, this eclectic education is an extension of St. Xavier's, rather than a departure from it; its goal is to fashion a perfect spy who can penetrate the soul and the

skin of another, one who is simultaneously a paranoid subject, continually aware of the Raj's other agents, possessing the same ability, who create a field of surveillance to which the agent is always subject. The dangers of psychic penetrability are structured reciprocally here; though Kim did manage to "save himself" during one occasion, he is hyper-aware of the futility of evading the vengeful and powerful gaze of colonial power. His first thoughts after leaving Lurgan's school involve the pleasures of sharing his adventures with the other schoolboys, but this pleasure is brought up short by his realization that the punishment for telling tales in school is dire; his own teachers, agents of the empire, would kill him. "If he talked foolishly now... Colonel Creighton would cast him off -- and he would be left to the wrath of Lurgan Sahib and Mahbub Ali -- for the short space of life that would be left to him" (210).

This cold equation is followed by a cheery reflection on the "fun of inventing imaginary adventures," thus diverting readerly attention away from the absolutely fatal consequences of childlike behavior in a child. Lurgan's imperial workshop, seemingly exuberant and amusingly theatrical in its ability to offer costumes, space for play, and boyish camaraderie, while learning a fascinating but somewhat unsavory "trade," is also a potential chamber of horrors, a cold and efficient guardian of its own secrets. Kim's involvement in secret pedagogies such as

Lurgan's both create him as a tradable and valuable commodity, and endow him with a potentially fatal knowledge which must be monitored by his beloved, or at least familiar, former teachers, who could turn on him at the blink of an eye.

The deflection of readerly attention away from the consequences of violent imperial pedagogies constitutes one of the main narrative strategies of the novel, which consequently many critics have read and criticized as deceptively sanitary. Said wonders at the absence of "scheming moneylenders, village prigs, vicious gossips, or unattractive and heartless parvenus" (43) and claims that danger is shunted off to the margins, thus creating a safe and idyllic world in which "certainly danger threatens from time to time, but we never seriously doubt that Kim will somehow wiggle out or that he will outsmart his opponents" (40). Angus Wilson writes that corruption and evil are implied, but basically absent from Kim, and Irving Howe agrees that:

that sense of evil which has for cultivated people has become a mark of wisdom and source of pride ... is not a frequent presence in the pages of Kim, and when it does appear it can rarely trouble us with either its violence or grasp. (31)

Some have concluded that this supposed suppression of danger and mortality is responsible for the novel's quasi-canonical status as a classical book for children rather

than adults. In fact, those episodes in which danger of the extremest kind is evoked and then immediately dissipated by a particularly cheering following phrase or passage embody the tensions and contradictions apparent in the dynamic of colonialism. This dynamic covers its tracks under a film of homosocial camaraderie and boyish exuberance like that which masks the novel's underlying violence.

Violence, then, is perceived by most critics as an absent or suppressed element in Kim. This paradigm of lack is echoed in another observation of Said's, which is that "Kim is an overwhelmingly male novel" (12). Though Said concedes that there are women in the novel, he concludes that they do not constitute a "world" within it or challenge the prevailingly homosocial relations in this world since "the women in the novel are remarkably few in number, and all are somehow debased or unsuitable for male attention" (12). Indeed, both Said's introduction to the Penguin edition of Kim and his chapter on the novel entitled "The Pleasures of Imperialism" in Culture and Imperialism, devote only a few sentences to these women, thus attesting to their "unsuitability" for male critical attention. Sara Suleri also sees the "marked homoeroticism of the narratives of colonial encounters," but concludes that this phenomenon "could provide a highly productive field of study for the epistemological limits --and their concomitant terror-- imposed by an imperial contemplation

of the multifariousness of culture" (16). Affirming the homosocial arrangement of Anglo-Indian novels does not preclude productive feminist readings of gender and femininity; in fact, as Eve Sedgwick's Between Men has persuasively demonstrated, this type of reading practically demands that the suppression of the feminine be examined as a sign of both representational and real homosociality. Femininity, like violence, resides under both a textual and a cultural veil which is represented in Anglo-Indian fiction as the veil of purdah. Yet, rather than reading femininity as debased because it is obscured, thus critically staying on one side of this veil and thereby affirming its ability to divide and conceal, readings such as Suleri's question the division of the world into female and male, and look for points of entry between the two worlds. Her analysis of representations of and by English and Indian women in English India goes beyond a passive acceptance of cultural alterity and sees the notion of feminine abasement under colonialism as potentially challenged by the writings of Anglo-Indian women.

Said's remark that the women in the novel are either "debased or unsuitable for male attention" calls attention to some of the reasons that critics find these women so difficult to see in this novel. The fact that Kim contains no romance plot, and in fact only introduces the spurned Woman of Shamlegh in order to present and then defuse the possibility of sexual relations with women, fixes the

protagonist in perpetual childhood. Kim, like Peter Pan, is offered genital sexuality, only to reject it with a "pure boy's grin" (312). Since the romance plot is foreclosed in order that the protagonist may remain a boy, women do not function as potential wives or sweethearts for men, but that is not to say that they do not exist. Instead, Indian women function as as substitute mothers to the orphaned Kim.

All of the women Kim encounters are Indian, and their bodies are shrouded over in veils and drapings which are meant to both preserve feminine modesty and privacy, thus constituting a "women's world" hidden behind walls of fabric, or sequestered in zenanas on the rooftops of buildings. This is one reason why it may be difficult for some to "see" the women in the text; one of the markers of ethnic difference between white and Indian women in Kipling's fiction is that while white women are promiscuously visible, engaging in sometimes frenzied social activity in order to find husbands as soon as possible, Indian women do not mix with men outside their own families. The fascinating thing about these "invisible" women is the frequency with which they captivate Kim's attention. These women, far from being invisible, possess powerful voices which command attention and sometimes terror. The fragmented glimpses of women's faces and bodies revealed in the act of unveiling constitutes these bodies as partial spectacles.

The first woman encountered on the voyage, the Sahiba, initially manifests herself to Kim as a disembodied voice, "a harsh, thin cackle behind the curtains" of a hill-rajah's palanquin. The "flat thin voice behind the curtain" punctuates its remarks with a single "skinny brown finger heavy with rings" which raps on the palanquin and shakes at him "reprovingly." Rather than separating the Sahiba from the world, the curtain functions in a theatrical way by permitting occasional glimpses of its occupant which she stages to great dramatic effect. The rapping finger punctuates her speech, which impresses even Kim in its command of invective and wit. "From behind the shaking curtains came one volley of invective. It did not last long, but in kind and quality, in blistering, biting appropriateness, it was beyond anything that even Kim had heard" (122). The invisibility of this body behind the shaking curtain foregrounds the power of the feminine voice and also marks an important point of similarity between Kim and the women, for both exploit theatrical means of self-presentation as a way of redressing their marginal status.

One of the first things we learn about Kim, one of the things that characterizes him as a little friend of all the world, is that, as a boy, he can enter the bounds of the zenana, which Said describes as "the segregated world of Muslim women." Crossing this boundary is part of the game, which at this early point in the text has not yet been

capitalized and turned into the "Great Game" of empire which gets most of the critical attention:

What he loved was the game for its own sake--the stealthy prowling through the dark gullies and lanes, the crawl up a waterpipe, the sights and sounds of the women's world on the flat roofs, and the headlong flight from housetop to housetop under cover of the hot dark. (51)

Enshrouded in darkness and warmth, through which the boy goes crawling and prowling through enclosed and obscure spaces, the zenana is figured as a maternal body which is forbidden to men, but accessible to children. While the Great Game of imperialism excludes women, the game of crossing over into the zenana embodies a maternal body and redresses a loss; it is always a surrogate maternal body for the Anglo-Indian. Suleri writes:

the zenana, after all, was possessed of one advantage denied to British women: it could include children within its space. Throughout Anglo-Indian narrative, the separation of parent and child is a sentimentalized motif that repetitively reveals the extent of its traumatic betrayal. (80)

Since Kim's mother died of cholera, or "went out," as he describes it, before he was born, the only mothers he has known have been Indian women, surrogate mothers. But in this respect, he is no different from most Anglo-Indian children under the Raj. Since Imperial children were

generally shipped back to England and separated from their homes of origin, as was Kipling himself, they can be seen as orphans sent to be raised by surrogates overseas. These children, like Kim, must be dis-oriented, indoctrinated and immersed in the dominant culture so as to acquire the emotional distance necessary for them to rule. This dynamic of separation and loss from both the maternal body and the primary home creates an intimacy between (native) mother and (white) child which redresses a lack. "In their infancy too these children had been symbolically closer to the zenana than to their actual mothers: nurtured by wet nurses and ayahs, they were, Kipling records, the true intimates of the colonial world" (Suleri 81).

Since the only white woman mentioned in the novel is Kim's dead mother, who has "gone out," extinguished by cholera and immediately replaced by a half-caste woman who becomes his caretaker, native women function as surrogates for white women in this novel; femininity is represented entirely by them since their white counterparts have been extinguished from the text. Surrogate mothers in Kim function not only as substitutes for biological mothers, but also as facilitators in the orphan's quest not to find its "true" identity, which is always associated with paternity, but to negotiate between identities. While Lurgan's workshop, which would seem to make available different dramatic identities usable by border crossers such as Kim, in fact represents instead the scene of a

pitched battle for dominance waged within the male-dominated political world, the zenana or women's world replaces this power struggle with an economy based on incorporation, substitutability, and transformation.

Kim's typical mode of address to native women from whom he begs on the road is "mother." This strategy effectively defines all native women as potential mothers, drawing them together into a gynosomal network of community which also reflects their status as a general maternal labor force exploited by whites in India. Suleri writes of the practice of sending white infants out to nurse with Indian women, whose own children generally then starved to death. As Suleri writes, "the bond of nurturing between ruler and servant is quite pragmatically a bond of death" (81). The value of maternal nurturing is symbolically overdetermined in the text since it represents language; maternal surrogacy determines the "mother tongue" of the imperial subject. When the Sahiba, impressed by the Anglo-Indian superintendent's knowledge of native idiom, inquires of him, "Who suckled thee?" the source of language and the use of its nuances is established as transmitted by maternal surrogacy; the question does not address biological maternity but rather nurture. This distinction is reinforced a few sentences later, when the Sahiba remarks that "the others, all new from Europe, suckled by white women and learning our tongue from books, are worse than the pestilence" (124). The Indian female body is

represented here as the source of Indian language and of culture.

Kipling's autobiography describes how his wet-nurse or ayah teaches him the native tongue which was later to surface in his fictional texts, both in the form of native expressions for which there are no English equivalents, and as his primal language, from which other forms of speech must be mentally translated. In the Kipling nursery:

she or Meeta would tell us stories and Indian nursery songs all unforgotten, and we were sent into the dining-room after we had been dressed, with the caution 'Speak English now to Papa and Mamma.' So one spoke 'English', haltingly translated out of the vernacular idiom that one thought and dreamed in. (4)

The "unforgotten" vernacular idiom which is transmitted by the Indian surrogate mother is the language of stories, dreams, and thoughts. Translating this primary language into the secondary language of English entails a psychic disorientation; the process of translation is halting and awkward. Kipling's education as a writer at the military school Westward Ho! completed his initiation into the English language, and it was the only language in which he wrote, but the persistent presence of Indian idiom in his fiction attests to his continued attachment to his surrogate mother-tongue.

St. Xavier's school and Lurgan's workshop take on the work of dis-orienting Kim by giving him a sahib's education

in a paternalistic homosocial setting. The Indian women's world of the zenana represents the maternal space to which Kim has recourse when he wants to re-enter the Oriental world. Indian women such as Huneefa, the dancing girl, and the Sahiba all provide Kim with the means to reassume his original status as an Indian boy through theatrical performance. Kim's prior quick change acts from a white boy to a Hindu boy to a Muslim beggar were all facilitated through the use of his costumes, or props, and his command of Indian cultural knowledge was such that he could easily sustain the performance without assistance. This Kim, prior to his capture and education by the Anglo-Indian schools, was as yet a protean self, able to take on and put off different identities easily. As Judith Plotz puts it, "so flexible are the boundaries of Kim's identity that he seems to don a new consciousness with each set of clothes" (113). The schools' function is to curb this cultural flexibility by giving him an identity as a sahib; therefore his disguises after his stay there are characterized by their reliance upon Indian women as suppliers of skin dyes, charms, and other forms of theatrical assistance. If "he almost moves in and out of his own skin, sometimes as pale as his Irish genes dictate, sometimes as dark as the fierce sun or the dyes of the bazaar can make him" (Plotz 115) this mobility is made possible by his encounters with Indian women, whose

motherly and sometimes sinister interactions with him allow him to be re-birthed as a multiple or divided self.

There are three episodes of theatrical disguising which involve Indian women. In the first of these, Kim ascends to the rooftop apartment of a dancing girl from whom he begs a turban, a haircut, and some skin dye. This costume, which he needs in order to travel the road as a native, is mistaken by the dancing girl as an element in a romantic intrigue; she assumes that he wants to pass as native in order to seduce a native girl. Kim allows her to believe that he needs the disguise as part of a "jest", and the girl refers to her assistance with his costume as a "play." Kim's transformation into a "low-caste Hindu boy, perfect in every detail," is accompanied by mirth and happy expectation in re-entering the world as a re-oriented subject; his fanciful tales on the third-class car of the train are "the more rampant for being held off native speech for so long. In all India that night was no human being so joyful as Kim" (175). Both the road and the "mother-tongue" of native speech represent "life as [Kim] would have it," and are accessible to him only when he is dressed as a native rather than a sahib. The dancing girl prides herself on the effectiveness of her disguise, especially her skin-dye, which she warns "does not wash away." This dye, equalled only by that which Huneefa supplies, is like the mother tongue which is also transmitted by Indian ayahs and nurses because it is semi-

permanent. It confers an enjoyable and familiar identity upon the recipient which is a powerful form of play, since it allows the divided self to cross boundaries of race and ethnicity. The dye externalizes and makes visible one of the identities which reside within Kim, and allows him to reinvoke and reclaim this identity and the "native speech" which goes along with it subsequent to its suppression at the sahib's school. This episode occurs during Kim's first vacation from the school, and its lighthearted nature foregrounds it as a hiatus from the rules, regulations, and orders which gall him.

Hurree Babu and Mahbub Ali take Kim to the Indian witch Huneefa to be dyed and charmed prior to his half-year leave, which he is given specifically to be "de-Englishized" (232) after his years at school. Kim's Indian friends in the Service believe that English-ness is a process which can be reversed through theatrical and mystical means, and they overcome their suspicions of women because they want him to have the protection of a magical disguise ritual performed by a native witch. Ali warns Kim of the dangerous nature of Indian witches: he points out "how Huneefa and her likes destroyed kings" and says that "it is by means of women that all plans come to ruin and we lie out in the dawning with our throats cut" (225). Despite the fear and loathing which Ali and the Babu have for "Huneefa and her likes," they recognize her value as a powerful "de-Englishizer" of boys such as Kim. Huneefa,

however, is not under their control; she is not exactly an obedient servant of the empire, and the men are greatly unnerved by her witchcraft. Paternal figures such as the lama, who Kim credits with having "made me that I am -- he sent the money that taught me" (225) and the men of the Secret Service decide what Kim is going to be and train him for that purpose. Since the thing that they wish to make him--an agent and spy for the empire--requires that he possess a divided self, a "de-Englishized" self which is loyal to English interests but is able to enter the skin of the native, their main concern before sending Kim out into the world is to modulate the proportions of the different cultural selves within him. The unnerving and terrifying aspects of Huneefa's ritual signify that part of culture, the women's world, which subverts the great game. A boy can be taught to be a sahib at a school, but where can he be "de-Englishized"? The Indian maternal body, which is depicted in this episode as enormous, blind, and terrifying, mystically creates a re-orientalized subject and in so doing reveals how cultural border crossings resist the colonizers' efforts to master them.

Huneefa requires that Kim remove his cartographic tools before performing her magic on him; his "compass, Survey paint-box, and the new-filled medicine box" represent the "Englishization" which she's been hired to reverse. The enterprise of dying Kim's skin, straightforwardly accomplished by the dancing-girl during

Kim's holiday, becomes part of a magical ritual by which Huneefa promises to give him "full protection of the Road": to make him invisible to evil. Her dye, which "does not go in a week or a month" (226), is secondary to the spells and incantation which she performs in a trance-like state above Kim's drugged and unconscious body. Her "huge and shapeless" figure "wrenched to and fro as she sat cross-legged by Kim's head," and she fills the dark room with "moanings and snortings" (227). Finally, "Huneefa's crisis passed, as these things must, in a paroxysm of howling, with a touch of froth at the lips. She lay still and motionless beside Kim, and the crazy voices ceased" (228). The mystical aspect of this act of disguising ends in a birth-like scenario, after which the newly-dyed Kim "woke after a sleep of a thousand years" (228). Femininity, a quality which is feared and excluded from the Great Game played by men, here is shown to facilitate theatrical transformation and re-acculturation.

Though both the zenana and Lurgan's workshop contain disguises and other theatrical props, the workshop functions as a testing ground for boys, where teacher and student struggle for psychic dominance. Its pedagogical function constructs a master/slave relationship between the teacher and the pupils. This function's reliance upon disciplined and highly regulated forms of exchange between men is reflected in the high tuition required for attendance, for the three hundred rupees per annum required

casts the relations between teachers and students as an economic one. In contrast, the dancing girl gives Kim her assistance for the pleasure of the game; "she shook with laughter till her bracelets and anklets jingled" (175) as the "shameless" Kim charmed her with his pleasantries and tall tales. The turban, dye, and other props she supplies are freely given, as are the four annas Kim leaves her in payment. When she calls Kim a "breaker of hearts," as do both the Sahiba and Huneefa, she is commenting both on his personal beauty and appealing boyishness and its effect upon Indian womanhood. The silver "heart-lifter" charm and brass heart-shaped medicine box which Kim receives from Indian friends symbolize the sentimental and primary relationship between the "Little Friend of all the World" and the world of women who provide him with nurturing and theatrical disguise for love, rather than financial and political gain. The feminine space which incorporates and nurtures Kim remains yet a bracketed-off one, but the glimpses of the Indian women's faces visible behind the "perpetual flick and readjustment of the uneasy chudders," or veils, creates a mediating scrim which permits a form of communion between male and female, a temporary transgression of the segregation between genders and races. The Indian surrogate-mother's love is like the dye that doesn't wash off as well as the stories and tales told in the vernacular "all unforgotten"; it holds out the promise

of an abiding memory of a primary culture as well as a space from which to stage cultural border crossings.

Chapter Four

"Desiring to Desire: Theatrical Subjectivity, Modernity and Publicity in The Custom of the Country"

In his February 1914 "Book of the Month" column in the North American Review, F.M. Colby comments on the "steady damnation of the American wife, whether by foreign observer or by native novelist" which he sees in the novels of his day. In this review of The Custom of the Country, he takes the opportunity to

refer to the persistency of [the] type, the grip on our fiction of this same climbing woman, who rises from rag carpets to ormolu in the eighteen-sixties and from ingrain carpets to marble suites in 1913.

(Tuttleton 212)

Colby's reading of Undine Spragg as the "figure of the bad American wife, or woman in her social ascension," both deplores the selfishness and social ambition of such women and betrays dismay that "native novelists" like Wharton should embarrass their own countrywomen. Wharton's unpatriotic depictions of American women had been criticized in the press as early as 1905, the year that The House of Mirth was published, and by 1927 Charles Walker could observe in the Independent that "Mrs. Wharton was one of the first American novelists to write about Americans unfavorably" (Tuttleton 435). Though Wharton criticism in

the thirties and forties tended to condemn her point of view as too narrow and fatally blinkered by loyalty to her upper-class values, her reception by her contemporary readership indicates a strong awareness of her powers as a sharp-eyed critic of the American social scene and the customs of her country, particularly in relation to the woman question. Critics and readers saw in Undine Spragg "a type of American womanhood which might be described as one of the stock figures of the newer fiction" (Tuttleton 201), a familiar figure with a pedigree linking her to her counterparts in American naturalist novels.

Wharton's audience read Undine Spragg as supremely typical of a well-known social type; the "spending American woman [who is] always turning up in our literature" (Tuttleton 201). Reviewers of the novel took the opportunity to characterize Undine Spragg as "climbing," "grasping," "socially ascendant," and "spending" while asserting her frightening typicality and numerous counterparts -- her driving ambition and voracity were significant because to critics they pointed out the presence of these vices in the "American wife." Many of these critics use their reviews of the novel as occasions for larger criticisms of socially ambitious, acquisitive American women and wives. The reviewer for the New York Sun asserts that Undine is "a model for other women who are pushing their way and a standard by which the people who are watching them may be judged" (Tuttleton 203). This

reviewer's assumption that Undine's counterparts in real life, the ranks of "pushing" and aggressive women, are symptomatic of a serious social problem reveals some of the biases and concerns about women's social status so common to this historical period. The linkage between American women's social ambition and vices such as vulgarity and selfishness contributed towards a crisis in class categories which is played out in Wharton's descriptions of Undine's many upwardly-mobile marriages . Her disconcerting theatrical facility for adopting new social roles and her ability to mimic the manners of the classes into which she ascends enables that cross-class mobility which made her "terrifying from the perspective of the entrenched classes" (Lindberg 121). Adopting this form of women's "passing" across classes as her subject gave Wharton the occasion to depict several different classes and their different modes of reacting to that "strange being fabricated in the later nineteenth century--the American girl" (Lindberg 115).

The narrative of Undine's rise through theatrical forms of self-presentation, and Wharton's use of theatrical tropes with which to describe both her personality and the dynamics of this rise, align feminine ambition with performance and conscious self-display. Though critics universally agree that Undine is, as James Huneker charitably characterizes her in 1915, at best a "disagreeable" (314) girl, the one quality upon which all

agree is her truly tremendous drive and ambition, her unstoppable desire to "get ahead." Undine produces and markets different versions of herself with the same unstoppable industry with which the tycoon Elmer Moffatt pursues business deals on Wall Street, and her rise up the social ladder from an obscure provincial American town to a Fifth Avenue mansion which is "an exact copy of the Pitti Palace" (1009) is made possible by her uncanny mutability. Wharton's use of the stock figure of the ambitious American wife allowed her to write about a kind of desire with which her audience was familiar--that for social prestige and recognition--and to explore her ideas about the dynamics of that desire and its relation to theatricalized forms of subjectivity. This desire for position, recognition, commodities, and ultimately for desire itself, is expressed by theatrical motifs, language, and ontological models.

Undine Spragg and Elmer Moffatt, the novel's two most important and most theatrical characters, represent newly dominant social values and ways of looking at the world which are radically different from those of Old New York; they are quite consciously presented as representatives of the modern American woman and man. These characters possess subjectivities which are entirely conditioned by the awareness of an audience, and in fact can be said to lack identities which exceed the occasions during which they are performing in front of others. The compromised form of identity which is available to the new American man and

woman as Wharton envisions them requires the presence of an audience to shore up a sense of self utterly dependent upon performance. While the tragedy of The House of Mirth was predicated upon the frustrated demands of the subject for a means of expressing or acknowledging a private self, stripped of social pretense engendered by economic need and unfettered by oppressive customs, this "republic of the spirit" has become entirely foreclosed in this novel, literally gone bankrupt.

The forces of modernity as Wharton conceived them in this most depressing but most ambitious work array themselves against the notion of a private self, a face behind the successive masks which all social subjects are forced to don. Identity, especially feminine identity, becomes a mise en abîme of reflected and disseminated images, none of which refer to what critics call a "soul." Lindberg, Waid, and Lewis all agree that Undine lacks this vital attribute, and other critics' quite amazing declarations that she is "so monstrous that at times she seems scarcely human"¹ and has "no intelligence"², "no soul, no life,"³ betray a significant amount of discomfort with Wharton's version of the modern American wife. Candace Waid traces this "soulessness" to Undine's "devotion to an aesthetic of surface and ornament...linked

¹Tuttleton 204

²Tuttleton 205

³Lindberg 115

to her absence of interiority" (136). Many of Wharton's other critics agree that it is this lack of interiority which makes Undine "the most perplexing of Edith Wharton's characters" (Lindberg, 115).

Reading Undine as a representative of the ranks of a known social type, the "spending American woman," goes part of the way towards clarifying the dilemma of reading this perplexing heroine by placing her within a historical discourse about American womanhood and class mobility right before the First World War. It is possible to argue that her lack of interiority is due to her being a "type" rather than a distinctive character, and some critics have seen her as too much an embodiment of a social problem to be a character in her own right. Indeed, part of Wharton's strategy in her "argument with America," to use Elizabeth Ammons' felicitous phrase, consists in addressing issues such as class and gender on several levels and through representative characters.

What, however, was Wharton striving to represent? Rather than reading the absence of interiority as a failure in characterization, I read it as a part of commentary on the power of modernity, and the consumer culture which contributed so vitally to it, to produce a new type of subjectivity. Undine is both a representative of an American type (her initials, U.S., underscore her status as the "home made article," a category connoting both industrial capitalism/commodities and national identity,

and one which the American tycoon Elmer Moffatt includes both she and himself within) and a model of a new form of consciousness which is a distinctive product of consumer culture.

In consumer culture, subjects are defined by what they want, and Undine only wants "what everyone else wants." Her desires are both absurdly grand and boringly pedestrian; while at the beginning of the book she asserts that she wants "everything," her desire to have only what others around her have already got dooms her to perpetual dissatisfaction, for she ends by feeling that "it was always her fate to find out just too late about the 'something beyond'" (656). She has no "interiority" because her desires are merely reflections of those she sees around her, and like the stock market they are subject to the vagaries of chance and fluctuating fortunes. Mirror-like, she reflects images whose popularity has given them social currency, but the satisfaction of desire is perpetually deferred, since she is the ideal "consumer...hooked on images which s/he takes for her own identity, but does not recognize as not of her own making" (Bowlby 30). Her initials "US" signify the relational nature of her identity -- she both represents us, the modern readership, and the aggregate of different identities which she appropriates and imitates. The culture from which she comes produces this type of subjectivity by collapsing and ignoring the distinctions

upon which the genteel life of the artist and the life of the mind are based, such as the distinction between public and private, object and subject, capitalism and romantic love.

The plot of Custom of the Country traces the heroine's precipitous rise through divorce and remarriage from small town anonymity to aristocratic stardom as the wife of a great American financier. Her entire life in the booming but provincial town of Apex, prior to her family's removal to New York, has consisted of a series of dress rehearsals for the role of star. We are told that from her earliest days, her

chief delight was to 'dress up' in her mother's Sunday skirt and 'play lady' before the wardrobe mirror. The taste had outlasted childhood, and she still practised the same secret pantomime, gliding in, settling her skirts, swaying her fan, moving her lips in soundless talk and laughter. (635)

The Spraggs, who have moved to New York in order to give their daughter the "social benefit" (629) of the wider audience that her beauty deserves, are "passionately resolved that Undine should have what she wanted" (628). Like stage-parents, they invest all their resources in their child's career; they want her to have the opportunities to be seen and admired which they feel her beauty deserves. The first scene of the novel sets up a theatrical dynamic between Undine and her parents which is

repeatedly enacted in varying forms; they sit in the audience admiring their daughter as if she were already a star. Mrs. Spragg and the professional masseuse Mrs. Heeny sit "enthroned in two heavy gilt armchairs" within the "Looney suites" at the hotel where the Spraggs have established their home, commenting to each other on Undine's lovely form. Though they are sitting in one of the expensive "private drawing rooms"(623) of the Hotel, this highly decorated room "shows no traces of human use" (623); it resembles a theater, with its overly rich furnishings, transient occupants, and florid carpets. Its histrionic possibilities as a space for spectatorship and performance are highlighted by the name of this hotel: the Stentorian.

Though the Stentorian is the Spraggs' home, it is not, however, a space for the private life. In The American Scene (1907) Henry James characterizes the hotel as the archetypal modern American social space. His critique of the hotel as a space which blurs public and private social spaces together in an "immense promiscuity which manages to be at the same time an untempered monotony" (104) nostalgically yearns for a time before "a conception of publicity as the vital medium" (105). James reads the invasion and colonization of the private life by the public as a general phenomenon interpenetrating every aspect of the national character and institutions as he observed it during his extended American tour in 1904. The ability of every person in a hotel lobby to constantly observe

everyone else, and worse, the prevailing and infectious desire to be seen and to see which is responsible for the enormous success of hotels, promotes "the air of unmitigated publicity, publicity as a condition, as a doom, from which there could be no appeal" (9). And, for James, it is the gaze which is the problem; the spectatorial arrangement of hotels allows a promiscuity of looks which leaves no room for the private life. The following passage from The American Scene traces the circulation of public gazes which co-opt the category of the private:

That, precisely, appeared the answer to the question of manners: the fact that in such conditions there couldn't be any manners to speak of; that the basis of privacy was somehow wanting for them; and that nothing, accordingly, no image, no presumption of constituted relations, possibilities, amenities, in the social, the domestic order, was inwardly projected. It was as if the projection had been so completely outward that one could but find one's self almost uneasy about the mere perspective required for the common acts of the personal life, that minimum of vagueness as to what takes place in it for which the complete 'home' aspires to provide. (10)

Hotels, theaters, ballrooms, and other public spaces foreclose the possibility of the private life by directing and "projecting" the subject's gaze "so completely outward" towards an observing audience that she loses the ability to

project "inward." The social and domestic order which is created by the subject's private inward gaze stands in opposition to the dis-order, or lack of "manners" and "constituted relations," which James felt characterized the modern American scene. The "perspective required for the...personal life" requires the gaze to acknowledge and respect the boundaries between the public and private which the air of publicity elides. The figuration of social life as a great hotel lobby with a theatrical "row of lustres reflected in the polished floor" (9) subjects everyone to the circulation of promiscuous gazes. Since the inward projection which James, writing in 1907, thought necessary for the "personal" is impossible under these circumstances, it follows that a subject so constituted would lack interiority. The harsh light of publicity obliterates the "minimum of vagueness" which permits subjects to preserve a sense of self separate from spectacle.

These same harsh lights illuminate Undine's "secret pantomime" in her hotel bedroom:

Its blazing wall-brackets" provide an "untempered glare [which] would have been destructive to all half-tones and subtleties of modelling, but Undine's beauty was as vivid, and almost as crude, as the brightness suffusing it. (635)

Wharton's description of this bedroom as a stage, and the performance of the "lady" before the mirror which takes place within it details the invasion of the private by the

theatrical which typifies Undine's quest. Her gaze is directly entirely outward, towards her reflected image in the mirror in front of which she "twists and sparkles" (636). The consciousness that this performance is intended for an audience--she is practicing her mannerisms for Mrs. Fairford's dinner party--informs the way in which she consumes her own image and prepares it for the consumption of others.

Wai-Chee Dimock's seminal article on The House of Mirth, "Debasing Exchange," details Wharton's strategy in writing about social life in economic terms. Writing about personal values, women's bodies, and sexuality as commodities which can be bought and traded, owed and borrowed, links the private life to the mechanisms of Wall Street. While Lily Bart fails to barter herself on the marriage market, Undine uses her bedroom as an image-factory within which to produce a marketable, theatrical image of herself. Her bedroom is far from being a private space or home; Undine's true "home was in a beam of light" (635). This blurring between the borders of public and private radically compromises the privacy of the domestic space. The notion of the home as a public performance space proliferates throughout the novel, in the end leaving the reader with the sense that the homes most valued by the modern American are those which are the least compatible with private values and are, instead, spectacular showplaces whose function is to display wealth and status.

At the beginning of her career, Undine lacks sufficient resources to turn her house into a splendid set piece into which she can invite others to observe her; therefore she attends an endless round of entertainments in search of an audience. For

She wanted to enjoy herself, and her conception of enjoyment was publicity, promiscuity--the band, the banners, the crowd, the close contact of covetous impulses, and the sense of walking among them in cool security. (769).

Undine chafes at the privacy and exclusivity of her second and third husbands' homes precisely because they are private. The Dagonet house on Washington Square and the de Chelles estate at St. Desert represent "a very special subclass that prides itself on its invisibility" (Ammons 117) and to Undine, whose home is in a beam of light, the lack of opportunities for visibility presents a deep crisis. Her notions of domesticity are entirely at odds with those of Old New York and French aristocracy. The "ormulu" interiors which the "climbing American woman" wants to exchange for the comfortably homey "rag rugs" of the American housewife signify a struggle not just in design aesthetic and class ambition, but in representations of modern domesticity. The blurring between domesticity and publicity results in a displacement of the home onto both the hotel and the theater. For Undine,

driving about with [de Chelles] to dinners and dances, waiting for him on flower-decked landings, or pushing at his side through blazing theatre-lobbies, answered to her inmost ideal of domestic intimacy. (956)

Private values such as "intimacy" and "close contact" undergo a satirical revision in these passages. Meetings of minds and exchanges of confidences are impossible to subjects whose "inmost ideals" revolve upon specularity and the promiscuous circulation of images.

The infiltration of the private home by the consumer, the blurring of the line between inhabitant and collector, is posed in the novel as a distinctively American phenomenon. De Chelles's oft quoted speech decrying the vulgarity of the modern American society "climber" comes on the heels of his wife's illicitly inviting the famous collector Elmer Moffatt into St. Desert to examine and offer a price for the famous Boucher tapestries. In his words, Americans are "all alike" for they

come among us speaking our language and not knowing what we mean; wanting the things we want, and not knowing why we want them; aping our weaknesses, exaggerating our follies, ignoring or ridiculing all we care about--you come from hotels as big as towns, and from towns as flimsy as paper we're fools enough to imagine that because you copy our ways and pick up our slang, you understand anything about the

things that make life decent and honourable for us!

(982)

The protest operates on two mutually reinforcing levels. The notion of the impermanence of American homes, their replacement by hotels as large and anonymous and public as towns, points out the differing attitudes towards domestic privacy which elicits the conflict between DeChelles and Undine. Respect for the privacy of the home, which DeChelles characterizes as a European ideal, is impossible for those Americans who live in the air of publicity, in hotels or houses "forgotten...before you knew it" (982). DeChelles resents the fact that his house has been turned into a public space, and this resentment is tied into his perception of Americans as inherently theatrical. In the above passage, the diatribe about Americans' lack of private values is interwoven with the argument that they are all actors, blindly imitating the European manners they see around them without internalizing or really understanding them. DeChelles's sense of having been "taken in" or deceived by this performance is evident in the type of language he uses; Americans "ape," "copy," and "exaggerate" the ways and manners of Europeans in a type of grotesque, rather than artful, performance; one based on mimicry and satire. They do not "inhabit" the role, like skillful actors, but rather produce a form of burlesque. The American invasion of aristocratic Europe is tied to the invasion of private values by public ones. Mobility between

cultures, classes, homes, and roles is figured as a distinctively American trait, one which traditional voices such as DeChelles's unconditionally deplore once he learns that it is based on theatrical role playing.

Wharton's own critique of theatrical role playing across these axes is far more subtle. The sharp distinctions which DeChelles draws between American social theatricality and European sincerity are undermined by the narrative frame which she constructs around this speech. This frame is itself interpenetrated by the language of the stage: during his denunciation, DeChelles'

white face and drawn nostrils [gave] him so much the look of an extremely distinguished actor in a fine part that, in spite of the vehemence of his emotion, his silence might have been the deliberate pause for a replique. Undine kept him waiting long enough to give the effect of having lost her cue--- (982)

Because DeChelles is himself "extremely distinguished" and French, he gives the sort of performance which would not be out of place in the Théâtre Français, an institution with which the teenage Wharton was familiar from trips to the French theater with her father. Wharton's autobiography devotes a section to her recollected "theatrical contacts" as a means of explaining her experiences in working with playwright Clyde Fitch to turn The House of Mirth into a play. She attributes her fascination with the drama, from the position of the writer and of the spectator, to an

intimacy with European, rather than American, forms of theater; "The great stars of the old group" (Backward 164) at the Theatre Francais as well as Sarah Bernhardt and Mrs. Pat Campbell made a great impression upon her. DeChelles' performance, which is articulate, passionate, yet controlled, reflects the classical and restrained qualities of the French theater as Wharton saw it and her reliance upon the use of theatrical metaphors to describe it function as a device for placing him, as everyone is ultimately placed, within a genre of performance. The ironic placement of a protest against theatricality within a theatrical setting effectively comments on the inescapability of performance as a metaphor for social life. This scene sardonically comments on the blindness of social actors who believe that they are exempt from performance; the issue is not whether characters in the novel perform, for themselves, or for others, but rather the types of roles that they choose and the willingness and enthusiasm they bring to their performances. All social interaction in Wharton's novels is theatrical upon several different levels. Part of the perplexing nature of Custom lies in the thorough interpenetration of theatricality and authenticity, the blurring between the private self and the performing self.

The particular kind of perplexity which propels this novel, which Ammons considers "perhaps the best novel she ever wrote" (97), has been commented upon more or less

obliquely by several of Wharton's critics. "Theatrical" is a word often used to describe Undine's behavior and character. Elizabeth Ammons calls Undine "manipulative, theatrical, and adaptable" (105); Waid asserts that "her self-conscious theatricality turns all places into settings for her and all people into accessories" (136); and Cynthia Griffin Wolff says that she "changes identities with a disconcerting facility which borders on the monstrous" (ix). The critics all seem to notice Undine's theatricality but are unsure what to make of it.

Gary Lindberg comes the closest to addressing theatricality as anything other than a convenient label with which to describe a perplexing character. The last chapter of his book, Edith Wharton and the Novel of Manners, interprets all "formal scenes" in the novels such as large dinners, operas, and tete-a-tetes where social surveillance is possible as inherently theatric in nature. In his view, this type of scenes "put[s] the self on stage and then conveys to the reader an extraordinary sense of the audience" (164). Paradoxically, Undine is the most theatrical of Wharton's heroines, while having the least to do with the actual theater. Lily Bart participates in a tableau vivant, Sophy Viner of The Reef longs to become an actress, yet the reader is permitted to see them in non-theatrical, un-self-conscious moments which reflect the existence of an inner self which precedes acting. Custom is Wharton's bleakest novel because the theater has become

fully assimilated and incorporated into the private life of its heroine, so that the only life she can be said to have, the only consciousness possible to her, is that of being seen and admired. There is no need to portray the actual theater in a novel which is so suffused with it; performance is no longer a thing separate from oneself, with clearly defined boundaries separating audience and performer, stage and world; instead, the "audience itself [is] ever-present" (Lindberg 166).

The type of performance which DeChelles accuses his wife and her countrymen of enacting in their social lives, the burlesque, is a specifically American genre. The burlesque--popular, spectacular, showy--relies upon satire of entrenched social classes and gender roles, gaudy costumes and props and the visual impact which these and the performers make upon the audience. Elmer Moffatt's elaborate joke upon the Apex Temperance Society, whose sanctimoniousness he perfectly imitates and then mocks by getting terribly drunk during the Society's ice cream social, is a good example of the sort of burlesque performance which becomes identified as uniquely American in the novel.

Easy attitudes towards divorce and remarriage are described in the novel as uniquely American and, more particularly, characteristic of rapidly-growing small towns such as Apex. The practice of discarding a disappointing husband is linked both to attitudes towards upward social

mobility in Undine's hometown and to a general business principle of making a profit. As Undine matter-of-factly explains to Marvell's aghast relatives at a family dinner, "Out in Apex, if a girl marries a man who doesn't come up to what she expected, people consider it's to her credit to want to change" (685). In this remark, Undine is discussing the credit, or profit, which can be earned by disposing of an old husband in exchange for a newer, better one. However, this sentence works on two levels, for in order to acquire a new husband, Undine first needs to transform herself into an appropriately upper class version of a Old New York wife, marquise, or tycoon matron before she can attract the man who will marry her and make her one. Undine's increasingly profitable series of marriages all result from her extraordinary talent to change herself to suit the tastes of three different men. Her theatrical ability to transform herself into diverse and desirable versions of womanhood allows her amazing class mobility.

Undine's four marriages shocked contemporary readers, who, unlike more recent critics, read the novel as a "divorce novel." The reviewer for the English Saturday Review, writing in 1913, equates "the custom of the country" with "the divorce court" (Tuttleton 211) and labels the novel a "scathing exposure of the scandals of divorce and of the mean standards of a certain section of American society." Undine discards and picks up husbands as easily as she takes on different identities to fit the

occasion. Lest the reader think that this promiscuity has a sexual nature, Wharton takes pains to establish the heroine's coldness and lack of sexual desire for men. She was not trying to write a novel about sexual passion but one about the passion for social position, which, for women, could only be acquired through marriage to a successful and indulgent man. Ultimately, Wharton was more interested with tracing the relation between feminine identity and divorce than in reading divorce as a consequence of either "mean standards" or poorly governed sexual passion.

"The Other Two," (1903) the most frequently anthologized of Wharton's stories, is a tale about divorce which has a great deal in common with The Custom of the Country. Both are about women from provincial American towns well out of "society" who use remarriage and divorce as "a passport to the set whose recognition [they] coveted" ("OT" 1185). Waythorn's visions of his wife's youth, "how she must have looked down on the other women, chafing at her life, and secretly feeling that she belonged in a bigger place"(1193), perfectly mirror Undine's youthful dissatisfactions and frustrations in Apex. Alice Haskett-Varick-Waythorn and Undine Spragg-Marvell-DeChelles-Moffatt are dissimilar in terms of demeanor--Mrs. Haskett is supremely charming, while Undine is "unpleasant"--but both inspire a similar sort of discomfort and anxiety on the part of those around them since their much-divorced status

inspires doubts about the authenticity of their own personalities. If marriage defines a woman's identity, then remarriage radically calls that identity into question. Mr. Waythorn's doubts about his wife's possession of a private self result from her protean ability to shift her personality to accommodate one surname after another, one husband after another:

Her pliancy was beginning to sicken him. Had she really no will of her own--no theory about her relation to these men?...She was "as easy as an old shoe"--a shoe that too many feet had worn. Her elasticity was the result of tension in too many different directions. Alice Haskett-Alice Varick-Alice Waythorn-she had been each in turn, and had left hanging to each name a little of her privacy, a little of her personality, a little of the inmost self where the unknown god abides. (1196)

Here, "personality," the inmost self, interiority, the proper name--in short, the private--are conceptualized as finite commodities which divorce and remarriage consume. Waythorn's sickness is engendered by the realization that his wife has been, in fact may be, several different people; her "pliancy" and facility in sliding between the different roles and names she has inhabited--Alice Haskett, Alice Varick and Alice Waythorn--call her own claim to a discrete identity into question. This anxiety goes far beyond the unwillingness to share his wife with her former

husbands; when they had married he had been fully aware of her previous marriages as well as the changing social attitudes towards divorce which allowed him to "smile at these innuendoes" about her third marriage to him and "discount them" (1185). He sees his wife's personality as an "old shoe" which has lost its original shape in pliantly taking on the successive shapes of its former wearers. The multiplicity of the roles which a divorced woman inhabits and the changes of social status enabled by these shifting roles pose a challenge to the stable concepts of personal identity, privacy, and integrity which distinguished Old New York from the new social order prior to World War 1.

When Wharton writes about the "the successive upheavals which culminated in the catastrophe of 1914," which "'cut all likeness from the name' of Old New York" (Backwards 6), she is referring to the Great War, but at this time, the year that she was struggling to finish The Custom of the Country, she was dealing with an additional sort of "upheaval": on April 16, 1913, her own divorce decree was granted. Ammons speculates that Wharton must have felt "enormous relief to be able to pile divorce upon divorce in The Custom of the Country" (99) and that she was finally able to complete the novel due to her sense of personal closure at having ended her unhappy marriage. In any case, Wharton's practical knowledge of the divorce court's workings certainly inflected her realistic depictions of Undine's divorces in Sioux City and Reno and

provided her with a set of cultural references and linguistic codes relating to the practice of divorce which surface in the narrative. To take one example, Indiana Frusk-Binch-Rolliver, another oft-married Apex native who rises through a career of strategic marriage and remarriage, bears a name which would have reminded contemporary readers of the state's notoriously liberal divorce laws. Indiana was the first divorce colony because it was the "first state which offered divorce under such conditions of residence that citizens of other states went there for divorce" (Barnett 23).

James Barnett's 1938 monograph, Divorce and the American Divorce Novel, 1858-1937, classifies fifty novels as "divorce novels." Four of these were written by Wharton,⁴ and Barnett notes Wharton's vital contributions to the genre, asserting that Custom is probably the best American divorce novel ever written, comparable only to W. D. Howells's A Modern Instance and Sinclair Lewis's Dodsworth. (109).⁵ Though Barnett's work, which is

⁴Of the "five personal favorites among her fiction" (Lewis 490) Hudson River Bracketed, The Custom of the Country, Summer, The Gods Arrive, and The Children, three are classified by Barnett as "divorce novels." Though it may have been true that "divorce itself was something it pained her even to contemplate" (Lewis 333), the theme gave rise to the creation of some of Wharton's best work.

⁵Wharton had read and admired Robert Grant's Unleavened Bread as well as Howells's A Modern Instance and Lewis's Dodsworth, all of which are included in Barnett's list. See Ellen Dupree's article "Jamming the Machinery: Mimesis in The Custom of the Country" for an interesting Irigarayan

sociological rather than literary in approach, consists mainly of a series of plot summaries interspersed with empirical data and statistics regarding the frequency of divorce and legislative changes relating to it, a survey of these plot summaries reveals an important similarity in terms of shared themes in pre-World War I divorce novels. In both Grant's and Arthur's divorce novels, marital conflicts arise from a socially ambitious wife's desire to free herself from a husband who either cannot or will not assist her in her quest for status. The wife's selfish desire to better her position by marrying "up" causes the marital split. The "climbing" American wife's desire to change her social class by changing husbands indicates a social crisis in feminine identity--women's mobility across class lines is tied to the practice of divorce and remarriage. In "The Other Two," this slippage of feminine identities across the axes of class and marital status is traced to the dissemination of popular images of "successful" women through media such as photographs, newspapers, magazines, novels, and the theater.

Waythorn imagines his wife chafing in "Utica or Pittsburg"⁶ prior to her wildly successful career as an reading of Custom as a feminist re-writing of Grant's popular divorce novel.

⁶ In her autobiography Wharton notes that the first inroads into the coherent and "compact world of my youth" occurred in the "eighties , with the earliest detachment of big money-makers from the West, soon to be followed by the lords of Pittsburgh" (6). Alice Waythorn's origins in Pittsburgh, the source of the "infiltration" of Old New

upwardly mobile wife and envisions her adroitly copying her dress patterns from a "New York fashion paper" and gazing into "illuminated shop windows, lingering over the photographs of New York actresses" (1193). In this scenario, Alice constructs her identity just as she does her dresses, through adept mimicry. Like the New York actresses whose photographs she admires through shop glass, she designs and produces a vision of fashionable femininity which male spectators will be willing to pay for the privilege of seeing and appropriating. The constructedness of Alice's identity, her adept patterning of self after commodified images, mirrors that of the female spectator who is "encouraged to desire the possession of a material environment, an environment which 'represented a standard of living promised to the viewer ideologically, but awarded only to the eye'" (Doane 24). The New York actresses whose photographs focus Alice's desires for increased social status and a higher standard of living represent models of feminine mobility across identities, classes, and roles. The shop windows in small towns like Apex and Utica draw the gazes of ambitious women like Undine and Alice because they invite "the female spectator to witness her own commodification and, furthermore, to buy an image of herself insofar as the female star is proposed as the ideal of feminine beauty" (Doane 24). The promise of increased York by differing values, identify and place her as one of the "invaders," with an important difference; her position as a "big money-maker" arises not from a career in finance and industry, but from marriage.

social status and mobility which the photographs represent is made good by both of these women, whose theatrical abilities to pattern and shape themselves based on the models they see around them provide them an escape route from small town dullness and permit them to create simulacra of "ideal" feminine beauty.

Waythorn's disillusionment when he discovers that this "ideal" is created by feminine pliancy and elasticity in regard to personal identity reflects Peter Van Degen's disillusionment and consequent flight from Undine after he learns that she has deceived him about her husband's illness; she is not his "ideal" after all. The social imperatives which instruct ambitious women from the provinces to mimic and represent a popularized "ideal" femininity for the consumption of others guarantee disappointment not only in the men who "buy" these images, but also in the women who "witness their own commodification." The tableau vivant scene in the House of Mirth in which Lily Bart embodies a feminine ideal from a portrait by Reynolds fills her with a temporary elation, a "self-intoxication" (House 129) of self-display, but fails to satisfy her desire to be seen as anything other than a commodity.

The paradox of theatrical feminine self-display--Selden believes that while watching the tableau he is seeing "the real Lily Bart, divested of the trivialities of her little world" (House 129)--is that it mistakes the

performative for the "real," and dismisses the woman's own "little world" off the stage which is, of course, very real to her as trivial, besides the point. Lily's performance certainly has consequences in her "little world." Her theatrical representation of a pictorial feminine "ideal" motivates Gus Trenor's attempted rape and rekindles Selden's waning desires to marry Lily by appealing to his "aesthetic sense and at the same time to his sensuality, but also and perhaps more importantly to his vanity" (Ammons 36). The performance elicits a frenzy of acquisitiveness in its male viewers and a desire to possess the image of ideal femininity framed by the staged tableau. Though Lily's allegiance to the "republic of the spirit" prevents her from taking full financial advantage of this performance, this performance's status as a marketable commodity is certainly never questioned, though its consequences and possible benefits for women who participate in them certainly are.

Undine's industrious dissemination of an idealized image, her stage-management of her own career, evokes comparison with a successful actress's strategies. Mrs. Heeny's black bag full of Undine's clippings from the newspapers are offered to Paul Marvell to read as both a symbol of his mother's successful career, and as a fitting text to represent a life lived in as public a medium as possible. The climbing American woman's peeks into newspaper society columns such as "Town Talk" and "Boudoir

Chat" invite her to gaze into an idealized world, a world much like that Alice Waythorn sees when she looks into the shop windows in Pittsburgh at the photographs of New York actresses.⁷ The woman's desire to penetrate to the other side of the window, to acquire the objects of her desire by becoming herself an idealized object of desire, drives Undine's canny management of her own self-presentation. Like an actress, she hires a press-agent to make sure that she gets into the papers. The private showing of her portrait at Popple's salon suffuses her entire being with joy as she anticipates a larger audience of the general public viewing this same picture; her craving for the contact of many eyes upon her own idealized form reflects the desire to be a "star," which Wharton saw as quintessentially American and distinctively modern:

Any triumph in which she shared left a glow in her veins, and the success of the picture obscured all other impressions. She saw herself throning in a central panel at the spring exhibition, with the crowd pushing about the picture, repeating her name; and she decided to stop on the way home and telephone her

⁷The "gossipy" New York newspaper Town Topics reported on Wharton's own engagement and marriage to Teddy Wharton in 1885 (Lewis 41), as well as other events in her life, such as her divorce. Since her social position as well as her husband's guaranteed that the papers would include her in their social columns she, unlike Undine, had no need for a press agent. Wharton's astute observations regarding the pleasures and dangers of a life lived in an "idealized world" arise from her privileged position within it.

press-agent to do a paragraph about Popple's tea.

(752)

Undine conflates herself with her portrait in the above passage. In this scenario, she sees herself being seen by the crowd; she becomes a literal "witness" of her own commodification. The illusion of presence which the dissemination of her own image before the crowd confers upon her allows her to image herself "throning in a central panel" while she is not physically present. This illusion is so powerful that it "obscured all other impressions;" the anticipatory pleasure of hearing the crowd "repeating her name" informs and constructs her consciousness. In order for her to have a sense of self, she must hear her own name repeated upon the lips of others and see their eyes gazing raptly upon her form. Her collaborations with the press agent and the portrait painter work to produce public representations of self which "refurbish that image of herself in other minds which was her only notion of self-seeing" (886). The scenarios in which Undine sees herself being seen represent the only incidents of self-consciousness we see her participating in. The pleasure she experiences in the dissemination and triumph of her image penetrates her body and leaves a "glow in her veins."

The glowing ecstasy of self-display which represents Undine's only access to consciousness is entirely alien to the upholders of private values and male privilege such as Undine's second and third husbands. This feminine ecstasy

threatens the social order which they stand for, and male consciousness of it brings forth a corresponding emotional response. Marvell and DeChelles's deep shame and humiliation because of Undine's public exploits and domestic sacrileges arise from a disillusionment in private values so extreme as to be a virtual cause of death in Marvell's case. The promiscuous circulation of his wife's image through the papers and her circulation through the hands and homes of different husbands, explode his sustaining belief in the integrity of the private life. His suicide represents a refusal to participate in the theatricalized world of modern social relations, where the only escape from performance is extinction.

Marvell's reaction in the subway to seeing his own name in the newspaper which "the unshaved occupant of the next seat held between grimy fists" (846) is the converse of Undine's; he blushes in shame as just as if the dirty workingman's hands which clutch the paper were instead clutching his own body. His blush, which endures for weeks afterwards, reflects the shame which Undine is incapable of feeling; he blushes both for her and for himself. "For the first time in his life the coarse fingering of public curiosity had touched the secret places of his soul, and nothing that had gone before seemed as humiliating" (847).

Both DeChelles' infuriated paleness and Marvell's painful blushes at the dishonor of publicity reflect their class status; the visible blanching and reddening of their

skins serves to differentiate them from the emphatically lower class Undine and Elmer Moffatt, who relish their positions in the public eye. Moffatt's unvaryingly ruddy skin, and his "neck in which, at the first chance, prosperity would be likely to develop a red crease" (693), display a formidable animal vitality in keeping with Undine's judgment that "in the Marvell set Elmer Moffatt would have been stamped as 'not a gentleman'" (693).⁸ In these episodes, the idea that class is determined by the right breeding, and indicated by the desire for the private life and a strong distaste for publicity, is contrasted with the emergent idea of class as determined by money. Marvell's revulsion that the hordes of the "unshaven," working class, semi-educated public, here figured as literally dirty, should contaminate his "secret places" reflects Henry James's own reactions to just this type of American, who had become increasingly visible in large cities due to changing immigration patterns. The traditional husband's identification of his wife as the representative of the "secret places" of his own soul delegates the burden of representation of private values, in this novel known as "soul" or interiority, onto the

⁸The only person in the novel who works with her hands also possesses this permanently reddened skin. Mrs. Heeny, the possessor of "broad red hands" (624), is a "'society' manicure and masseuse" (624) and an avid reader of tabloid magazines and society columns, especially those relating to Undine. Both her body and her reading tastes cast her as a representative of the working-class "type."

woman, whose status as private property upholds this scheme of representation.

"The growth of short black hair" on Moffatt's "manicured hands" (932), which attracts Ralph's fascinated gaze as he learns the tale of his wife's secret marriage to Moffatt, metaphorically links Undine's first husband with the grimy-fisted workingman on the subway. Both are bathed in "the air of publicity," equally at home in the public space of the subway car and the office building. The revulsion that Ralph feels affixes itself to Moffatt's "dirty" hands, which, despite manicures, still bear the dark mark of the lower classes whose invasion of Ralph's private life is expressed as a near-rape, practically an invasion of the body. Seeing Undine's name in relation to a divorce suit in bold-type headlines and learning that she has been married before forces Ralph to realize that his wife's affinity for publicity means that the working classes have access to both her image, her narrative, and, in Moffatt's case, her body. The subway episode and the scenario in Moffatt's office depict Ralph's sickened realization that he is sharing his wife with both the newspaper reading public and a former husband--with an audience identified as lower class, whose differences from the aristocracy are readable upon their hands and bodies.

The compromising of a woman's private domestic "self" by the practice of divorce and remarriage sicken both Waythorn and Marvell because it calls into question not

only the integrity of the domestic space but the notion of a discrete, authentic, fixed wifely personality and identity which resides within and maintains that space. The terms of the "sexual contract" of marriage in Old New York dictate that a wife not only becomes the possession of her husband, but that her personal identity become permanently linked with his. Though Waythorn compares his wife to an old shoe which has lost its shape after accomodating different wearers, in fact the husbands themselves function as the transitory receptacles for her personality, which takes on new roles and married names as easily as she exchanges last year's gowns for more fashionable ones. Waythorn's perceptions of feminine identity in the context of marriage are confounded and sickened by the mobility and instability of his wife's marital identity. R.W.B. Lewis describes Alice's identity as "shredding" (134) because it no longer has an integrity or "core"; instead it is contingent upon the desires and expectations of her husbands. Waythorn learns that his twice divorced wife is not, in fact, a guarantor of private values and stable identities but rather circulates and oscillates between identities, and this knowledge sickens him because it gestures toward a type of feminine identity which exceeds exclusive ownership by a husband. The linking of a theatricalized feminine identity with one of the distinctive features of modern American life, divorce, consolidates the identification of modernity with a newly

mobile, unstable, public figuration of ambitious femininity.

The "mounting pang of physical nausea" (932) which Marvell feels after hearing Moffatt's revelation expresses itself in a epistemological and perspectival dis-ease linked to the shattering of the category of the private male self, which is wedded to the notion of the private wife. Ralph's way of seeing the world has been radically changed by the knowledge of his wife's, and therefore his own, compromised identity; "whichever way he turned his haggard thought, there was Moffatt bodily blocking the perspective" (932). The dissolution of Ralph's consciousness is signaled by his fragmentary, partial, and alienated response to the objects he sees around him, which all seem to lose any coherence or personal relevance:

The blindness within him seemed to have intensified his physical perceptions, his sensitiveness to the heat, the noise, the smells of the dishevelled midsummer city; but combined with the acuter perception of these offenses was a complete indifference to them, as though he were some vivisected animal deprived of the power of discrimination. (933)

The collapse of the feminine "ideal," the revelation that his wife's face, form, and narrative are not private but have been shared by other husbands, newspaper readers, the "public," infects the sanctity of the Marvell home. This

home, idealized by Moffatt as "freshness and silence" amid "marble paved halls [which] laid soothing hands on him" (933), acquires a different meaning after the collapse of the feminine ideal. Its "freshness," like Undine's own "freshness, her fragrance, the luminous haze of her youth" (934), abruptly takes on the staleness of public spaces such as the Stentorian, which affirm public values rather than private ones. As the fevered and nauseated Marvell enters his house, "he had the shock of feeling himself in a strange place: it did not seem like anything he had ever seen before. Then, one by one, all the old stale usual things in it confronted him" (933). The dissolution of private ideals which engenders Marvell's altered perspective means that he sees the domestic space in a radically different way--he cannot "discriminate" it from public space--and it signifies death for both him and the social order he represents:

He bolted the door and stood looking around the room. For a moment he was conscious of seeing every detail with a distinctness he had never before known, then everything in it vanished by the single narrow panel of a drawer under one of the bookcases. (936)

This panel, which contains the revolver with which Marvell kills himself, irresistibly catches and holds his gaze and "bodily blocks the perspective" just as does the figure of Moffatt himself. Wharton's strategy in metaphorically linking the occlusion of visual perspective with the

collapse of public/private social distinctions and boundaries foregrounds the assault of modernity and its values upon an earlier social order. This conflict is responsible for the shocking and unexpected eruption of violence and death within this novel of manners. The distinctions and boundaries between public and private lives and wives which shore up pre-modern male identities function because they dictate social relations. Marvell's inability to adapt to new forms of social relation based on promiscuity and publicity means that he cannot enter into relations with the objects which surround him; they become emptied out of meaning and significance. In the face of his wife's "shredding" identity--as Undine Spragg, Undine Moffatt, Undine Marvell, Undine DeChelles--Marvell cannot be sure that social relations as he understands them can continue to exist. Protean identities, which fluctuate and mobilize in reaction to market forces and social ambition infect the social market with a new type of currency. The frame of reference shifts to give value to what one can become, rather than what one is.

Elmer Moffatt is the novel's answer to the question of what one can become in the modern world. His beginnings are even humbler and more mysterious than Undine's, and his rise in New York's financial markets makes him "one of the six wealthiest men East of the Rockies" (1009). And like Undine, the theatrical consciousness which marks him as a modern American man endows him with the protean identity

which facilitates his social success. "Nevertheless something in his look seemed to promise the capacity to develop into any character he might care to assume" (693). Indeed, modern business itself is figured as a form of virtuoso theatrical performance which Moffatt excels at because, unlike Marvell and DeChelles, his subjectivity is mobile, perfectly in control of its own performances. Marvell notes the similarity between Moffatt and a great actor he saw at the French theatre:

In Paris, in his younger days, he had once attended a lesson in acting given at the Conservatoire by one of the greatest light of the theatre, and had seen an apparently uncomplicated role of the classic repertory, familiar to him through repeated performances, taken to pieces before his eyes.... As he listened to Moffatt the remembrance of that lesson came back to him. At the outset the 'deal,' and his own share in it, seemed simple enough....(795)

Wall Street business "deals," like theatrical roles, are "apparently uncomplicated" to the uninitiated and admiring audience which nonetheless recognizes the artistry involved in virtuoso performance. Moffatt's approach to business is aligned with a particularly indigenous genre of American theatre: the circus. His loud and gaudy clothing, shiny redness, and comic colloquialisms evoke the "barkers" and impresarios who traveled with P. T. Barnum, another

theatrical and fabulously successful self-made man, to small towns all over America:

If the call were that of business--of any of the great perilous affairs he handled like a snake-charmer spinning the deadly reptiles about his head--[Undine] knew she would drop from his life like a loosened leaf. (994)

The key to the snake-charmer's performance, and to the Wall Street speculator's, is to make difficult and "perilous affairs" look easy and natural, to underplay the peril of possible failure in order to inspire confidence in the audience or the investor. One of the few things Wharton criticized about Henry James's novelistic technique was

his total inability to use the 'material,' financial and industrial, of modern American life. Wall Street, and everything connected with the big business world, remained an impenetrable mystery to him. (Backward 176)

Wharton's own success in depicting the "American money-maker in action" (Backward 176) relies upon her comparison of the business tycoon with the theatrical impresario; the same performative qualities of personality which Undine uses to rise to the top of the social scale are shown in operation in the arena of Wall Street.⁹

⁹Elizabeth Ammons calls Custom "one of America's great business novels" (109).

In both A Backward Glance (1934) and The Writing of Fiction (1924) Wharton details her method for conceptualizing the characters in her novels; she calls this process gaining "mastery over my creatures" (201). She claims that these characters can only begin to assert themselves in her mind and take a place within her narrative when they "actually begin to speak within me with their own voices" (203). One "odd feature" of her method, which she finds sufficiently significant to describe in practically the same words in both works, is that

my characters always appear with their names.

Sometimes these names seem to me affected, sometimes almost ridiculous; but I am obliged to own that they are never fundamentally unsuitable. And the proof that they are not, that they really belong to the people, is the difficulty I have in trying to substitute other names. For many years the attempt always ended fatally; any character I unchristened instantly died on my hands, as if it were some sensitive crustacean, and the name it brought with it were its shell. (Backward 201)

Wharton's experiments in "unchristening" her characters were unsuccessful because they "always appear with their names" and changing these proper names, or "shells," disrupts their integrity as characters. The perception that the proper name connotes personal essence, that names "belong to the people" they signify and cannot be changed

without a form of representational violence or "fatality" occurring as a result gives a great deal of weight to the power of names to define identity. Identity for Wharton is always social in nature, that is to say, it determines and is determined by the social relations which are made possible by the name one bears. "But I often wonder how the novelist whose people arrive without names manages to establish relations with them!" (Backward 202). One of the symptoms of modernity as it is delineated in Custom of the Country is the devaluation of both private selves and proper names. Undine discovers to her dismay that, after her divorce from Marvell, the social relations into which she can enter have become greatly curtailed -- in the eyes of the law and her peers, she has become a different person and has to begin the quest for status all over again:

Her one desire was to get back an equivalent of the precise value she had lost in ceasing to be Marvell's wife. Her new visiting-card, bearing her Christian name in place of her husband's, was like the coin of a debased currency testifying to her diminished trading capacity. (859)

Names are like money in the social economy of Old New York; they confer and regulate value. Undine's success at re-valuing herself through remarriage and public self-advertisement signify the weakening power of notions of privacy and identity conferred through the proper name; the disintegrating power of these notions to regulate social

intercourse is a symptom of changing attitudes towards divorce and social mobility.

Though Wharton depicts the devaluation of the proper name in a largely negative light in the novel, her own attitudes toward her female characters gesture toward a surprisingly modern approach to women's proper names. For her and for Undine's friends, Undine Spragg is always called Undine Spragg; only the sensational newspapers insist on giving her all four of her married names. Actress-like, Undine takes on new names and performs the roles which go with them when it is advantageous to her, but both she and other modern Americans such as Indiana Frusk and Elmer Moffatt know who she is: they continue to call her by her maiden name regardless of who she is married to.¹⁰ This acknowledgment of marriage as a form of performance permits Undine to retain the "shell" of her own name. The feminist notion that a woman retains a claim to an independent identity after marriage and that retaining her maiden name discursively signifies this claim to autonomy is here asserted to be a condition of literary

¹⁰Undine's first name has a double meaning, for the undine of myth is a water spirit, often depicted veiled, as well as the name of a permanent wave solution produced and sold by her father. Mr. Spragg, who passes his "straight black brows" (630) on to his daughter, often abbreviates her name to "Undie." This interesting nickname for a creature of surfaces such as Undine arises from his old belief that there is an honorable interior underneath her array of performances; his anger and disillusionment when she keeps Van Deegen's pearls comes from his disappointment at finding that she doesn't.

style and method. Wharton could not pry Undine from the "shell" of her name and still write the novel she wanted to write.

The double bind of feminine theatricality in Wharton's novels lies in its ability to confer social mobility upon women while denying them permission to be anything but an ideal, to express desires which exceed the pleasures of seeing and being seen. The punishing effects of this system are all too evident in The Custom of the Country. While Undine converts every opportunity to be seen to her advantage and stage-manages her career with the driving practicality which Lily eschews, she is also a victim of Wharton's vision of modernity, in which the "republic of the spirit" and the private life, with its ingrained tradition, notion of the inviolate self, and distinctions between object and subject are constantly eroded by consumerism, imitation, and commodity fetishism. The "spending American wife" or representative modern American woman which Wharton was both criticized and applauded for bringing to life in fiction is, in the end, still afflicted by "all the unassuaged rancours and hungers of her early days in West End Avenue" (993).

Wharton's critique of the "promiscuous and showy" values of the American nouveaux riches subtly details the heavy price to be paid by the winners of the game as well as the losers. The internalization of theatrical ideals

which distinguishes the Moffatts, their protean abilities to rapidly become what the market wants, perversely distances them from the satisfaction of desire while seemingly permitting them to acquire anything around them. The "queer smile" (1011) which Moffatt gives to his stepson, and the "tiny black cloud" of dissatisfaction which hangs over Undine before the Moffatts' spectacular dinner party, contribute to the novel's final note of perversity. In the end, Lily Bart's dilemma is the same as Undine's; those desires for something other than stardom, for a subject position which exceeds the specular economy in which seeing and being seen represents the only form of being in the world, remain unsatisfied.

Lindberg claims that "although Wharton emphasizes another kind of irony in showing Undine's success to be perfectly empty, it is clear that social triumph costs Undine nothing, morally or personally" (70). Other critics have similarly claimed that part of the novel's deep cynicism lies in the fact that the heroine learns nothing from her experiences; her soulessness, lack of interiority, and "imperviousness to experience" (Lindberg 71) condition the perverse banality of the ending, in contrast to the tragic and transcendent death scene of Lily Bart. In fact, Undine's changing relationship to knowledge is responsible for this perversity. Knowledge operates as a vanishing point for desire in a commodity culture. "Even now, she was not always happy. She had everything she wanted, but

she still felt at times, that there were other things she might want if she knew about them" (1012). The knowledge that "there was something she could never get," that is, the role of "Ambassador's wife...the one part she was really made for" (1014), extends her knowledge of the field of social positions while casting this field in theatrical terms. The possession of knowledge in this episode elicits desire while underscoring its unattainability. In the end, Undine's triumph through social mimicry does exact a price; first it fixes her sense of self to theatrical models and invests it in the acquisition of parts to play; then it then blocks this trajectory by confronting her with "the one thing she could never get." Roles and social positions are here figured as objects or things which one can acquire or buy like commodities.

Ironically, the protean shifts of personality which permit Undine to use marriage as a career strategy, to become Mrs. Marvell, DeChelles, Moffatt, in succession, stand in the way of her becoming an Ambassadors, since divorced women cannot play that particular role. The double bind of theatrical subjectivity is that it ensures a potentially endless multitude of roles for modern American men and women to play but it fails to promise anything more stable, more authentic, than additional incarnations of selfhood to strive for and acquire. The rapt gaze of the woman looking into shop windows at photographs of actresses, commodified and idealized images of femininity

which she wants both to acquire and to become, futilely strives to penetrate the glass which separates her from her desire. Though Undine is not yet an Ambassadors at the novel's end, the narrative figures her as "an utterly modern American woman" (Ammons 112) and she functions for the reader as the representative, or ambassador, of this new type of creature. Her unassuaged hungers and uneasy knowledge of that "something beyond" are representative of the crises in identity and privacy which Wharton diagnosed in America right before World War I. The "tiny dark cloud" of desire both deferred and spurred on by commodity culture and the theatrical subjectivity it engenders hovers on the horizon of this novel and marks the uneasy space where both the promise of modernity and the transformative powers of theatricality fall short of expectations.

Chapter Five

"The Theater of Consciousness in The Golden Bowl"

The theme of the relatively unsophisticated American, such as Isabel Archer, Lambert Strether, Milly Theale, or Christopher Newman, who emigrates to Europe and is confronted with a radically different order of social relations which demands that the protagonist learn to interpret European social codes, to see through and behind social appearances, runs strongly through James's oeuvre. These Americans are represented as being blind to that exterior surface of performance, behavior, and public persona since they consider it superficial and at bottom less important than the idea of the "inner" self. The question of social form, however, is represented in these novels as the deepest question of all. The realization that personal essence, the interior self, is expressed in the European milieu through the medium of highly coded, densely layered, and initially baffling social performances demands both a conceptual shift on the part of the Americans and a commitment towards learning and enacting these codes. James's American protagonists in Europe dramatize the problematics of a self which conceives of the relation between self and performance, desire and action, as unitary and transparent. Their beautiful sincerity, a quality which James portrays as peculiarly American, is

often contrasted with the equally beautiful but often duplicitous social forms of their European counterparts. It is because the Americans initially read outer signs as signifying inner essence in the realm of social performance that, when they learn of the fatal disjuncture between exteriority and interiority in the European social code, they come to grief or even death, in Isabel Archer's and Milly Theale's cases, or renounce the knowledge they've gained and return to America, like Lambert Strether and Christopher Newman. Maggie Verver, the protagonist of The Golden Bowl, is the exception to this pattern. She, in contrast to the dying, self-immured, or renouncing Jamesian Americans abroad, takes her newfound knowledge of the distinction between the interior personality and its manifested social roles, and learns to live with it and for it.

In Maggie, James starts with a heroine who, to an even greater degree than his other protagonists, lacks an outer social form to present to the world. Extremely sheltered and phenomenally innocent, she's a sweet and retiring girl, always referred to as "little," whom her friends consider "constitutionally inaccessible" to knowledge (274). Her innocence is viewed as both beautiful and fragile, like the perfect pure crystal of a perfectly unflawed gilded bowl, but this very innocence is "trying," viewed as a care and a burden to those around her, and in that way very possibly itself an evil, though of the most precious kind (274).

Fanny Assingham asserts that Maggie "wasn't born to know evil. She must never know it"; Maggie herself realizes that she has "never had the least blow," has never been made "lonely and sore" by perceiving a crack in the good faith and beautiful intentions which she attributes to others (94; 171; 171).

Of course, Maggie's faith is destined to be shattered like crystal. She will know evil when she discovers that her husband and her childhood friend, her father's new wife, are having a secret affair. However, her prediction that she may be "abject under a blow" is not fulfilled (171). Instead, she is able to acquire a powerful social persona of her own.

The theatrical metaphors which Maggie employs to describe her campaign to "humbug" everyone and thereby "save" them and their relationships to each other are numerous and deeply significant. The theatrical metaphor is a thread running throughout the second volume which ties together several different types of thresholds which Maggie crosses -- thresholds dividing passivity from action, privacy from publicity, unconsciousness from consciousness, sincerity from deceit, detachment from compassion, ignorance from understanding, and daughterhood from wifeliness. Though Maggie is not a "real" actress, her repeated acts of envisioning herself as one, and of envisioning her whole domestic situation as a play which

she is involved in, provide a key in interpreting how her acts of imagination shape her success.

Maggie starts to see herself, after her innocence has been cracked, as an actress: one who can maintain a personal and interior sense of self while exhibiting to others a polished and controlled exterior . In her own performance, and in her way of conceiving herself to herself as a performer, she learns to conceive of the self as possessing layers of intention and enacting multiple performances. The social personae which she learns to develop are like the layers of gilding on the golden bowl. But, unlike that of the hypocritical but also beautifully gilded performances of her duplicitous husband and friend, hers cover the purity of good intentions.

Of course, both the golden bowl and the actress function as metaphors in this novel. Maggie persistently employs theatrical images and metaphors to envision her world. James's use of the theatrical metaphor to describe a protagonist who is represented as undergoing a process of transformation, from girl to woman, from ignorance to knowledge, from daughter to wife, from American girl to European Princess, points out the intricacies of this process, and the ways that the metaphor itself, when Maggie incorporates it into her lexicon of interior images and reads it in the world around her, helps her to make sense of and negotiate these transitions. Maggie's often painful transformation from a person lacking a social form to one

who acquires a glossy social exterior parallels her development. She begins as an American girl and daughter, possessing only a private self, and becomes a Princess and wife with a mastery of social roles.

It was part of James's moral and aesthetic code that personal transformation can and often does arise from a developed ability to interpret intelligently, to "see." An enhanced sense of self-consciousness arises from an increased susceptibility to what he calls "representational values," or the play between signifier and signified, form and content, which informs an artistic imagination:

We have but to think a moment of such a matter as the play of representational values, those that make it a part, and an important part, of our taking offered things in that we should take them as aspects and visibilities--take them to the utmost as appearances, images, figures, objects, so many important, so many contributive items of the furniture of the world--in order to feel immediately the effect of such a condition at every turn of our adventure and every point of the representational surface. One has but to open the door to any forces of exhibition at all worthy of the name in order to see the imaging and qualifying agency called at once into play and put on its mettle. (35)

In this passage from the Preface to The Golden Bowl Henry James's appeal to his readers to but "open the door"

invites them to participate in a form of readerly agency. The "imaging and qualifying agency" aroused by the imaginary stepping over a threshold offers the astute and newly-aroused reader the reward of "feeling immediately the effect of such a condition at every turn of our adventure." James's forging of the connection between readerly agency and taking things as "aspects and visibilities...appearances, images, figures, objects" indicates the essential function of metaphor, that is, the expression of abstract ideas in the form of concrete images available to the eye. Indeed, a significant portion of the famous difficulty of The Golden Bowl resides in its dizzying wealth of metaphors, of "images, figures, objects" represented in language. Reading this novel, "the novel in which [James's] dialogue is at its most complex and seemingly perverse," we are asked to embark upon an "adventure" of both reading and seeing, an adventure not unlike Maggie Verver's own (Yeazell 87). The strategy Maggie develops in the second half of the novel, which is allied with James's own narrative strategy, is to convert her half-formed but powerful suspicions and anxieties about the possible perversity, the "Evil - with a very big E" marring her own and her father's marriages, into "aspects and visibilities" -- powerful metaphors which permit her to examine them and deal with them in a coherent way (310). Her new way of seeing her life is to take ideas "to the utmost as appearances, images, figures, objects."

The enterprise of reading for surfaces, of paying close attention to the appearances which ideas take, links the projected Jamesian reader and the Princess in an active and adventurous form of agency which offers the sensation of being put into danger, being put on one's "mettle," of navigating through difficulty and perversity. These sensations of both risk and pleasure associated with reading James's novels are among the great rewards that they have to offer. Once Maggie begins to create metaphors to give form to the things she sees she begins to have the "time of her life," painful though many of these times turn out to be (469). Her opening of the door and stepping over the threshold into image-making and interpretation represent a newfound desire for agency, or as Fanny Assingham puts it, a desire to "live," and to "immediately feel the effect of such a condition." The immediacy of the change in Maggie's perceptions and the accompanying proliferation of metaphor in Book 2, appropriately entitled "The Princess," are themselves represented by two powerful metaphors, that of the door and the threshold. The appearances of these metaphors echo and reprise the passage from the Preface I have quoted above, which entreats the reader to "open the door" to "the values of representation" embodied by figurative, metaphorical language.

Maggie's first suspicions that her relations with both Charlotte and the Prince are not right are turned by her visual imagination into a

thick air that began more and more to hang ... over her accumulations of the unanswered. They were there, these accumulations; they were like a roomful of confused objects, never as yet 'sorted,' which for some time now she had been passing and re-passing, along the corridor of her life. She passed it when she could without opening the door; then, on occasion, she turned the key to throw in a fresh contribution.... The sight moreover would doubtless have made her stare, had her attention been more free -- the sight of the mass of vain things, congruous, incongruous, that awaited every addition. It made her in fact, with a vague gasp, turn away, and what had further determined this was the final sharp extinction of the inward scene by the outward. The quite different door had opened and her husband was there.

(335)

The imaginary door behind which Maggie stows away her unformed suspicions is an image she's made to express her new-found consciousness that something is indeed very wrong with her marriage, wrong enough to make her turn away "with a vague gasp." Yet, in a familiar narrative move, James represents her as paradoxically staring at the contents of this yet unopened door -- the "mass of vain things, congruous, incongruous" which represent the as-yet unsorted pieces of the puzzle which she is working over in her mind. These objects, which correspond to the "furniture of the

world" to which James refers in his Preface, represent the obscured fact of her husband's adultery which Maggie is learning to see.

The Princess's anticipated act of opening the metaphorical door of knowledge is deferred until the beginning of Book 5. It is at the beginning of this Book that Maggie has made sense of at least one incongruous object or "vain thing" which has come uncloseted--the golden bowl which provides proof of her husband's secret romantic relationship with Charlotte--and her interpretation of this meaning of this object helps the others, which she has stowed away behind the door, make sense and become congruous in relation to each other. After she's achieved her interpretation of the meaning of the golden bowl, and has used the occasion of its breakage to arrive at her strategy for proceeding, she has stepped over a threshold into knowledge:

It was as if she had come out--that was her most general consciousness; out of a dark tunnel, a dense wood, or even simply a smoky room, and had thereby at least for going on the advantage of air in her lungs.

(469)

The impressions which she has had of being trapped in darkness and denseness, of unread signs hidden by thick air and smoke, represent her former ignorance caused by the obscuring appearances which her husband and his mistress have been throwing over their relationship. By her act of

intelligently reading these appearances, Maggie comes to feel that she has "come out" of the woods, and that this emergence from ignorance into knowledge has given her something to "go on with." And "going on" is something that Maggie does for the rest of the novel; she uses the knowledge gleaned from her reading of signs and objects and appearances as the "air in her lungs" which gives her the energy and the strength to continue to read them, painful as they are, and work to save her marriage and her father's.

It is precisely because of Maggie's ability to read the images and appearances around her and act upon them that critics have attributed to her the status of an artist, the most "consummate artist-surrogate in James's oeuvre" (Winnett 197) and a "philosopher-storyteller" (Williams 196). This seems at first a slightly strange judgment, since there is such a profusion of other characters in James's oeuvre who are artistic geniuses and produce meritorious artistic products. Maggie is not an actress or performer, like Miriam Rooth, Verena Tarrant, or Madame Carré, nor a worker in the visual arts, like Roderick Hudson, nor a writer of tales or painter of paintings. In James's oeuvre, which is so packed with stories of writers and artists, why does Maggie receive the accolade, from so many critics, of taking her place as the greatest artist of them all? Maggie is indeed a worker in "appearances," as are James's other artist figures. The

difference between Maggie and these other Jamesian artists is that Maggie is an artist in social appearances. The images she makes of the world and the metaphors she constructs to embody those images remain interior, rather than outwardly expressed as painting, sculpting, or theatrical performance on the stage, and are generally contained within her own psyche. It is to the extent to which we as readers are given access to this psyche, packed with rich and complex metaphors and images, that we can appreciate her artistic achievement (and James's, of course) and the felicity of the images which populate it. In giving us this access, James is leading the reader over the threshold which separates the visible artistic product from the invisible artistic process--we can see the form of human thought, and the ways in which metaphor-making contributes towards the formation of a consciousness, specifically Maggie's.

Maggie opens the door to meaning in the way that James would like his reader to, and thus acquires the kind of agency which makes her a creator in her own right, an "artist of human relations" (Yeazell 57). Her active role consists, in Volume 2, of doing more than simply facing the accumulated signs, symbols, and objects from which she has been turning away; she becomes a creator of her own personal images and metaphors which she can use to influence the actions of others as well as make sense of her own. The efficacy of metaphor lies in its helping her

to externalize and give a concrete form to the precariously balanced and outlandish domestic arrangement in which the two couples are involved. Her acts of imagination, her facility for image-making and metaphor, help her not only to perceive the situation which she is in but also to decide what to do, how to arrange, and thus they are far from passive or merely aesthetic. They transform her from a "passive follower of Amerigo and Charlotte's lead into the dynamic character who provokes the actions of others" and account for her "outcome-orientedness" and anomalous success (Torgovnick 445). Yeazell notes that Maggie is indeed the only one of James's heroines of the later period who get what (and who) they want, rather than opting for a beautiful act of renunciation (100). She wants a "happiness without a hole in it big enough for you to poke in your finger"; the bowl as it was to have been, and a marriage as perfect as she can make it (475). In opening the door to metaphor and figurative meaning, Maggie faces these images she sees and resolves to work with them, unlike Milly Theale in The Wings of the Dove, who, when confronted with the fact of her lover's duplicity, evil, and deception, chooses to turn her face to the wall and die.

For James, creating a personal image of a thing or relation in the world and achieving something in that world are inextricably linked:

All of which amounts doubtless but to saying that the whole conduct of life consists of things done, which do other things in their turn, just so our behavior and its fruits are essentially one and persistent and unquenchable, so the act has its way of abiding and showing and testifying, and so, among our innumerable acts, are no arbitrary, no senseless, separations. The more we are capable of acting the less gropingly we plead such differences; whereby, with any capability, we recognize betimes that to 'put' things is very exactly and responsibly and interminably to do them. Our expression of them, and the terms on which we understand that, belong as nearly to our conduct and our life as any other feature of our freedom; these things yield in fact some of the most exquisite material to the religion of doing. (36)

In Volume 2, we perpetually see Maggie in the act of "putting" things to herself; when she feels herself excluded, deceived, jealous, baffled, and suspicious, she envisions herself wandering inside a labyrinth or outside of a doorless pagoda, and she conceives of herself as either standing upon a lonely and barren stage or occupying a theater box as a passive spectator. These acts of imagination or metaphor make it possible for her to "do" the most effective things to remedy her situation. The proliferation of metaphor-making viewed through the Princess's consciousness in this volume correlate both to

her increased power to do, see, and arrange, and to an increased portion of that precious Jamesian commodity, the consciousness which itself makes these things possible.

The bifurcation of the novel into two volumes marks the place where Maggie begins to become like the Jamesian artist, the person upon who nothing is lost. The theatrical metaphors in the text contribute significantly to the shape of Volume 2 and they regularly turn up in the language with which both James and his critics analyze this text. In his preface to this volume James relates Maggie's "value intrinsic" to her "feeling everything she has to, and to playing her part in that proportion" (21). The shape of Volume 2 is determined by Maggie's continuous trajectory towards knowledge and action; while in Volume 1 she is represented as passive, "good," and ignorant of the crack in the marriages, in Volume 2 she opens the door to her suspicions and decides to do whatever she can to get her husband back and preserve her father's marriage to Charlotte.

Many of James's most perceptive critics draw upon theatrical comparisons in describing Maggie -- she is like an actress, a playwright, a performer. In Laurence Holland's chapter on The Golden Bowl in The Expense of Vision, entitled "The Redemptive Process," he uses theatrical metaphors to explain how its heroine salvages flawed and broken relations. He writes of Maggie's "commitment to her role" and her staging of the "drama" of

Book 4; she "assumes the full burden of her role in the drama she helps to create" at the card table at Fawns, where she conceives of the domestic situation as a drama she's staged (384; 394). He claims that "she begins consciously and deviously to play her part" once she finds her "place on-stage" (379). Ruth Yeazell also sees Maggie as defining herself "anew towards the end of The Golden Bowl with metaphors of energetic creation--the dancer, the actress, the playwright" (57). Joseph Boone compares the Princess to a dramatic artist:

Maggie reaches this point of control over the lovers by perfecting her acting skills, learning to read between the lines, making imaginative leaps, imposing her omniscience on others--as often noted, characteristics associated with the modern artist's unsettling enterprise. (385)

It is particularly appropriate that critics should pay such attention to the theatrical metaphor in their critical projects and employ it in their analytical language since it is the one with which Maggie most persistently images herself in Volume 2. She "puts" herself to herself as an actress, a performer, and in this way subscribes to the "religion of doing." In the act of envisioning herself as an actress and the "unsettling" situations in which she finds herself "dramas" and tableaux that she can both write and act within, she takes her place within the elaborate

web of European social relations from which James's other American heroines often turn their faces.

The Ververs' loyal friend, Fanny Assingham, plants the seed of this drama when the incredibly rich, widowed, retired businessman, Mr. Verver, and his daughter Maggie establish themselves in Europe for the purpose of collecting the finest art objects Europe has to offer. Adam wishes eventually to set up a museum in his adopted home town, American City, and to fill it with these priceless art works. James depicts Verver as a type of cultural Cortez: a pioneer in the world of Europe, who has come to use the power afforded him by enormous wealth and a fine sense for the beautiful to enrich his home country by bringing home booty from Europe. His wealth also makes it possible for Mr. Verver to acquire yet another distinguished European commodity by arranging his daughter's marriage to Amerigo, the immensely desirable, urbane, and penurious Italian Prince to whom Mrs. Assingham introduces them. The Prince is a good friend of Mrs. Assingham's, and it is her opinion that the match is perfect because the Ververs are as much in need of the social distinctions which the Prince possesses as he is of their money. She believes that the Verver money has made it absolutely necessary for the retiring pair to live differently than they have been doing since coming to Europe. It has given them a position which requires living up to, and has made it possible for them to ally

themselves, through marriage, to distinctive personages with proven success and value in the field of social display. The innocent pleasures which the Ververs enjoy together are private and intensely domestic. Their primary social relations are with the Assinghams, who don't "count" in the high social circles within which Fanny thinks the Ververs belong.

The Prince finds the Ververs' naiveté and lack of social forms or fronts baffling and frustrating to deal with, and he envisions them as "good children, bless their hearts, and the children of good children" (274). Like the Principino, the Ververs are ignorant of the social codes which govern at a place such as Matcham, the country house where noble personages engage in illicit behavior and genially avert their eyes from that of others. The Prince, however, underestimates his wife when he thinks that she and her father:

would sometimes be a little less trying if they would only once for all peacefully admit that knowledge wasn't one of their needs and that they were in fact constitutionally inaccessible to it. (274)

Access to knowledge, a "fascination and a fear," is to become a thing that Maggie needs.

James sets the stage for the drama of Maggie's acquisition of knowledge by first establishing the differences between the innocent Americans and the urbane Europeans, Charlotte and the Prince. Though Charlotte is

herself an American, she is one of those expatriated Americans who has, like Madame Merle in Portrait of a Lady, adapted herself exceedingly well to European morals and manners. Serena Merle and Charlotte are expatriated American women who are "perfectly the social animal that man and woman are supposed to have intended to be" and are "cultivated and civilized"; they are good at carrying things off, playing their parts, and fitting into the role of the "brilliant woman" who has polish and verve (Portrait 244). They, unlike Isabel and Maggie, are represented as being, from the outset, expert at producing deeply attractive, brilliant surfaces of social behavior which they can use to manipulate others.

The baffling Mr. Verver is described as a person who shies from social display:

there was even something in him that made his position, on any occasion, made his relation to any scene or to any group, a matter of the back of the stage, of an almost visibly conscious want of affinity with the footlights. He would have figured less than anything the stage-manager or the author of the play, who most occupy the foreground; he might be at the best the financial 'backer', watching his interests from the wing, but in rather confessed ignorance of the mysteries of mimicry. (160)

Both Adam and his daughter are initially depicted as lacking "affinity with the footlights"; they are content to

occupy the position of admiring spectatorship of the grand personages, such as the Prince, with whom their exalted position puts them in contact. The Verver money makes it both possible and necessary for them to finance the distinguished social drama, represented by Matcham, state banquets, and public house-showings at Fawns, in which the Prince is a featured player. It has made them free to be "great," to be "as free as air," but only, as Maggie says, if they act on it; if they decide eventually to live up to their roles as personages themselves, rather than delegating that role to their spouses (165). The shift occurs in Volume 2 when Maggie renounces her position as a spectator who watches the Prince and Charlotte, who both possess an affinity for the footlights and for being publicly seen and admired, in order to meet them on their own ground.

Many of the metaphors in Volume 2 depict Maggie as a performing artist, an actress, and a trapeze girl during the moments when she is most conscious of herself and most aware of the sensation of being seen, observed, and in control of her own self-presentation. She learns to produce a brilliant and opaque surface and a public persona. When Maggie pictures herself to herself in this way she feels a gain in personal power and self-possession, as well as anxiety and responsibility, as she steps over the line dividing spectator from performer, and starts to take her place as a doer rather than a watcher.

In the beginning of Book 3, which occurs some years after Maggie's childhood friend Charlotte has married her father, James describes Charlotte and the Prince together at a grand dinner where they are "outshining, overlooking and overtopping" the "swarming social sum" of the crowd (215). Charlotte especially is represented as reveling in the footlights; her marriage to Adam has made it possible for her to be

crowned...in light and colour and sound; the unsurpassed diamonds that her head so happily carried, the other jewels, the other perfections of aspect and arrangement that made her personal scheme a success, the proved private theory that materials to work with had been all she had required and that there were none too precious for her to understand and use. (214)

Charlotte's positioning high up on the grand staircase, "exposed a little to the public," underscores her new visibility and the pleasure this gives her, all made possible by her eminent social position resulting from her marriage to an American tycoon (214). His resources, which he desires should be used to create the social spectacle which he eschews for himself, make it possible for her to prove to herself that she can fill the role of the great lady beautifully and convincingly. Her role is to represent him, his power and his privilege, in his absence. And this is a role which for which Charlotte is supremely suited. The split between her former position as a poor

but brilliant American girl abroad, with no prospects for marriage, and her ambitious desire to be seen and admired in the public sphere of high society has been bridged by Mr. Verver's money. Mrs. Verver "overtops" the uplooking, admiring mass below and enjoys the sensation of being a star and of having taken the position that she has desired for so long.

Charlotte is frequently positioned aloft on staircases and balconies to be seen by admiring beholders from below. When she and the Prince meet for their trip to Gloucester, he gazes up at her waving down at him from a balcony, and when Maggie and her father snatch a moment alone together in the park, they return to view both their spouses waving at them from the upper story window of Portland Place. When Maggie sees them "perched together on in the balcony" she, as well as the governess and the "group on the pavement," stare and gape at the spectacle of their beauty as at "truly superior beings" (393). The pathos of Maggie's "individual gape" is caused by her seeing that they are together, excluding her, in their conspicuous visibility and commitment to appearances. It is only when she herself becomes a "mistress of shades," or appearances, that she can assume an ascendant position upon her own stage.

Charlotte's theatrical presentation, as one so often seen and admired from those positioned below, and her affinity for self-display occupy a different register from

that of the Prince. Performance in the social world is completely natural to him; he doesn't need a skill for carrying things off since it is his nature to move within this world with complete confidence in his own value. His ancestry and lineage as a royal personage mean that he has been as accustomed to "showing himself" to others as he has been to living and breathing. Charlotte's vantage point on the staircase lets her occupy the positions of both spectacle and audience. As she looks down at the Prince, she is struck anew by his ability to stand out in a crowd of dignitaries without any apparent effort, in his "fine unconscious way" (215):

Superior to any shade of cabotinage, he yet almost resembled an actor who, between his moments on the stage, revisits his dressing-room and, before the glass, pressed by his need of effect, retouches his make-up. (215)

Here, the Prince is compared to an actor, but with a difference: he is put to us as superior to acting since his performance of himself, as the grand personage always worthy of admiring looks from others, is unconscious. He is the "real thing" which represents an ideal.

His look itself at such times suggested an image--that of some very noble personage who, expected, acclaimed by the crowd in the street and with old precious stuffs falling over the sill for his support, had gaily and gallantly come to show himself: always

moreover less in his own interest than in that of spectators and subjects whose need to admire, even to gape, was periodically to be considered. The young man's expression became after this fashion something vivid and concrete; a beautiful personal presence...

(69)

The Prince has presence, that "fine unconscious way" of drawing and retaining the admiring gazes of others. So while Charlotte has required materials to create a public self which matches her own vision or project of self-creation, the Prince's inherited exalted social position thrusts him into constant visibility. He shows himself to others as the fulfillment of an inherited obligation to be seen, to represent royalty to "spectators and subjects."

Charlotte and the Prince play their roles in the production of social appearances which Mr. Verver has financed by representing representative values themselves; they are personages rather than mere persons. They possess brilliant social surfaces and the larger than life personae which make them conspicuous signs of the power of lavish and practically unlimited materials. In contrast, the Ververs themselves are obscure and domestic; they haven't got the same "form" as their spouses. When once Maggie begins to see that she is excluded and set apart from her husband and Charlotte, she begins to imagine their relation to each other as a "beautiful but outlandish pagoda, a structure plated with bright hard porcelain," outside of

which she wanders as a spectator looking up (327).¹ This image represents her position as the spectator or audience to the theatrical pair of personages, who also possess a bright, hard, and opaque plating of brilliant appearances which they use to exclude her. Their performance of innocence and care for their spouses conceals their adulterous desire for each other: it is like the "great decorated surface...consistently impenetrable and inscrutable" of the imaginary pagoda (327). Maggie imagines herself outside the hard structure of appearances which she knows they are sharing. She sees herself positioned below them, looking up from below their footlights, and feels abject before this inscrutable and glossy surface. Her method of rising above this abjection is to initiate a plan for producing social surfaces of her own, and, in so doing, to conceal the fact that she is making her way across the threshold separating spectator from performer. She becomes a social "actress" and the largest portion of her act consists in her pretending that

¹Mr. Verver associates the precious glazed Damascene tiles he buys with Charlotte at his side with Charlotte herself, since she also offers a "free response to the collective caress of all the shining eyes" upon her (192). James's favored metaphors for expressing the hard brilliant surfaces of Charlotte's social behavior often take the form of glazed porcelain objects. Her voice "clear and a little hard" corresponds to the surface of the vieux Saxe porcelain pieces which she exhibits to visitors at Fawns (525). The elaboration of the metaphor contributes towards the sense that, at the end, Charlotte has taken her place among the art objects collected by her husband, and will be incorporated into their exhibit in American City.

she's not acting by outwardly maintaining her appearance of ignorance and abjection.

When she becomes a performer, with a new subtlety and awareness of the dynamics of social roles, she acquires the empathy that comes from being able to put yourself in another's place. It allows her to see herself as others see her, and sometimes to see **for** others, or through the eyes of others. She sees "for" them as she takes responsibility for them and tries to plan the best possible outcome for them all, and she sees through their performances and imagines the emotions and strategies which motivate them. This becomes especially apparent in the second half of the novel, as Maggie becomes the center of consciousness, and the device through which we see the other characters in it.

At the beginning of Volume 2 James depicts Maggie in the process of going over her reactions to the guilty behavior of the Prince and Charlotte after they return from their assignation at Matcham. Her renewed and intense desire for the Prince, her determinations to become a part of his social life, the "worldly" which he shares with Charlotte, is met with his strange reaction. The conclusions to be drawn from this reaction, that is that he has in actuality done something to her to feel guilty about, are still vague; they are "something indeed that she couldn't that she wouldn't, even to herself, describe," yet in the following paragraph she has already formulated a

metaphor with which to describe it (332). His reaction starts to make sense to her when she sees herself as he sees her: exterior to the performance of social life, his life, a spectator rather than an actor in the play of relations which take place outside of the domestic sphere. These perceptions are cast in theatrical metaphors:

It fell for retrospect into a succession of moments that were watchable still; almost in the manner of the different things done during a scene on the stage, some scene so acted as to have left a great impression on the tenant of one of the stalls. (332)

Maggie feels herself outside of Charlotte and Amerigo's lives, and consequently creates a metaphor in which she sees herself exterior to it, separated from them by her position in the stalls while she watches them acting together. Maggie makes subsequent advances towards intimacy with both the Prince and Charlotte, and tries to insert herself into the worldly social life which previously they have had all to themselves. She conceives of these advances into their life, the social, public life, as movements towards a position on the stage as an actress, rather than as merely a member of the audience. She wants to cross the threshold which divides the passive viewer from the active performer; she wants to "do" things with the Prince rather than merely to watch. Her inquiries to Charlotte about Matcham are not innocent requests for information--she is trying to show an interest in, and

thereby insert herself into, the world which contains the Prince and Charlotte, represented by Matcham itself, with its preoccupation with the visible, the showy, the worldly.

Her sense of herself as she carries out this planned duplicity, the first of the many calculated actions she is to take in Volume 2, is that of an actress:

She reminded herself of an actress who had been studying a part and rehearsing it, but who suddenly, on the stage, before the footlights, had begun to improvise, to speak lines not in the text. It was the very sense of the stage and the footlights that kept her up, made her rise higher; just as it was the sense of action that logically involved some platform--action quite positively for the first time in her life, or, counting the previous afternoon...her part opened out and she invented from moment to moment what to say and do. (348)

Maggie sees herself as an actor in both senses of the word, for she images herself both playing a part in front of an audience, and performing action in the world. The important difference between acting a studied and rehearsed part and improvising one's own lines is emphasized here to underscore the power which ascending to this metaphorical stage gives Maggie. She wants the couple to know that she intends to enter the pagoda of their relations, and that she will ascend the stage which has been keeping her separate and ignorant. When she breaks out of the quiet,

passive, domestic role which she has been occupying in Volume 1, this transformation is represented as both a shift in roles, and an increased autonomy from scripts which define her as excluded, ignorant, and abject.

Maggie's felt position of abjection arises not only from her sense of exclusion from the world of social performance but also from her "abysmal" sexual desire for the Prince. The Prince is well aware of his power over Maggie, and his power over all women.² Secure in his own mastery of social surfaces and performance, he assesses the transparency of the performances behind which women seek to hide from him their disabling desire for him. Their futile efforts to hide their desires affect him with both a certain pity and a complacent consciousness of his own superiority. Though Charlotte is a mistress of surfaces, he sees through them to the truth of her terrible desire. He believes that the woman

always dressed her act up, of course, she muffled and disguised and arranged it, showing in fact in these dissimulations a cleverness equal to but one thing in the world, equal to her abjection: she would let it be known for anything, for everything, but the truth of which it was made. (75)

²Susan Winnett claims the Prince's "consummate role-playing toward the world" is, in large part, the reason for Maggie's initial attraction to him (215).

The Prince is amused rather than disturbed by women's dissimulations because he knows that their "acts" cover up their subjection and abjection to his personal presence and magnetism. His own affinity for social pretense and surface makes it supremely easy for him to turn their abjection into his own profit and pleasure. Maggie's performance proves more powerful than Charlotte's, however, because it is more responsible and more nuanced. She acts the role of the ignorant and abject woman while resisting the Prince's practically irresistible physical appeal to her senses, thus setting herself above them. She controls her desire and confounds his expectations. She portrays herself as abject while she rises above the Prince's appeal to her bodily senses, thus saving herself from being helplessly subject to them. Her performance is abject in another sense as well; unlike Charlotte and the Prince, she is continually aware of the moral dilemma which her acts of dissimulation place her within. Her religious faith and training and her own moral code contribute towards her continual consciousness of uneasiness and bad faith. While the Prince and Charlotte act and dissimulate without suffering from moral qualms, Maggie always pictures herself to herself as consciously playing a part unnatural to her. Because the Prince has the flexible moral values of the Borgias, he feels that having to "plot and lie" for someone else is not only a fit occupation for the "imagination" but also an act "worthy...of the personal

relation" (261). As committed as Maggie is to both acts of the imagination and the salvaging of personal relations, the values of plotting and lying never come easy to her nor save her from restlessness, despite the fact that she learns them so well and practices them so effectively. Part of the sympathetic appeal which she retains is due to the visible effort we see her making to keep up her role, and to the doubts which she harbors to the end about the moral risk involved.

The paradoxical nature of Maggie's theatrical self-imaginings is that while they help her to assume the role of the personage, the Princess who is emphatically social, grand, and public, they at the same time figure her as a performer in a more vulgar and humble genre of theater: the circus. The motif of the circus recurs throughout the text in sharp contrast to the elevated social atmosphere of ambassadors, tycoons, and royalty which permeates the novel. It is when Maggie is most successfully living up to her role as a Princess and a wife, rather than a young American girl and a daughter, that this image comes to her. The juxtaposition of these two images--the Princess and the circus girl--contributes toward an understanding of the multilayered quality of Maggie's performance and her doubts about its dignity and moral value. It is important that she always envisions a sympathetic witness to her performance--Fanny Assingham--who supports her enterprise from off-stage. It is ironic that Maggie envisions herself

as a performer in an essentially common form of entertainment while she is presiding over a banquet for the entertainment of heads of state. This disjunction between the workings of the inner self and the manifestations of the outer persona functions as a subtle social commentary on the structure of social interaction. James lodges his critique of the superficial values and easy morals of the Matcham party within this circus/banquet metaphor; the role-playing which seems so sophisticated and polished when performed at Matcham is viewed through his eyes and Maggie's as a lower form of theater:

Mrs. Assingham produced on her the impression of giving her constantly her cue for this; and it was in truth partly by her help, intelligently, quite gratefully accepted, that the little Princess in Maggie was drawn out and emphasized...she felt herself for the first time in her career living up to the public and popular notion of such a personage...Fanny Assingham might really have been there at all events, like one of the assistants in the ring at the circus, to keep up the pace of the sleek revolving animal on whose back the lady in short spangled skirts should brilliantly caper and posture. (374)

The consciousness of an audience makes Maggie feel like "she might skip up into the light even, as seemed to her modest mind, with such a show of pink stocking and such an abbreviation of white petticoat" (374). While Maggie knows

that she must learn the part of the Princess to earn the love and respect of a Prince, her "modest mind" casts her display of social ascendancy through acting in vulgar images. The consciousness of many eyes upon her does not fill her with elation and pride as it does Charlotte -- instead she feels embarrassingly exposed down to her underwear, with her stockings and petticoats showing. Fanny Assingham can function as a sympathetic and encouraging audience and confederate in the circus ring because she is a close older female friend to whom Maggie doesn't mind exposing herself. Fanny knows Maggie's "real" self, and Maggie's consciousness of feeling very much alone after she learns about the adultery is partially mitigated by her sense of Fanny as a sympathetic audience. The circus metaphor always represents Maggie alone and struggling on the stage while she is learning to "fill out her appointed, her expected, her imposed character" (374) as a Princess. Thus, the show of social superiority which works so well to impress, intimidate, and deceive others boils down, for her, to an interior picture of herself as abject and exposed.

At the same time that Maggie is taking her position in the world as the Princess, and entertaining and dressing in the manner to match, she is envisioning her achievement as less than grand--as vulgar, tawdry, and slightly pathetic. In Maggie's own imagination she is a slightly pitiful, desperately trying little girl on stage. Mrs. Assingham

envisions Maggie as an "overworked little trapezist girl -- the acrobatic support presumably of her embarrassed and exacting parents" and herself as a member of an observing audience, a "kind lady" who "gives her, as an obscure and meritorious artist, assurance of charitable interest"

(534). Mrs. Assingham's sharp eye sees the peril, the hard work, and the danger involved in Maggie's performance. The Princess's acrobatic and unremitting efforts to support not only her "exacting parent" but her husband and stepmother cannot be recognized or acknowledged by anyone but Mrs. Assingham because she's the only one in possession of the relevant facts. Maggie's meritorious plan is to work in obscurity -- to conceal the fact that she knows that there is no net beneath her trapeze, and that to fail in her performance of ignorance is to bring down the entire structure which her whole family depends down to the ground.

Once the Prince learns that Maggie does know about his relationship with Charlotte, he joins Fanny Assingham as a spectator to her show. He is not, however, as supportive as Fanny is; when Maggie imagines herself performing before him, she sees him as an inscrutable and mysterious figure who leisurely observes her intense efforts at performance. She "just failed to focus the small strained wife of the moments in question as some panting dancer of a difficult step who had capered, before the footlights of an empty theatre, to a spectator lounging in a box" (479).

Amerigo's pledge to passively follow his wife's plan and to participate in her profession of abjection gives him nothing to do, really, but to observe her. Maggie's consciousness that the extent of Amerigo's support lies in his "not committing himself" to either her or Charlotte, but rather awaiting further developments, turns the specular arrangement established in Volume 1 on its head by depicting him as an observer of her theatrical efforts, her work (479). What comes easily and naturally to Charlotte and even more so to the Prince strains Maggie with its difficulty. This metaphor reverses the sense of another which had come before as a figure for describing the Ververs' former passivity and their spouses' engagement in social labor. Previously she had imagined the linked marriages as the "family coach" and that "Amerigo and Charlotte were pulling it while she and her father were not so much as pushing. They were seated inside together...so that the exertion was all with the others" (342). Maggie takes up the "repeated challenge" in this image by resolving to jump out of the coach and take her place as an active worker, helping to propel the coach forward and to control its direction. Her leap outside the metaphorical coach represents her crossing of the threshold between idleness and activity. It, along with the circus metaphor, represents her as panting, working, and straining in this novel in which work itself has only a metaphorical quality. The freedom from having to work which the retired Mr.

Verver's riches confers on everyone displaces the necessity for labor onto the realm of the social, so often figured in this novel as the realm of the theatrical. James perceived that social relations, that marriage, that happiness require artistic perception and a commitment to incessant labor. Both the novelist and the Princess see all they need to see, and act in that proportion. Seeing and acting, theatricality and labor, are joined as means towards the same end: the accomplishment of work and the production of beauty, knowledge, and consciousness. James's achievement in conceptualizing these things as eminently worthy of the hardest labor, the most tireless care, and the greatest sacrifices come through most strongly in those moments when we see his characters striving towards consciousness and engaging themselves in struggle.

Performance, like knowledge, remains a fascination and a fear for Maggie, because the possession of a moral sense keeps her aware of the distinction between interior and surface, between the real and the "put on." She learns to be a mistress of shades and surfaces without giving up the sense of distinction between surface and depth. Maggie's moral center, which Fanny Assingham calls "character," the "precious little innermost...little golden personal nature" is represented as existing underneath or behind an exterior front (402). Fanny sees Maggie as keeping this quantity "concealed about you somewhere...somewhere under...like

that little silver cross you once showed me, blessed by the Holy Father, that you always wear, out of sight, next your skin" (402). She has a moral center, hence her heightened consciousness of the presence of Father Mitchell, that "good holy hungry man," whose presence at her breakfast table reminds her of "what was awkward in her consciousness of having, from the first of her trouble, really found her way without his guidance. She asked herself at times if he suspected how...she had dispensed with him" (531). Her avowed strategy of "never deflecting into the truth" is a dubious value for a devout Catholic to worship. She can humbug but it is never part of her personality, her "golden little personal nature." These references to the gold and silver of Maggie's private self belie the low estimation which she has of her own humbugging.

Even in her triumph she is always imaging herself as humble, on the brink of disaster, failure, discovery--she is always self conscious and a little guilty about her dissimulation. The burden of continually projecting and constructing a version of self at odds with the self "concealed...somewhere under" is described in theatrical terms; the Princess welcomes a quiet moment alone at Fawns because it seems to offer a respite from performance. At Fawns she feels "much in the mood of a tired actress who has the good fortune to be 'off', while her mates were on, almost long enough for a nap on the property sofa in the wing (485). The possibility of a moment "off" stage is

foreclosed, however, as she realizes that "she was to fail, for refreshment, even of that sip of independence" represented by a moment of relaxation backstage on a couch (485). There is still to be no rest from performance for the harassed and so tired Maggie--the time offstage she'd been hoping for in vain is still denied her. The intensely wakeful and interminable vigils of consciousness to which James's protagonists are given often prevent them from indulging in rest: "sleepless meditation begins as early as Isabel's fireside vigil in Portrait of a Lady, but it is in the novels of the major phase that the need for wakefulness is most unrelenting" (Yeazell 16). There is never a moment during which Maggie can go "off," never a moment that is any better than almost, but not quite, long enough for a nap backstage. The intense wakefulness she experiences is caused by her metaphorical function as both actress and author of the play; the theatrical metaphor depicts her in both positions. When she envisions her companions at Fawns she sees "figures rehearsing some play of which she herself was the author," and Fawns itself as "a stage again awaiting a drama" (488). The famous last scene of the novel, in which she buries her face in the Prince's chest, gestures towards a theatrical metaphor which had come earlier, that in which Maggie imagines herself and the Prince alone in a dark theater where she dances and he watches. The Prince's enigmatic pronouncement, "I see only you," refers to the theatrical dynamic between player and

audience; if he is seeing only her, it is because she is still, in his mind, on that stage. Maggie's own look of "pity and dread," hidden from Amerigo's eyes and ours as she averts them from his face and our vision, arises from her consciousness that the longed-for moment away from the footlights cannot occur; her "little golden nature" underneath remains unacknowledged, since it can't be conveyed by the dynamics of theater. Pity and dread are themselves emotions long associated with dramatic tragedy, and thus fitting accompaniments to this theatrical tableau.

Amerigo is still within the "thick air that hung over her accumulations of the unanswered"; he's the biggest of all the vain objects in her imaginary closet that she's been deferring actually looking at. Such was the effort of taking care of the most pressing crises always at hand that she did not have time to consider him, to consider whether he had also stepped over the thresholds with her. He has not yet done so at the end -- he has is still "taking in -- or trying to -- what she so wonderfully gave" (580). Maggie turns away from the fact that she will never know whether his effort to follow her is succeeding--whether he is actually "following" her in the sense of understanding her, or rather whether he is only following her for his own self interest. When she buries her eyes in his breast she has come full circle to her original aversion of her eyes, with a "vague gasp," from the accumulations of suspicion in her imaginary closet. This is one threshold that remains

to be crossed. She's abdicated her role as actress, now that she finally can, yet her position as the spectator of Amerigo's own performance is something she shies away from. Performance as abysmal as his, performance which has no idea behind it but rather is an end in itself, rather than a means to a beautiful end, reminds her of his limitations as always only theatrical, a personage rather than a person. Though he says that he sees only her, in fact it is she who averts her eyes from the knowledge that all there is of the Prince is that which is available to the eye and to the senses. He can be seen, desired, smelled, kissed, and otherwise available to her adoring senses, but not known. He is still the representative of his race--pleasure seeking, amoral, a Borgia at heart--and still stuck in his labyrinth. In his immobility, rigidity, and monumentalness during their final embrace, he resembles a wax figure.

Maggie met it afresh -- 'Ah don't they look well?' Their companions, at the sound of this, gave them, in a spacious intermission of slow talk, an attention, all of gravity, that was like an ampler submission to the general duty of magnificence; sitting as still to be thus appraised, as a pair of effigies of the contemporary great on one of the platforms of Madame Tussaud. (574)

The final meeting between the two couples, which takes place prior to the Ververs' removal to American City, sets

up a specular dynamic which reflects a shift in power relations. The adulterers' formidable abilities to dazzle, dissimulate, and deceive are depicted in this tableau as harmless and decorative. Maggie and her father contemplate it with feelings of both tenderness and pity, for everyone involved is indeed submitting to their duties as spouses, children, and parents, and it is Charlotte who is making the greatest sacrifice, giving up both her lover and her life in Europe's high society. The tableau depicts her and Amerigo in theatrical terms once again, with the Ververs as spectators, but with a difference--on this occasion, after all that has happened, the audience assumes an active role and controls the performance. This tableau memorializes Amerigo and Charlotte's theatrical power by representing them as effigies of greatness, submitting to their job of looking as magnificent and static as wax figures in Madame Tussaud's museum. James describes them as theatrical images, wax figures, but these images are frozen, representative of only one thing at a time--themselves.

Mr. Verver's principle of collection is that a thing should be "the best of its kind" and representative of itself and its type; it should embody a single discrete ideal. Others have noted Verver's acquisitiveness and callousness in collecting human beings on the same principles as he collects objets d'art, and have said that he consequently views his wife and son in law as objects

too.³ But the complication to this reading is that James colludes with Adam's vision; he too represents them in this way. He leaves Amerigo and Charlotte their beauty and distinction, their value, but fixes this value in a static, parodic image. He puts them in a frame of perception, in a tableau, which freezes their positions.

Their fixed positions in theatrical frames at the novel's end mirror their reduced range of individual choice; both are compelled to do their duties as spouses by separating from each other. The Prince's self-imposed exile at Portland Place, always pacing and smoking "incessant cigarettes" while he waits for Charlotte to be disposed of, and the tightness of the noose around Charlotte's neck while she vainly contemplates the golden bars of her cage, work to arouse the readers' sympathy. Yet our sympathy cannot be too great at this point; it was their own allegiances to themselves as creators of beauty, deceivers of the innocent, and creators of polished and deceptive surfaces of social behavior which have frozen them. James does want us to appreciate them, to perceive this beauty once again, but also to see its inflexibility and persistent narcissism.

James held The Golden Bowl in high esteem as perhaps his most polished and finished literary achievement, one of

³Hugh Stevens makes this point in "Sexuality and the Aesthetic in The Golden Bowl," Henry James Review, Vol. 14, No. 1, Winter 1993.

his "really 'done' things of [a] superior and more appreciable order"; in its Preface he notes that he felt hardly any need to revise it for inclusion in the New York edition (37). While he envisioned his earlier works as "awkward infants" which demanded refurbishing in the form of "the rapid flash of an anxious needle, the not imperceptible effect of a certain audible splash of soap-and-water" (28) in order for them to be rendered presentable to his readers, he considered that the "altogether better literary manners of The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl" (33) obviated the need for extensive rewriting. In a letter to his agent dated May 20, 1904, James declared The Golden Bowl "the best book ... that I have ever done" (Gale 264).

James's criteria for literary excellence required that a work of art set up an interactive dynamic between itself and the reader. The novel should "give out its finest and most numerous secrets, and to give them out gratefully, under the closest pressure--which is of course the pressure of the articulately sounded" (35). The novel only expresses its value under the pressure of vigilant and tireless efforts of interpretation, and the extent to which it rewards its reader for these efforts constitutes its value. Maggie's insistent and articulated soundings of the distinctions between the inner life and outer social performance are indeed rewarded at the end of the novel; she alone has learned to "live." Yet the novel's open

ending extends the task of critical sounding into the horizon, leaving an infinite margin for yet further interpretive effort. We as readers cannot know the significance of the glance of "pity and fear" which Maggie casts at the Prince, any more than Maggie can know what the future holds for her. The "wine of consciousness" which Maggie imagines fills the golden bowl of a beautiful and fully realized social relationship to the brim can never be exhausted. The life which Maggie has chosen to live requires her ceaseless vigilance and devotion to the task of seeing behind the scenes, playing roles, and closely observing the roles that others play, reading not just the intentions that others express but their particular modes of expression and performance as well. Correspondingly, James asks his reader to always read for both surface and depth; to examine not only the things represented in his text, but the myriad and subtle ways in which these things are represented, the metaphors and images in which he couches them. The theatrical metaphors with which he represents the characters to us, and which these characters use to envision themselves, illustrate the ways that consciousness is structured as the sum of the inner self and its performances. Rather than conceiving of consciousness as an attribute which exists behind the mask of a social persona, James illustrates the necessity of the social persona as a powerful means of representing oneself to the world **and** to one's self. Theatrical metaphors

function as a powerful meta-language which operate through and beyond the spoken word, giving form to a consciousness and sense of self which strives to articulate itself, and thus to "live."

Chapter Six

Conclusion

My readings of these texts illustrate the mobility of identity, but also reveal its contours by demonstrating that the freedoms gained by theatricality are as often as not ephemeral, fleeting, or ambivalent in tone. Varieties of identity which are unimaginable in turn-of-the-century America and England are represented in these novels as a goal towards which the efforts of the theatrical subject can be directed. However, the models of freedom, independence, and power which Eustacia, Kim, Undine, and Maggie emulate are still constrained just as tightly by social codes which police and define the sorts of behavior and roles available to them. Trading one type for another represents a sort of triumph for the theatrical subject in its quest for self-transformation because it stresses the possibility of transformation itself, but the novels' often tragic endings demonstrate that becoming a Princess, society queen, brilliant romantic heroine, or spy does not leave the subject nothing left to desire, but rather pushes the margins of identity in different directions without entirely dismantling them.

Passing as represented in these novels does address the desire of those on the margins for power and wider opportunity, but the promise of theatricality to provide

these things is only partially fulfilled, as it is always constrained by the range of culturally intelligible identities which can be passed into. The heroines of The Return of the Native, The Custom of the Country, and The Golden Bowl take their models for desirable and enactable identities from the representations of "ideal" women which they see in the tabloid press, romantic novels, pictures in shop windows, and other examples of popular culture. Because they are embedded in history, they are unable to imagine anything which exceeds these images. Their desires for a transformation which would permit freedoms which exist outside of the bounds of type remain unsatisfied, despite their remarkable acts of self-making, because their theatricality emulates only those images which possess coherency in their historical moment. The novels both represent the difficulty of imagining entirely new ways of conceiving of identity while simultaneously gesturing towards its possible subversion by narrating the desire for images and models which may not yet exist.

The disenfranchisement of those who occupy marginal positions on the race, gender, and class continuum often provides the motivation for passing. Smith asserts that passing is

generally motivated by class consideration (people pass primarily in order to partake of the wider opportunities available to those in power) and constructed in racial terms (people describe the

passing person as wanting to be white, not wanting to be rich), its consequences are distributed differentially on the basis of gender (women in narrative are much more likely to be punished for passing than are men). (Smith 43)

Marginal figures such as homeless Anglo-Indian orphans and women who challenged type reflected and prefigured the shift in identity categories which would result in radical cultural redefinitions of gender, class, and race. The figure of the spy, Kim, exemplifies the theatrical subject in the sense that he will make history, but, has been effaced from it as an individual -- he has become a number and his name will never appear in any history book. His covert operations parallel those of the theatrical subject, who also works in the realm of appearances, dissimulation, and type.

Institutions such as the law, colonial bureaucracy, and gender codes govern the theatrical subject's ability to question them through performance. These novels present nuanced and complex enactments of how specific cultural moments both constrain and permit theatrical self-transformation. Instead of claiming that there is no "self" behind or beneath reiterations of performance, these authors depict a self which is faced with the dilemma of dealing with the consequences of performances that shift the margins of identity. Novels of this period stress the alienation, bewilderment, confusion, and terrible sense of

responsibility which accompany the subversion of identity. Utopian readings of the potential of theatricality to do away with social marginality must acknowledge these consequences, for

the body is always an embodying of possibilities both conditioned and circumscribed by historic convention. In other words, the body is a historical situation, as Beauvoir has claimed, and is a manner of doing, dramatizing, and reproducing a historical situation. (Butler, "Performative Acts," 272).

Theatrical subjects both embody alternatives to rigid identity categories and dramatize the specific historical situations of those living in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century America and Britain. The boundaries of identity in the late twentieth century are in a state of flux because of technological developments such as gender reassignment surgery and changing social attitudes towards race, class, and gender. As the margins of identity shift, so must ways of reading identity.

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