READING FASHIONS, FASHIONING READINGS: GENRE, STYLE, AND SARTORIAL SEMIOTICS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Rosa Arrington Heath Sledge: Reading Fashions, Fashioning Readings: Genre, Style, and Sartorial Semiotics in Nineteenth-century American Literature
(Under the direction of Jane F. Thrailkill and John McGowan)

We are nothing without clothes, and American novelists of the nineteenth century, with their careful attention to hats, trains, ruffles, corsets, and shoes, know it. This dissertation examines the ways in which, at the tumultuous end of the nineteenth century, two kinds of reading—the reading of dress and the reading of novels — affect one another. As America becomes increasingly urbanized, and as advances in manufacturing (sewing machines, commercially-available sewing patterns) and marketing (the rise of the department store and the mail-order catalog) change the fashion industry, Americans read dress differently. This change in readership also changes the late-century novel: naturalism and realism, which emerge in response to midcentury domestic sentimentalism and revise both its stylistic and philosophical tenets, show an increasing reliance on their reader's active interpretation of texts. A close examination of the works of Theodore Dreiser and of Henry James, alongside contemporary theories of acting, of psychology, of philosophy, and of semiotics, offers a re-evaluation for the modern critic of the role that clothes (and other types of self-representations) play in the development of identity. For James, the problem of the self is to externalize itself (by dressing itself) in such a way as to invite proper readings of that self. This is a problem of readership: how can one ensure that his utterances—fashionable or literary—are properly read? For Dreiser the self does not exist until it creates itself—a problem of authorship.

James and Dreiser both work through two different sets of related questions in these novels: the relation of dress to self, and the relation of performance to performativity, both variations on the central question of the nineteenth century: what is the relationship of representation to the real? These novels, like dress, invite the active, subjective, distanced, materially-aware, and contingent kind of reading that I will call pragmatic: just as there is no fashion that remains eternally in style, so there is no single reading or representation that fully captures reality —nor should there be.

To Robert, because you put up with an absent wife for so long—and because I couldn't have finished without you.

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Introduction

"Why does Fashion utter clothing so abundantly? Why does it interpose, between the object and its user, such a luxury of words (not to mention images), such a network of meaning?" (Roland Barthes, The Fashion System xi).

We are nothing without clothes, and American novelists know it. Ghostly Peter Quint in *The Turn of the Screw* is hatless and "like nobody." Hurstwood and Drouet in *Sister Carrie* are "nothing without good clothes." Vandover, nude, finally becomes the beast. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's dream of a socialist utopia is materialized in *Herland*'s practical, gender-neutral uniform. Hester Prynne's scarlet A becomes to the townsfolk a metonym for her character. Lily Bart's increasingly unfashionable dresses make her increasingly socially invisible. I could go on.

Yet until recently, clothes have rarely been taken seriously in the academy.[1] This, I think, is a mistake. The critical turn towards the performative since the 1980s, when philosopher Judith Butler's work was published, has given rise to a swelling critical interest in all kinds of things that operate from the outside-in (in the mode of what Peter Stallybrass and Ann Jones call "investiture").[2] I view performativity theory and several other recent critical trends as related to

[1] Critical interest in fashion and literature increased beginning in the 2000s, in conjunction with Thing Theory and with a new interest in materialism more generally. For prior work on fashion and literature, see, for example, Aindow; Elahi; Hollander, *Seeing*; Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance*; Kuhn and Carlson; McNeil, Karaminas, and Cole; and Ribeiro, *Fiction*.

[2] According to Stallybrass and Jones, the "opposing of clothes and person was always in tension with the social practices through which the body politic was composed: the varied acts of investiture. For it was investiture, the putting on of clothes, that quite literally constituted a person as a monarch or a freeman of a guild or a household servant. Investiture was, in other words, the means by which a person was given a form, a shape, a social function, a 'depth'" (Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance* 2). Investiture, according to Stallybrass, is "the notion that 'Fashion' can be 'deeply put on' or, in other words, that clothes permeate the wearer, fashioning him or her within. This notion undoes the opposition of inside and outside, surface and depth. Clothes, like sorrow, inscribe themselves upon a

the shift away from ideas of representation as deceptive and towards those that see it as a site of performativity: the recent philosophical interest in objects (Thing Theory, New Materialism); the resurgence of interest in formalism (surface reading, a rejection of what Ricoeur has called the hermeneutics of suspicion); and the flush of research into the relationship of mind and body in multiple fields (in psychology alone, there is the boom in appearance research, the predominance of happiness psychology, and the rise of CBT and other symptom-based interventions over typical psychoanalysis). All these—and many more—speak, I think, to a newly important attention to how our surfaces shape our insides: to the outside-in performative model of identity.

It seems to me, then, that it is time that literary scholars look seriously at dress. Despite the still-current popular denigration of clothes as frivolous and epiphenomenal, modern-day attempts to regulate dress betray the same belief in dress's efficacy as did similar regulations since the time of early modern Europe. Consider the debates around the hoodie after Trayvon Martin's death. Trayvon's hoodie has metonymically come to stand in the collective consciousness for the problems of racialized fear and the cultural demand for visible signs of submission that make whites comfortable and blacks safe; the hoodie condenses these larger debates.[3] Similarly, the debate over the wearing of hijab and other religious symbols in French schools, or the regulations against sagging pants in Georgia, index real problems in the world,

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person who comes into being through that inscription" (Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance* 2). Compare this notion to Bill Brown's understanding of the operations of the royal seal and its relation to kingship in his reading of Twain's "The Prince and the Pauper" (Brown, *Object Matter*, Chapter 1).

[3] See, for example, *Hoodies, Color Lines, and Black Visibility | Archaeology and Material Culture* and *Trayvon, Hoodies and America's Fears - The Daily Beast*.

and (as signs) also affect those real problems. When a hoodie can get you killed, it becomes starkly clear that sartorial representations matter, as they have always mattered.

One reason that clothes have not been taken seriously comes, I believe, from the fear that clothes are fundamentally a fiction. Academics search for fact and for truth, for replicability, for communicability. Dress, in contrast, is fundamentally interpretive, and fundamentally subjective. But dress, along with our actions and our words about ourselves, is one way that we know one another; our interpretations of other are based in large part on the evidence of these surfaces, so subject to our own misinterpretations. The possibility, then, that we are deceived by these surfaces—that there is no "there" there (or, perhaps worse, that we can't get "there" from "here")—inspires, perhaps, an unscholarly fear. It is this fear, laid so bare by deconstruction and the culture wars, that contributed to the strong backlash against critical theory outside the academy and outside humanities departments; perhaps academic critics still shy from engaging fashion because of its highly subjective, deceptive, and seemingly frivolous nature.

But this sense of clothing's falsity, its unsteadiness as an object of interpretation, goes back long before the tumultuous 1980s. We inherit it from Plato: the desire for access to the Real, the nagging feeling that we have instead only appearances, shadows, and approximations, are our historical inheritance. Clothes seem to be doubly removed from reality, doubly representative, doubly false; as art historian Anne Hollander has argued, clothes are seen as "a simple screen that hides the truth or, more subtly, a distracting display that demands attention but confounds true perception" (Hollander, *Seeing* 445). Like metaphor, fashion is seen as simply a flourish, a decoration, with nothing to say about the "real."

Some would, of course, say the same about novels and fictions of all sorts; while I am certain that no literary critic would make this argument, politicians, both now and in the nineteenth century, would and have. As types of representations, fiction and fashions share subjectivity, interpretability, and lack of closure. Literary critics are uniquely positioned to examine representation of both types: the surface, the fictional, the metaphorical, the fashioned. After all, that is what we do: we find truths in fictions.

This is why a dissertation about literature can learn from clothes; in several ways, clothes operate similarly to novels. Both clothes and novels are public aesthetic statements that require an audience or a reader; both are therefore fundamentally connective and communicative. Yet at the same time, clothes, like novels, mark a boundary between self and others, and by taking us out of ourselves—turning our *selves* into an audience--we gain the ability to compare our selves, our experiences, to others'. And finally, perhaps most interestingly, fashion and novels simultaneously serve as both performances and as performatives: they combine two strands of theory that have seemed incommensurable. Both clothes and novels are selected, edited, and intentional representations intended for the public: both are thus a kind of performance (a term to which I will return). Yet both clothes and novels are at the same time performative: both not only reflect but *create* the self. Clothes and novels both do this by externalizing the self; both function as what Kathryn Bond Stockton calls "thrown selves," for both novels and clothes allow one to throw the self outside the self, to escape the boundaries of the self.

Dressing forces a rather literal externalization of perspective. To dress oneself is necessarily to imagine what one looks like to others. As Ruth Rubinstein has put it, when dressing, "[t]he self is also an audience, and clothing allows individuals to view themselves as

social objects" (Rubinstein 3). The ability to see the self as an object, as if from outside, was a relatively new development in the nineteenth century—one that was sustained by new technologies of seeing. Photography allowed people to see themselves as others saw them, offering an exterior view uncolored by interior experience; Alan Trachtenberg has written extensively on how photography's documentary quality, its proffered objective representation of the real, changed nineteenth-century thinking. The new availability of inexpensive, large mirrors reinforced visual self-objectification; as art historian Anne Hollander says, "[t]he mirror, then, is for seeing the self as a picture" (Hollander, *Seeing* 398). Full-length mirrors, which had been prohibitively expensive until 1835, were now available, and, as historian Sabine Melchior-Bonnet argues, "From a glance in the mirror flowed [...] a new geography of the body, which made visible previously unfamiliar images (one's back and profile) and stirred up sensations of modesty and self-consciousness" (2002).[4] Dressing requires and fosters this kind of externalization of the self, what I will call self-objectification; in order to consider the audience for one's performance of self, one must first serve as one's own audience. Dressing requires the ability to see oneself as both separate from and different from others while simultaneously taking those others' perspectives.

A similar process of externalization is at play in language, for it is through language that we first externalize and conceptualize a self. Language, according to pragmatist sociologist George Herbert Mead, plays a central role in the infant's individuation: Language—specifically

[4] Until 1835 mirrors were produced only in Europe (mostly Venice) by an expensive process of glass-coating using tin and mercury; in 1835 the invention of silvered glass made mirrors more affordable since the new process was suitable for mass manufacturing.

hearing oneself speak, as one hears others speak, and as others hear one speak—gives the baby a sense of the self as distinct from others. Language, then, for Mead, helps the infant to fashion a concept of self by dividing the flux of experience into "mine" and "not mine." Clothes do something similar; Edith Wharton tells us in the opening vignette of her autobiography of the moment she "was wakened into conscious life" (3) by a new hat. Wharton shows the transformation of the "little girl who eventually became me, but as yet was neither me nor anybody else in particular, but merely a soft anonymous morsel of humanity" into an individual person, Edith Wharton herself. She attributes the "the birth of her identity" to the hat and the self-awareness it engendered:

> she had on her new winter bonnet, which was so beautiful (and so becoming) that for the first time she woke to the importance of dress, and of herself as a subject for adornment— so that I may date from that hour the birth of the conscious and feminine *me* in the little girl's vague soul. (Wharton, *A Backward Glance: An Autobiography* 1-3)

Or as art historian Anne Hollander has put it, "clothes […] give a visual aspect to consciousness itself, not to its surroundings. They produce its look as seen from within" (Hollander, *Seeing* 451). In other words, clothes externalize and materialize identity, making it visible to others and, crucially, to the self. This notion was expressed by Henry James's brother, William James, who, beginning with his first long study, 1890's *Principles of Psychology*, also saw clothes as helping to form identity: "The old saying that the human person is composed of three parts soul, body and clothes is more than a joke. We […] appropriate our clothes and identify ourselves with them" (James, *Principles* 292). Clothes are part of our social selves as we present them to others and part of our selves as we see them; to dress, we must imagine seeing ourselves through the eyes of others, we must "throw" our nascent selves into the world.

Novels, too, force this externalization of perspective; the act of reading takes the self out of its own experience and immerses it instead in the experience of another. Recent studies have shown that novels help people develop empathy and theory of mind; cognitive literary theorists such as Lisa Zunshine argue that the reading of novels develops these essential human attributes precisely through this process of imagining and inhabiting the other's perspective—throwing the self out of the self and into another's perspective. According to Kathryn Bond Stockton, the externalization of self is a kind of temporary sacramental sacrifice of one's identity, akin to Bataille's religious sacrifice; for Stockton, both clothes and novels can fill "the need to externalize the self, to throw oneself out of oneself, to disrupt the homogeneity of the self" (Stockton 47). This is what clothes and novels do for us: they "disrupt the homogeneity of the self" by splitting the self into both a participant and an observer; by externalizing the self and imagining the experience of the other, we create a kind of double consciousness.[5] The throwing, or externalization, of the self (seeing the self in the mirror, seeing others in a novel) is thus simultaneously a movement towards individuation (towards fashioning the self as separate) and *also* a movement of connection and sympathy, for it is the thrown self that allows us to identify with other people, thereby connecting our individual selves to a larger society.

If self-objectification is the ground of both dress and linguistic representation, then perhaps thinking seriously about dressing can offer us new ways of thinking about

[5] These terms—participant and observer—I take from Porter, who examines the dual functions of the self as both subject (or participant) and object (or observer) in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American novels. Double consciousness is, of course, W.E.B. Dubois's term for a particular racial configuration of identity; as Nahum Chandler has argued in "Originary Displacement," and as I will argue later in this project, double consciousness is available to Americans of all races.

representation. The ways that people find to externalize or "throw" the self—looking in mirrors, at photographs, reading novels—may look self-absorbed and alienated to followers of Platonic tradition, in which representation is *not true*. I want to look at ways of thinking about this self-objectification, not as alienation from the self to be pathologized (although both novel reading and interest in dress have been so diagnosed), but as *productive*. I want to recuperate what historian Richard Sennett has described as the public, performed self (which in modernity has taken a beating at the hands of the private, intimate self). One of the projects of this dissertation, then, is to attempt to reframe the idea that attention to surfaces, to the theatrical-style performance of self (or, alternatively, self-representation), is a mark of false consciousness, alienation, or deception.[6]

This "theatrical performance of self," a phrase that takes account of both "performance" (theatrical or public presentation of the self) and "performativity" (repeated physical acts that shape habits and thereby identity), suffuses many late nineteenth-century novels. In the novels of both Theodore Dreiser and Henry James, both performance and performativity are thematized—although not always in those terms. Both authors' novelistic representations of dress condense their epistemologies of representation, and indicate the ways in which, for each author, representation both *is* and *is not* intimately related to the real. In their sartorial explorations of these semantic questions, James and Dreiser also reveal how the self relates to itself and to others

[6] Sharon Marcus and Steven Best coined the term "surface reading" as an alternative to the "hermeneutics of suspicion" that have prevailed in institutional modes of reading since the New Criticism at least. I find the roots of this suspicious reading in the works of the late nineteenth century, alongside the roots of surface reading itself; I argue in the rest of this dissertation for attention to the literal surfaces represented in novels, and this might give us some clues about reading practices to supplement the current mode of critical reading.

(spatially, visually, and affectively). Briefly, clothes in James operate as versions of Kathryn Boyd Stockton's "thrown selves"— like Sharon Cameron's "externalized thinking selves," which materialize Jamesian consciousnesses, clothes in James externalize self-images, ideas of identity, that are put into the world and tested out in relation to others. Jamesian clothes, then, are material manifestations of the self, observable evidence of identity that can be studied, interpreted, and engaged. Like Jane Thrailkill's Chladny figures, clothes register the consciousness that chooses them; they materialize ideas and persons, making them available for interaction, for contact. Jamesian clothes are about relation; they are the boundaries and edges that connect and overlap, that separate and individuate. In contrast, Theodore Dreiser's first novel, *Sister Carrie,* fills out his main character as one might stuff a scarecrow: begin with nothing, add an empty suit of clothes, and pad it out. Within the diegetic space of the novel, the main character, Carrie Meeber, is depicted as creating herself from the outside in—as performing, and dressing, herself into being. Carrie is a modern-day Galatea who also serves as her own Pygmalion. As we will see, the centrality of self-fashioning in this novel offers a re-examination of the basis of naturalism as a genre; fashion, and self-fashioning, are the antithesis of determinism, and I show that Dreiser's naturalism comes less from a philosophical or literary school espousing determinism and objectivity than from a particular epistemological relation of objects to subjects.

These two oeuvres offer two quite different—yet paradoxically commensurable—epistemologies. James offers primarily a kind of inside-first model: the Jamesian self exists as an individual already, and its problem is to interact with others. This is figured in his treatment of dress. For James, the self exists; its problem is to externalize itself (by dressing itself) in such a

way as to invite proper readings of that self.[7] This is a problem of readership: how can one ensure that his utterances—fashionable or literary—are properly read? For Dreiser, in contrast, as for Mead, the self begins as un-individuated, and must create itself, act by act, as an independent self—a problem of authorship. This is figured in the way that Carrie comes into focus over the course of the narrative; while material details (street corners, restaurants, office blocks) are rendered with such solidity as to make them nearly palpable, Carrie begins as a blurred figure and becomes clearer and clearer as she accretes material details to herself. For Dreiser, then, the self does not exist until it makes itself, and unmediated relations with others are of secondary or even tertiary interest, relegated to the background; the material details that broker these relations take center stage.

James and Dreiser thus work through two different sets of related questions in these novels: the relation of dress to self, and the relation of performance to performativity. (And as we will see, they come to very different answers.) Both these questions are variations on the central question of the nineteenth century (and, I believe, of the twenty-first): what is the relationship of representation to the real? Looking closely at how these authors depict dress and its relationship to identity can help us to also understand their ideas about performance, representation, and surfaces —which can, in turn, help us to understand how they thought reading worked (and how it should work). The way that people read clothes in novels can tell us something about the way to read novels. This is the second major aim of this project: after reframing attention to surfaces

[7] This is very apparent in, say, *Daisy Miller,* as we will see; it also reflects much of the critical writing about James's own attempts to shape readers' interpretations of his novels.

and to theatricality as productive, I hope to gesture towards what a mode of sartorial reading might look like.

In this project, I track two attitudes towards dress and its relation to the wearer in late-nineteenth-century American novels: the first, a Platonic attitude, sees dress (and other forms of representation, including theatrical performance) as flawed or even deceptive representations of the essential nature of the person wearing it; the second sees dress instead as helping to shape its wearer's contingent and fluid identity.[8] I examine the ways that these two attitudes entail different models of how one reads troublesome interpretive objects like clothes, and find that changes in the reading of clothes index generic changes in the late-nineteenth-century American novel. (Indeed, I argue that clothes, as much as novels, drive this shift in reading practices.) This period of time—roughly 1870-1915—marks a unique historical moment when two major historical changes converge: the increase in urbanization, with its increased level of interaction with strangers; and the simultaneous increase in the standardization of dress, which comes from the massive distribution of the fashion plate in magazines, the distribution of the sewing pattern, and the invention and rapid spread of the sewing machine. The first large change, urbanization, demands more and better reading of strangers' surfaces; the second, appearance standardization, refuses that interpretation. Increasingly, the basic fashionable outfit was a cipher, and as its homogeneity increased, so did the importance of *details* of dress as invitations to particular groups of readers. (You are, no doubt, familiar with the process by which enforced visual conformity breeds coded clues that are intended to be read by specific audiences: think of the gay

[8] For an overview of these two positions, see González, *Identities Through Fashion*, Chapter 3, "Fashion, Image, Identity."

sartorial codes during the closeted 1950s and 60s, when a single earring or a particular color of handkerchief whispered volumes about sexual desires and practices.) This double move —the simultaneous invitation to and refusal of interpretation —is characteristic of clothes, which, as J.C. Flugel pointed out, derive their power from simultaneously covering and drawing attention to what they cover. This move is equally characteristic of realist and naturalist novels, which distinguish themselves from their predecessors, the midcentury domestic and sentimental novels, by this same combination of interpretive invitation and refusal.

This invitation to read and simultaneous refusal to confirm that reading—in other words, the valorization of interpretation—that is so characteristic of how these texts and dress were being read is also, I will argue, characteristic of a particular pragmatic semiotic orientation, and an emergent transactional theory of aesthetics. The importance to late nineteenth-century fiction of the interpreter—of the labor of interpretation, of the subjectivism embedded in the act of interpretation, and (as we will see) the centrality of the semiotic distance between the signifier and the signified—is analogous to the active interpretation required by actual historical dress. The reading required by these contingent signs is a very active reading, and requires that the reader insert herself and her lived, bodily experience—in a very self-conscious and self-aware way—into the interpretive gap by which these standardized sartorial signs invited reading. (It is also a peculiarly feminine mode of reading; in the nineteenth century, women's print literacy grew out of what Christine Bales Kortsch calls "textile literacy." Kortsch links the reading of dress and other fabric signs to the reading of linguistic signs, examining how women learned to read and write by stitching samplers.) Kortsch's idea of textile literacy, which links reading dress with reading words, also indexes the strands of a pragmatic semiotics: it highlights both the

imbrication of the reader and the text, and the way that the abstract is manifested into the physically palpable. These are both characteristic of the kind of reading that I am after.

This is a very different mode of reading than that which sufficed for midcentury didactic and sentimental fiction. The works of the end of the century are what Umberto Eco terms "*opera aperta*" (open works), and the sartorial glimpses they offer exemplify the new role of the reader. This newly transactional reading style, so dependent on the reader's dress knowledge, is one thing that differentiates realist and naturalist novels from sentimental and domestic ones. For, while sentimental and domestic novels depict dress in exceptional detail, James and Dreiser often seem to deliberately evade describing dress, leaving large swaths of dress implicit and undescribed, attending instead to small glimpses or details. As Anne Hollander notes, sentimental novels tend to describe "perfectly fitting and sentimentally behaved clothing," and "often" contain "much detail of feminine dress" (Hollander, *Seeing* 441). This mirrors sentimental novels' narrative mode; for, as Hollander points out, the sentimental novel relies on the "type" rather than the particular in its characters, and presents each character as a sartorial archetype: "one can feel both a reliance on and an exaggeration of type for characterization […] and a consequent dependence on standard popular representations of physical looks" (441). The realistic novel, in contrast, "can weave carefully chosen elements of clothing into the texture of the narrative and use them to support the action in the revelation of character"; as in great paintings, in realistic novels "details are exact and numerous, but they are never there for their own sake; they always serve the total vision, which focuses on […] the real person himself, most intensely filling out and being himself *in his own garments*" (441, 443). In other words, as Hollander notes here, each genre handles clothing description in a manner characteristic of that

genre's concerns: sentimentalism seeks to allow the reader to imagine herself in the place of the character, while realism and naturalism instead ask the reader to confront *difference* and particularity, to imagine someone else's experience.

Realist and naturalist texts' refusal to exhaustively describe dress invites the reader into the text to co-create the meaning transactionally, completing the picture with her own experience; yet, crucially, the reader does this *while retaining full awareness of the distance between herself and the character about whom she reads*. This awareness of readerly distance is a product of one's awareness that one is not (as in a sentimental novel) having the same experience as the character, but is instead imagining the experience of the character, who is different from oneself—in other words, one is aware of one's own temporary suspension of disbelief, and one retains one's own self-awareness while creating in imagination the experience of the other characters. As I argue, it is this distance that is so characteristic of late-century reading. Late-century novels are persistently and insistently *theatrical*, playing/performing roles and surfaces, drawing attention to their very artificiality; midcentury novels are, in contrast, absorptive or immersive, sentimentally identical with their own self-representation.[9] This theatrical performance of self (including the self-distance and the somewhat distanced interpersonal relations it entails) is (as we will see) paradoxically social and connective, rather than alienating: the performer is connected with her audience, and the audience that admires a performance is connected to the artist.

[9] This pair of terms is famously Michael Fried's.

This semiotic distance appears first in the theater, which had been, as Bruce Wilshire reminds us, the privileged site of representation since the time of the ancient Greeks, as well as a privileged site for examination of the ontological and epistemological *status* of representation as such: "[t]he actors are showing by means of theatre the theatre-like show of life" (72). The theatricality of the newly realist/naturalist productions of the late nineteenth century, which materially stage and produce this distance, emphasize the role of the viewer in the production of meaning.[10] As the theater transitions from melodrama to realism and naturalism (Ibsen, Strindberg, O'Neill, and Shaw), it plays host to other kinds of realism: in production, in costuming, and in the acting theories of Konstantin Stanislavsky. Late-century productions played with (among other things) the convention of the "fourth wall," both eliding it and drawing attention to it; it also experimented with new "box" type sets to bring the viewer into the set, and new "realistic" costuming (famously, David Belasco, one of the primary producers active in bringing European naturalism to the American stage, was said to buy clothes from real hobos and real shop-girls for the sake of realistic costuming). Theatrical realism and naturalism require more activity on the part of the reader, and they also engage the semiotics of how we perceive

[10] This shift has been extensively studied in terms of the visual arts: Fried argues precisely that visual art in the eighteenth century is a site of this conflict about the role of the viewer in the work of art. Although Fried's primary focus is in the eighteenth-century use of absorption as a visual trope, he contrasts this with the idea of theatricality, in which the painting solicits the interaction of the viewer. John Dewey, too, shows an interest in this shift in the location of meaning production in visual arts in his *Art as Experience*: his idea of an "aesthetic experience" is given from the viewer's point of view, not that of the artist. The aesthetic shift to a transactional production of meaning is apparent in both the theater and in the visual arts. Christopher Greenwood argues that James's late fiction reflects his stint of writing for the stage, especially in his use of "ellipsis," gaps that translate spatially onto the stage as physical distances and as things not-said by characters. According to Greenwood, this technique forces James's readers to interpret his texts as theatrical audiences would, interpolate meaning into these deliberate absences. Rosenbaum, "Audience" has argued that the theater as a trope within novels was used by writers to shape their audiences' response to the written work (172); I argue rather that the theatrical relation between artist and audience structured the reading experience, and that clothes are part of this interpretive experience, both in the theater and in novels and in real life.

things as “realistic”: as Marvin Carlson argues in his important essay “The Iconic Stage,” verisimilitude, combined with aesthetic and spatial distance, gave the audience a kind of double consciousness. The audience felt simultaneously that they were immersed in something that looked or seemed like the real thing, yet they were also at the same time aware that it was simply an imitation of the thing, a performance of the thing:

> Even when nothing on the stage itself served to distance the audience from the reality of Belasco's setting, the fact that it was on a stage, displayed, or in Eco's useful term, ostended for its public's contemplation, provided precisely the minimum distancing Bullough demanded, and created an agreeable tension between the audience's knowledge of illusion and their appreciation of its effectiveness. However complete the stage illusion, the audience necessarily remains aware of it as illusion. They are aware intellectually that beyond the plate-glass windows of Belasco's restaurant setting is not a New York street but the back wall of the stage, and even more directly, they are aware physically that they are sitting in a theatre auditorium as members of an observing audience. (Carlson, "The Iconic Stage," 5)

The stage frames theatrical experience. This notion of “framing” (a term first used by Goffman and later expanded by Eco) is an essential element in the development of semiotic distance. As Bruce Wilshire notes, framing not only distances the spectator from the action on stage. It also distances the spectator from herself, allowing her to examine herself as if from a similar distance: “when we project a ‘world’ of persons as staged and fictional, hence as other, we achieve sufficient distance to give what is habitually so close to us, and so much our own, a revealing presence and intelligibility— presence as presence. We excavate ourselves” (Wilshire, *Theatre As Metaphor* 90). The theater’s frame creates this double sense. It is the frame across which the spectator interprets; like an open space in a nearly-completed puzzle, the frame encourages him to hold up his own experience to the interpretive gap left for him.

In the nineteenth century, the novel takes over for the theater as the central site for exploring representationality; theatrical representations—both literal performances and the new social orientation towards theatricality—are incorporated into novels, and novelistic representations of both types of performances (stage and social/sartorial) import into the space of the novel reading situations that require the new kind of transactional, pragmatic reading.[11] In essence, by reminding the reader of how she already interprets theatrical action and dress, the novel links that reading style to its own new requirements, asking the reader to transfer those skills into her novel-reading.

These various newly-transactional types of representations —dress, novels, theater—have in common one more key element, beyond those I have already mentioned (their intentional inserted gaps to increase the reader's interpolation, their aesthetic and semiotic distancing): their simultaneous invitation to and refusal of the act of reading. This is related to the two other characteristics I have mentioned; these sketchier narratives, with their glimpses or moments of clarity and materiality and with their elisions and ellipses, ask much more of the reader—and nineteenth-century authors weren't entirely sure their readers were up to the task. (As it turns out, Dreiser's were not, and James's were only inconsistently so.) As the reader must supply more and more of the narrative herself, the possibility that she might get it wrong becomes more likely. As Bruce Wilshire has argued, a more metaphorical or distanced drama emerges beginning with Shakespeare, a drama that requires and risks more interpretation from its audience:

[11] See Rosenbaum, "Audience" and Rosenbaum, "'The Stuff of Poetry and Tragedy and Art': Henry James, the Theater, and Audience."

> Theatre continues to orient man within the world, but now a new distance for commentary and questioning has been interposed between him and the world. The world continues to be given presence, its appearances rendered, but at a distance which takes much larger risks concerning the intelligibility to be achieved. The very distance makes greater the possible payoff in terms of sweep and depth of intelligibility, but the risk of failing to grasp what is touched by this reach is much greater. (Wilshire, *Theatre As Metaphor* 60)

It is precisely the distance "interposed" between the audience and the world, and the need for interpretation and interpolation that that distance entails, that gives rise to both the possibility of greater meaning (the synergistic adding of the reader's or audience's experience to that presented on the stage, enriching both) and to the possibility that it will be misunderstood. This aesthetic distance, then, is the source of the simultaneous invitation and refusal to be read displayed by the novels I examine; it is also an extremely familiar dynamic in fashion, where covering a body part makes it more, not less, sexually interesting.

The problem with the legacy of Platonism is that, in this mode of thinking, surfaces point to something else, just as Plato's shadows on the cave wall *point to* the Real. (This is a bastardization of fashion's dynamic: here the hidden is fetishized, and covering something simply draws attention to it.) This leads to a refusal to treat clothes and other representations seriously, for, as Hollander says, when "serious thinkers" encounter dress's importance (which conflicts with their own sense of dress's "trivial" nature, its status as "shifting ephemera on the surface of life"), they are "led to treat clothes as if they were metaphors and illustrations. To be objectively serious about clothing has usually come to mean explaining what they express about something else" (Hollander, *Seeing* xv). Clothes and novels lose their value as specific things-in-themselves and become *only* metaphors, signs that only point to meaning. Dress, with its erotic status as "something that seems to promise something else, a mystery that promotes in the viewer

the desire to remove it, get behind it, through it, or under it" (445-447), can lead to a kind of critical reading that ignores what is present to us—form, surface, dress, and style—in favor of the meanings to which they point. If we do not take clothes and style as seriously as nineteenth-century novelists seem to have done, we may begin to see reading as an excavation, a breaking through a false surface to access a transcendent meaning. This hermeneutics of suspicion, as we will see, comes to us from Plato by way of sentimentalism: specifically, the sentimental semiotic desire for sincerity, which asks that the sign be equal to its object, that it be transparently identical with its referent.

By refusing this kind of reading, dress and novels also refuse the thinking that underlies it: that representations can only matter insofar as they are true representations of some pre-existent real. The books and clothes of the end of the century continually frustrate this sentimental semiotics, turning away from the readerly pleasures offered by satisfying closure. These late-century novels foreclose the approbation and reassurance derived from the revelation that our interpretation matches up with the answer given by the author, as at the end of (for example) the detective novel, the *ür*-closed work. These novels, like dress, instead invite the active, subjective, distanced, materially-aware, and contingent kind of reading that I will call pragmatic. This pragmatic reading, like Kortsch's "textile literacy," values openness rather than tidiness: the reader fashions an interpretation and moves on, remaking that interpretation as needed. That is what these novels teach readers, and what clothes have taught them: as there is no fashion that remains eternally fashionable, there is no single reading or representation that captures reality. Pretending can offer some kind of truth. We can remain aware of artifice, of

fashioning, of distance (the gap between the clothes and the body, the representation and the real, the surface and the inside) without pathologizing it; indeed, we can value those things.

Chapter 1: Representing Reality or Fashioning Reality?

Why, then, if clothes matter, has fashion been such an under-examined area of literary scholarship? Fashion certainly has not lacked for attention in other disciplines; since their inception, disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, economics, and psychology have been interested in dress and in how people (and cultures) conceptualize their relations to dress. More recently, history (especially material history) and philosophy have begun to take an interest. And in the last decade or so, with Thing Theory and new materialisms propping open the door, dress has finally begun to make its way into the literary-critical lexicon.

Still, fashion is mostly left to female critics. This gendered interest in fashion is not new; interest in fashion has been seen as the domain of the feminine since about the mid-nineteenth century. Until this time, as J.C. Flugel tells us, men had peacocked their fancily-dressed selves as flauntingly as ever woman did. But around the mid-nineteenth century, men abdicated the realm of beauty to women, and armored themselves instead in the most modern (and most ideologically saturated) garment of all, the three-piece suit.[12] Flugel called this the Great Masculine

[12] Male dress has until the mid-nineteenth-century been as gorgeous as female dress; in fact, according to Anne Hollander, "for centuries male potency was expressed in erotic and vividly imaginative clothing, and female charm was expressed in much simpler clothing that primarily emphasized modesty" (Hollander, "Modernization," 29). Picture, for example, the courtiers of Louis XVI, or the spectacular fashions worn by Elizabethan courtiers; as in the animal world, where the male of the species is the most gorgeously colored and plumed, human males also were decorated—until the middle of the nineteenth century. The shift away from male fashionable and other forms of masculine self-display is primarily economic and ideological, argues Michael Carter: "men's appearance was withdrawn from the old aristocratic economy of ceremony, conspicuous consumption and an aesthetic of sumptuousness associated with displays of social rank. That was the negative dimension, but at the same time as this was taking place male dress was being inserted into a modernizing political, economic and aesthetic order. Flugel argues that the slogan of the French revolution 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' had a series of sartorial consequences for participation in the new social order. These were 'uniformity' and 'simplification'" (Carter 109).

Renunciation: "Man abandoned his claim to being considered beautiful. He henceforth aimed at being only useful" (quoted in Carter, *Fashion Classics* 109). Men, in giving up frivolity and aestheticism and arrogating to themselves utility, production, and labor, ceded the domain of fashion to women—an attitude that we can, perhaps, still see today in male critics' disinterest in the unserious matter of literary clothes.

Yet the question of separate spheres that motivated the masculine sartorial renunciation was also being played out in other domains, including the literary. Novel-reading was a feminine pursuit, and novel-writing had been increasingly viewed as so; consider Hawthorne's complaints about the damned mob of scribbling women, or Norris's jibes at the sentimental female readers and writers who were ruining virile, masculine American literature. Just as men were renouncing sartorial aesthetics, male novelists were simultaneously attempting to claim literary aesthetics as a masculine domain, to frame writing and reading as rugged, manly, American pursuits.[13] But modern literary critics need not disavow an interest in dress in exchange for intellectual seriousness. As modern critics, we take novels seriously, and without needing to engage in the

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Suits, which Flugel saw as "quasi-neurotic asceticism," were something akin to "corporal punishment" (quoted in Carter 115, 109). Anne Hollander, too, sees the ideological component in men's shift to utilitarian dress. She argues that "an aesthetics of mass production, one certainly suitable to modern democratic social ideals, and consequently suitable to modern dress," produced men's garments, which were fundamentally modern; women's garments, she says, did not modernize similarly until the beginning of the twentieth century (Hollander, "Modernization," 27). For assertions that masculine self-display is again on the rise, see, for example, Olesker.

[13] See Amy Kaplan, who argues that realist authors, in their obsession with professionalism, are attempting to counter the feminine gendering of authorship, common until 1875; this attempt to re-masculinize reading and writing is the project that birthed realism and naturalism. A similar gendered split drove the division of art into the categories of "high" and "low," as Levine has described; high art was coded masculine and low/popular art feminine. For an account of how aesthetic culture came to be coded as feminine, see Douglas, who traces what she calls "the feminization of American culture" in the literary and intellectual arenas. See also Barrish, who argues that the primary concern of realist writers was intellectual prestige, and Bell, *Problem*.

posturing that nineteenth-century American male authors seemed to require for the same project; if outdated gendering of interest in novels does not limit our critical compass, why should the outdated gendering of the interest in dress do so?

Perhaps it is fashion's ephemerality, its epiphenomenality, that puts critics off studying it. If fashions change every year or so, what can we really learn from them? But it is precisely the ephemerality of fashion that allows us access to the principle of change itself, which is eternal. In the words of Anne Hollander, Baudelaire demonstrates that "it is in the very contingent, fleeting look of any current fashion that man shows his aspirations to an ideal, his creative longing--and the representational artist's task should therefore be to 'extract from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry within history, to distill the eternal from the transitory'" (*Seeing* 425). If the epiphenomenal points us to something useful, has useful effects, then it is, pragmatically speaking, worth examining. And, as we will see, novels and dress—both epiphenomenal—can indeed have real effects in the world.

Perhaps in the current economic and intellectual climate, literary scholars, guarding what disciplinary prestige we have left, prefer to avoid the study of frivolities. (After all, no one wants to be name-checked in the *New York Times* annual piece mocking MLA panels.) Or perhaps it is that clothes are so ordinary. Anne Hollander calls it clothing's "mental indigestibility" (450): "In their perpetual irksome worldliness, their common visibleness so inescapably attached to every body, ordinary clothes seem to drag at all the lofty aspirations of man and at all his finer feelings" (450). But novels, too, can be said to be both frivolous and ordinary; I think no literary critic would make this claim, but certainly some politicians in charge of purse strings, both now and in the nineteenth century, would and have. No, I think that it must be a lingering Platonic

sense that dress is deceptive, and that as pure surface, pure fiction, it has nothing to tell us about anything true. Just as it was in the nineteenth century, dress is still being read only as fiction. As we know, though, fictions can tell the truth. In fact, as the pragmatists knew a century ago, fictions could help to shape the truth.

What, then, is the relationship between dress's surface fictions and whatever truth they hide, or imply, or shape? This question —whether surfaces can tell us anything about reality — is one that has traditionally been asked of theater, not of novels. With its thousands of years of history, the theater was, until the nineteenth century and the rise of the novel, the site for exploring these questions, and it has in response taken this question as one of its eternal topoi. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the history of thinking about deception, fakery, and representation that nineteenth-century readers and writers had inherited; to get at the problem of representation (clothing as self-representation, novels as representations of experience) I will begin with the theater, for the theater's long history of engagement with these questions of surfaces and fictional representation can help us to understand the same questions as they are staged in the novel (which is by any account less than three hundred years old). By understanding the problem of representation itself, we can better understand how clothes were thought to represent the self and how novels were thought to represent experience. This question of how representation works, and how it is related to what it represents—the semiotics of representation—is, we will find, the question that many theories of fashion are attempting to answer; it is most especially at play in theories that denigrate fashion as trivial, frivolous, or epiphenomenal. As we will see, dress condenses big questions: questions that nineteenth-century realist and naturalist authors asked, questions in which we ourselves are critically wound up.

Representation

As it is in any democracy, the question of representation in America has been a particularly fraught one. Who can speak for whom? How is representation authorized? What are the limits of representation? What is the relation of the representation to the represented? The question of *political* representation underlay two of the foundational events in American history, the Revolutionary War and the Civil War.[14] And as Alan Trachtenberg and others have shown, the artistic experimentation of the postbellum American period—the period in which I am particularly interested—grows directly out of a question about representation: the question of how American artists could best represent the shattering national experience of the Civil War. Political and aesthetic representation are thus bound together in America. Representation's slide between aesthetics and politics is no coincidence; as political scientist Hanna Pitkin notes, "the various uses of a single family of words are related. Even a new application of a word must make sense to the speakers who use it: they must have a reason for thinking of *that* as an instance of representation" (Pitkin 6-7). Political representation and artistic representation, then, are related. But what of self-representation—the representation of one's character, of one's self, to others? Self-representation, it turns out, is both an aesthetic and a political act. In the time of nation-

[14] Like the Revolutionary War before it, the Civil War was, of course, fundamentally framed as centering on a question of representation: one of the important proximate causes of the war was the debate over how slaveholding and non-slaveholding interests would be fairly represented on a national level. And this connection between political and aesthetic representation is not confined to America; the English Civil War, which ends the period of sumptuary legislation, was also a crisis of representation. In fact, as Pitkin points out, the term "representation" was an artistic term only until precisely the moment of the English Civil War, when Parliament began to see themselves as a body that *represented* the will of the English people —the beginning of the term's political dimension.) See Pitkin (especially the Introduction, chapters 4 and 5, and the Appendix on etymology) for a discussion of how the concepts of artistic (descriptive and symbolic) representation are linked to political representation.

building, the citizen's body becomes a figure for the nation, and self-representation—*dress*—offers yet another iteration of this American national problem of representation. This is not semantics; democracy and dress are connected. Fashion is a fundamentally leveling, or democratizing, phenomenon, as Charlotte Perkins Gilman observed: Dress is "the most immediately attainable form of expression, the most universally visible, the most open to modification" (Gilman 30). Dress's very mutability, a function of its instability and epiphenomenality, becomes a virtue here; its accessibility to all gives democratized access to the tools with which one can craft one's self-representation.[15]

Theater and dress have served, in the public imagination, as the epicenters of representationality, the battle sites for the opposing ideas of representation-as-deception and representation-as-generative (until the nineteenth century, when novels replace the theater as the location of these epistemological wars). The public imagination tends, in each historical period, to treat dress and the theater similarly, either disapproving of and regulating both institutions or lauding in both their transformative potential. These regulations, in fact, indicate the importance of these two sites of representation, for sumptuary laws appear only in moments of instability and change: "sumptuary law is rarely, if ever, associated with stable relations of hieratic domination, but is a product of circumstances in which a hieratic social order has come under internal pressure" (Hunt, *Governance* 105). Sumptuary laws are an attempt to stabilize rapidly-changing societies precisely by fixing representation, by pinning it to the "real." The very attempt to regulate these activities betrays their importance; in making the argument that dress

[15] See Lipovetsky, Ley, Joselit, and Zakim, "Ideologies."

should be regulated because it is frivolous and unimportant, proponents of sumptuary law actually show their belief in its centrality and efficacy. After all, societies only regulate things that matter. The regulations themselves tell us that clothes mattered: like theater's imitations and representations, dress's representations worked, producing real effects in the world.

Sumptuary laws, English Puritanism, and the war of images

There have been many attempts to regulate representation; sumptuary laws and laws regulating theatrical performance are both attempts at this regulation, and both illuminate contemporary epistemological links between dress and theater, as well as displaying the specific cultural anxieties attached to representation. In examining the arc of sumptuary legislation, as well as the changing motivations for these regulations, we will see emerging concerns about how representations are related to the real: sumptuary laws are, as we will see, an attempt to answer implicit questions about whether and how clothing worked on the self to change it, about whether and how representations of all kinds — especially including theatrical ones — affected the reality they purport to represent. It is to these questions that I wish to attend in this examination of sumptuary laws, as well to the way in which sumptuary laws by their very attempts to regulate representation implicitly affirmed its performative power.

Sumptuary laws are, according to legal sociologist Alan Hunt, "a form of symbolic politics" that condense their moment's political, social, and economic anxieties (Hunt, "Governance of Consumption," 414). Hunt sketches the broad drift of sumptuary legislations from moralism to economics, beginning with medieval attempts to regulate morality by regulating all types of consumption: of food, of drink, and especially of dress. He follows the

legislation through laws regulating dress and visible markers of class hierarchy in the early modern era, which end, after the triumph of mercantile capitalism, in the conversion of explicit sumptuary regulations into nationalist economic protection laws.[16] Sumptuary legislation proper peaked in the pre-modern era; in England, the period from 1337-1604 is the heyday of these laws. The same period is also, as we will see, the peak of internal conflicts in the Church of England and of the resultant religious reforms.

Sumptuary laws had multiple explicit aims (including moralism, status-fixing, and economic protectionism), but legal historian Peter Goodrich finds that all sumptuary laws were fundamentally attempts to regulate "idolatry," or the privileging of the representation over the real. Sumptuary laws, says Goodrich, were designed to turn citizens' attention away from false representations (such as dress), and toward God. Goodrich traces the origins of sumptuary laws to the second B.C. writings of Tertullius on idolatry: Tertullius, who treats theater and dress as instances of idolatry, "endeavors to outlaw all forms of imitation or mimesis and all species of figurative image as threats to the faceless and invisible source of truth and of law" (Goodrich 712). The real business of sumptuary laws is thus, according to Goodrich, always the attempt to

[16] For a good capsule history of sumptuary laws, see Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, Chapter 2. For the history of sumptuary laws as they relate to moral enforcement, see Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*; these sartorial moralities included the requirement that prostitutes distinguish themselves from godly women by wearing mandated articles of dress as badges. Examples of politically-based sumptuary codes include the French Revolution's *sans-culottes* and French aristocrats (Shovlin) and England's various attempts to stop the wearing of Irish and Scottish native dress in 1537 and 1746 (Robson 491-92). For a discussion of sumptuary laws' attempts to codify and stabilize economic and social distinctions, see Jones and Stallybrass, Chapter 3 (59-87). This final type of sumptuary law includes the most familiar set of laws, the Elizabethan edicts that restrict certain items of apparel, fabrics, and decorations to people of a certain rank or wealth; see Hooper; also see Smith on the Calico Act of 1721, which intended to curb servants' consumption of imported cloth and to make their class position visible. Finally, for a discussion of sumptuary laws as agents of nationalism and of economic protectionism, see, for example, Clair Hughes' chapter on Jane Austen and muslin. These economically protectionist sumptuary laws include multiple English bans and tariffs on imported cloth throughout the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, all of which were intended to stimulate the domestic wool trade.

get at the "invisible source of truth and law" by forcing representation to properly align with reality.

But *why* must representation align with reality? Concerns about representation as deceptive, as purposely misaligned with reality, have their roots in Plato's distaste for representations, which stemmed from what he saw as their status as third-order imitations: representations of representations of the real, which can tell us nothing useful about the ineffable Real that they copy. It seems that Plato's problem with representation is that it *fails*—that it does not and cannot accurately convey the Real. Yet Plato's antagonism towards the imitative arts of the rhapsode and the dramatist comes, not from a sense that representation is useless, but from a sense that it is too powerful. Plato argues, for example, in his discussion of how the citizen should be properly educated, that theater should be regulated in Athens because the youth exposed to theatrical representations would internalize and make real those representations. He argues that only theatrical representations of exemplary conduct should be allowed, lest "from imitation they should come to be what they imitate. Did you never observe how imitations, beginning in early youth and continuing far into life, at length grow into habits and become a second nature?" Even for Plato himself, representation and imitation are never *wholly* deceptive; they can, through being enacted, become "second nature," performatively creating what they purport to represent: making representation real.

What interests me about Goodrich's account is its reading of sumptuary laws as implicitly affirming representation's capacity for performativity. Sumptuary laws, says Goodrich, were attempts to regulate the social order, and the social order reflected the moral order; the regulation of the visible and material signs of social position thus also regulated man's

relation to civic society and his relation to God. These larger correspondent effects were to be achieved by regulating dress. Goodrich calls this the "war of images," and argues that "[the] considerable interest in the governance of apparel was directly a concern with images and the regulation of the visible order of public life" (712). The war of images, in its emphasis on changing the real by changing how one represented the real, implicitly shows that representations have power. Sumptuary laws, then, which in Goodrich's account are always attempts to force a particular truth-relation between representation and reality, thus betray an awareness both of appearance's power and of its plasticity; the war of images is precisely an attempt to control reality by controlling appearances.[17]

This war of images raged especially hot in England during the sixteenth century—the height of both English sumptuary legislation and of the religious pamphlet wars, which dealt both with the problem of the theater in London and the Vestiarian crisis. These pamphlets condense multiple strands of representational anxiety, and show that the Puritans were especially heavily invested in Goodrich's war of images; they were highly sensitive to the power of dress and to the power of theater.[18] For example, Philip Stubbes' *An Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), a

[17] Certain sumptuary regulations attempted to take advantage of the shaping power of representations. Some laws, for example, were *prescriptive* rather than proscriptive, legislating the wearing of particular kinds of dress rather than prohibiting undesired types; these include, for example, laws requiring prostitutes to wear visible markers denoting their profession. The idea that reforming appearance could change reality also grounds the argument made by legal historian Paul Raffield, who argues that after the Reformation, the lawyers of the Inns of Court used dress to frame themselves as emblems of the new national political compact, passing several internal sumptuary laws that applied solely to the legal profession (Raffield).

[18] In fact, sumptuary laws were passed in England precisely at the moment that Henry VIII was making the decrees that separated the Church of England from the Catholic Church; the Vestiarian crisis (which expressed the anxieties about what position the English church would take on the representation/reality problem) was, according to Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance*, the central Protestant conflict of Elizabethan England. Roman-style vestments (like the surplice) were seen as "the materializations of the Whore of Babylon at the heart of the Church of England"

response to the Vestiarian crisis, set out to preach against various worldly pastimes (including theater-going) and the excesses he perceived in English dress. Stubbes's primary complaint was about the mobility that dress afforded, the representational slip it allowed; he wanted to fix representation so that it consistently and stably signified one's social class. This problem—the problem of recognizability, in Hunt's terms—is a central concern in the sixteenth century; according to Hunt, this is the problem that most earlier, class-fixing sumptuary legislation was intended to address. Stubbes's vitriol indexes his fear that false self-representation, the undeserved wearing of particular class signs, can create moral and social instability:

> There is such a confuse mingle mangle of apparell and such preponderous excess thereof, as every one is permitted to flaunt it out in what apparell he has himself or can get by anie kind of means. So that it is verie hard to know who is noble, who is worshipful, who is a gentleman, who is not; for you shall have those who are neither of the nobilytie, gentilitie, nor yeomanrie goe daylie in silks velvets satens damasks taffeties notwithstanding they be base by byrth, meane by estate and servyle by calling. This is a great confusion, a general disorder. (Quoted in Earle, *Costume* 15)

Note the abundance of language associating representational instability with chaos: confuse, mingle-mangle, confusion, disorder. These are the fruits of wearing garments that misrepresent one's class. But Stubbes is not simply concerned that lower-class people are appropriating upper-class dress; he seems to worry more deeply that these false class representations are taken for

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(Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance* 4). See Lake and Questier, Robson, and Doda. Also see Goodrich for an excellent explanation of why Roman vestments were so problematic. This debate about ecclesiastical garments is repeated during the nineteenth century in England; the debate between the High and Low branches of the Church of England rehearsed the terms of the Vestiarian conflict almost verbatim. Obviously, both these debates about clerical dress condense larger disagreements between Catholicism and Protestantism; note the dates, for the Vestiarian controversy happened at the moment of the Protestant schism and the Tractarian debates and the Oxford Movement took place at a peak of political unrest between England and Ireland. It is important, though, that in both periods the larger religious tensions are expressed by fighting about clothes using tracts. The sartorial and literary grounds of these debates indicates that both sides believed in what Jones and Stallybrass term the "animating and constitutive power of clothes" (4).

true, that misrepresentation *works*. His attempts to stabilize dress come, not from a sense of dress's unimportance, but from its terrifying efficacy. Stubbes "wants clothes to place subjects recognizably, to materialize identities," but he is nevertheless "forced to recognize what he deplores: that clothes are detachable, that they can move from body to body" (Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance* 5).[19] Stubbes expresses the epistemological problem that clothes present in this period: they are a "superfluity that has the power to constitute an essence" (Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance* 3). In other words, dress has the potential, in an age that craves fixity, for terrifying performativity.

This same impulse expressed by Stubbes—to stably fix representation—underpins Puritan prejudice against the theater. Puritans' hatred of the theater has to do, argues performance studies scholar Simon Du Toit, precisely with the Puritan sensitivity to performativity's power. Du Toit sees the pamphlet wars and the anti-theatrical agitation of the sixteenth century as expressing a contest for power being conducted between the Puritans and the theater, and argues that the battle is precisely for the control of performative power. Du Toit sees performativity as central to Puritan theology and practice: for him, the Puritans' communal identity is created through shared embodied performative practices (including prophetic speech, fasting, particular apparel, iconoclasm, and laws about recreation and Sabbath-keeping; see 82-93). (These performative practices, which are, according to Du Toit, based on Galenic theories of the body that underpin Puritan theology, are thus aligned with theatricality in another way; according to theater historian Joseph Roach, the same Galenic physiological theories for the

[19] See Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance*, Chapter 3: "Yellow Starch: Fabrications of the Jacobean Court."

ground of theories of acting and theater at this time.) Du Toit argues that the anxieties Puritans displayed about performativity came from their sense of its power. The Puritans, says Du Toit, saw bodies as radically permeable: the Puritan body was boundaryless, for it was part of its community and also of Christ. This meant that any impurity in the individual Puritan body could pollute the entire body of Christ, the entire church (du Toit 58-59). "The puritan body was constructed as a house, the temple of the *pneuma* of God; within that house, order and cleanliness were paramount because the *pneuma*, the Holy Spirit within, communicated with God himself" (67). Thus, Du Toit argues, the Puritans' performative worship practices were intended to continually and actively maintain the purity of the Puritan body, keeping its impulses and humors in balance so that it maintained its status as worthy of church membership. He argues that it is thus precisely the Puritan sense of *susceptibility* to representations of all kinds that directed their iconoclasm, their anti-theatricality, and their regulation of dress and recreation activities; for, as performance scholar Josette Féral has put it, "no one ever insists upon his distance from something unless he is afraid of resembling it" (Féral and Lyons 176). The Puritan attempts to regulate performativity by regulating sartorial and theatrical representations index the fears these performative practices occasioned.

For the Puritans, theater came to stand in for deception itself; not only was theatrical representation inherently a lie ("Plays promote hypocrisy and deceit. What else is acting but deceit, luring people into thinking a man is someone else?" (Morgan 343)), but, like all forms of imitation, it also directly competed with the church and nurtured the worldly passions that opposed reason's godly rule. This worry, that representation can unseat more godly desires, drives the most characteristic Puritan antipathy: their hatred of Catholic pomp and pageantry.

According to historian Edward Morgan, Puritans felt that, by appealing to its parishioners' senses (incense, stained glass, fancy vestments, music), the Catholic church was using the tools of theater—by definition the tools of Satan—for God's work, and contaminating what should be godly with what was most definitely impure. Yet the Puritans clearly knew that these sense appeals worked. They believed in the power of representation; this was why they so heavily regulated the theater, the worship service, and dress.

Like Plato, Puritans believed that actors and playgoers were at special risk of absorbing representation and enacting it, turning it real. This happened, according to Puritan belief, when the spectator imitated and subsequently internalized and enacted the immorality shown on stage: "[i]t was too much to expect of mortal men […] that they could view without imitating 'those immodest gestures, speeches, attires, which inseparably accompany the acting of our Stage-playes'" (Morgan 342). So when in 1642 the Long Parliament finally closed down the English theater (which stayed closed until the Restoration in 1660), it would seem that the Puritans finally had their collective foot upon representation's neck. Yet oddly, during the Interregnum, the Puritans' obsession with representation only serves to turn representation into reality, giving it *more* power (Bawcutt 191). The Puritans themselves made real the representations that had until then been confined to the stage; as royalist pamphleteers pointed out, the Puritan insistence that representation and reality must coincide becomes frighteningly literal, for upon the theater's closing, the Puritans enacted the tragedy, murder, and political intrigue previously represented on the stage, bringing it into reality.

America's fashionable Puritans

America, too, had its sumptuary laws, though they are less familiarly known than the English ones, and these American laws are both similar to and different from their English cousins; while American sumptuary regulations and theatrical limits were also intended to fix representations to their referents, the American regulations expressed, not only class anxieties, but also political and racial anxieties. Sumptuary laws were most common in the northeast, Puritan-settled territories (for example, they were passed by Massachusetts in 1634 and 1636, repealed in 1644, then passed again in 1651 (Robson 495)), but they also existed in the southern colonies; sumptuary laws were also passed in Virginia (1619) and South Carolina (1690) (Robson 498). American Puritans found dress and its regulation important enough to raise doctrinal disputes; the careful (and delightful) early historian of costume in America, Alice Morse Earle, traces several documented congregation-wide arguments causing near-rifts in the Puritan church, both in exile on the Continent and in America after the passage, that centered on dress and personal adornment (Earle, *Costume*, chapters 2-3). It was partly disputes of this type that led to the northeastern sumptuary laws in America; as we will see, the Southern laws were aimed instead at regulating slave dress and fixing racial hierarchies (Robson 498-500).

Again we see sumptuary laws drawing attention to the very instability and performativity that they are trying to counter, for while the American Puritans insisted that dress should truly represent character, they were not above taking pleasure in dress's aesthetic beauty.[20] We think

[20] This Puritan tension between regulation/suppression and drawing-attention-to is evident in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, according to Robson, who notes that this kind of "badging" punishment was not uncommon among the Puritans (494). Robson sees this tension in the double effects of Hester's scarlet A: on the one hand, it (like

today of Puritans as dour, intentionally plainly-dressed fellows, characterized by what Hawthorne calls their "sable simplicity"; their nickname, "Roundheads," comes from their distinctively ugly haircuts, which serve as visible signs metonymizing their flesh-mortifying, world-defying doctrines.[21] Our imaginations, taught by historical romances, thus imagine the political and religious confrontations of the seventeenth century as confrontations between very differently attired parties: the aggressively plainly-dressed Puritans facing down insouciant, beplumed Cavaliers. But this is imagination, applied post-hoc; in the course of her exhaustive research into colonial documents, bills of shipping from England to the colonies, household account-books, and portraits, Alice Morse Earle finds "little to indicate any difference between Puritan and Cavalier in quantity of garments, in quality, or cost—or, indeed, in form. The

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Pearl) signifies her sinfulness, and is intended to mortify her soul for its immorality by publicizing her shame; on the other hand, Hester gorgeously decorates both signs, drawing attention to the very material proof that is supposed to be mortifying her. And it is precisely this rebellious gorgeousness that recommends her needlework to the other Puritan matrons in the community. In other words, it is by decorating the sign of her sin with unnecessary ornament that she succeeds financially. (This, perhaps, calls into question the convictions of the Puritan matrons who patronize her as a seamstress, for Hester's scarlet A and her daughter both become advertisements, not for her sin, but for her aesthetic skill.)

[21] Lucy Hutchinson explains the origins of the nickname Roundheads in her biography of her husband, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* (published 1805, but written far earlier, as Hutchinson lived 1620-1681): "The name of Roundhead coming so opportunely, I shall make a little digression to show how it came up: When Puritanism grew a faction, the Zealots distinguished themselves by several affectations of habit, looks and words, which had it been a real forsaking of vanity would have been most commendable. Among other affected habits, few of the Puritans, what degree soever they were, wore their hair long enough to cover their ears; and the ministers and many others cut it close around their heads with so many little peaks as was something ridiculous to behold. From this custom that name of Roundhead became the scornful term given to the whole Parliament Party, whose army indeed marched out as if they had only been sent out till their hair was grown. Two or three years later any stranger that had seen them would have inquired the meaning of that name" (quoted in Earle, *Costume* 39). (Other scholars have argued that the nickname comes from the Puritan opposition to the four-cornered caps worn by Catholic priests, a subject of the Vestiarian controversies. See, for example, Doda.)

differences in England were much exaggerated in print; in America they often existed wholly in men's notions of what a Puritan must be" (Earle, *Costume* 34).[22]

We thus mischaracterize Puritans when we think of them as simple ascetics; as historian Edward Morgan notes, "anyone who has studied the Puritans knows that they were not quite ascetics, that they put a high value on the good things of this world and among them recreation" (Morgan 341). The Puritan rejection of worldly matters was an *epistemological* position, an attempt to insist that the world of representation be as closely aligned to the eternal reality as possible, not a simple ascetic rejection of material comforts. The increasing colonial anxiety over unstable appearances, and the Puritans' attempts to regulate dress as an attempt to fix these unstable appearances, have been noted by other critics; Ruth Mayer sees that instability as contributing to a major shift in the Puritan worldview, away from typological interpretations and toward more pragmatic and relativistic ones.[23] (The Puritan desire for perfect correspondence

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[22] Earle notes in passing that our mental image of the dour Puritan may come from a single description of Cromwell, written by Sir Philip Warwick, describing him as badly dressed. She puts it thus: "I never can think of Cromwell otherwise than in this attire [described by Sidney], and whatever portrait I see of him, I instinctively look for the spot of blood on his band. I know of his rich dress after he was in power; of that splendid purple velvet suit in which he lay majestic in death, but they never seem to me to be Cromwell — he wears forever an ill-cut, clumsy cloth suit, a close sword, and rumpled linen" (Earle, *Costume* 36).

[23] For Ruth Mayer, the central concern for American Puritans is still the distinction between what one is and what one appears to be, and this concern is played out in the colonists' relations to the Indians. According to Mayer, Increase Mather believed that appropriate punishment for people who "manipulate their social position in masquerades of status" was Indian captivity, since Indians stripped their captives of both social pretensions and clothes; she argues that Mather analogously sees King Philip's War as a visitation of justice upon the vain and worldly colonists. But Mayer finds in the colonists' relations with the Indians a strange sympathy, an identification with the Indians; more than simply a lesson in mis-representation, their encounters with the Other (including the figure of the "praying Indian," whose "savage" appearance is always at odds with his ostensible civilized Christian interior) raise for the colonists the spectral possibility of hypocrisy. The colonists' awareness of a distance between self-representation and reality leads them to a conviction of their own sin; according to Mayer, this new conception led them to see potential hypocrisy in everyone, even themselves and their Puritan neighbors, and eventuated the Salem Witch Trials, which were predicated on the idea that neighbors — or one's own self— could be agents of Satan even without knowing it. The horror of discovering misrepresentation of moral character, whether intentional or accidental, is precisely the horror upon which Nathaniel Hawthorne's dark Puritan stories ("Young Goodman

between representation and reality—the desire for what I will call "semiotic identicality" as we turn to its inheritors, the American sentimentalists—is impossible to fulfill, although we will continue to find the desire for it driving various responses to artistic representation on the stage, in the novel, and in dress.) "It will take another hundred years," Mayer says, "for a complex semiotics of social performance, style and fashion to evolve, which will allow access to people *on the grounds* of their pretensions and masquerades, rather than in spite of them. Only from this [later] vantage point can the insight that you are what you do--or what you own and wear--appear as anything but frightening" (Mayer 106). Clearly, the instability of dress and the beginning of performativity *were* frightening for the Puritans, if their attempts to squelch them are any measure. We are not yet in the nineteenth century, when "social change and cultural self-fashioning will lose their negative connotations" (Mayer 106). The eighteenth century, though, offers clear antecedents for this later attitude, both in the loosening of sartorial restrictions and the acknowledgement of clothes' power as political signs, as well as in the increasing respect given to acting and theater.

The age of revolutions: political, social, and theatrical

The American concern with representation hits new heights in the eighteenth century, but is increasingly secularized; it becomes less a matter of spiritual and moral import and more a matter of accurately representing one's affiliations in an increasingly atomistic and fragmented

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Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," for example) rest. Robson says: "Hawthorne, who reputedly studied the records of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, described the Puritan founders as 'a people amongst whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly interfused'" (Robson 493), indicating that Hawthorne also recognized the Puritan project as an attempt to make representation and reality align through regulation.

society. In the expanding eighteenth-century colonies, there were enormous changes in population, settlement, and economic status; the cohesiveness of small groups that immigrated together, and for similar reasons (such as religious persecution, like the Puritans in Massachusetts or the Quakers in Pennsylvania), was no longer a factor. Instead, immigration became a fragmenting force, changing the colonial demographics. For example, while most religiously-motivated immigrants arrived as free citizens, up until the American Revolution most immigrants were not free immigrants, but indentured servants, slaves, and other types of bound labor. It is these shifts in immigration patterns, says historian Aaron Fogleman, that create the characteristic American "melting pot." In the eighteenth century, original religiously-motivated colonists now shared space with German, Scottish, Irish, and African immigrants, as well as Native Americans; in the colonial cities especially (Philadelphia and other central points of entry to the colonies), there was no cohesive sense of shared identity, for various cultures, languages, and dress styles rubbed against one another. Individual colonists thus used the act of representing themselves sartorially to strangers in order to differentiate themselves from their new neighbors and to connect across cultural boundaries.

The colonies as a whole similarly struggled, attempting to form a coherent national identity that comprised all its various residents and to then represent that coherent identity to England. One way they achieved both goals was through dress. Fashion is a representation that is deeply woven into the political and economic fabric of America, and dress (like other material goods, especially tea) condensed the political conflict over political representation, serving as its flashpoint and its sign. Dress became the nexus point of the practical material rebellions against

mother Britain and also a personal political signifier that helped the American colonists identify themselves as part of a cohesive nation (Breen, "Baubles").

Over the course of the eighteenth century, the colonies became increasingly tightly bound to Britain: economically bound by the import trade in consumer goods and the colonial export trade, and culturally bound, for theater in America was still full of British plays and British actors. (In fact, it was not until 1820 that a native-born American actor, Edwin Forrest, made his debut (Wilson, *History* 18); although the first American-written play, Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787), did well, most successful repertories were European.) The economic and cultural links that tied America to England had to be broken before the colonies could achieve political and economic independence; this political independence came to be figured by independence from British imports, especially textile imports (Zakim, *Democracy*). England, trying to make their domestic wool production a profitable concern, treated the colonies as a private market for their wool trade, which the American colonies resented. This resentment—framed famously in terms of taxation without representation—boiled over in popular non-importation and non-consumption movements, essentially boycotts of imported English goods, especially textiles; the colonists publically and communally joined together in resolving to wear only domestically-produced cloth. Dress in America thus became a visible reminder of the inequality of the relationship between the colonies and the mother country.

According to social historian Eric Zakim, it was of homespun domestic cloth that the new republic was woven. Zakim argues that the democratic impulse is expressed by a sudden inversion of sartorial signs: wearing fine imported clothes was no longer a sign of a successful and virtuous citizen. Instead, in a "consciously leveling moment" (1564), the more plainly

dressed one is, the more politically virtuous one becomes. This turned the social hierarchy of signs upon its head: "[t]he 'indifferently cloathed,' those heretofore considered incapable of virtue precisely because of their unpropertied and consequently dependent status, were now promoted to full citizenship by homespun" (Zakim, " Ideologies," 1564). This "homespun ideology," argues Zakim, which "joined all on an equal footing in a manufacturing economy," was thus "a most practical expression of what Thomas Jefferson would soon call the equality of all men" (1565); the wearing of homemade cloth, which represented solidarity with the colonies' cause, began to erode the old association of virtue with prosperity.

The colonists' resolutions of non-consumption had nothing to do with religious morality, and were far removed from the sumptuary laws of the Puritans; this homespun movement instead expresses a new political dimension to representation: representation's ability to display one's affiliations with a group or to position oneself against a group. According to Zakim,

> The Continental Congress's 'non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation' policy in 1774 was far less concerned with ascetic self-denial, for instance, than with encouraging the development of a national economy. Non-consumption, in other words, did not mean anti-consumption, and American agriculture, arts, and manufactures—'especially that of wool'—were explicitly encouraged. (Zakim, "Ideologies" 1563)

This is non-consumption *only* of imports; by eliminating the consumption of imported goods, it encourages domestic production of goods. According to Zakim, then, politicizing and moralizing consumption of domestically-produced goods lays the groundwork for the industrial production system so soon to flourish in the United States; the debate over homespun cloth also grounds the typical equation of the Republican autonomous household with the nation itself, since the idea of "domestic" production encompasses both nationally-made, non-imported goods and goods made at home, within the family (1568). Dress, which operated as a religious performative for du

Toit's Puritans, here becomes a political performative. The politics of dress is a way to represent oneself as part of a political community; shared homespun garments shaped each individual to fit into the new nation.

These shared protests against various imported goods (stamps, tea, cloth) produced the first true national American political consciousness; according to economic historian Timothy Breen, the colonists' shared protests of the Stamp Act (1765), Townshend Act (1767), and Tea Act (1773), by forging a shared movement, actually *produced* American democracy. Breen traces first the colonists' shared consumption of British imported goods, which gave the colonists the "common framework of experience, a shared language of consumption" that "eroded the stubborn localism of an earlier period" (Breen, "Baubles," 76, 74). The common language around the consumption of British imports was subsequently politicized, argues Breen, creating a public political discourse and thus a nascent public sphere. The colonists' visible representations of their Loyalist or Revolutionary beliefs—the wearing of homespun goods, the boycotting of tea—"situate[d] a universal political discourse about rights and liberties, virtue and power" in the colonists' shared "semiotics of things" (75). In other words, "Americans discovered political ideology through a discussion of the meaning of goods" (90). According to Breen, the act of consumer choice taught Americans a more highly developed sense of independence (87); in this account, choosing fosters the individualism and autonomy that a democracy demands. Breen's assertion translates into the material world de Tocqueville's observations about Americans' independence; according to Breen, the typical American aggressive equality and independence are not the *results* of democracy, but *preconditions* of it that emerge from consumption behaviors. In other words, choosing what to buy taught people how to make choices, how to be

democratic citizens. Philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky makes a similar argument in his *The Empire of Fashion,* where he argues that it is precisely the rhythm of fashion's change and the act of consumption that create individualism make democracy possible. Fashion, seemingly a frivolous representation, has real performative political effects, not just on individual identity, but on collective identity as well.

Dress played a part in social revolutions as well. In America, the performativity of dress worked, not only in communal religious contexts (like the Puritan churches) or political contexts (like the homespun movement), but also in individual social contexts. This extension of dress's performativity from the communal to the individual is, I believe, one source of the so-called American dream; as attitudes toward dress shift away from the deterministic demand that the representation of the self match the self's already-existing reality, social or otherwise, they shift instead toward the notion that dress can be strategically deployed in the socially-mobile space of the new nation. According to Zakim, Benjamin Franklin's writing about dress and about class mobility change across his oeuvre, indexing shifts in popular attitudes. In Franklin's early references to dress, he argues that dress should reflect one's social status, and seems to see class and individual position as relatively fixed: in 1722, Franklin complained that the colonists were using imported cloth to jockey for status. He was right; according to Breen, in his examination of eighteenth-century colonial portraiture, clothing and cloth are essential to colonists' "attempt[s] to distinguish themselves from members of other status groups" who were "trying to establish clear markers separating themselves from all the others who were clambering up the social ladder" (Breen, "Portraits," 40). But the disapproval sounds odd coming from Franklin; it sounds, in fact, more like Stubbes' sixteenth-century complaints, or the English sumptuary laws

that tried to fix social status by fixing sartorial symbols, than like the first self-made American man. According to Zakim, Franklin's early complaints about people who dressed above their station were motivated by something quite different than earlier English anxieties: "a view of the tensions between material advance and social stability that had nothing to do with the Calvinist sense of sin" (18). In other words, Franklin's objections to people dressing above their station were not self-serving, but instead offered on behalf of a stable society, as a way to keep the very young America from falling into complete chaos. It is clear that Franklin did not consider character or social position to be fixed or innate; indeed, Franklin "eventually became the colonies' leading publicist for the distinctly nonpuritan idea that virtue could be acquired through regular habits" (Zakim 18). While this idea of the malleability of self persists throughout his work, what changes is the underlying epistemology of representation. At first, one's acquired virtue was, for Franklin, a function of authenticity— an alignment of representation (self-representation through dress) with reality (character); virtue was, according to the early Franklin, a characteristic of the man who "always speaks the Thing he means" (Zakim 18). The later Franklin, though, allows that attending to appearance can also help to develop virtue; as he acknowledges in his *Autobiography,* appearances and self-representation had been crucial in shaping his own reputation, and the habitual enactment of the appearance of virtuous character created in him the real thing: second nature. As a young man in debt for his first print shop, Franklin "took care not only to be in reality industrious and frugal, but to avoid all appearances to the contrary," and his self-representation of industry and frugality was expressed in both action and in dress:

> I drest plainly; I was seen at no places of idle diversion. I never went out a fishing or shooting; a book, indeed, sometimes debauch'd me from my work, but that was seldom, snug, and gave no scandal; and, to show that I was not above my business, I sometimes brought home the paper I purchas'd at the stores thro' the streets on a wheelbarrow. (Franklin)

Franklin's careful public representation of his virtue indicates that social position and character were, increasingly, seen as malleable; eventually, the idea that one could acquire virtue through action, that one could be a self-made man, subtended the development of the American dream.[24]

The culture of self-making becomes the central tenet of the American dream of unlimited advancement, and it is from its inception linked to dress, the self-created self-representation that one shows to others: "[c]onsumer goods became the props in a new public theater of self-fashioning" (Breen, "Portraits," 40). (The importance of dress in this self-making is famously emphasized by Horatio Alger in his American rags-to-riches stories of the early nineteenth century.) Dress, though, as I will show, is more than a simple prop for performances of self; it is instead a tool of self-fashioning—what Foucault calls a technology of the self.[25] Dress is fundamentally performative. It is a public representation, to others and to the self, of who one is, and this public representation—this performance—materializes that identity and makes it "second nature." As in the colonies' homespun debates, where visibly declaring one's political loyalties by wearing (or not wearing) homespun actually made people more committed to their

[24] It is during the first half of the nineteenth century that the Calvinist predestination/election theory lost ground; the idea that one can achieve virtue through work (a fundamentally performative notion), rather than through one's essentially good nature, was the subject of some debate in Protestant Christianity as Calvinism gave way to other Protestant sects. The Calvinist doctrine might be summarized as "Faith yields justification and good works"; in contrast, the belief of more liberal sects might be summed up as "Faith and good works yield justification." See Hatch.

[25] See Foucault.

political views (as Breen points out, even politically undecided people had to wear *something*, and the act of wearing forced them to choose sides, as well as politicizing their positions), the act of choosing dress performatively increases political and identic commitment.[26]

The question of whether self-representation could change the self was increasingly the subject of debate by theorists of eighteenth-century acting. America was an especially fertile ground for these debates; it was similarly fertile ground for the theater troupes enacting the terms of these debates on the stage. It is true, as American theater scholar Arthur Hornblow says in 1919, that a "majority of the Northern Colonists were bitterly opposed to the playhouse on religious and moral grounds" (Hornblow 25), but the steadily-increasing stream of immigrants meant that there were masses of newly-arrived urban citizens that were "burdened with no such scruples" (25), and who wanted to enjoy in their new home the same popular theatrical performances that they had in their old. The reigning Puritan prejudice against professional theater lasted only through the Revolutionary War (during which the only productions were those put on by the British troops), but after the Revolution anti-theater laws in Philadelphia, Boston, and Rhode Island were repealed, and anti-theater laws in other colonies followed soon after (Wilson, *History* 16).

The traces of the Puritans' moral antipathy to the theater are clearly visible in histories of the American stage. While most accounts (such as Dunlap, Wilson, and Ireland) argue that

[26] This is similar to a process described by sociologist Colin Campbell, who argues that, in rapidly-changing, unstable societies (like the industrializing and urbanizing nineteenth-century America), the act of choosing among the consumer goods offered serves as a way of gaining self-knowledge; in Campbell's words, a consumer discovers her "true identity by a process of monitoring their responses to the various styles that are brought to [her] attention" (Campbell loc 521-522).

American professional theater began with the arrival of the first resident professional theater company, the Hallam Company, in Virginia in 1752, Josiah Hornblow, in his much earlier (1919) history of American theater, cites accounts of professional theatrical performances as early as 1702; according to Hornblow, the later date is a relic of the colonial moral prejudice against players inherited from the Puritans, which meant that theatrical productions were not widely reported in newspapers. Hornblow says that this contemporary prejudice made it more difficult to find public documentation of these early theatrical performances, and this lack of documentation of the vibrancy of theater in early America has misled scholars. Not only were professional performances taking place in 1702 in the colonies, says Hornblow, the first permanent professional theater building was actually erected in Williamsburg Virginia in 1716 for the Stagg Company—thirty-six years before the Hallam Company arrived. And Hornblow finds records of even earlier amateur performances. In Virginia in 1665, players were brought before a court to face charges for acting a play, and the first play written by an American and performed in America (*Gustavus Vasa* by Benjamin Colman) was staged by Harvard students in 1690 (Hornblow 30). Hornblow thus finds the theater present from the settling of the colonies. But America, however rich a place for theatrical performance, did not yet generate its own original dramatic works or philosophies of acting; those would still most commonly come from Europe until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. And Europe churned out enough popular plays and enough theatrical philosophy for the both of them.

The eighteenth century was called the Age of Revolution, and these revolutions were not only political; there were also aesthetic and philosophical and scientific revolutions, all of which bore on the cultural ideas of how representation worked. The paradigm shift in acting theories in

the eighteenth century comes, according to acting historian Joseph Roach, from the scientific revolution. Acting theory, argues Roach, is always grounded in contemporary medical and philosophical theories about how the body works and how emotion is produced— and it seems also to index contemporary ideas about identity, representation, and authenticity. The mid-eighteenth century shift in acting styles coincides with Adam Smith's writing on moral sentiments; Rousseau's evisceration of the theater and his romanticization of the natural; the rise of empiricism and the concomitant shift from inductive to deductive reasoning; and new discoveries about human physiology. What this all means is that, crucially, for nearly the first time, the philosophical examination of how representation is related to reality is couched in *secular* terms. As we will see, the eighteenth-century paradigm shift in acting condenses a new attitude towards representation: from this point on, the gap between representation and reality is no longer seen as simply deceptive, but also as a site of opportunity to be exploited by careful self-presentation.

In the early part of the century, theories of acting had been based on the idea of the passions: intensely-felt emotions that cause physical manifestations. The passional acting theory, according to Roach, is linked to the contemporaneous Galenic and humoral theories of the body. According to these ideas, the actor's body takes in emotional and artistic inspiration through his breath, which is then translated into increases of certain humors within; the actor is swept away, possessed, by the emotion, which he cannot help but physically express. Inspiration is the central mechanism here, according to Roach: "These inspiring forces came literally out of thin air. A vital pneuma, imbibed from a universal aether, supposedly permeated the blood as spirits, and, radiating outward from the heart and lungs, displayed inward feelings as outward motions"

(Roach 27). *Real feelings* (not representations of emotion), triggered by inspiration, are first felt, then expressed on the body; these real feelings are communicated to the audience both by the actor's bodily materialization and by his breath entering into their bodies. This model depends upon congruence, or equivalence, between representation and the reality: the representation grows naturally out of the real experience, simply reflecting or expressing the actor's genuine feeling.[27]

This inside-to-outside, expression-of-authentic-feeling model of how emotion is portrayed is analogous to the older Puritan ideas about representation's relation to reality: in both, the representation, as far as is possible, *is* the reality. But Joseph Roach records a seismic shift that happens in the middle of the eighteenth century. He traces an evolution, based on changing medical knowledge, that moves acting theories from these inside-out expressive models to outside-in, *performative* models. (Acting theory remains a bit ahead of literature, for the literary shift from the expression model to the performative model does not occur until *after* the novel gains primacy as the preferred form of cultural expression; in literary writing the inside-out model is retained through the sentimental period, for reasons that will be explained

[27] Understanding this model can also help us understand the source of the moral panic occasioned by theatrical representation, for these theories ascribe to the acting body a radical permeability: "[t]he same physiological model that explained [the actor's] powers of bodily self-transformation also demonstrated his acute vulnerability to the forces that he summoned" (Roach 28). A part of the seemingly universal anti-theatrical prejudice (see Barish), then, is linked to the ideas held by various cultures about how acting worked. The passions, or violent emotions, that actors display and that audiences feel in response, were dangerous precisely because of their realness, and their transmissibility. As Roach notes, the word "passion" itself, which comes from Latin *patior* meaning "to suffer," contains within itself the suggestion "that emotions seize upon and possess those who suffer them" (28). The problem of "[h]ow to control and restrain that process became a major question of acting theory well into the eighteenth century" (28). Underpinning this style of acting, then, is an assumption similar to that which had underpinned the anger directed at people dressing above their station: that the internal state determines the external attitudes, or, in other words, that clothes should visibly and accurately represent one's real moral character and social rank. In other words, both assume a kind of sincerity, or transparency, between the representation and the referent.

shortly.) Roach traces the arc of development from these pneumatic theories espoused by classical rhetoricians to mechanistic models during the eighteenth-century age of rationalism. According to Roach, at the end of the century, the emergence of biology produces new models, which bring with them, first vitalistic theories of acting (associated with sensibility), then Diderot's mixed vitalistic and mechanistic theories. The important thing about Roach's developmental arc—what I wish to emphasize about it--is that by and large, these changes trace a larger epistemological shift: from the idea that one can realistically represent only really-felt emotion to the idea that physical imitation of the emotion's signs can actually create the emotion. In other words, the developmental arc of acting theory marks a shift from an inside-to-outside model to an outside-to-inside model, one in which bodily attitudes and imitations of emotion can actually create the represented emotion inside the actor: "emotion felt in the body, eventually perceived by the mind, but not prompted by the imagination" (83). In other words, we see the acceptance of performativity, of "second nature."

The idea that real feeling must preexist the actor's convincing expression of feeling was first called into question when David Garrick made his acting debut in 1741 with his new naturalist style of acting that "broke decisively with the past" (56). Paradoxically, although Garrick's style of acting is called "naturalist," it is absolutely artificial: it is as cunningly created, and as disarticulated from the expression of sincere feeling, as you can get. Garrick's style is predicated on observation, imitation, and merciless drill. Diderot was stunned by Garrick's mimetic ability to portray human emotion solely using his body. Here is Diderot's account of seeing Garrick's talent displayed:

> Garrick will put his head between two folding-doors, and in the course of five or six seconds his expression will change successively from wild delight to temperate pleasure, from this to tranquillity, from tranquillity to surprise, from surprise to blank astonishment, from that to sorrow, from sorrow to the air of one overwhelmed, from that to fright, from fright to horror, from horror to despair, and thence he will go up again to the point from which he started. Can his soul have experienced all these feelings, and played this kind of scale in concert with his face? I don't believe it; nor do you. (Quoted in Roach 152)

This "naturalist" style of acting is far from natural in the sense we use the word. But, as Roach reminds us, the meaning of "natural" shifts over time; our concept of "naturalness" is based on the unlearned, instinctive behaviors of biological organisms. In the eighteenth century, though, philosophers and scientists had no notion of biology as a science, or of the concept of organism. Instead, their governing metaphor was the machine, with its predictable system of causes and effects (condensed in the famous Enlightenment metaphor of the world as a watch that is created, wound up, set going, and then abandoned by a giant watchmaker in the sky). So when Garrick's contemporaries said his acting was "natural," they meant that he had discarded the old rhetorical and oratorical conventions of gesture and intonation associated with the classical rhetorical actor, and *also* that he acted in accordance with the age's governing metaphor of the machine. Garrick's "mimetic and pragmatic" style of acting (26) emerged, according to Roach, out of his basic mechanistic worldview. For Garrick, *science*, not inspiration or passion, was what counted in acting: observation, repetition, and practice. In fact, Roach claims, science funds the eighteenth-century concept of "sensibility," which is a historical product of Enlightenment mechanistic thinking; sensibility is, for Garrick and for Diderot, a product of a particular organization of matter in the body, a natural capacity that makes one more or less susceptible to

impressions. This scientific basis of sensibility means that "[s]pirit no longer merely works on matter, spirit emerges from a particular organization of matter" (Roach 95-96).

Now we arrive at the central concept of "second nature," the answer to the question of how something so calculated —so highly *artificial*--can seem so natural, so spontaneous; second nature is how we can reconcile the idea of the body as a machine, as pure material, with the performance's "natural" portrayal of emotion. Second nature is the crux of the epistemological shift I am tracing. The reconciliation is possible, says Roach, because of two simultaneous definitions of the word "spontaneity." The term comprises both the layman's idea of spontaneity as unrehearsed and the eighteenth-century scientific idea of spontaneity as something organic, innate, or reflexive:

> In Diderot's scheme the actor rehearses his actions until his emotions appear to be spontaneous in our conventional, organic sense of that word—proceeding from natural feeling, produced without being planted or without labor—but in fact they are really spontaneous in Robert Whytt or David Hartley's mechanical sense of acquired automatisms. (Roach 152)

This elision of the two kinds of spontaneity leads to a new concept: Diderot's idea of "second nature," the "acquired automatisms" that allow nature and machine to work similarly. This concept of "second nature" —something very like William James's idea of "habit"—reconciles the artificial and the natural through rehearsal.[28] It allows for the production of the real by repeating the representation of the real.

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[28] Although Diderot's *Paradoxe* was not translated and published in its entirety until the 1880s, when William Archer engaged it with his riposte, *Masks or Faces* (1888), its principles would have been familiar to players in America. Actors in America were primarily trained in Europe, and most were European-born until at least the infamous 1849 Astor Place riot, which expressed the American working classes' partisanship for the American-born actor Edwin Forrest over British Macready. For an account of the nativist and class valences of this riot, see Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990* 52-55.

Why does this new model of acting *as* acting, rather than as expression of truly-felt emotion, emerge at the moment (1800-1840) when, in America, sincerity and transparency of representation becomes increasingly urgent? Sincerity was, according to cultural historian Karen Halttunen, the bedrock value of life in America in the first half of the nineteenth century, and, as we have seen in the early parts of this chapter, attitudes towards dress and towards theatrical representation generally mirror a culture's epistemologies of representation. Yet in this period we have performativity emerging in theories of acting at least a quarter-century before it is accepted in theories of dress or of the novel (which takes over for the theater as the primary cultural expression in the early nineteenth century). Why are these various types of representations suddenly out of step? To make sense of this anomalous obsession with sincerity, I need to turn to the rise of the novel and to contemporary ideas about racial performance.

American sumptuary law: regulating racial representation

There is in this period a marked cultural shift away from the communal, shared experience of the theater to the more private, individual experience of reading the novel: as Emily Allen puts it, "the novel's rise depends on the theater's fall" (quoted in Michals 193).[29] One of the ways that early novels distinguished themselves from the theater, with which they competed, was in their claim to more accurately and authentically represent real, private

[29] This shift from the drama to the novel as the primary form of cultural expression has been discussed by many scholars. As Levine has shown, it was a gradual shift, for the shared cultural experience of the theater persisted long after the rise of the novel rose; the novel at first *supplemented* the theater rather than replaced it. Davidson gives an account of the material and financial conditions of publishing in America, which made the novel (now seen as a private genre) a public and cultural one in early America: Because novels were relatively expensive, they were often read aloud or passed around.

experience.[30] Early novels claimed for themselves a greater authenticity and transparency of representation than the theater could offer; according to scholar of the eighteenth-century novel Teresa Michals, these anti-theatrical novels authorize themselves by attacking the theater. In their explicit examinations of the "generic relation of the novel itself to the theatre," these novels reject the stage's very public theatricality in order to claim for themselves the ground of the private, the domestic, and the authentic. The novel, in its infancy, begins already to distinguish itself from theater and to consolidate its claim to more clearly purvey reality because of its claims to authenticity and privacy: to more truthful representations of the real.

As if to make up for this retreat into the individual, the early novel relied upon the private-but-shared reading experience as a device to connect its individual readers into a community; it thematized privacy and individual experience (the central features of the novel-reading experience, wholly absent for theatrical audiences), not as something missing, but as something added: as the building-blocks of authenticity. In other words, early novels purported to offer, not a theatrical staging of experience, but real contact with real individual experience. (Early novels seem to justify themselves through authorizing devices such as epistolary formats or prefaces that make claims for the literal reality-value of the novels they precede; Hawthorne's found custom-house manuscript, Defoe's insistence that Roxana is a real history of a real

[30] The key characteristic of the novel, says Ian Watt, was (and remains) its inherent realism, for (unlike older genres who measured aesthetic success by how well they reproduced conventional literary descriptions of experience) the novel values the exhaustive, mimetically-accurate representation of the actual particulars of individual experience. This novelistic valuation of representative accuracy makes the novel, says Watt, a form deeply engaged with the problem of semantics: The problem "which the novel raises more sharply than any other literary form [is] the problem of the correspondence between the literary work and the reality which it imitates. This is essentially an epistemological problem" (Watt 11).

woman, and Richardson's seeming reproduction of Pamela's real letters all smack to me of defensiveness of fiction as such.) They seem to offer contact with the real, unmediated (or un-defiled) by representation itself. In other words, the representation and the reality are, in the early novel, proffered as identical: the representation *is* the real. These novels, which "equate the private with the authentic" (Michals 192), insist upon semiotic identicality—which will become, as we will see, the characteristic epistemology of the American sentimental novel.

I have mentioned that attempts to legislate representation's relation to reality have often consorted with one another: laws regulating apparel have usually gone hand-in-hand with laws regulating theater. However, the eighteenth century in America offers a particularly illuminating exception to this linkage. American sumptuary laws passed in the mid-eighteenth century had little to do with regulating the relation of representation to reality on the stage. Instead, these sumptuary laws attempted to regulate *racial* representation: to make race, and its tagalong, status, visible for all non-whites.

Sumptuary laws essentially ended (except for a few motivated by economic protectionism) in England by 1607, when the American colonies were just beginning their attempts to legislate dress. These late sumptuary regulations in America were in part a response to America's social fluidity, its lack of a fixed social system—exactly the problem that sumptuary laws are designed to fix: sumptuary laws, which are found "only in cultures where it is possible to disguise one's status via clothing" (Earle, "Shoes," 187), are "rarely, if ever, associated with stable relations of hieratic domination, but [are] a product of circumstances in which a hieratic social order has come under internal pressure" (Hunt, *Governance* 105). The very lateness of the colonial sumptuary laws, then, indicates that the laws were a holding action,

a response to boundaries already being crossed: "sumptuary legislation was considered necessary during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries precisely in order to control […] unsanctioned personal transformation via dress," and these laws peaked in America during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries because this was "precisely the period when […] it was considered possible, even easy, for non-elites to succeed in imitating elite dress" (Earle, "Shoes," 187).

These late sumptuary laws, however, did not target socially ambitious white colonists; the sartorial transformations aimed at were, apparently, *racial* transformations. The latest-passed, and longest-lasting, sumptuary laws in the American colonies were those regulating the clothing of slaves. For example, South Carolina passed sumptuary acts in 1735 and 1740 (both nearly a century and a half after the end of sumptuary legislation in England) stipulating that "many of the slaves of this Province wear clothes above the condition of slaves" (quoted in Robson 499). While these laws do express the typical attempt to ensure what Hunt calls "recognizability," or the idea that (as Cotton Mather said in 1694) "the Ranks of People should be discerned by their Clothes" (quoted in Hunt, *Governance* 109), they have a special concern that *slave* status be sartorially recognizable. At the moment when the idea of self-making takes hold in white culture—remember Benjamin Franklin as a young printer, carefully crafting his public image-- a strong anxiety appears around the congruence of racial appearance and racial reality.[31]

[31] As Mattingly argues, ""Dress was considered a proper means of keeping free blacks in their place" (11). Mattingly also notes the preoccupation with sumptuary laws in classic American literature: "Although most states had never officially instituted sumptuary laws, the Americas had, in fact, a long de facto history of such injunctions, and notions about such regulation permeated the culture. Popular New England literature often referenced earlier sumptuary laws. In Catharine Maria Sedgwick's early popular historical novel, Hope Leslie, Reverend Cotton announced a 'sumptuary regulation' (165), and Everell Fletcher warns Sir Philip Gardner that the colony's sumptuary laws might 'prove inconvenient' to Roslin (128). Similarly, Nathaniel Hawthorne suggests in *The Scarlet Letter* that Hester Prynne violated Puritan sumptuary laws" (11).

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries' obsession with authenticity and sincerity is a coded version of a racial worry. Across the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, race in America became increasingly biologized—seen as a fixed, inherited category that was not subject to performativity.[32] And this biologization of race coincides almost exactly with the brief renaissance of the sentimental epistemology of sincerity that, as we have seen, conducted a holding action against performativity and artifice. It is almost as though slavery in America was a last attempt to assert a Platonic-style denigration of representation as fundamentally inauthentic. By denying sartorial performativity only to blacks, however, American epistemology paints itself into a corner, for it is this desire for racial sincerity —the near-biologization of black apparel —that leads to the uneasy coexistence of the two seemingly incommensurable ideas that characterize the antebellum era and its literature: the performative model that funds the American dream and the performance-as-deception model that underpins American sentimentalism's demand for semantic identicality. The first, the incipient American dream, expresses an ideology of self-making and values both performance and performativity

[32] This was clearly instrumental in America, where the black population increased as quickly as the white population. Other colonies with black slavery were, for various reasons, dependent on slave imports—the slave population did not sustain itself, and certainly did not increase. In America, though, according to David Brion Davis, there were many areas where there was a positive growth rate for slaves. In these areas where slaves were increasing their numbers through reproduction, and even began to outnumber the whites, there was intense worry about entire colonies slowly turning black: in Virginia in the 1760s white inhabitants were "increasingly terrified by the rapid growth of the slave population" (Davis 134). Davis also argues that many Caribbean or Iberian colonies became mixed-race societies, with a "large free colored class, which enjoyed privileges denied to blacks" (Davis 134), as in Saint-Domingue. The difference here is that slavery was not purely race-based; in other words, blacks had access to performativity, to some ways to change their lot. In America, in contrast, blacks' lot was entirely fixed and not able to be changed through acquisition of wealth or social respect or anything else. Davis argues that the concern that blacks would out-populate whites (superadded to the continuing specter of Haiti and other black revolutions) contributed to the hardening of the color line: "In the Chesapeake, all people of African ancestry were increasingly seen and defined as 'Negro'" (Davis 134).

(both concepts that rely upon a gap, or difference, between representation and reality). The second, the antebellum obsession with sincerity and the nearly obsessive fear of deceptive figures (Halttunen's confidence man and painted woman) expresses instead an insistence that people represent themselves truly: that people be who they appear to be. The mid-eighteenth-century American sumptuary laws thus encode something more than the simple anxiety about class mobility and ambition that we saw in the English early modern era, or even the ontological anxiety about representation itself. These American sumptuary laws encode precisely the sentimental novel's insistence that sign be identical with referent.

The special concern given by the American sumptuary laws to the recognizability of slave status through dress thus indicates an interesting paradox: laws regulating black dress, limiting its transformative potential, are passed at precisely the moment that white culture begins to fully embrace dress's performative power. In other words, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century marks both the beginning of the ideology of the self-made man, which depends on a kind of aspirational self-image (reaching above one's station then making that one's station) and the simultaneous rise of the culture of sincerity and authenticity, which rejects the idea that one's self-representation be anything other than what one truly is (Halttunen). The paradox here—on the one hand, accepting performativity in the figure of the self-made man, and on the other, rejecting the very mechanism of performativity, which depends upon a gap between the representation and reality—is rooted in a fear of black performativity. Slave clothing must

accurately represent its wearer's "real" racial identity.[33] American self-making did not—could not—apply to blacks.

By the 1820s, when most people who are not free are black, we see the beginning of the hardening of racial categories and the increasing biologization of race, both of which deny performativity to blacks. Blacks could not change their status; a slave's condition, by definition, is "lifelong and hereditary" servitude (Prude 139). And economically speaking, a runaway slave could not be read as attempting to realize his own American dream, because he was stealing property from his master: himself, and all the potential labor of his or her future children, who will also be unable to access the famed American social mobility: "For mulattoes and Negroes, all rights were rooted in the past, in remote African ancestry. Ancestry alone determined status, which was fixed. A Negro could not buy out of her assigned race; she could not marry out of it, nor were her children released from its taint" (Hickman 1179). It was thus crucial in the antebellum era to be able to recognize who was and was not black. Since blackness was identified with slavery, the racial body needed to be absolutely legible to whites, and whites must be able to unerringly visually identify race. This demand that appearance match reality is no longer motivated by the religious and philosophical concerns of the Puritans and the Greeks, nor by the political and social concerns of the colonists. The appeal to race as a visible, stable marker

[33] David Brion Davis also connects slave labor to the American dream: in the North, he says, "white workers increasingly resented the competition from slave workers and the way that slavery degraded most forms of labor. Skilled workers were especially sensitive to this kind of stigma by the mid-1700s, a time when Northerners began a long quest to ennoble physical labor. […] In urban centers like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, this gradual reevaluation of white "ambition," leading to the birth of what would later be termed "the American dream," helped to weaken the foundations of slavery. It also intensified the fumes of racism" (Davis, *Problem* 131). What Davis is tracing here is what I will examine in slightly different terms: the way that sartorial and other performativities, which are denied to blacks during slavery, are also used to chip away at the "peculiar institution."

of status is not a religious appeal to a visible natural order, but a fundamentally secular attempt to align representation with reality for an *economic* reason: keeping owned property intact (Barrett 318). For slaveholders, it was economically crucial that blacks be what they seemed and be recognizable as what they were.

Sentimental racial transparency: black dress and the one-drop rule

But what *were* black Americans? What is one's "real" racial identity? This question vexed the American law for over a century; vats of ink have been spilled tracing the development of what would eventually be called the "one-drop rule." The name itself is so familiar that it seems as though the nineteenth-century American apologia for slavery—the idea that blacks and whites were fundamentally different, perhaps even different species, and that differences in the blood of the races has always been biological and natural —has existed since the colonies' founding. In a way it has, but in the very early years of the American colonies, there seems to have been no overwhelming concern about racial identities, as there would be later; racial categories in the early American colonies were (as they would remain in other, especially Iberian, colonies, such as Portugal and Brazil) more capacious and flexible than we might expect, given later racial attitudes. For example, Virginia and Maryland enacted their early statutes against interracial sex and miscegenation, not to foreclose the possibility of interracial sex, but in an attempt to check the enthusiastic race-mixing already occurring (Hickman 1173). Colonists were from the very beginning producing mixed-race children. But, as Hickman further notes, the hardening of the color line also began relatively early. In 1656, Virginia began treated mixed-race people as black; not coincidentally, this happens "just as race-based slavery was

taking a firm hold" (1174). The concern that there by fixed invisible racial boundaries of blood, and that these be reflected in fixed *visible* boundaries of color, was thus from the beginning an economic one: America needed race to be a visible and unchangeable marker of one's legal status.[34] This was not the case in other colonial societies that had mixed racial backgrounds; America's very early, and very brief, race-blindness lasted far longer in other colonies, especially Latin American and some Caribbean colonies. These other colonies are found by historian Rebecca Earle to have had far more flexible ideas of racial constitution, and to allow for far more sartorial performativity among blacks, than did the American colonies. As Earle shows, until the late eighteenth century, race in Latin America was thought to be partly cultural and class-based, and could therefore be established (in part) by clothes: "clothing helped create identity, particularly racial identity" (189). By the middle of the nineteenth century, though, even in these colonial societies that *had* Davis's large class of free blacks, dress "had lost much of this ability […]. Instead, clothing was thought to reflect, more or less accurately, existing class and racial identities" (Earle 189).

[34] While concerns about racial purity had been encoded in Iberian legal systems' *limpieza de sangre* laws since the fifteenth century (Davis, *Problem*; Sweet), the sense of blackness as a purely biological characteristic —racial science—did not emerge until the middle of the eighteenth century. According to literary scholar Nicholas Hudson, racial science could not appear until after the late-seventeenth-century secularization, which allowed scientists to pluck man from his supernatural position as made in the image of God himself, and to insert him instead into the taxonomies they were building of the natural world. After secularization, man became continuous with the natural world, and was thus subject to the same taxonomical urges that were being enacted in disciplines like geology, biology, and anthropology. See Hudson. For more on taxonomy and classification obsessions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see, for example, Bowler and Burkhardt.) Additionally, the new racial science put increasing pressure on explanations for racial differences; the ongoing debate between polygenism and monogenism in which Louis Agassiz was such a visible player was a last vestige of the overlapping of religious "natural philosophy" and the newly secular and empirical rational science of the eighteenth century.

As Earle's research indicates, and for reasons that seem clear in the context of demographic research conducted by historian Aaron S. Fogleman, it became centrally important in the nineteenth century that blacks, especially, not be able to remake themselves into elites; their labor was simply too necessary. Nearly from the American colonies' inception, the economy depended upon unfree labor; however, this unfree labor was not identified as *black* labor until the early nineteenth century. According to Fogleman, almost three-quarters of immigrants that arrived between the settling of Jamestown and the Revolution were unfree, and these unfree workers were the backbone of the emerging economy: indentured servants in the North, prisoners and convicts in Maryland, small-farm slave labor in the mid-Atlantic, and large-plantation slave labor of the deep South all provided cheap, bound labor. Yet the race of this mass of unfree workers is quite heterogeneous; from 1607-1700, only a tiny percentage of immigrants were Africans, meaning the great majority of unfree immigrants were Europeans. From 1700-1775, almost half of the immigrants were Africans, and of the Europeans that make up the rest, only about half are unfree. And between the Revolution and the end of slave importation in 1808, only 4% of the total immigrants are unfree Europeans, while one-third of the total immigrants are Africans.[35]

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[35] See Fogleman; see also Davis (132-140), who links changing immigration and labor patterns to England's political and economic situation. According to Fogleman, the numbers of types of labor change significantly from the founding of the colonies to the end of slave importation. Generally, Fogleman finds that in the first century of the colonies, Africans are a small category (17%) and that 50% of the total immigrants are unfree Europeans. From 1700 to the Revolution, Fogleman finds that of a much larger set of immigrants (immigration almost tripled in this century), 48% are Africans, and free and unfree Europeans are nearly equal (26.5% and 25.8%, respectively). Of the period from the Revolution to the end of slave importation, 30% of the total immigrants are Africans, and only 4% of total immigrants are unfree Europeans. From 1607-1699, of a total of 198,400 immigrants, Europeans made up 83% (165,200). Of these European immigrants, 40% were free, and 60% (98,900) were unfree: indentured servants or convicts and prisoners. Only 33,200 Africans entered the colonies during this period: about 17% of total immigration. In contrast, the period from 1700 to the Revolutionary War saw approximately equal numbers of

These trends make it fairly clear that color was not a reliable sign of one's status as free or unfree until at least the time of the Revolution. It was during this earlier period of multi-racial servitude that Earle's claims for racial performativity obtain; her research into the sugar colonies of the Caribbean indicates that in the mid-1700s, blacks wearing elite dress were admired, and that at this time in New Amsterdam "Hair and skin color had not yet become a symbol of inherent degradation" (Davis 128). By 1820, though, white-appearing people were generally free, and black-appearing people were generally assumed to be unfree. It is at this same moment that Earle finds that "it was no longer considered possible to alter one's race via luxurious dress. On the contrary, as we have seen, attempts by non-whites to dress well were regarded as ludicrous failures. Legislation was no longer necessary to control such transparent deceits" (Earle, "Shoes," 189). In other words, race was now, in the early antebellum period, seen as both a stable marker of status and also as a visible trait, one that could be identified without doubt by an observer.

Epidermalizing clothes, biologizing race

The absolute centrality of the notion that black appearance must be aligned with racial reality is condensed in the advertisements for runaway slaves. These advertisements indicate that slaveholders saw blacks' appearance—even fungible items such as dress—as perfectly fixed and

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Europeans and Africans entering the colonies, and the European immigrants were nearly evenly divided between free and unfree immigrants. From 1700-1775, immigration was 52% European and 48% African; of the European immigrants, a little more than half (51%) were unfree and a little less than half (49%) were free. unfree immigrants made up almost 60% of immigration, with free European immigrants making up the other 40%. From 1776-1809, 70% of the total immigrants (273,200 of 387,800) were European, and of those, the great majority (93%) were free immigrants. There were 114,600 Africans imported during this period — not quite 30% of the total immigrants. The slave trade was made illegal in 1808, but by this time, of course, the institution was self-sustaining; slaves were reproducing and their offspring were also enslaved.

as instantly recognizable. The ads, which sought the return of runaway slaves through their recognition, describe various elements of the runaways' appearance. While historian Jonathan Prude finds that thirteen common descriptive categories are used in the ads (sex, height, age, complexion, weight, hair/hair color, speech, movement, shape of face, mouth/teeth, eye color, nose, ears), the most detailed descriptions are consistently descriptions of runaway slaves' *clothing*. Runaways were "consistently depicted more through clothing than through any other attributes" (Prude 143). Nearly 76% of the runaway ads mention clothing, and clothing is described with a peculiar intensity: the "average number of clothing items mentioned for each runaway (9.6) was more than twice the average number of physical characteristics cited (4.6) and more than 25% higher than the average number (7.2) of all non-clothing features" (Prude 143). Prude sums up the role of dress in slaves' recognition and return: "It is impossible to overstate the role of dress in these advertisements" (Prude 142).

This points to an odd dichotomy. On the one hand, slaveholders seem to assume that runaways will not attempt to change how they look—that they will not try to deceive people who could return them to captivity; slave clothes as represented in advertisements seem to carry in their pockets an assumption that the clothes are as much part of the runaways as their skins, and are as unlikely to be changed. Yet these ads seem to have simultaneously been operating under the permanent assumption that runaways are masterful deceivers and old hands at misrepresentation: born confidence men, naturally artful. According to Prude, runaways were "widely accused of active masquerades" (156) in the ads. Masters publishing advertisements imagine the sorts of deceptions or performances in which the runaways might engage: they anticipate them changing their names, faking documents, even posing as ministers to escape

(157). Yet, oddly, Prude notes that only 4% of the ads posited that the runaway slaves might change their costumes. How strange. It was, of course, not easy for runaways to find different clothes to change into, for clothes were expensive, and, according to some scholars, clothing's scarcity is enough to explain its use as a fixed descriptor, enough to explain the seeming exact congruence posited between appearance and self: "since few people had an extensive wardrobe, describing the clothes was as good as describing the man or woman" (Waldstreicher 252). Yet, according to Prude, more runaway slaves took clothes with them than anything else: they "took extra clothing more often than tools, weapons, money (though some garments were doubtless exchanged for supplies), or even food" (154). Slaves, then, likely had the means to change their clothes on the run. Some ads, of course, acknowledged this possibility: "it was precisely to transform their 'looks' (so the ads speculated) that some fugitives took or stole extra apparel" (Prude 157). But this does not, by itself, explain satisfactorily for me the masters' fixation on the fixity of slave clothing.

It was not that masters had no other distinguishing characteristics to offer about their runaways slaves, for most masters would know every "peculiar mark" or distinguishing attribute of their slaves' bodies; according to Prude, masters looked over slaves very carefully when they bought them, which "afforded masters considerable expertise about their runaways' physiques" (Prude 141). (Indeed, forty of the ads he analyzed described scars in places normally covered by clothes.) Yet still, runaways are described primarily in terms of their clothes, not in terms of their bodies.[36] This points, I believe, to an almost biological understanding of slave clothing, an

[36] See Greene; Morgan and Rushton; Robson; Waldstreicher; Prude; and Fifield.

understanding of slave clothing as a stable sign, as much a biological fact as skin pigmentation.[37] (This is another version of the contemporaneous idea that physical appearance was in a fixed alignment with character and with biology; the assumption that underpins phrenology, criminal physiognomy, scientific racism, and other kinds of pseudo-science that would increase in popularity over the nineteenth century.) Slave clothes, like slave bodies, were seen as a kind of permanent signification; the performativity of dress, and its changeableness, were repudiated or ignored. Skin pigmentation, as unstable a marker of racial status as dress, was also treated as a stable sign of social, economic, and legal status. The idea that one's appearance matches reality is expressed by several literary characters of the period, such as *Iola Leroy's* Dr. Latrobe, who have an uncanny ability to see through racial deceptions: "Harper mocks [Latrobe] for declaring, mistakenly, that to practiced eyes 'there are tricks of blood which always betray' white niggers" (Foreman 521). Yet, despite the buttress offered by scientific racism, the assumption that race was always visible on the skin became increasingly untenable across the nineteenth century, and the epistemological changes that this shift materializes are easily traced through the history of legal wrangling over how slaves were to be defined (Sharfstein). The idea that identity is visible,

[37] Mimi Thi Nguyen calls this process the epidermalization of dress and examines how "profiling surfaces," especially sartorial surfaces, is deployed in relation to minority groups. See "Epidermalization of the Public Body: Archipelago with Mimi Thi Nguyen" and "Profiling Surfaces by Mimi Thi Nguyen." Similarly, Barrett argues that whites see blacks as identical with their sartorial self-representations; there is a white failure to imagine the black body, or the black dress, *as* signifiers, as a sign and a referent with a distance between them, however slight. Barrett argues that black bodies do not *signify*, for they are seen as only material and corporeal; white bodies are the only bodies that can be read (Barrett 320). However, this sense of dress as an attribute of the human body is not limited to black dress; many nineteenth-century writers treated dress as though it were a physical attribute of the wearer. Darwin, Charles Darwin's son, uses the principles of evolution discovered by his father and applies them to dress, as though dress were a living animal, comparing the cyclical nature to sexual selection. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, too, sees clothes as part of our evolutionary process; she says that, like the pelt of an animal, clothing evolves with us: "It grows on us, socially, as theirs grow on them individually" (Gilman 2).

and that "blood would generally manifest itself in an easily discernable (and legally dispositive) manner" (Sharfstein 628), depends on the idea that representation and reality should and must be identical —sentimental epistemology at work. This idea, however, gives way in the courts to interior and genealogical models of race in which blackness becomes invisible; this internalization of race transfers the burden of racial signification from black bodies to black *dress*, despite dress's significatory mobility —a process that Mimi Thi Nguyen calls the epidermalization of race (Nguyen).[38] This helps to explain the runaway slave ads' odd dependence on descriptions of easily-changed clothing: black dress becomes fixed, the visible marker of race.[39]

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[38] Early legal decisions about slave status assumed two things: that blackness signified slave status, and that slave status entailed visible blackness. In other words, race was visible, and visible racialized signs were enough to determine legal status. For example, 1835's Hudgins v. Wright bases its decision on how white the defendant or plaintiff *looks*: "the burden of proving or disproving free descent would be based on appearance —white and/or Native American appearance created a presumption of freedom, while African appearance created a presumption of slavery" (Sharfstein 621). It was, then, only after racial appearance created a presumption of either slave status or freedom that evidence would be accepted about the person's history: "once the burden was established, the court required substantive proof of free or slave status through testimony regarding maternal ancestry" (Sharfstein 621). In other words, according to the court, *looks* were more important than maternal slave status in fixing one's status as enslaved or free. (In this case, the white-appearing plaintiffs were freed despite evidence that, the three generations of women suing, as well as two immediately prior generations of women, had been born to enslaved mothers —the usual criterion for slave status (622-623).) Both these assumptions, however—that black meant slave status, and that slaves looked black--turned out to be wrong. Light-skinned blacks could pass as white; Ellen Craft played the role of a slaveowner convincingly enough to ride first-class to freedom. Later court decisions, taking into account the difficulty of identifying race visually, turned from appearance-based judgments to quantum theories of race: they instituted the one-drop rule or hypodescent, which moves race from the body's surface to its interior and to its past, to the biological and genealogical level. Race becomes invisible, and "the harder it was to tell white from black, the more necessary it would be to devise an uncompromising criterion beyond visual appearance to maintain white supremacy" (Earle, "Shoes" 628). As Earle points out, when race moves from a visible, surface characteristic—one that is relatively easily read and modified—to a biological, internal characteristic, it is increasingly fixed. This has epistemological consequences; it undercuts the sentimental insistence that a sign and its referent be identical, and it also entails a new kind of suspicious reading—reading for the hidden, rather than for the visible (the very antithesis of surface reading).

[39] Prude argues that "genteel" white folk were reluctant to really look at a black body; the genteel "tended to visually conflate all those below them into broad groupings of nongenteel and to limit their 'regard' for these inferiors" (Prude 133). Prude points out that the descriptions of the runaway slaves are intended to get them back and so give physical visible things; in contrast, "The descriptions gentlemen and ladies created of one another not only usually

Yet the convenient fixing of black dress led to an epistemological tangle. As slaveowners passed laws to control black dress, both negative injunctions (proscribing certain items of dress in order to deny blacks access to dress that might increase their status) and positive injunctions (prescribing what should be worn in an attempt to shape behavior), we find that they were relying on dress's performative power even in their attempt to deny that mode of performativity to blacks. The positive injunctions are a form of what Philippe Perrot refers to as a "pedagogy of dress," which relies on the idea that dress shapes behavior: as Booker T. Washington put it, "no white American ever thinks that any other race is wholly civilized until he wears the white man's clothes" (quoted in Foster 21). According to Philippe Perrot, this racialized pedagogy of dress originated among anthropologists, who believed that Western clothing would civilize the "savages" that they encountered; bourgeois norms would be internalized from bourgeois dress, working from the skin inward like a Nessus shirt. This position (which anticipates Foucault's explanation of how discipline operates) indicates that the dominant classes tried to control dress's performative power for its own benefit in all its dealings with the Other. In the anthropological context, dress was made to profit both social and economic imperialism: the savage would "have his moral standards raised by being made to wear the external signs of a morality later internalized by the symbolic and social profit extracted from displaying these signs" (Perrot 75). Anthropologist Henry Stanley wanted to clothe the Africans, but his impulse did not stem from Christ's moral injunction to clothe the naked; instead, Stanley's version is an economic injunction, one that both Westernizes the native population and

subordinated visible attributes to character but also used external features more to certify gentility than to insure recognizability" (Prude 134).

opens new market for British textiles (Perrot 79). And of course, dress's performativity was not used only against blacks, but also against the lower classes, in Europe especially; as Perrot says, ready-to-wear bourgeois clothing "became crucial in the spreading of bourgeois norms, for those ready-to-wear copies became pedagogical instruments of deportment and morality" outside the middle class itself (72). On the poor, ready-to-wear clothes "acted as mental orthopedics" (Perrot 74); like philosopher Andy Clark's concept of "scaffolding" (in which language and the material world help to shape our identities by containing them), ready-to-wear clothing shaped the lower-class body's gestures and postures, forcing the internalization of genteel norms, and thereby formed the characters of the poor. By controlling slave dress, whites thought to control slave bodies and slave minds.[40]

Of course, these attempts at sartorial pedagogy did not work on African tribesmen or American blacks, neither of whom wished to internalize and adopt bourgeois white norms of dress and aesthetics.[41] Black people wanted to fashion their own selves, and despite the legal, economic, and material constraints on slaves' access to textiles and to the leisure time to fashion their own garments, this desire is clearly expressed in nearly every firsthand account of slave dress. Slave women were responsible for the majority of textile production on large plantations,

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[40] Helen Bradley Foster notes that all captured Africans were stripped as a sign of their enslavement: "just as the human being may be embodied through clothing, so too may the body be deprived of its humanness by stripping it of its clothing" (Foster 69). This is why prisoners and army recruits have their personal clothes, the things that signify their individuality, removed and uniforms substituted: when an institution wants to fashion someone in their own image, it takes away the tools of self-fashioning. See Joseph; Nathan; Spooner; and Craik, *Uniforms Exposed*.

[41] Nor did European lower classes; see, for example, Kathy Peiss's *Cheap Amusements* on early-twentieth-century immigrant working girls' loud fashions, flaunted against Hull House's reform workers' attempts to tame them into bourgeois girls; see also Angela Partington's examination of working-class style as a rebellion against genteel styles of post-World War II England.

and often also were responsible for making all slave clothing.[42] This was a big job: "keeping the enslaved people clothed was a constant worry" (83). The labor involved in producing the number of garments needed to clothe all the slaves on a plantation was enormous, and this may explain the skimpiness of much slave attire: children often wore nothing but a "tow" (cheap, tough, home-carded, -spun, and –woven linen cloth) shirt. (Booker T. Washington famously meditated on the mortification of the body that breaking in these cheap cloth shirts occasioned: "The most trying ordeal that I was forced to endure as a slave boy…was the wearing of a flax shirt. […] It is almost equal to the feeling that one would experience if he had a dozen or more chestnut burrs, or a hundred small pin-points, in contact with his flesh" (quoted in Foster 91).) Yet the clothes slaves wore on Sundays, their own time, were individual, stylish, colorful, and personal. Despite the lack of leisure time and the fact that many slave women spent their days making clothes, dress was important enough to them that they also spent their nights sewing: "the whole process of clothes-making—the fashioning from cast-off clothing and scraps of material of something that was of cultural importance to the slaves, the spinning, weaving, dyeing, and sewing typically completed in poorly lit cabins after a day's work in the fields or around the Big House, and the infusing of all this with an African-American aesthetic sensibility—was almost entirely the achievement of slave women" (White and White 25). This activity was in itself communal and community-building, and in its rejection of white middle-class aesthetics—and of the "sartorial pedagogy" they intended to instill—slaves were able to assert their own individual personhood.

[42] On smaller farms there was no room to raise the land-hungry textile crops like flax or cotton from which slave clothing was produced. There was plenty of manufactured "negro cloth" for sale in grades considered suitable, in price and wear, for slave clothing: osnaburg, denim, fustian, linsey-woolsey. See White and White 8-9.

These sartorial selves, rather quietly asserted during the antebellum years at weddings, funerals, slave celebrations, and Sunday churchgoing, were publically and proudly asserted by ex-slaves and free blacks after the War. As Shane White and Graham White explain, free blacks' public flaunting of their own hybrid styles, inflected by African color and design traditions and heedless of white middle-class genteel sartorial norms, were met with a mixture of ridicule and perturbation by whites: yet, as Foster notes, "if the viewer is sometimes confused or disturbed by the style of dress, perhaps this in itself signifies an important purpose" (Foster 219). Blacks' assertion of their own cultural style and taste was intended to highlight their aesthetic independence from whites.[43] (This refusal of white sartorial discipline would continue: through the zoot suits of the 1930s and 40s, the low-riding pants of the 1990s and 2000s, and today's hoodies.) This is important because black style is not a failed imitation of white style (though that is often how it is read, even now); it is a parody, a subversion, that was not necessarily intended to participate in or mimic the prevailing norms of gentility. Semiotically speaking, then, black style is not a failed Platonic imitation of white style; it is instead an innovation, a new, original thing in itself.

Staging black performance and performativity

As if in response to the end of slavery, and to the withdrawing of attempts to legislate black self-representation, the end of the Civil War saw a sharp increase in the number of black stage performers in minstrel shows; black theatrical performance publicly and visibly staged the

[43] See White and White, Chapter 4: "Dandies and Dandizettes," 85-124.

problem that black bodies posed for sentimental sartorial semiotics. The idea of black performers playing blackface parts at first seemed to audiences entirely natural; after all, thought whites, they were practically playing themselves on stage — barely acting at all. These black blackface performances made it seem that the actor was the same as his part: they presented a kind of semiotic identicality that was delicious to sentimental audiences. These black self-imitations were seen as a form of mimicry, and were the only type of performance open to early black performers.[44] According to Harryette Mullen, whites coded black performance as simple imitation precisely in order to limit black access to performativity; for Mullen, black performance, including racial passing, is an attempt to leverage performativity, to move "from the margin to the center of American identity" (77), and when white audiences read these minstrel performances as staging only blacks' imitative or deceptive nature, they betrayed their fear of black performativity.[45] As Mullen notes, racial performativity is "almost invariably interpreted as inauthenticity when managed by an African-American," while the same performativity is seen as "an exemplary instance of cultural assimilation" when European immigrants pull it off (Mullen 77). In other words, according to Mullen, whites read blacks as deceptive or inauthentic *precisely in order* to deny them agency and performativity; blacks' performances were read as deceptive rather than performative to keep them marginalized. This

[44] See Glenn, "'Give an Imitation of Me': Vaudeville Mimics and the Play of the Self" for an exploration of the links between mimicry and performativity for female performers.

[45] This white concern with black theatrical performance's deceptiveness is, I think, in part grounded in part in the worry that the historical black performance of deference to whites was hiding a very real threat: consider *Benito Cereno*'s Babo, or the ways that John Brown and the slaves of the Haitian revolution of 1791-1804 were imagined. See Scott for more on black performance of deference in America.

reenacts the distinction between Halttunen's confidence man and the Alger-style self-made man, but in racialized terms; as Mullen makes clear, while the role of the self-made man was available to many immigrant groups, blacks were cast in the role of the deceptive confidence man.

Yet, as theater scholar Karen Sotiropolous argues, the phenomenon of black actors performing in minstrel shows revised the idea of black performance as simply "natural" self-imitation. By addressing both white and black audiences simultaneously, the performers made visible the artifice of performance itself; black actors also tempered the shows' inherent racism by downplaying many of the racist stereotypes they contained. To put Sotiropoulos's findings into the terms of this project, the idea of black performers playing blackface parts at first seemed to audiences entirely natural; after all, thought whites, they were simply imitating themselves. But as these performers revised the racist stereotypes of the minstrel shows, and as they made their double appeals to their multiple audiences, the performers increasingly displayed their *distance* from the parts they played. Thus, by introducing into their performances the distance between signifier and referent that artifice always demands, these black performers destabilized the difference between the natural and the artificial. Or, to put it another way, by enacting W.E.B Dubois's double consciousness on stage, black performers brought together the experience of the African-American and of the actor (double consciousness, as we will see, being equally the ontological state of both).[46]

[46] Black performance raised the fear that blacks could manipulate the gap between self-representation and self for their own ends. This awareness of the representational gap is, according to W.E.B. Dubois, the characteristic experience of being black in America. Dubois calls this "double consciousness," and for him it is always a function of blacks' double awareness of their own interiors and a simultaneous sense of how whites view them from outside: "Dubois's veil, another figure for double consciousness, means always looking at the self through eyes of others" (Sotiropoulos location 65). Whites wanted to see the black body, not as a sign to be read (which entails semiotic

These black entertainers' sophisticated play with the racist stereotypes thus doubled (through acting) their already-present racial double consciousness; African-Americans, who were always aware of and controlling their public self-presentations lest they be seen as insufficiently deferent, enacted on the stage their intense awareness of the split between the visible performance and the "real self." As Sotiropoulos puts it, these performers were "hyperconscious of the veil, of that 'peculiar sensation' that Du Bois had described during the same years of 'always looking at one's self through the eyes of others'" (Sotiropoulos 75-76). The distance between blacks' own internal perceptions of themselves and whites' perception of them was foregrounded in the context of the theater; onstage, these performers were "hyperconscious of how much their self-presentation on stage would be read through stereotype" (Sotiropoulos 169). The performers "consciously used racist stereotypes in their performances" on stage in order to subvert and revise them: they did so "in part to distance themselves from these images, since it was abundantly clear (at least to themselves and their black audiences) that they were *performing* these roles, not embracing them as representative behavior" (169-172). Black minstrel performers thus used the distance between themselves and their roles "to expose the fictions within the imagery" (169-172).

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distance between the representation and the original), but as an object —unitary, semiotically identical with its representation Barrett 332. Stephanie Camp notes a similar sense of racially-constructed self-distance in Franz Fanon's work: "Describing the consequences of European colonialism on twentieth-century Africans' somatic experiences, Frantz Fanon wrote: '[I]n the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty.' Caught in the white gaze, Fanon argued, blacks were 'sealed in that crushing objecthood'" (Camp 539). Nahum Chandler, in "Originary Displacement," has argued that double consciousness is not limited to blacks, but is characteristic of the American condition more broadly.

Yet at the same time that they exposed the fictionality of black stereotypes, black performers in minstrel performances marketed themselves as more authentic than white actors. This play with authenticity as a guarantor for a performance exemplifies the problem with the sincerity culture that Halttunen examines; the linkage between the natural and the performed—which turns upon self-awareness--explains why sentimental culture was an unsustainable interlude in a long history (traced in this chapter) of the double awareness of the power of both representation/performance and authenticity/reality. Ironically, of course, it is precisely in the quest for authenticity that the *performance* of authenticity becomes more important than whatever the non-performing state might be; we have arrived back at Diderot's "second nature" by way of the racialized sentimental obsession with authenticity and naturalness. The attempt to be sincere all the time, and to always make the outside match the inside, itself became a kind of deception; the emphasis on naturalness meant that the natural contained elements of the artificial. Naturalness shades into the performance of naturalness.[47] In other words, whites' obsession with sentimental authenticity and its demands for semiotic identicality, which they used to keep blacks from accessing the performative power of appearance, pushed black performers even farther into performativity. In black minstrel theater, then, there is a layering upon layering of performed African-American identity that contributes to sincerity's implosion; when the sign is dizzyingly the same as yet different from the referent, it produces a kind of *mise en abîme* of semiotic identicality.

[47] This is increased by new technologies of seeing the self that emerge in the nineteenth century, including new technologies of photography and the increasing availability of mirrors. See Hollander, *Seeing*; Melchior-Bonnet; Kasson, *Perfect Man*; and Trachtenberg, *Reading*.

Defining novelistic sentimentalism

Racial representation in America frustrates the sentimental desire for semiotic identicality that undergirds the American sentimental novel from its inception up through the end of the Civil War.[48] While American sentimentalism is usually defined somatically and affectively, as the notion that affect or emotion can be directly transferred to the reader's body through the text in order to effect changes in feeling, and through feeling, behavior, I wish to argue for a different reading of sentimentalism. What sentimentalism wants is collapse: of the signifier and the referent, of the reader's and the character's experience, of the experiences of readers into one another. Even those scholars of sentimentalism most focused on this direct transmission of readerly sensation often discuss it in semiotic terms. Marianne Noble, for example, focuses on the textual transmission of physical, embodied feeling—usually painful feeling—experienced by the sentimental reader in her important essay "The Ecstasies of Sentimental Wounding in *Uncle Tom's Cabin,*" yet Noble and all her respondents to "Ecstasies" share an implicit focus on the collapse of semiotic boundaries: between the author, the text, the character, the reader.[49] Noble discusses the "[a]nxiety over the gap between representation and affect [which] pervades *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (Noble, "Response," 162); Hendler defines sentimentalism as the "fantasy of experiential equivalence" (Hendler, "Structure," 147); Michelle Massè calls sentimental

[48] For an exploration of the beginnings of the "epistemological gap" in sentimentalism, see Bennett. For the developments and changes between the eighteenth century sentimental novel and the nineteenth century sentimental novel, see Fluck. For the differences in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sentimentalism, see, for example, Marshall; Solomon; Chandler, *Archaeology*; and Noble.

[49] Noble's insistence on the reader's physical sense of emotional pain, transferred from the wounded character to the reader through the novel, is the subject of a fascinating exchange of responses in the *Yale Journal of Criticism*. See Noble as the original; for responses see also Masse; Barnes, "Response"; and Hendler, "Structure."

connections "affiliations based on incorporation of or merger with an other" (Masse 158); and Elizabeth Barnes sees all these strange sentimental mergings leading to what she calls "the ambiguity of the status of the real" in sentimentalism (Barnes, "Response," 323-324). In this foundational exchange, then, these critics all restate in various ways the same problem: sentimentalism's desire for semiotic identicality undergirds its impulse to collapse the sign and the referent, the representation and the real. (As we will see later, sentimentalism's demand for merging will be met in naturalism and realism by a kind of bracketing, distancing response, a theatrically-derived framing which prevents this semiotic, affective, and identic collapse.)

Sympathy, the nineteenth-century notion of direct emotional connection between people that grounds sentimentalism's model of semiotic collapse, was assumed to operate through the novel from its inception (the novel generally considered the first American novel was titled *The Power of Sympathy)*. The sentimental novel depends upon sympathy to connect with its readers, but its deployment of sympathy is the source of both its early promise and the antebellum distrust it inspired. Immediately after the Revolution, the novel was, according to literary historian Richard Bell, championed as the ideal educative agent for the new democracy; the novel was to train the new citizens' capacity for sensibility and, by moving their feelings, instill in them moral sentiment. But Bell finds that, beginning in the mid-1780s, this euphoric embrace of the novel turns to a worry about readers' over-identification with the novel, especially in response to 1774's extremely popular *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Apparently, says Bell, early proponents of the novel, such as Benjamin Rush, felt that Goethe's text disarticulated sentiment from morality: "Goethe, [Rush] believed, had broken the cherished link between sensibility and charity, and betrayed the sacred covenant between author and reader by misusing the much-

trumpeted power of sympathetic identification to stir up affection for wholly undeserving characters" (Bell, "Werther," 100). This identification with "undeserving characters" led readers to imitate Werther; the novel was blamed for the rash of copycat suicides among *Werther* readers, according to Bell, making very clear the problems that could result from the collapse of fiction into reality. Bell says that by the turn of the nineteenth century, the novel, which had been seen as a savior of the nation, "had, in the minds of many wary critics, transformed all fiction into a blight on public health" (106). Similarly, literary scholar G. Harrison Orians finds in a 1797 article this denunciation: "those who first made novel-reading an indispensable branch in forming the minds of young women have a great deal to answer for. Without this poison instilled, as it were, into the blood females in ordinary life could never have been so much the slaves of vice" (quoted in Orians 200). Clearly, eighteenth-century America feared the power that novels' representations wielded, and feared fiction's real effects in the world.

The concern about sympathetic reading —an especially intense concern when deployed on behalf of highly impressionable or receptive readers such as women and young people — intensified over the first half of the century. Warnings about the dangers of novel-reading rang through sermons, speeches, and essays; as Barbara Hochman and Nina Baym explain, novels offered simultaneously the appeal of direct sentimental connection and a frisson of danger posed by the prospect of this affective collapse.[50] The dangers grew directly out of the connection. The

[50] See Hochman, "Disappearing Authors"; Barnes, *States*; Baym, *Responses*; and Baym, *Woman's*. The danger lies in the intensity and the uncontrollability of the sentimental connection, says Robert Solomon: "Sentimental literature violates the reader's sense of self by provoking […] unwelcome emotional intrusions at an intensity that cannot be controlled (except, perhaps, by firmly putting down the book in question). […] Whatever else literature is supposed to do to us, goes this account, it ought not to 'manipulate' the reader's emotions, interfering with […] autonomy" (Solomon 9). The view of sentimentality as a culpable weakness, a vulnerability to the loss of self, is partly

sentimental mode, as nineteenth-century people thought, required a kind of reading that was not really *reading* at all, as we define it; sentimental reading was a direct connection by which feeling passes from the author/narrator to the reading body, almost without the mediation of language—a form of affective infection.[51] This direct transmission leaned on an odd semiotic epistemology in which novels were less as a *representation* of the real (a relationship which entails some distance or distinction between representation and reality, between sign and referent) than a channel for direct, unmediated contact with emotional reality itself. This sense of direct contact produced readers' strong identifications with these novels.[52] Encouraged by the

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responsible for the modern distaste for sentimentalism (see, for example, Tompkins, who attempts to recuperate sentimentalism's prestige). Solomon traces the original eighteenth-century idea of moral sentiments (which connected feelings to ethics), and finds that the modern sense of sentimentalism as weakness originates with Kant, who propounded a new kind of autonomous self: "it is difficult to see how strong sentiments could constitute a weakness unless there is already operating some powerful metaphor that views our sentiments as alien and the integral self as a will which is supposed to contain or control them but fails to do so. So, too, sentimentality seems to be self-indulgence if a person is seen to indulge in his or her emotional weaknesses. One could thus view the reader as the willing victim of the emotionally manipulative author, just as an alcoholic is seen as the willing victim of that first drink. Sentimentality is 'giving in,' and a preference for sentimentality suggests a perverse willingness to make oneself vulnerable. Thus, according to this unflattering picture, the reader indulges in sentiment" (Solomon 9).

[51] This sense of collapse of boundaries between the reader and the text mirrors the nineteenth-century sense of direct connection between the actor and the environment—what Matthew Taylor has called the "panpsychic discourses" of the first half of the nineteenth century. He includes in these "panpsychic discourses" various philosophical and scientific lines of thought, including American transcendentalism, electrophysiology, mesmerism, and spiritualism. As Taylor points out, panpsychism rests upon "the perception that 'human' beings are fundamentally interlineated with their larger environments" (Taylor, "Edgar Allan Poe's (Meta)physics: a prehistory of the post-human," 195). Taylor's explanation of panpsychism seems to echo Roach's explanation of the actor's radical permeability. Taylor continues: "In this context, we can see even such mundane matters as the mid-century 'germ theory' debates and Theodor Schwann's 1839 postulation of cell membrane permeability as participating in the same general conversation as Henry David Thoreau's Walden (1854) or the Fox sisters' 1848 spirit-rappings: all were evidence that bodies (and thus selves) are radically open to their surroundings, whether physical or spiritual" (195). Similarly, Paul Gilmore points out another example of the nineteenth-century obsession with direct connection in the metaphors of electricity used in American Romanticism; see Gilmore, especially 472. (See also Schuller.) This permeability of the human self was, precisely, sympathy.

[52] According to Halpern, identification, or merging, is the central characteristic of sentimentalism: "In a sentimental text, the implied author is the same as the narrator [...], who is the same as the main characters (who share the same experiences as the author), who is the same as the authorial/narrative reader" (Halpern 65). This identification even, she charges, affects literary critics of sentimentalism: "In order to do its work on us, sentimental rhetoric requires the

novels' performance of "authenticity" and "transparency" and by the "real presence" that the novels seemed to offer (see Barnes, "Response"), readers seemed to lose their identities in the act of reading —to collapse into the novel's fictional world.

This idea of direct emotional connection, characteristic of literary sentimentalism, is only loosely related to Adam Smith's eighteenth-century theories of moral sentiment, upon which the early pedagogical hopes for the American novel were pinned. Although sympathy and identification are, for Smith, the key drivers in ethical social behavior, the form of identification he posits is distanced, visual, almost voyeuristic or filmic— something far more like James Chandler's twentieth-century visual sentimentalism than like midcentury literary sentimentalism's affective and semiotic collapse.[53] This is the problem with sentimental and sensational novels as pedagogical tools; while the novels-as-moral-agents camp assumed a distanced eighteenth-century model of "high sentimentalism" at work, the novels themselves produced at this time were of the identificatory semiotic-collapse model of literary sentimentalism.

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critic to read without critical distance" (Halpern 63). Hendler also sees sentimentalism's desire for identification or collapse as problematic: "sympathy demands a still closer connection between reader and character; the former is asked to feel with the latter, partially to submerge his or her identity and experience in the emotions of the fictional figure in order to transform partial sameness into identity" (Hendler, *Public* 5).

[53] For a modern account of sentimentalism based, not on the merger of the self with the other, but on the visual observation and recognition of the other as different from the self, see Chandler, *Archaeology*.

Postbellum semiotic distance

A semiology that collapses sign and referent is no semiology. What postbellum novels will offer, in contrast to antebellum literary sentimentalism, is a self-conscious examination of the distance between sign and referent, and a valuation of that distance; they will reject sentimentalism's desire for direct connection. The shift from identicality to distance as the underwriting value appears in several areas: I will examine it as it manifests in novels, acting, and clothes. In acting theories, the semiotic distance between representation and real becomes apparent in the transition from theories of the seventeenth century (which depended on the actor's actually feeling the emotion he would portray) and the eighteenth century (Diderot's model, based on vitalism and sensibility but allowing that representation can precede actual experience). In the postbellum years, we find in William Archer's reformulation and re-examination of Diderot's ideas a fairly pure version of performativity. In Archer's view, the actor need not feel the character's emotions before representing them; instead, he feels his or her character's emotions as a *result* of representing them.

In novels and clothes, the semiotic distance affects readers most. The distance between signifier and referent, between representation and reality, means that there is more representative slip: the reader must do more work to fashion her own reading of a given representation. In the novel's new genres and techniques, and in the sartorial realism of the new, stranger-filled urban centers, readers are tasked with creating meaning for increasingly open, unbound modes of representation. New novelistic genres, such as literary realism and naturalism, require a more active, pragmatic kind of reading than did the domestic sentimentalism of the antebellum novels. The postbellum genres have a kind of opacity, a refusal to be read; they are exemplars of Eco's

opera aperta, and demand of their readers something like Keats's negative capability—a pragmatic literary sensibility. The new modes of reading engendered by the increasing acceptance of performative semiotic distance also appear in the ways clothing is worn and interpreted. We see a shift similar to that in novels, away from a sincerity and transparency of dress styles (during the period of the domestic and sentimental novels) to a more oblique style, which resisted interpretation and which had to be pieced together or deduced from sartorial clues.[54] The new modes of reading that dress required took account of the increasing homogeneity in clothing (which was increasingly ready-made or sewn from mass-marketed patterns).

Dresses and reading, theater and performance, are all representations — all *performances* of some kind. (Henry James, with his usual prescience, puts a nearly identical list of representations in the mouth of Madame Merle as making up the "shell of appurtenances" that

[54] Cultural historian Karen Halttunen reads the dress of the Empire revival of the first quarter of the nineteenth century as sartorially mirroring the cultural emphasis on sincerity and transparency; art historian Anne Hollander sees the early 1820s Neoclassical revival in dress, with its indexical visual relationship between the body and the garment, as the beginning of the *modernist* visual aesthetic. (Interestingly, Hollander notes, the shift to modernism began with *men's* garments at the end of the eighteenth century; not until the period 1900-1925 did women's fashion begin to truly modernize, in the face of "real social reform" (Hollander, "Modernization," 32).) But dress historian C. Willett Cunnington points out that the neoclassical revival was no less artificial and conventional than other types of dress: "The supposition that such a style was but a reaction from one more artificial and a praiseworthy approach to naturalism is belied by the fact that it was, in its way, highly artificial and unnatural. As though woman's dress has ever been otherwise!" (Cunnington 30). And, according to Haltunnen, the cultural and sartorial emphasis on sincerity continued through midcentury (literary sentimentalism certainly peaked at midcentury), and the dress of midcentury was far from the simple visual lines of the thin, clinging lines of the early eighteenth-century Empire dresses. Cunnington periodizes the styles of the second quarter of the century more accurately, in my opinion. He breaks them into "romantic" (1822-1835) and "sentimental" (1836-1849) styles (Cunnington 23); he lumps the whole period from the 1820s-1850s "Gothic," which denotes the artificiality of dress shape that distorts or disguises the appearance of the body beneath. He further links the Gothic tendency in dress to a particular epistemological orientation to the world: "'Gothic' denotes an ingrained habit of mind […] which induces a person unconsciously to re-arrange phenomena at the expense of truth in order to produce an emotional reaction. [….] The romantic mind uses its emotions to distort, and the sentimental mind uses its emotions to conceal reality. The former leans to flamboyant forms of expression, while the latter seeks shelter by 'turning all to favor and to prettiness'" (Cunnington 23). Cunnington could be talking here about literary styles instead of dress styles.

make us human: "one's house, one's clothes, and the book one reads, the company one keeps" (*Portrait*, 397-398).) Of course, the most common colloquial modern usage of the word "performance" denotes theatrical performance: an intentional putting-on of some spectacle for some audience. (Performance in this theatrical sense famously became a trope for social behaviors in the hands of sociologist Erving Goffman.) While, like representation, "performance" has acquired connotations of falsity and deceit, in etymological fact it simply means "doing."[55] According to theater scholar Bert States, originally the term simply meant carrying out an action: acting. States offers four main iterations of the term, which evolve from one another: an act/duty taken on then carried out; any notable act; a literary or artistic act; and the current meaning, the intentional and public performance of sport, music, or play.[56] I wish to surface the pragmatic sense of *action* contained in the term performance. (I would point out, too, that the term "acting" itself turns on precisely this distinction between "doing" and "pretending.")

[55] In fact, this grammatical confusion between things and actions, between nouns and verbs, is oddly common in terms that have to do with fashion. *Fashion*, *fabricate*, *artifice*, *makeup:* each term in noun form denotes a prosthetic application of something foreign atop something natural (usually a human body) with the intention of concealing or enhancing the natural item beneath. Each term in verb form, though, carries a connotation of constitution and creation: a sense of literal "becoming," or even investiture. Literary scholars have typically been more concerned with the noun forms of words related to fashion – the concern with falsity and authenticity —than with the verb forms.

[56] While States is in this essay arguing for a purer, non-metaphorical use of the term "performance," I think that the term's slipperiness is useful. Goffman's use of the term "performance" as a metaphor or allegory for offstage self-aware, self-conscious self-presentation also has value; I am interested in both literal (theatrical) and metaphorical (social) performances. See also Wilshire, "The Concept of the Paratheatrical," who argues, like Goffman, for the value of applying theatrical terms and theories (as he does in this essay; "paratheatre" was a term coined by director Jerzy Grotowski) to extra-theatrical life.

This emphasis on action, in combination with the cluster of ideas I have examined under the umbrella of sartorial readings of open texts (active interpretation and subjectivity, an emphasis on the material, a valuation of the performative/habit, and (most crucially) the allowing for and valuing of distance, both emotional and semantic, that comes from rejecting the notion that there is a Real that can and should be accessible) at least co-emerge with, and I think probably come out of, a specifically American, specifically nineteenth-century sense of the relation of representation and reality. Pragmatism was interested in ideas at work, not as representations of some ultimate transcendent reality. As Georg Simmel, a contemporary of James and the pragmatists, put it,

> This independence of truth which has always been accepted in the past is denied by the pragmatists. Both inner and outer life are based at every step—so their argument runs—on particular imagined ideas. These ideas sustain and foster our lives if they are true, or they bring us to ruin if they are false. But our ideas are dependent on our mental make-up, they are by no means a mechanical reflection of the reality with which our practical life is interwoven. (Simmel 84)

Simmel here gets at the peculiarly active, interpretive quality of pragmatism's view of the real. The pragmatic world-view is generally characterized by the following orientations: it asserts the continuousness of experience (and the *a priori* relation of perception to cognition); it prioritizes empiricism and observation, or attention to what is (especially to the material and the observable consequences of the immaterial); it is wedded to inquiry and to active seeking and interpretation of what is observed. While pragmatism is distilled into its most familiar form in the publication of William James's 1906-1907 lectures as *Pragmatism: A New Name for an Old Way of Thinking*, it grew out of an intellectual movement that emerged in the 1870s, and was first crystallized in Charles Sanders Peirce's publication of "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" in 1878;

although William James is the popular face of pragmatism, Peirce is equally central to the intellectual development of pragmatism.[57] Some of Peirce's most central work in the pragmatist tradition was about representation, from his earliest essay "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" to his general theory of signs.[58] The pragmatists, by dismantling sentimental semiotic idealism and rejecting the Platonic idea that there is a transcendent truth "out there" that can be only weakly imitated here, fund my assertions about the late-nineteenth-century shift in epistemologies of representation. In getting rid of the desire to reach the Real, the pragmatists also got rid of many of the problems that have historically trailed behind representation's skirts, including the concern that representation is inherently false or deceptive. While the pragmatists believe that is impossible for a sign to represent its referent completely accurately, this is not a form of deconstructive pathos or Platonic nostalgia. Instead, for Peirce at least, the Real itself is not self-identical; uncertainty is built into the universe itself.[59] For example, in his work on the scientific method of inquiry and his examination of the universal "laws" of physics, Peirce always insisted on the presence of chance or randomness; for Peirce, observed variation in measurements and results during experimentation come, not from faulty approximations or faulty representations of some faultless real, but from a relatively accurate measurement of an ever-changing real. (Peirce called this concept of fundamental chance "tychism," which stands for his idea that natural laws are just habits, or approximations of the universe's usual behavior, rather than "laws" that hold

[57] See Menand.

[58] For an excellent overview of pragmatism, see Putnam, "The Permanence of William James."

[59] See Carolyn Porter's *Seeing and Being,* which links Heisenberg's uncertainty principle to American literature.

immutably throughout.) How can one represent, with only static signs, an ever-changing reality? Pragmatism would argue that, in the absence of access to a crystalline Real, the process of inquiry becomes increasingly important—and with it, the role of the interpreter.[60] What Peirce's characteristically pragmatic representational theories offer is something beyond the two binary relations between representation and reality that we have so far examined: Rather than representation as a flawed reproduction of the Real or representation as a transparent vehicle giving direct contact with the Real, Peirce's semeiotic offers a *triadic* relation that makes visible the role of the interpreter and the interpretive process.

Peirce's thought is always fundamentally triadic (the distaste for binaries is a hallmark of most pragmatist thinking; William James's radical empiricism offers another example), but two of his main triads will concern me in the following chapters: his three major types of signs, and his triadic sign relation itself. Peirce's three primary types of linguistic signs are the *icon*, in which the representamen looks like its object; the *index*, in which the representamen bears a real relation to its object; and the *symbol*, in which the representamen represents the object conventionally or arbitrarily. This triad can account for multiple and shifting relations between a representation and its object: in some situations a representamen is tightly related to its object (icon, index); in others it is completely arbitrarily related to its object (symbol).

[60] Pragmatist theories of truth are often misunderstood as simply restatements of the maxim "The truth is what works." For clear accounts of the complexities of pragmatist truth theories, see Brandom and Haack. Brandom makes the action of truth-making exceptionally clear, saying that for the pragmatists in their most mature conceptions of truth, "Truth is treated, not as a property independent of our attitudes, to which they must eventually answer, but rather as a creature of taking-true and treating-as-true" (Brandom 77).

But language is not the only type of representing relation that Peirce intended to account for in his semeiotic; he intended his semeiotic to transcend language and describe relations of experience and reality.[61] The second main triadic grouping that will concern me in the chapters that follow, then, is Peirce's formulation of a general sign relation: the relations between the *object* (the thing being represented; the "firstness"), the *representamen* (the thing doing the representing; the "secondness"), and (Peirce's innovation on Saussure) the *interpretant* (the mental concept of the object taken in by the interpreter via the representamen; the "thirdness").

I want to emphasize the importance of the idea of "relation" here. For Peirce and the other pragmatists, relationship is positional, nearly spatial; the term "relationship" itself implies the gap or distance in which I am interested. One cannot be "in relation" to something identical to oneself, just as one cannot give directions *from* one's present location *to* one's present location, because there is no relation in sameness. Or, as Hanna Pitkin puts it, "representation seems to require a certain distance or difference as well as resemblance or correspondence" (Pitkin 68).

I also want to emphasize the cruciality to this structure of the interpreter. Here we see the importance of the act of interpretation itself, and of the "recording consciousness" that does the interpreting (the phrase is Henry James's). Peirce's insistence that the interpretant is a mental concept implies the presence of an interpreter who is actively conceptualizing that mental concept. It also indicates the contingency and subjectivity of the sign's meaning; since the

[61] As always in pragmatism, meaning only emerges in context and from experience, experiment, not from theory: "language can be understood only in the concrete context of its uses, in cöoperation with other kinds of signs" (Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs* 19-20); Peirce always intended that his semeiotic should apply to other kinds of representing relations (such as the ones that I've been talking about here: acting, clothes, reading.)

interpretation is itself another representamen of the object, which necessitates another act of interpretation, the sign's eternal participation in chained and endless acts of interpretation reiterates the pragmatist conviction that the Real, that truth, is simply the convergence of a process of approximation—a process in which the interpreter plays a key role. Built into Peirce's semiotic, embedded in its triadic structure, is a sense of contingency and of performativity: the semeiotic allows for the possibility that reality is, in fact, created as it is represented in the mind of the interpreter. For the pragmatists, experience is created—performatively, in the terms I have been using—as a function of semiotic distance (which allows relationship), at least in part by the act of interpretation. Peirce's semeiotic, then, taken in the context of the larger set of pragmatist works and beliefs, allows for a relation between representation and reality that is neither wholly constructivist nor wholly idealist.

Reading the fashionable detail

The necessity for interpretation—for reading—condensed in Peirce's semeiotic was a familiar one to newly-urbanized nineteenth-century citizens. Reading was a central part of city living: reading the characters of urban strangers through a variety of signs, especially dress. The proliferation of these signs — what John Kasson calls in his *Rudeness and Civility* the codes of visual gentility —created a "semiotic breakdown" (70) for city dwellers, who saw the importance of literacy as both "authors" and as "readers" of these signs, and who felt anxious about their performance at both tasks.[62] (According to Kasson, the cultural anxiety over the idea of the

[62] Christine Bayles Kortsch calls this "textile literacy," and links it to print literacy; women often learned to read and write through their sampler stitching, and Kortsch links this to the ability to "read" into others' appearances. See Kortsch.

confidence man was, precisely, a semiotic anxiety.) What we might call, playing on Harold Bloom's famous phrase, this "anxiety of interpretation" grew out of precisely the worry about how representation relates to reality: "Were the rituals of politeness and civility grounded in a moral order, whether that of society of class, or of individual character (the lady, the gentleman)? Or were they merely a matter of appearance, subject to hypocritical manipulation?" (Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility* 94). These are semiotic questions, versions of the broad epistemological questions this chapter has described: is the sign grounded in a real relationship to the referent, or is it completely arbitrary and conventional? Does the representation of reality have a real, natural, stable relation to the reality it represents?

The investigation of this question, and the active modes of reading required by the increasing importance of non-linguistic sartorial signs, led to a peculiarly deductive zeitgeist; it also underpinned the contemporaraneous interest in physiognomy and the endless appetite for etiquette manuals, detective stories, and novels. This interest in deduction especially fed the appetite for the novel, which "took as one of its principal themes the concealment and unmasking of character and its problematic relationship to appearances" (Kasson 94). As Kasson points out, these central concerns of the novel, which exemplified the contemporary anxiety about reading strangers' appearance, were also expressed in the similarly deductive zeitgeists of other fields; readers as diverse as Freud and Sherlock Holmes, according to Kasson, "developed analogous strategies of detection, in which they assigned less importance to the manifest content of the objects before them than to the latent meaning of apparently insignificant details" (94). The importance of the detail —sartorial or literary—cannot be overstated.

The obsession with detail, and with linking details into a coherent explanatory narrative, led to a sense that reading (whether sartorial or literary) was an active pursuit of clues: readers were now detectives rather than observers. In "The Man of the Crowd," Kasson points out, the narrator shifts from a disinterested observer of humanity—a flâneur type—to a detective, an active seeker after confirmation and clues about his quarry: a new kind of reader, who is actively working to interpret and put together the story's elements ("the narrator leaps up to follow him. The stance of a languid, contemplative reader, sitting within the coffeehouse, gives way to the strenuous and prolonged work of pursuit. Poe's narrator becomes the amateur investigator, the detective, the social scientist, determined to follow his quarry until he decodes his message and possesses his secret meaning" (84).) This new kind of reader is an active interpreter in whom Peirce would have delighted, and is precisely the kind of reader required by the late-century *opera aperta*.[63]

Given their role in this process of making meaning, the "apparently insignificant details" that distinguished unfashionable from fashionable dress gained enormous importance. As Barthes has expressed it, the detail

[63] This attempt to interpret, to "read in," to wrest a "secret meaning" from surfaces, to infer hidden depths from unintentionally betrayed clues of behavior and appearance, was the kind of reading that Freudian interpretation relied upon. The link between reading in and analysis is made clear in Richard Sennett's study of the decline of what he calls "public man" across the nineteenth century. Sennett argues that the increasing need to control appearance grows out of the conception that "personality" was immanent in appearance. In Sennett's explanation of this mindset, "behavior comes before consciousness. It is involuntarily revealed, difficult to control in advance, precisely because there are no clear rules for reading the miniature details; they are clear only to initiates, and neither in acting as a gentleman nor in appearing as a woman of absolute respectability is there ever a stable code to use." As a result of this way of thinking, says Sennett, "Consciousness becomes therefore retrospective activity, control of what has been lived" (Sennett 420). This shift from the performance mindset of the *ancien regime*, which consisted of "taking each other as presented in social framework," to the valuing of authenticity is paralleled in the changes in reading practices.

> plays a crucial role in making clothing mean something. It is the meaning in a style which now becomes precious and this meaning depends, not on each element, but on the link between them and in this link it is the detached term (a pocket, a flower, a scarf, a piece of jewellery) that holds the ultimate power of signification. (Barthes, *Language* 108-109)

The detail, then, is where meaning lives; it is absolutely central to the structural relationship—the semiotic relationship—that makes dress readable. For Barthes, the detail—what he calls the "next-to-nothing"—becomes "the soul in the general economy of clothing" (108). Nineteenth-century readers of fashion said the same. Balzac, in his 1830 *Treatise on Elegant Living*, says "Differences have vanished in our society: all that remain are nuances" (de Balzac 23). As clothes become increasingly standard, the differences lie only in details, which become more and more subtle as others imitate them. Nuances are read to deduce character, says Balzac: "*clothingonomy* has become almost a branch of the art created by Gall and Lavater" (67).

These fashionable details marked the boundary between imitation and belonging, between (false) representation (imitation) and real membership. Fashionable details function as a coded communication between wearers and readers who share the same fashionable vocabulary, who belong (as Bourdieu has shown) to a shared interpretive community of sartorial signs; familiar modern examples of fashionable details that identify to readers "in the know" the wearer's membership in a particular group include, for example, the British school tie or the codes of gay men's attire during the closeted 1950s and 60s. In other words, the detail both signified membership in particular groups and distinguished the wearer from non-group members; it is simultaneously both a collectivizing and an individualizing sign.

The proliferation of details emerges from the increasing availability of commercial sewing patterns, sewing machines, and ready-to-wear manufactured clothing made the latest

fashions newly accessible to all classes: as Perrot puts it, "the growing homogeneity seemingly characteristic of modern, standardized bourgeois clothing has been accompanied by the proliferation of secondary, subtle differences" (1).[64] At the same time that appearance became a means of conveying crucial information about social class, economic means, and even moral character, changes in sewing technologies and printing processes increasingly standardized clothes; fashion is democratized, made widely available, and this made it increasingly difficult to use clothes to differentiate their wearers. Mail-order sewing patterns were introduced in 1860 and quickly entered into ladies' magazines for mass distribution, instantly homogenizing the construction of home-sewn clothes. The sewing machine was patented at midcentury and adopted shortly thereafter for factory production, spurring the ready-to-wear industry, which mass produced clothing. The ready-to-wear industry developed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and when the sewing machine dropped in price, becoming available to the home sewer in 1876, home-sewn garments mimicked the finish of factory-made ones.[65]

It is this increase in availability —this democratization of access to fashion--that spawns Thorstein Veblen's trickle-down theory of fashion, which posits that fashions were first adopted

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[64] This standardization happened earliest in men's clothing; constraints of style, cut, and fit in women's clothing meant that women's clothing (excepting outerwear and foundations) was not mass-produced on any large scale until around the turn of the century. Ann Hollander argues that men's clothes were therefore more modern than women's; see Hollander, "Modernization." For overviews of the rise of ready-to-wear clothing, see Ley, Joselit, and Christman and Kidwell. For the effects of the rise in commercially-available sewing patterns on home sewing, see Walsh. For a history of the sewing machine's effects on home sewing see Putnam, "The Sewing Machine Comes Home"; for an articulation of the importance of the sewing machine to developing industrialism in the United States (second only to the gun industry), see Brandon.

[65] For an overview of the development of the ready-to-wear industry in America, see Ley. For a clear discussion of the developments in garment technology, see Gordon. For developments in sewing patterns, see Emery, "Development of the American Commercial Pattern Industry: The First Generation, 1850--1880" and Emery, "Dreams."

by the elites and then imitated by the lower classes in order to arrogate to themselves the social and economic prestige of appearing fashionable.[66] Veblen's theory uses a peculiarly sentimental understanding of imitation as a false representation of the self, and, as Cathy Davidson reminds us, "there are unquestioned assumptions of cultural hegemony implicit in the conventional concept of imitation" (Davidson 10). This sentimental understanding of imitation as fundamentally false and deceptive is no longer a shared cultural assumption, either in aesthetics or in the world of economic production.

As economic historian Maxine Berg shows, American culture from patent applications to aesthetic education leaned on the notion that imitation was the door to innovation: innovation was viewed as a *product* of imitation. According to Berg, who examines patents awarded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there is direct evidence for a historical link between imitation and innovation; the concepts were, in Berg's view, were not opposites but partners, for any imitation that adds its own novel twist, or detail, was legally recognized as a patentable innovation. Manufacturing thus churned out imitations of costly items, such as "pinchbeck" and other electroplated metals that resembled gold, costume jewels, and imitation leather (Perrot 24, Berg 71-72).[67] Are these imitations of something else, or real things in their own right? If an

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[66] Veblen's trickle-down model of fashion influence is being replaced in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by trickle-up models; the rise of youth culture in the 1950s and 60s, and the fashion influencing of subcultural groups such as punks and teddy boys, has inverted the direction in which influence flows. For more on this, see the excellent review article from Hann and Jackson. See also Lipovetsky (1058) and Blumer, who sees fashion as a process of "collective selection." Berg indicates that as early as the American eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the trickle-down model was not the only one that held.

[67] As Berg points out, eighteenth-century aesthetic theory leaned heavily on imitation's value as training for creativity, and she examines multiple late eighteenth century patents and inventions to see where imitation and invention overlap. Theater and other arts, and educational pedagogy as well, were also based in the idea that imitation preceded creation; the young actors of the Garrick school learned the presentation of emotion primarily

"imitation" and an "original" have the same effects, then are they not—pragmatically speaking—functionally the same? Perhaps, as Barthes (and Walter Benn Michaels) say, this conflation of imitation or representation with reality is a characteristic of capitalist society; Barthes notes that "when jewellery imitates some precious substance, gold or pearls, it is shameless; the copy, now a characteristic of capitalist civilization, is no longer a hypocritical way of being rich on the cheap—it is quite open about itself, makes no attempt to deceive, only retaining the aesthetic qualities of the material it is imitating" (Barthes, *Language*).[68] The very idea of "imitation" holds only under sentimental epistemologies that see imitations are failed copies of something real (an attitude that still obtains; one example is Benjamin's distinction between the auratic original art

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through attempting to align their bodies and faces and voices with models of emotional representation given in paintings and sculptures. (Garrick himself, the original of the naturalist school of acting, often observed emotion in real subjects.) This naturalist school of acting relied on training their creativity through imitation. According to Roach, this imitation was grounded in Diderot's concept of the imagination as the bridge between imitation and creation. Roach says that, for Diderot, in the act of imitation there is also an element of creativity. Artistic illusion is inherently both mimetic and creative: "Each artist casts this illusion by skillfully selecting details from observation or memory, recombining them in his imagination, and then finally expressing them in the materials of his chosen medium" (Roach 125).

[68] Simmel reads the imitation of jewels somewhat differently. For him the imitation is not pragmatically the same; he finds a difference in the "supra-personal" (something like the Benjaminian aura), which the original has and the imitation does not. This "supra-personal" is "the significance of 'genuine' material." According to Simmel, "The attraction of the 'genuine,' in all contexts, consists in its being more than its immediate appearance, which it shares with its imitation. Unlike its falsification, it is not something isolated; it has its roots in a soil that lies beyond its mere appearance, while the unauthentic is only what it can be taken for at the moment." Simmel seems here to be referring to some immanent value that comes from authenticity; for jewelry, the "more-than-appearance is its value, which cannot be guessed by being looked at, but is something that, in contrast to skilled forgery, is added to the appearance. By virtue of the fact that this value can always be realized, that it is recognized by all, that it possesses a relative timelessness, jewelry becomes part of a supra-contingent, supra-personal value structure. Talmi-gold and similar trinkets are identical with what they momentarily do for their wearer; genuine jewels are a value that goes beyond this; they have their roots in the value ideas of the whole social circle and are ramified through all of it" (Simmel 209). The imitation is, for Simmel, practically the same ("identical with what they momentarily do for their wearer") but ontologically different, with different kinds of value. Compare this to Michaels, "The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism."

object and the mechanically-produced reproduction.)[69] The status of these imitations *as* imitation—details that the knowing eye, trained by habitus to recognize the real, could see through to status-truths—depends upon the old sentimental and idealist binary between the real and the imitation, but the conflation of the representation with the real signals, it seems to me, the rise of a representational epistemology that is more pragmatic, more performative.

This more performative view of imitation is evident in Georg Simmel's theory of fashion, produced around the same time as Veblen's (Simmel in 1895 and 1904, Veblen in 1899); Simmel views fashion as simultaneously imitative and performative. Simmel's theory sees fashion impulses as going in two directions, and, significantly, he frames fashion's double impulse in terms of representation. Imitation, according to Simmel, is the social, connective impulse, the representation of the self as like others; this is the fashionable declaration of membership in a group. Innovation, in contrast, is the distinguishing impulse, the move to represent the self as individual, to set the self apart from the group.[70]

These two impulses identified by Simmel can help us understand the importance of the detail, as well as the ever-intensifying arms race between readers' attempts to decode resistant

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[69] See Copjec (83-84), who reads Benjamin's concept of the aura in terms of a distance —something like Bullough's aesthetic distance—between the art object and the observer. See also Bullough.

[70] Simmel, like Kasson, sees style as a kind of camouflage; for him style is a form of stylization, a way of generalizing one's appearance in order to conform. Interestingly, though, he sees this process of one of generalization or abstraction: "What drives modern man so strongly to style is the unburdening and concealment of the personal, which is the essence of style. Subjectivism and individuality have intensified to breaking-point, and in the stylized designs, from those of behaviour to those of home furnishing there is a mitigation and a toning down of this acute personality to a generality and its law. It is as if the ego could really no longer carry itself, or at least no longer wished to show itself and thus put on a more general, a more typical, in short, a stylized costume" (Simmel 216). Simmel then frames this abstraction in terms of *distance*: "Stylized expression, form of life, taste all these are limitations and ways of creating a distance, in which the exaggerated subjectivism of the times finds a counterweight and concealment" (Simmel 216).

surfaces and wearers' attempts to deny readers the clues they need. These conflicting impulses can be read as coming from Simmel's two separate, conflicting social needs: the need to simultaneously identify oneself as part of a genteel class by controlling one's self-representation (as Kasson says, to become socially invisible through sartorial and bodily management) and the need to set oneself apart, to distinguish the self from the less fashionable, the less tasteful Other. This double motive and method of fashion—its ability to signal both conformity and individuation—is a figure for the shifts in representational epistemology that I have been tracing; the connection between imitation and innovation, posited by Simmel and confirmed by Berg, funds the shift I have been describing in representational epistemology, which is most visible in changing ideas about dress as self-representation and in changes in novelistic genres.

Semiotic and aesthetic distance in novels, dress, and theater

As we have seen, there is in the last quarter of the century a move away from the sentimental idea that representation must be identical to the reality it purports to represent and towards acceptance of the gap, or distance, between representation and reality. This is important in several arenas. It means that aspirational dressing--the province of the self-made man or woman--is now acceptable, and this marks the end of sartorial laws attempting to regulate dress as a sign of occupation, class, economic status, or race. It also marks an increasing social acceptance of the theater. Theater, the place where, according to Wilshire, human beings have traditionally taken up questions of performance and language, is in the late nineteenth century no longer hidden, repressed, or outlawed; instead it is taken into culture with a joyful welcome, both

as pure entertainment and as one location for the examination of fictional truths.[71] Reading becomes not a vice but a virtue; this semiotic shift also marks the increasing acceptance of novel-reading. The possibility that readers are filling their heads with useless, deceptive fictions is no longer a point for debate in the popular press nor for thunderous denunciations from the pulpit. (Indeed, in the modern world, reading is seen, not as a vector for "affective infection," but as an *antidote* to the current representational vices—digital worlds such as those found in video games, television, and the endless internet.)

Representation has accreted new meanings over the course of the centuries and, I hope, over the course of this chapter. According to Hanna Pitkin, the Greeks, with whom my account of representation began, had no word for representation. The term comes instead from a Latin word that meant "to bring something absent into presence." The modern term "representation" still carries this etymological kernel within it, for, as Benjamin reminds us, over time words accrete, not replace, their meanings. The recalled absent, says Pitkin, was originally an inanimate object: the etymological kernel, the re-*present*-ation of absent things, sums up the semiotic distance (the absence) and the performativity (the presence) with which this chapter has wrestled.[72] When representation is different from reality, the representation is not necessarily a

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[71] In my chapters on Dreiser, I will carefully examine the increasing accessibility to women as audience members and actresses during this period. See also Butsch, "Bowery B'hoys and Matinee Ladies: The Re-Gendering of Nineteenth-Century American Theater Audiences"; Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences*; and Levine for information on the American theater as popular entertainment; for the culture of spectatorship, see, for example, Gunning, "Spectatorship"; Gunning, "Phantom"; Glenn, *Spectacle*; and Lhamon.

[72] For an account of how this operates in the modern theater, see also Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre As Memory Machine*. Hanna Pitkin points out that the term "representation," originally used only in reference to theatrical representation, did not take on its current political dimension until the moment of the English Civil War, when Parliament began to see themselves as a body that represented the will of the English people: "By the 1620s the noun 'representation' and the adjective 'representative' have widened from their original applications in art,

deception—it can also call that absent reality into being. In fact, this is representation's central semiotic function, say Derrida and Pitkin, for the sign always points to something not present (Barrett 321).

It is representation's ability to call the absent into presence that lent novels their early sense of danger: novels "unfitted one for one's position in life" precisely by representing imaginative vistas beyond the reader's current reality (Davidson 47). Novels bring the absent into presence by encouraging their readers to imagine possibility that is not yet present, not yet fulfilled; it is inherently suffused with a kind of optimism, like the democratic spirit itself. And as Bruce Wilshire has shown, there is a similar dynamic in the theater; theater's function—to explore the increasingly wide gap between theatrical representations and the world by engaging the subject of representation and of alienation — is precisely to bring what is *not* (not-yet, or not-now) into presence. This is why theater has been an effective tool of resistance to power, from the time of Aristophanes to the present-day The Yes Men and Reverend Billy. Optimistic futurity is thus built into the semiotic structure of representation itself; why, then, do we so often still read representation in sentimental terms, seeing it as a falling-short, a nod to an inaccessible past? The gap between representation and reality is inescapable, but this does not entail the death of meaning or the death of interpretation. Quite the opposite. In the act of representing the past or the imagined future, theater and novels bring the absent into relation with the present: there is distance, yes, but there is also always connection.

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religion, and the theater, to refer to any substituted presence, including people standing for other people" politically (Pitkin 243, 247).

Representation is therefore not a rehearsal or repetition of the past; it is not plain old-fashioned mimesis. As we've seen in Peirce's semeiotics, representation always has some element of subjectivity in it: the interpreter is central. As Borges has shown in "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," even an exact retelling has some difference in it, absorbing some of the teller: "while the two versions are (of course) 'verbally identical,' the one composed by Menard seems 'almost infinitely richer'— since one is no longer reading a romantic novel from another time and place but a contemporary text written as if it were such a work" (Harris 264-266). This is another version of William James's favorite Heraclitean saying: you never cross the same river twice. The sign, then, in its pointing to something not present, always contains within itself some measure of distance. This is not a pathos of absence — at least not in the usual sense of pathos. (One of the questions I address later in this work is the redefinition of pathos as a viable alternative to sympathy, one that takes account in self-distancing the semiotic distance I trace here.) Fashion, pragmatism, and the novel of this period all share this re-valuation of distance. This re-valuation is visible in the increased attention to the importance of the detail, of change, and of newness.

It is perhaps representation's future orientation, the optimistic gap at the heart of the sign, that connects fashion with democracy. Fashion is linked to modernity, individualism, and democracy by their shared semiotics: all depend upon representational slip, the loosening of the sign/object relation and the representation/reality relation. Politically speaking, democracy loosens the relation between the people and their political representatives by eternally retaining the possibility for representative change at the people's will. For philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky, democracy learns from fashion's instability and superficiality: they share two defining principles,

individual desire, and eternal change for the sake of change. Lipovetsky, in fact, argues that the institution of fashion was a condition of possibility for democracy's development. Thus democracy, as I claimed at the beginning of this chapter, is always bound up in representation, and fashion, as the representation par excellence, by figuring the underlying beliefs that drive artistic engagements with the subject of representation itself, can teach us to read our own subjects of interest (nineteenth-century American novels) more clearly.

Chapter 2: What Carrie Carries: Acting and Self-Fashioning in *Sister Carrie*

"You're born naked, and the rest is drag."—RuPaul Andre Charles

Theodore Dreiser's 1900 novel *Sister Carrie*, his first, shares a plot with a hundred prior novels: young woman leaves home and family for the first time, seeking success in the city. The novel should, then, begin with the classic poignant emotional farewell scene, inviting its readers to share Carrie Meeber's sentimental parting from her family. The novel's title implicitly supports this expectation, for a *sister* entails siblings and parents. Yet Dreiser immediately distances *Sister Carrie* from the tropic goodbye scene; he takes family and feelings out of his picture and instead focuses the reader's attention on Carrie and one what she carries. The novel's opening line offers an unexpected list of Carrie's possessions: "a small trunk, a cheap imitation alligator-skin satchel, a small lunch in a paper box, and a yellow leather snap purse, containing her ticket, a scrap of paper with her sister's address in Van Buren Street, and four dollars in money" (3). The opening paragraph seems designed to foreclose any readerly anticipation of domestic sentiment. As the train speeds towards Chicago, Dreiser snips the thread of sentimental expectation, just as Carrie snips "the threads which bound her so lightly to girlhood and home" (3). Sentimental identities, woven from threads of locality, kin, and domesticity, are out of the question in this novel from the beginning. Dreiser's odd, objective first line sets sentiment to one side, shifting the reader's focus from *feelings* to *things*; he begins instead to lay out a new kind of relation, one between things and people. Dreiser introduces an affect whose object is, quite literally, *objects*: dresses, clothes, bags, money.

Some critics seem to miss Dreiser's immediate repudiation of sentiment, seeing Carrie as a sentimental figure stranded in a naturalist novel.[73] But Carrie is an anti-sentimental character; in *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser subversively revises sentimentalism to suit the emerging urban, capitalist mass culture, and transforms sympathy, the fundamental affective relation of sentimentalism, into pathos. In *Sister Carrie*, pathos is a "structure of feeling" that is characterized by the combination of individual and mass appeal and modeled on the relation of people to things. Carrie's relations with dress, so carefully traced by Dreiser, structure her relations with people: both her personal relations and her relations with theatrical audiences. As his opening scene predicts, Dreiser inverts the sentimental relation of people and things as described by critics Gillian Brown and Lori Merish, in which relations with people serve as the model for relations with objects (Brown calls this "sentimental possession," and Merish "sentimental materialism"). In Dreiser, it is instead Carrie's affective, desiring relationship with dresses and other beautiful, wearable commodities that serves as the model for her relations with people. Following Dreiser, I term this object-derived relationship "pathos," which (unlike sympathy) takes into account the increasing importance of things and appearances in the turn-of-the-century city. And further, I argue, this novel's style is also shaped by things; Dreiser's idiosyncratic style, his own quintessentially American form of literary naturalism, adapts and re-

[73] Literary critic Donald Pizer argues, for example, that Dreiser's interpolation of the sentimental narrative voice is a form of free indirect discourse, giving access to Carrie's mind —thus excusing Dreiser for the unevenness of tone and the frank uses of sentimental literary techniques, and pinning them instead on Carrie herself. He argues further that her reading choices, her taste, and her expectations all characterize her as a sentimental character. But she differs from the typical sentimental heroine in her seeming lack of affect—of sympathy—for other people in the novel. Many critics see Hurstwood as the novel's sentimental figure; Jennifer Fleissner has noted naturalism's tendency to sentimentalize and feminize male characters, despite its reputation as an aggressively masculine genre (Fleissner 13-19).

visions the tropes and techniques of sentimental narrative in order to valorize instead the distanced relations of pathos.

In this novel, Carrie fashions a form for herself through dress. Dreiser (who had not yet read Zola at the time he wrote *Sister Carrie*) similarly fashions his own form of literary naturalism--what Alan Trachtenberg calls "a new way of telling a new American story---a new form for a new content" (Trachtenberg, "Presence," 88). Dreiser's naturalism is not an entirely new form; it is instead a refashioning. Like a housewife making over an old dress to suit the current mode, Dreiser works from the materials of literary sentimentalism, updating the basic shape while retaining its trimmings: its techniques, its diction, and its activation of readers' feelings. Yet Dreiser uses these techniques of sentimentalism to work against its central assumption of sympathy, that strange merging of self and other in a shared tide of feeling. Dreiser picks apart the stitches that anchor affect to persons, and instead attaches affect to things.

Carrie's attachment to things —her desire —has been, of course, the subject of previous critical discussion. The question is whether or not Dreiser authorizes Carrie's desires (and, for many critics, authorizes by extension capitalism itself).[74] When this novel is read through dress, uncolored by the "philosophic fear of fashion" that, according to philosopher Karen Hanson, haunts the feminist academic, it becomes clear that Dreiser presents Carrie's object-structured relations with other people as adaptive, to be imitated rather than deplored (Hanson, "Philosophic Fear").

[74] See, for example, Bowlby, Murayama, Van Slooten, and Michaels, "Sister Carrie's Popular Economy."

The grammar of pathos: subjects and objects

The novel's opening line reflects these thematic concerns: its syntax emphasizes stuff. Its action is conveyed by a transitive verb ("consists of") that transfers the reader's attention to the sentence's real, emphatic object: the list. Trunk, satchel, box, purse, and their (implied or explicit) contents: these are what matter in this novel. Although Dreiser opens the sentence with Carrie's name, the name is syntactically bracketed off, for the phrase that introduces her modifies rather than stands alone, serving (with the verb) to effectively push the reader's attention ahead to the list of bags. This sentence is a microcosm of the action of the novel itself, which relocates the reader's interest away from characters and subjects (where sentimentalism's interest lives) to subject-in-relation-to-objects—and, ultimately, to subject-*as*-object. For it is Carrie's things that create her as a character.[75] Indeed, Dreiser extends his implicit syntactical claims about the importance of things in Carrie's punning name: "Carrie" is a transliteration of the transitive verb "to carry," a verb which (like Carrie herself) must always take an object.[76] The joke in Carrie's name re-enacts and intensifies the effect of the odd syntax of that first sentence, making it very

[75] Other critics have noted Dreiser's construction of Carrie's character through acquisition: see Corkin; Fisher 140-141; Lehan and Pizer 67; Lemaster; Markels; Town; and Zender.

[76] Philip Fisher reads Carrie's name differently, seeing Carrie as "literally her name, carried on the tides to her fame" (Fisher 161). This reduces her to her name, and positions her as a simple object, passively carried along by forces ("tides"). Fisher ignores the active, transitive form of the verb "to carry," which positions Carrie as the subject actively carrying, rather than the object being carried.

clear that objects are central to her identity: Carrie, as we will see, literally fashions herself as a self—as a *subject*—through dress—a collection of *objects*.[77]

Dreiser uses a collective object—Carrie's "total outfit"—as the subject of this first sentence; this is a grammatical figure for his play with the slippage between the subject (Carrie) and the objects by which she creates herself. In this opening line, Carrie, the ostensible subject, is the grammatical object, and the objects, the bags and dresses, are the grammatical subject; this syntactical slippage forecasts the way Dreiser will create epistemological and ontological slippages between subject and object. It is this slippage that drives the novel. Carrie's bags (especially the dresses they contain) are as central to this novel as Carrie herself. Both grammatically and thematically, Carrie is made equivalent to the objects that she carries.

Grammar here thus points to a larger question, one of the central problems that the book engages: what relationships are there, and should there be, between people and things, subjects and objects, at the turn of the American century? The question is perhaps less vexing to a modern reader than it was to Dreiser's contemporaries, for since 1900, capitalism has entrenched itself in America; manufacturing and consumer goods have suffused American life; urbanization has peaked, and the mass manufacturing of dress, very new at the turn of the century, has been codified into what Roland Barthes calls the "fashion system." We are, perhaps, less concerned than were Dreiser's contemporary readers about the proper relation between subjects and objects, persons and things; the importance of objects as part of one's identity is now naturalized (as is

[77] Bill Brown has discussed the different senses of the term "object": the inanimate material thing; the grammatical object; the sense of aim or intention, as in "my object in this study is to re-read Dreiser"; and the denotation of a receiving position, as in a literary work as the object of study. See Brown, *Object Matter* 1.

the easy dismissal of the significance of these objects). The notion that "subject" and "object" are positional or functional categories, rather than essential traits which define fundamentally different types of entities, is all-too-familiarly linked to Foucault in the modern literary critical mind. But at the turn of the century, the relationship between "subject" and "object" was a live question; it is the basis of the radical empiricism of Dreiser's contemporary, philosopher and psychologist William James.[78] More prosaically, as Bill Brown has shown us, the multitude of objects that make up the fabric of our daily lives was new in Carrie's time, and engaged people's active attention (Brown, *Object Matter*). *Sister Carrie* documents the social, cultural, and economic changes wrought by capitalism and by the objects in its train, and shows Carrie's fashioning of a new relation between her self and her stuff. The novel focuses on dress, which is a special kind of object: dress is an extension of the physical body, has a connection to its wearer's feelings, and is both easily revisable and materially fashions the self.[79] *Sister Carrie* lays out Carrie's self-fashioning through dress as a pattern for success in the modern American city.

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[78] William James synthesized his theories of radical empiricism late in his career, and they were published after his death in 1910, but the basic components of radical empiricism—disbelief in essentialism, interest in surfaces as well as depths, attention to continuities rather than disjunctions, etc. — are clearly apparent as early as 1890, in his first published book. See James, *Principles*, chapter 10, "The Consciousness of Self," in which James examines the relation between the self and its possessions. He asserts that objects, including both the body and the things we own, form a part of the self, as does one's imagined idea of the self as others see one: "a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him" (James, *Principles* 177).

[79] For dress's relationship to affect and identity, see Stallybrass, "Worn" and Stallybrass, "Marx's coat."

Things without which we are nothing

Economic and social developments in America at the turn of the twentieth century made surfaces and appearances—the visible markers of identity and one's place in the city's social web—weightier matters than ever. Shifts in job patterns and centralization of industry led to urban settling, and people were uprooted from local, kin-based networks, living and working instead among strangers. The nature of work also changed; according to cultural historian William Leach, factory production led to the development of retail sales and its corollaries, advertising and marketing. These new industries newly emphasized the importance of the worker's personal appearance, as Carrie's early experiences in Chicago evidence, for she is unable to find work as a shop girl.[80] Carrie is unsuited to serve as the visible face of consumer delights; her "individual shortcomings of dress" and her related lack of the pretty woman's "shadow of manner" relegate her instead to the factory floor, where she produces shoes for the consumption of others. Surfaces are the new social currency, and Carrie is flat broke.

In Carrie, Dreiser embodies a paradigmatic problem at the turn of the century: what is a self when it is snipped out of the pattern created by home and family? How to fashion a self when the warp and woof of daily experience are anonymity and strangers? Dreiser positions Carrie as finding a solution through dress. Carrie, as Simmel might have predicted, learns to use dress to differentiate herself from the mass of other urban citizens. Her identity cannot derive from kin networks or from the fabric of a local, place-bound world; not only are "the threads which bound [Carrie] so lightly to girlhood and home […] irretrievably broken" (3) in the

[80] See Benson, Lancaster, and Leach.

novel's first paragraph, she severs her last ties to her family when she leaves her sister's house very early in the novel. Yet in the absence of the markers of success that fashionable surfaces bring, Carrie is literally nothing, and she must create an identity for herself through dress.

Dreiser presents Carrie as a visual blank in the novel's opening chapters. Even the most attentive reader can sketch only a vague mental image of Carrie as an anonymous girl-figure with a "mass of hair," for Dreiser's stripped-down description of her offers no details of her physical appearance. He does briefly describe her dress, but her "shabby," "plain blue dress, with its black cotton tape trimmings," and "the worn state of her shoes" (7), while concrete and easily visualized, do not distinguish her from other fragments of hopeful young womanhood.[81] Yet over the first half of the novel, Carrie emerges as a visualizable character; it is as though each of her purchases of fashionable dress gives a twist to the lens through which we view her, slowly bringing her into focus. It is her dress that makes her visible—in the words of literary critic Kaja Silverman, "clothing draws the body so that it can be culturally seen, and articulates it as a meaningful form" (Silverman 189). Carrie cannot be seen in the absence of fashionable dress: "her physical features are never described. Her body is evoked exclusively through her meticulously described wardrobe, which, like the cut-out clothes of a paper doll, imply in advance a certain shape and stance" (Silverman 189).

[81] Her "plain blue dress" with only "black cotton tape trimmings" would have indeed been "shabby" in the 1890s, the apogee of baroque decoration in texture, color, and accessory in women's dress; by 1899 the exuberant bustling of the early nineties was subsiding into comparatively simple fullness at the back of the skirt, but swaggering fullness at the hem, achieved through goring, long ruffles, or a train, was still the standard, as was purely decorative ruffling, gathering, and ruching, and inset panels of lace upon skirts, which were often split and layered. Though sleeves were more circumspect than the absurd volumes their sartorial foremothers had achieved in the middle of the decade, shoulders were wide and emphatic, and bodices were heavily decorated, drawing visual attention to the bust, which was beginning to take on the characteristic pouter-pigeon droop of the Edwardian period to follow. Carrie's relative simplicity, both in level of description and in her actual appearance, is thus doubly unusual.

In referring to paper-doll dresses. Silverman intends, I think, to gesture to the way that Carrie's dress stands in for her other physical characteristics. But the metaphor is, perhaps, more apt than Silverman intended. The dresses, which imply "a certain shape and stance," actually shape Carrie's physical beauty. She goes from being "pretty with the insipid prettiness of the formative period, possessed of a figure promising eventual shapeliness" (4) to a "little beauty." At the novel's opening, she is pure potential, like a snail without a shell; in order to become visible, she must fashion herself using fashionable dress, which "implie[s] in advance a certain shape and stance." I thus take Silverman's metaphor quite literally: Carrie's dresses actually shape her body, serving as what sociologists Joanne Eicher and Mary-Ellen Roach-Higgins call "pre-shaped enclosures," which modify her physical self (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 3). (Eicher and Roach-Higgins deliberately separate dress from bodily appearance, noting that their taxonomy "imposes a somewhat arbitrary conceptual separation between biologically determined body characteristics and dress." However, they define dress as "[b]ody modifications and supplements, which … function as alterants of body processes" [1]. They thus implicitly acknowledge the *imbrication* of dress and body, and point to the ways that dress can change bodily appearance.)[82]

Dreiser's diction here (formative, promising, eventual) sets up Carrie's *potential* for visual appeal; it is not yet realized, but will be materialized through the action of dress. The

[82] This takes for granted the primacy of clothes over flesh; the development of off-the-rack ready-to-wear clothing at the turn of the century is an extension of the logic by which clothing, instead of being fitted to the wearer, increasingly demanded that the wearer shape her body to fit the clothes. See Joselit, especially pages 30-35. For a contemporary example, consider the prevalence of anorexia in runway models expected to shrink their bodies to fit into designer sample sizes.

futurity of Carrie's attractiveness calls into question the strict determinism of biology. Biology's ability to determine morality, intelligence, and character was widely culturally accepted at the turn of the century—especially in naturalist novels. Other examples of the cultural acceptance of biological determinism include Cesare Lombroso's taxonomy of criminal types, scientific racism (which attempted to prove the inferiority of blacks through cranial measurements), and the pseudoscience of phrenology, which "made character seem to be an obvious physiological 'given'" (Claggett 104).[83] Yet in Dreiser, appearance can be molded, bodies shaped, beauty achieved. By showing that self-fashioning can trump biological determinism, Dreiser begins to authorize Carrie's attachment to things; her clothes-obsession emerges as an adaptation, and we begin to see the outlines of how objects play a role in creating subjects.

Fetishizing and fashioning the foot

In addition to his conventional use of dress as a device of characterization (as in the telling detail of Carrie's too-small trunks with their slight freight of unfashionable dresses), Dreiser also uses dress as a mechanism for Carrie's transformation of her physical body — in Eicher and Roach-Higgins's terminology, Carrie's dress and shoes are "supplements" and "body modifications" (4). Dreiser figures her transformation through an odd focus on her feet. He describes Carrie thus in the first scene: "In the intuitive graces she was still crude. She could

[83] See Gould. This is similar to the sentimental idea of the relation between appearance and character, although the explanation is biological rather than natural; as Karen Halttunen has made clear, sentimentalism assumed that external appearance not only *represented* internal character, but was *caused by* character. Consider the terror evoked by characters like Lady Audley (1862) or Dorian Gray (1890), whose exteriors belied their interiors. I argue against both the biological and moral determinism of character on appearance; Dreiser seems to be inverting these causative models, and arguing instead for an indexical relation of appearance and character: Carrie changes her character from the outside in, by changing her appearance.

scarcely toss her head gracefully. Her hands were almost ineffectual for the same reason. The feet, though small, were set flatly" (4). Her head, her hands, and her feet, not yet fashioned, are presented as natural; yet he links these supposedly natural attributes to terms that entail artifice (physical practice, habit, and performance): graces, gracefulness, effectiveness. By mixing categories, Dreiser levels out the distinction between the natural and the fashioned. Carrie can *learn* the "intuitive graces" that will increase her appeal: she will learn to toss her head, to use her hands to gesture effectively.[84]

Even Carrie's flat feet, which seem quite flatly unchangeable, turn out to be a problem of fashion, not of biology. The fashionable foot at the turn of the century was dainty and high of arch; the fashionable shoes of 1899 had small Louis-type heels (curved hourglass-shaped heels that are broad where they connect to the shoe's sole, then narrow, then broaden out again where the heel meets the ground) of one to three inches in height. Even the fashionable buttoned boots for day wear or walking were heeled, and most heightened the visual impression of high arches with their design: a lighter-colored upper and a darker block of color near the sole, along with a curved seam between the two shades of leather and a curved line along the edge of the buttoned flap, drew attention to the high arch and the way the foot was set daintily on the ankle. If the foot had no arch, or was not particularly dainty, these curves, like trompe-l'œil, lent them the

[84] This elision of nature and artifice is related to a concept variously called "habit" (James, *The Principles of Psychology*), "performativity" (Butler), and "discipline" (Foucault). All of these concepts (which play out very differently in these very different thinkers) elide the differences in nature and artifice—all refer to the way that repetitive physical actions can effect change on bodies and identities. James's idea of habit, which slightly predates *Sister Carrie,* is most useful here.

impression of delicacy and high arches.[85] Consequently, Dreiser's emphasis on Carrie's flat feet encodes a wealth of things this small-town miller's daughter does not have. When Dreiser mentions her hometown's clothing shop and dry-goods emporium, Carrie starts in recognition, for she remembers well the "longings the displays […] had cost her" (Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* 7); a girl who could only eye longingly the dress shop windows in her little town would have had only one pair of shoes, and that more practical than pretty. Carrie's "worn" shoes are probably flat-heeled, plain leather shoes or low ankle boots—work shoes. But after several months with Drouet, Carrie's shoes "fitted her smartly and had high heels" (146); between the new shoes and a "nice skirt and shirtwaist," some "little necessaries of toilet" (75), and the notorious "peculiar little tan jacket, with large mother-of-pearl buttons which were all the rage that fall" (67), she has become "quite another maiden" (75); she "might well have been a new and different individual" (89).

Dreiser will return to Carrie's feet—and to the tools by which she refines them, fashionable shoes—several times over the course of the novel, and each iteration of this pattern of shoe imagery marks another step in her fashionable evolution: each time shoes punctuate the narrative, Carrie is a little more lovely, a little more successful, a little more independent, a little less bound by determinist forces. Indeed, in some ways shoes are the inciting incidents of the novel's action and the drivers of the plot. Carrie's first job when she comes to Chicago is in a

[85] The high-arched and high-heeled fashionable shoes of the late 1890s gave the line of the foot and ankle an elegance and a piquancy that was highly erotically charged. James Laver has argued that each era has its own erotic zone of the body which is both hidden and emphasized by the fashion of the day; the shock of titillation delivered by the feminine ankle, often exposed by the brief, flirtatious lifting of the sweeping skirts and petticoats, is characteristic of this period's interest in, and even fetishization of, the foot and ankle (Carter 130).

shoe factory (alongside other girls who are, like her, "clad in thin, shapeless, cotton dresses, and shod with more or less worn shoes" [25]), making shoes for fashionable men to wear; it is for lack of winter shoes and jacket that she loses that job. It is precisely the problem of shoes that prods Carrie to accept Drouet's "two soft, green, handsome ten-dollar bills" (62); she is seduced by his instructions to "[g]et yourself a nice pair of shoes and a jacket" (62), which are the first things he buys for her (70). When she is forced to choose between buying shoes and paying rent, she chooses shoes; this eventually leads to her abandonment of Hurstwood (396). And at novel's end, her enviable place in the world is framed in terms of shoes when Lola reminds her: "There're lots would give their ears to be in your shoes" (458). To be in Carrie's shoes might literally allow one to take her place: shoes are as much a cause of her transformation as an effect.

Sentimental appearances

Dreiser's emphasis on the plasticity of Carrie's appearance, and on dress's ability to "sculpt" her body, is at odds, as I have said, with the biological determinism of the period. It also contradicts the logic of what social historian Karen Halttunen has described as mid-century America's "sentimental cult of sincerity" (Halttunen 197). According to Halttunen, midcentury sentimental culture responded to fears about social mobility and the hypocrisy of strangers (the "confidence men" and "painted women" of her title) with a middle-class aesthetic ethics of sincerity and transparency in which "sentimental dress […] was to serve as the transparent revelation of the soul and thus was to help restore truth and social confidence to American society" (Halttunen 93). Under this model, appearance was a representation of reality, and one's looks reflected one's character.

In *Sister Carrie,* Dreiser calls into question the idea that character precedes beauty and that beauty reflects inner goodness. Carrie's beauty is a reflection, not of improvements to her character, but of her ministrations to her appearance. At novel's end, she directly acknowledges that her face outstrips her character. When Robert Ames, the voice of sentimental culture, exhorts Carrie at the end of the novel to go into more serious acting, Carrie finds herself "longing to be equal to this feeling written upon her countenance" (484); beauty, supposedly the external sign of goodness, *precedes* virtue in Carrie's case, and she wishes to live up to her appearance. The mismatch between Carrie's appearance (excellent) and her character (weak), which is reinforced by her profession as an actress, was troubling for contemporary readers. According to Dreiser, it was readers' discomfort with Carrie's character—specifically her sexual morality—that caused the book's low sales; he foregrounds the readerly discomfort with Carrie's sexual immorality and hypocrisy in his version of the events surrounding *Sister Carrie*'s publication and suppression, which he framed as a form of moralist censorship.[86] Yet despite the desires of

[86] Dreiser's opinion of the morality of Carrie's actions lies at the heart of many critical debates about *Sister Carrie*, including historical debates about the circumstances of its publication and the current squabbling over authorized editions. According to Stephen Brennan, Dreiser himself created the "myth" of the novel's suppression on moral grounds; the story was that Mrs. Frank Doubleday, the publisher's wife, read the manuscript after Frank Norris accepted it, and found it "disgustingly immoral" (Brennan 55). Her genteel outrage prompted her husband to refuse to publicize the book, filling Doubleday, Page's basement with copies of it, "where the book lay mouldering until Dreiser himself resurrected it (by buying the plates and copies and finding another publisher" (Brennan 55). This heroic battle between "the forces of Propriety" and the forces of art, says Brennan, was invented by Dreiser; as Brennan reminds us, the battle was re-enacted in the furor around the publication of *The Genius,* which the publisher John Lane withdrew a year after its publication at the behest of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. Dreiser had to sue in 1918 to have the courts decide whether it was obscene before it was made available again (Cassuto and Eby 5). The Pennsylvania edition is based on an uncut holograph manuscript and has approximately 36,000 more words than the Doubleday, Page edition; there is a current lively critical debate over whether the massive first round of cuts to Dreiser's original were mandated by Doubleday for propriety's sake. Brennan argues that Dreiser might well have made the first round of cuts voluntarily, after Harper rejected it in 1900 (Brennan 56). For more on the debate over the composition and publication of *Sister Carrie*, see Hayes; Pizer, "Note"; and Salzman.

the sentimentalists that dress and appearance be accurate indexes to moral status, they were already unreliable clues. As I have shown in Chapter 1, the midcentury American insistence that dress index morality was a historically and culturally shaped idea: it was a response to the economic, class, and racial mobility in America, as well as to the increasing urbanization of America and the resultant increase in interactions with strangers. In fact, dress was so bad at revealing moral character that it was difficult to tell prostitutes from respectable women. Literary critic Mariana Valverde, who has written about the meanings of Victorian prostitutes' "finery," argues that "the simultaneous stability and instability of dress as a social and moral signifier was a constant problem for reformers from the early Victorian period to the consumerist 1920s" (Valverde 172); even those who worked closely with prostitutes in efforts to reform them could not always tell respectable women from prostitutes by appearance (Valverde 171).[87] Yet this

[87] The management of one's social performance was especially important for women. Misjudging her performance or her audience could endanger, not just her reputation, but her body: "For a lady the standards of street dress were even more exacting, since her very respectability and physical safety might depend upon the signs she communicated through her appearance" (Kasson 121). When morality is read from sartorial and behavioral clues, it is only these clues that separated respectable women from prostitutes: "what most distinguished a prostitute was the way she attracted male attention by brightly colored attire, her notable omission of a hat that might shield her face, and her searching gaze" (Kasson 130). In fact, the misreading of the sartorial signs of the Aesthetic dress movement led to the arrests of several respectable women; Mary Blanchard argues that the wrappers, tea gowns, and other loose, uncorseted dresses that the Aesthetic movement espoused were seen as private garments, which caused a scandal when worn in public; the brief craze for "greenery-yallery" Aesthetic dress in the 1870s had women arrested as prostitutes when they were only Pre-Raphaelites. According to Blanchard, after Wilde's 1882 lecture on aesthetic decoration, the police chief ordered the arrest of women "who were attired in a dress that would attract unusual attention or cause a meretricious display" (quoted in Blanchard 29). This netted two women. (For more information on Wilde's American tour, and on his thoughts on dress as a form of aesthetics, see Cooper and Wilde.) Indeed, according to Blanchard, the lack of a corset was so strong a cultural sign of prostitution that respectable women could be arrested as prostitutes simply for appearing in public uncorseted: "In many cities, when respectable women went out in public wearing uncorseted garments — as one newspaper noted, 'donning a loose gown to visit their neighbor, go to the grocery store or run to the pump'--they were systematically arrested like prostitutes" (Blanchard 30). Blanchard examines the example of Louisville, where, in 1884, the police attempted "to 'suppress' aesthetic [30] costumes in public" as a result of the previous arrest of one Lizzie Brait, "who had been fined $5 in City Court for appearing 'on the street, as the evidence showed, in a pink Mother Hubbard.'" The Mother Hubbard (a variety of wrapper) was, according to the Louisville Commercial, commonly associated with prostitution: "Among no class is the Mother Hubbard more extensively worn" than that of the prostitute (30-31). For the broader links between

disjunction between appearance and character offers space for self-fashioning; as we will see in the next chapter, this gap between appearance and reality is one characteristic of the structure of pathos.

The cult of sincerity, as Halttunen acknowledges, was disintegrating by the turn of the century; she attributes its fall to "the growing power of fashion over middle-class life" (Halttunen 65) and to the increasingly self-conscious performance of sincerity—which is, of course, precisely *not* sincerity as the sentimentalists defined it. Indeed, at the turn of the century, the ideal of a "natural" beauty that comes from within was increasingly being replaced by a valorization of the artificial. Self-enhancement in all its forms, even including painting one's face, was becoming increasingly acceptable at century's end.[88] And Carrie's transformation reflects this; her beauty is *artificial* —not in the sense of falsity, but in the sense of the root word "artificing," which implies the conscious, intentional creation of an aesthetic object. Carrie creates herself as a beauty. By disarticulating appearance from morality, Carrie's performative beauty severs ties to the sentimental just as the novel's opening scene does.

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morality and dress, see Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*. According to historian of manners John Kasson, what distinguished the prostitute from the respectable woman was her visibility and her invitation of the male gaze (Kasson 126-130); Davis, *Working* connects this visibility to the actress, who displays herself on stage to the male gaze, and argues that it was this visibility that led to the actress's reputation as immoral. Piepmeier extends this, arguing that the movement of female bodies from the private domestic spaces of sentimentalism to the public streets and stages worked to destabilize associations between publicity, visibility, and immorality.

[88] Baudelaire's essay "In Praise of Cosmetics" (1863) indicates the beginnings of this shift. See Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* for a marvelous history of cosmetics and beauty culture in America.

Corsetry and shells

But how does Carrie achieve her transformation? How does dress work to change her appearance and even her identity? In the nineteenth century, as today, dress acts directly upon the body itself, which is the ground of our being, and changes it—in some cases permanently. Fashion is not purely external, not simply a mask or representation layered upon the outer shell of the self that changes only appearance. Habitual wearing of certain kinds of tight or restrictive apparatuses (corsets, high heels, or foot-bindings) notoriously causes permanent physical changes, but fashions also cause more subtle adjustments to posture, movement, and perception, changing the body's way of being in the world. Semiotician Umberto Eco, in his delightful essay "Lumbar Thought," notes the changes in his own body posture and proprioception (the conscious awareness of the sensations of one's own body) as an effect of wearing jeans. Dress is an "embodied practice," says sociologist of dress Joann Entwistle. As Entwistle points out, "Dress involves practical actions directed by the body upon the body which result in ways of being and ways of dress, such as ways of walking to accommodate high heels, ways of breathing to accommodate a corset, ways of bending in a short skirt and so on" (Entwistle, *Fashioned Body* 39). Dress, then, is far from being simply a layer added to the body's exterior; it changes the way we move, sit, and feel in our bodies. So, for example, Carrie's new high-heeled shoes would have changed her walk; as fashion theorist David Kunzle points out, "the high heel has radically modified the range of action in the foot, and thereby the stance and walk of the wearer. This heel has altered not so much a form as a relationship of forms in movement, transforming body posture and body action" (Kunzle, "Tightlacing," 561). (America's Next Top Model's endless "walking classes" are enough evidence for this.) The subtle postural and gestural changes do not

come only from shoes and corsets, for Carrie also practices imitating fashionable attitudes and gestures in her mirror: "She looked in her mirror and pursed up her lips, accompanying it with a little toss of the head as she had seen the railroad treasurer's daughter do. She caught up her skirts with an easy swing [….] her knowledge of grace doubled, and with it her appearance changed" (104). By imitating the bodily dispositions of fashionable women, Carrie is changing her body's habitus; she is learning the "intuitive graces" that she lacked in her first meeting with Drouet on the train, and these also shape her body. As historian Jenna Joselit notes, prettiness is "[a]s much a kinetic concept as a physical one," for prettiness "entailed shapeliness and ornamentality, roundness and grace, repose and containment" (Joselit 44).

Between Carrie's new dress and her new bodily habits, Carrie's body changes; by the time Drouet encounters her at novel's end, at the peak of her success, she has even grown taller; he says to her in surprise, "I never saw anybody improve so. You're taller, aren't you?" (473). As Dreiser shows us, Carrie's fashion works on her body, and eventually her mind, in adaptive ways; by showing fashion as one of the ways Carrie achieves her success, he primes the reader to overcome the "fear of fashion."

The notion that a subject can be shaped by objects makes us uncomfortable. Like nineteenth-century dress reformers, we have a niggling feeling that an over-interest in fashion, or in appearance, is a form of false consciousness — a distraction from real problems. Perhaps as a containment strategy, self-artificing is cast as frivolous and foolish; fashion seems to *contain*

women, limiting their physical and mental abilities.[89] The seemingly endless nineteenth-century debate over corseting (one subset of the broader dress reform movement of the nineteenth century, itself a subset of the agitation for women's rights) figures both of fashion's dual functions: containment and liberation. Corsets literalize fashion's repressive function, but their ability to effect permanent physical change (like the changes Carrie creates in her body) also expresses fashion's liberatory potential.[90] Obviously, corsets restrict their wearers' motion. I have referenced already their effects on the simple acts of standing, sitting, and moving about. Over time, corsets also change the internal structure of the body, moving organs, changing the

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[89] Feminist scholars have historically treated fashion ambivalently, at best. Wilson, *Adorned* argues in her chapter entitled "Feminism and Fashion" that one strain of feminism condemns every activity inflected by patriarchal values, and another sees criticism of any pleasurable activity on ideological grounds as elitist. These are what I have termed fashion's "oppressive" and "liberatory" functions; Wilson finds the basis for these two positions in the "authentic" and the "modernist" approaches to the relation of surface to interior. By "authentic" she means what I have called a sentimental relation to dress: Halttunen's transparency, a Romantic expressivist and essentialist notion of identity. By "modernist" she means the notion of the social, fluid, and fundamentally dissimulation-based identity which I find emerging in *Sister Carrie*, and which places primacy on the *external*. Feminists have specifically targeted Carrie for both interest and criticism. They have especially been interested in whether Carrie's proto-version of consumer feminism is simply a reinscription of an old pattern by which women exchange sexual attractiveness and beauty for social goods bestowed by men; Lori Merish persuasively explicates Carrie's self-objectification—her conversion of herself into goods for purchase. What feminist critics of fashion broadly, and of *Sister Carrie* specifically, fail to see is the book's complex treatment of fashion. See Merish, "Engendering," especially 322. See also Sawchuck and Hanson, "Philosophic Fear."

[90] Dress reformers in the nineteenth century cast their agitation for change in women's dress in terms of liberation: literal physical liberation from tight, constricting garments (a shift towards what they called "rational dress," with arguments based on scientific principles and secular hygiene concerns; see Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality* 119, Newton, and Gilman.) Dress reform was liberatory in political terms, for it was tightly linked to the early feminist movements, and came to stand in in some minds for women's liberation from patriarchal control. See Mattingly for the relation of the rhetoric of American women's dress to nineteenth-century politics; see also Montz for how suffragists deployed dress to ease male fears about radical women and dress reform. For a good overview of the general history of dress reform in the nineteenth century, including its links to activism, see Newton, Joselit 43-75, and Crane 112-128. For an alternative view of dress reform as a form of anti-feminism, see Kunzle, "Antifeminism", who argues that dress reformers' valorization of the "natural" female body, a legacy of the Romantic movement, and their demand that the female body be strong, healthy, and fertile in order to work and produce children for nationalist reasons, allowed for neither female choice nor female pleasure. Kunzle equates tightlacing with sexual liberation and empowerment, and argues that the freedom to choose the erotic over the practical is a freedom ignored by nineteenth-century feminism. Kaplan and Stowell 152-184 pull together the threads of theatrical performance, self-display, feminism, and costume/fashion.

shape of ribs, spines, and pelvises, and restricting lungs: a literal repression of the female body.[91] But the physical effects of corseting point also to its efficacy: corseting *also* serves as an exemplary act of self-fashioning from the outside in. Corsets function as what Michel Foucault calls a technology of self, and, like other body modification practices from cultures both ancient and modern, corsets offer a way to design one's own physical envelope, one's physical presence in the world.[92]

This ability to "design" the self, says modern philosopher of objects Tim Ingold, which is usually thought to operate only upon non-living things (computers, clothes, etc.), is equally relevant to living creatures; Ingold's example of the "design" of living things is the gastropod, which is formed, or trained, by its shell. The gastropod in this example is shaped by its shell in the same way that young women's bodies are shaped by corsets. Both the gastropod's shell and the corset work as external architectures to contain, protect, and shape the self. One can thus *design* the self by creating a "shell" of fashion, which is both separate from the self and part of it. The fashionable shell contains and structures the self, and supplies a clear demarcation between the self and the not-self; Victorianist Mary Blanchard has argued that corsets defined the

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[91] Modern women who wish to wear corsets need tutorials in how to sit, bend over, and stand while laced; see *Fran's Tightlacing Tips and Techniques*. See also Joselit for the long-term physical effects of corseting.

[92] Despite fashion's seeming ephemerality, it leaves physical traces and marks upon the wearer's body. Sociologists Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne Eicher find that *any* change to the body, temporary or permanent, is a form of body modification; Kathryn Eason and Nancy Hodges argue that body modification as a form of Cixous' *l'ecriture feminine*, a literal writing of the self upon the body . Practices such as tattooing, piercing, scarification, lip- and neck-stretching, and foot-binding are common examples of body modifications that have strong cultural meanings. Sociologist of culture Paul Sweetman examines how what he calls "corporeal expressions of *the self*" (tattoos and piercings) shape identity . In Sweetman's view, they work in the same way as "body projects," a term he borrows from Chris Shilling, who defines "body projects" as attempts "to construct and maintain a coherent and viable sense of self-identity through attention to the body and, more particularly, the body's surface" (quoted in Sweetman 293).

"boundaries" of the Victorian body. Critic Kaja Silverman goes further, arguing that as clothes define the body's boundaries they also bound identity: "clothing is a necessary condition of subjectivity—[…]in articulating the body, it simultaneously articulates the psyche" (Silverman 191).[93]

Fashion's shell-like function is perhaps most famously expressed by Henry James's character Madame Merle in *Portrait of a Lady* (1880): "every human being has his shell and […] you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances" (James, "Portrait," 397). This formulation extends and complicates the metaphor of the gastropod's shell, offering a model of distributed identity; Merle also asserts that dress, the self's shell, is a part of the self: the self "overflows into everything that belongs to us--and then […] flows back again."[94] By shell, then, she does not only mean the literal external layer

[93] For a history of the corset, see Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History*.

[94] The theory of the self as partly contained within dress (and other objects that combine a communicative, social function with an expressive, aesthetic, and psychological function, including the rest of Madame Merle's list: "one's house, one's clothes, and the book one reads, the company one keeps" (James, "Portrait," 397-398)) has a long history. Bill Brown has shown the intensification of the relationship between people and things at the American turn of the century (Brown, *Object Matter*). William James, in his 1890 *Principles of Psychology,* echoed Madame Merle in his theory of identity as "the sum total of all that [one] CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house," as well as family, social relations, ancestry, reputation, etc. This Jamesian model of the self is an accretive one, which takes account of all the things one owns or in which one has an emotional or financial stake. James particularly emphasizes the importance of dress to identity, continuing: "The body is the innermost part of *the material Self* in each of us; and certain parts of the body seem more intimately ours than the rest. The clothes come next. The old saying that the human person is composed of three parts—soul, body and clothes—is more than a joke. We … appropriate our clothes and identify ourselves with them" (James, *Principles* 189). (See Watson for an account of William James's fascination with his own personal dress.) Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance* trace how clothes have absorbed and reflected their owners' identities since the seventeenth century. See also Merish, "Sentimental Consumption: Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Aesthetics of Middle-Class Ownership" and Brown, *Domestic Individualism* for accounts of how sentimental texts invest domestic objects with feeling, and how these objects serve to create one's identity as a liberal subject.

encasing the self. She also includes "the whole envelope of circumstances," such as the books one reads, one's house, and one's friends. This whole "cluster of appurtenances" was termed by William James the "social self," and it works as another form of the sartorial shell. (As Andy Clark's concept of language's "scaffolding" function shows, even language itself is another type of "shell" that bounds and shapes identity.)

Through Madame Merle, James expresses exceptionally clearly the agency allowed by self-fashioning, if, like the gastropod, we choose our shells. If, as Madame Merle asserts, "a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear," then I create myself, in part, through the act of choosing what I wear. Carrie's acquired fashionable dress, like Ingold's gastropod shell, *designs* her body: it creates her outlines and edges, and shapes the self that it contains. Carrie fashions an identity by accreting a "shell" of fine dress.

This accretive model of self-fashioning is repeated in Eliza Haweis's 1879 image of the Terebella, a marine gastropod who fashions herself by creating her own shell. Haweis, an influential writer on design and women's appearance, displays through the figure of the Terebella the late-century belief in the power of representation and the malleability of identity. This passage takes for granted the corset's performative logic: that dress on the body's surface can shape the self from the outside in.

> The Terebella is a little creature that lives in the sea, to whose tender body nature has allotted no protective covering, and which cleverly sets itself to supply the want with a taste about as fastidious as that shown by our own fair countrywomen. It collects materials for its little coat with the same rapacity, and often with as little judgment--for some of its most ambitious ornaments being more costly than it can afford, have actually led to its own destruction! Nothing comes amiss to it. Sand, shells, pieces of straw, sticks or stones, atoms of sea-weed, every kind of *débris* within its reach, good, bad, or indifferent, it will collect and stick upon itself, agglutinated together by a secretion that among marine animals takes the place of needle and thread. It has even been known to

> add a heavy chignon pebble to its load, more inconvenient than serviceable, after quite a human fashion! When its laborious coat is finished, it thrusts out its triumphant head and rejoices. (Haweis 34-35)

Haweis here lampoons the fashionable excesses of the day; as a dress reformer and a devotee of aesthetic dress, she objected to the fussy, stiff, highly constructed shapes of 1870s fashion. But the central action of the passage shows the mechanism of self-fashioning through dress, and also suggests the sense of power—and pleasure—that self-decoration and self-determination offer in its final image of the little snail "rejoicing."

This passage and its central image link to the agency of self-fashioning in *Sister Carrie* in one additional way. As Peter Matthiessen and Donald Pizer have noted, *Sister Carrie* is filled with patterns of sea imagery in which Carrie is figured as a sea creature at the mercy of the tides This imagic pattern condenses Dreiser's interest in agency, determinism, and the constraints of external forces upon the self. Although Ingold's gastropod is separated from Haweis's and Dreiser's by more than a century, together they illuminate the design behind Carrie's self-fashioning; she is no victim of chance.

Costuming the public self

Carrie's agency is clearly figured in the profession Dreiser chooses for her: she quite literally *acts*, in both senses of the word.[95] In New York, she is frustrated by Hurstwood's

[95] States, in his essay "Performance as Metaphor," notes that the meaning of the term "performance" (like the term "acting") is rooted in in the idea of *action*. The original meaning of "perform," which remained stable through the seventeenth century, was simply to undertake and then do a thing. He traces the evolution of the term to its current meaning (a branch of aesthetics that includes performance art) from this idea of an act or duty done. It becomes first a *notable* act, rather than simply an act done, which evolves into the idea of performance of an artistic or literary work and thence to any public doing of music, theater, or sport (4).

passivity and fatalism, and prepares to support herself by action rather than waiting for the fall: she "secretly resolved to try. It didn't matter about him. She was not going to be dragged into poverty and something worse to suit him. *She could act.* She could get something and then work up" (378; my emphasis). The way that Carrie *acts* is—as always—through dress. Her skill in what Philip Fisher calls "self-enactment"—her self-fashioning as a fashionable woman—thus prepares her to succeed on the stage (Fisher 140). Indeed, she has been *acting* all along, in both its senses: her acting, her imitation of fashionable women on the street, is precisely now readable as a form of action. Her success on the stage is attributable to her years of rehearsal; it comes through her own action, not simply through luck or chance. The connection between Carrie's agency and her dress has been overlooked, yet Dreiser seems to carefully set Carrie up as an actor who learns to control her own fate through dress.

Carrie is not the first woman to shape her identity through dress; dress was already linked to women's self-definition in the public imagination, although often negatively. The suffragists in their bloomers, the tailored New Woman on her way to work in her suit, and the fashionable actress displaying herself publicly were all figures who defined their own identities in part through dress, and their dress was a sign of their unconventional public femininity.[96] In fact, dress, public visibility, and agency were all linked; women were no longer limited to the private sphere, instead going "out in public," which connoted "visibility, freedom, agency" as well as "transgression and deviance" (Piepmeier 1). Respectable women were moving out of the

[96] Suffragists had a fraught relationship with dress reform; while many of them agreed with the feminist impulses at the heart of the Bloomer movement, they were also very conscious of their public image, and some made the conscious choice to dress as attractively (and conventionally femininely) as possible for their marches and demonstrations. See Crane 127; Glenn, *Spectacle* 126-154; Mattingly; and Kaplan and Stowell 152-194.

domestic, private sphere that had previously circumscribed both their work and their leisure, moving instead into public spaces to socialize and to work. The street, the museum, the office, the shop, and the restaurant were all spaces newly open to middle-class women, but the public space they flocked to in droves was the theater, which helped to frame women's ideas of how and who they should become.[97]

One of the most visible manifestations of the public female self was the actress; according to historian Tracy Davis, actresses were "symbols of women's self-sufficiency and independence" (Davis, *Working* 222) who were also ideals of fashionable feminine beauty. Middle-class wives, mothers, and sisters wanted to imitate the actress's public self-display: they wanted to act — or failing that, at least to dress like an actress. As I have noted, their newly public occupations required more and better clothing, and women wanted to see the latest fashions on real women, in motion, rather than in stiff lithographs and engravings in magazines. The stage obliged. As theater historian Marlis Schweitzer argues, Broadway served as a kind of fashion show for nineteenth-century women (Schweitzer, *Broadway*). (In fact, the modern fashion show was originated by Lucile (Lady Duff Gordon), a couturière and theatrical costumer.)[98]

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[97] Theatrical managers courted this increase in female, middle-class audiences; they renovated theaters to remove the promenades where prostitutes displayed themselves, made rules about conduct and costume for both actresses and audiences to remove the possible moral contamination of contact, and instituted matinee performances designed to appeal to genteel women patrons. See Levine for an overview of how the middle class took over the theater; Richard Butsch argues that as the theater became a middle- rather than low-class pursuit, the gender of the audience changed from predominantly male to predominantly female. For the history of nineteenth-century women in public, see Bowlby, Scobey, and Piepmeier.

[98]According to Susan Glenn, Lucile, who opened her New York salon in 1910 and was "one of the principal designers for Ziegfeld's Follies" from 1915-1921, "deliberately blurred the lines between fashion, eroticism, and theater" (Glenn, *Spectacle* 41) with her fashion shows; Glenn notes also that "the gowns Lucile designed for London

Some women, not content with copying actresses' fashionable dresses, also wanted to act; acting offered an outlet for women's fashionable desires and a location for self-display, as well as the opportunity to support oneself in an increasingly respectable profession. Women were entering the theater (or trying to) in record numbers: Schweitzer says that "the number of women who identified themselves as actresses increased by 332% between 1890 and 1920, from 4,652 to 15,436, reflecting both the rapid growth of the theater industry itself, and the increased desirability of a performing career for women" (Schweitzer, "Becoming," 44). The American stage seemed accessible to all women, for at the turn of the century it required little formal training in acting or dance; dance historian Camille Hardy notes that "most [performers] learned to dance in rehearsals for specific productions" (Hardy 109). What the theater *did* require was expertise in fashion and grace, in what Joann Entwistle calls the "embodied practice" of dress (Entwistle, "Embodied").[99] Theater historian Eelin Stewart Harrison says that, "During this

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and New York high society women were often identical to the ones she later produced for Ziegfeld's revues" (Glenn, *Spectacle* 42). Interestingly, Lucile is also a nexus point between feminism, fashion, and theater, for she met radical suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst and found her very well-dressed (Kaplan and Stowell 7).

[99] Fashionableness indicated to managers and producers that the fashionable woman had the skills that acting demanded: beauty, fashionable appearance, and the skill — the physical ability and grace — needed to properly carry off fashionable dress. Fashionableness is a *physical* discipline: for example, the Poiret hobble skirts of the 1910s required a particular style of movement, with mincing steps and a very upright carriage, to overcome the skirt's tightness at knees and ankles. (Jenna Joselit asserts that fashionable women had to "pass through the 'trials' of the hobble skirt" before they could attain the freedom of movement that the 1920s uncorseted fashions allowed (58).) This physical ability was sought in casting; an anonymous writer, in a 1911 piece titled "How I became an Actress," tells the story of her interview with theatrical producer David Belasco, who asked her to sit down and stand up several times as a part of the interview. The actress, aware that he was watching how she managed her fashionable dress and her gestures and body, "very deliberately" rearranged her skirts each time; "At this point, she explains, 'Mr. Belasco looked at me quizzically, then down at my skirt. 'That is right; an actress must be sure her skirts are gracefully arranged'" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 76, n. 151). The ability to manage one's dress is a learned (not a natural) skill; "the naturalness the audience admired in an actress onstage was the product of long hours of training and careful observance" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 78).

period two theatrical elements that audiences loved were stars and clothes, and the wise producer gave them both. Stars, like Billie Burke and Ethel Barrymore, were chosen for their ability to wear costume" (Harrison 16).

Carrie's developed expertise with fashion is thus a crucial element of her success as an actress; fashionableness itself was the first requirement for girls hoping to enter the theater. The flooded market for actresses—the sheer number of stage-struck girls that Schweitzer identifies—meant that "fashionable dress became an increasingly important strategy for attracting attention" from managers and directors (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 50). And it was competitive. As actress Ethel Barrymore said in 1906, "out of the thousands of girls who desire to become actresses, not ten have any chance of success or happiness upon the stage" (quoted in Schweitzer, *Becoming* 50). Acting was of such interest to the public that even ladies' fashion magazines discussed the difficulty of finding work as an actress. *The Delineator* (a commercial sewing-pattern magazine originally produced by pattern manufacturer Butterick as a pattern distribution device; it became a general-circulation women's magazine in 1894, and Dreiser was its managing editor from 1907 to 1910; see Bland) warned stage-struck girls in 1909 about the long odds against success as well as the hard labor at being fashionable that stage work required: "Sometimes the novice is chosen from among those many waiting girls, sometimes she is rebuffed. But she must go on smiling, *go on prettying up her frock*, go on the weary rounds with the hordes of others" (my emphasis; quoted in Schweitzer, *Becoming* 60). In fact, excellent dress skills were so important that they could even make up for lack of talent; writing in the *Independent* in 1906, a former chorus girl asserted that "a girl can get a good situation through the grace of a fine dress, tho she may not be

able to sing, dance, or do anything else well, while a girl with real talent and a poor dress will be turned away" (quoted in Hardy 112).

Fashioning actresses, characters, and selves

Dreiser's and the casting theatrical managers' evident belief that beauty and fashionableness were practices, not essential traits, indicates a cultural shift: there is little to no anxiety about naturalness and sincerity manifested in these accounts, only a belief in the power of surface changes to change physical reality.[100] This shift in attitude is also visible in actresses' accounts of their costumes and the role these costumes played in creating characters. Actresses seem to agree that costume is absolutely central to character. In the context of actresses' accounts of the importance of costume and gesture, Carrie's imitation of fashionable women on the street begins to look less like vanity and more like a practice of art. Indeed, Dreiser explicitly frames her mirror play as a form of imitative rehearsal, not a manifestation of vanity: "Under [Drouet's] airy accusation she mistook this for vanity […], though as a matter of fact it was nothing more than the first subtle outcroppings of an artistic nature […]. In such feeble tendencies, be it known, such outworking of desire to reproduce life, lies the basis of all dramatic art" (157). Again, this authorizes Carrie's affective relationship with dress. She fashions a successful identity and prepares herself for her career as an actress by honing her dress and self-presentation skills. And it is her acting, accessed through dress, that offers her power; even as a member of

[100] Again, this is quite contrary to the sentimental ideology articulated by Halttunen. Philip Fisher sees this same linkage between acting, agency, and dress in *Sister Carrie*: he highlights both Dreiser's "refusal to contrast acting with sincerity, his refusal to oppose the representation of what one is not to authentic self-representation" and the role of dress in Carrie's "conspicuous performance of prospective being" (Fisher 167-68). He also connects this performative self to urbanization and other changes typical of America's "dynamic society" (167).

the audience, Carrie recognizes that to act is to "compel acknowledgment of power" (158). For Dreiser, the art of acting becomes a force, and the stage is the site of the feminine will to power (familiar to readers of his later works, but often overlooked in this first novel). In *Sister Carrie,* moments of performance are indeed the peaks of Carrie's social, economic, and personal power; as Deborah Garfield and others have noted, scenes of theater figure the possibility of transformation in Dreiser (Humphries 39). Carrie's benchmark performance at the Avery Theater traces her success through the eyes of Hurstwood and Drouet, who register the newfound power Carrie derives from her performance.

The scene of Carrie's first theatrical transformation echoes accounts by contemporary actresses of their relationships to their costumes and their characters, which re-echo Dreiser's articulation of Carrie's self-fashioning through dress.[101] These actresses' accounts share assumptions about "the transformative nature of dress and its role in the construction of a new, different 'self'" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 123-124); as we will see, the transformative effects of costume work upon the *actress's* "self" too. Nineteenth-century actresses seem to put on a new identity when they put on their costumes, which they often designed, produced, and bought. Some, like actress Frances Starr (who developed a whole "psychology of stage dress" based upon Thomas Carlyle's philosophy of clothes in *Sartor Resartus*), locate their access to a

[101] The woman's page was introduced in newspapers in the 1890s, and beauty and fashion columns written by actresses were common fodder for these pages (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 112). Dreiser's extensive newspaper and magazine experience makes it even more likely that he would have been aware of these articles. He worked as the drama critic for the St. Louis Globe-Democrat (Dreiser, *A Book About Myself* 173-180) and (as I have mentioned already) during his editorship, *The Delineator* published accounts of actresses and their costumes. According to Barbara Hochman, Dreiser himself originally wished to write for the stage (Hochman, "Portrait," 60), and his brother, Paul Dresser, wrote songs for Broadway and Tin Pan Alley. Dreiser's involvement in the theater world was deep and affective.

character in the character's costume (which is chosen, from underwear to headpiece, by the actress herself up until this period): "the sense of feeling appropriately dressed for the part gives a dramatic artist a grasp of her character" (quoted in Schweitzer, *Becoming* 123).[102] Others, like actress Laurette Taylor, saw costume's shaping power in more mystical terms. Taylor advised in 1910, "Dress your part as the character you are playing in real life, and you are sartorially--and perhaps psychologically--in tune with your role" (quoted in Schweitzer, *Becoming* 123). While Taylor's statement about being "in tune" with one's role uses a metaphor of sound-wave vibration, the sartorial vibrations to which Taylor attunes her performance seem to precede and even produce the psychological vibrations of the character itself: material manifestation precedes identity. For actress Laurette van Varseveld, who saw costume as a method of taking on her role's identity, sartorial identification is described in terms recalling a medium taken over by the spirit she channels.[103] In a 1908 article in *The Theatre Magazine* called "The Psychology of Stage Clothes," van Varseveld asserts that the right costumes can help a "temperamentally sensitive actress" (recall my earlier discussion of sensibility) to connect with her role; the right costume can "put her psychologically *en rapport* with the role she is interpreting" (quoted in Schweitzer, *Becoming* 122). For all these actresses, their costumes—which they have created—

[102] This is an echo of Dreiser's call in the novel's opening scene for a woman to write the philosophy of clothes.

[103] There is a resonance here with the notion of the male manager/director as the possessing spirit that is channeled by the passive actress, as in *Trilby*. But in the actresses' own formulations, they channel the *character* rather than the manager, and it is a character that they themselves have created through their invention of the costume that materializes it.

create the spirit of the character they will play, and the "sensitive" actress responds to the costume's cues.[104]

This sartorial shaping extended beyond the evocation of character onstage to the materialization of the identity of the actress herself: gowns created character and actress in equal measures. Another actress, Jane Cowl, discusses in 1914 the relations between gowns, character, and actress in such a way that the gowns seem to form a link between the role and the actress, a kind of mediator or medium connecting the two. Dresses seem to precede the *actress's* identity as well as the character's: "My gowns have always been a part of my existence. I give them just as much consideration in the planning [for a new role] as I give to memorizing my lines and am just as particular about their outcome" (quoted in Schweitzer, *Becoming* 122-133). Cowl makes an important point here: she says that costume is as important in creating her character as is the text itself. As we will see more strongly in my chapters on James's work, this attitude decentralizes the importance of texts and of linguistic signs, and instead values embodiment and materiality: people and stage characters are more than words. And, says Cowl, her gowns make up a part of this valorized embodiment; they are "part of [her] existence." This hints at the gowns' role in creating Cowl herself; her diction, which conflates the actress with the character she plays, implies that the gowns have also played a role in materializing Cowl's identity. The *actress* is called into being by her costume in the same way that her characters' identities are

[104] The idea of dress as a repository for feeling or for personality, especially that of the dead, is quite common; Wilson calls clothing "congealed memories" (Wilson, *Adorned* 1), an idea similar to that in Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance*. Stallybrass says of his dead friend's jacket, bequeathed to him: "Allon [….] was there in the wrinkles of the elbows, wrinkles which in the technical jargon of sewing are called 'memory'; he was there in the stains at the very bottom of the jacket; he was there in the smell of the armpits. Above all, he was there in the smell" (Stallybrass, "Worn," 36).

created through costume. The complex transformations that hopeful actresses like Carrie undergo to become fashionable—to fashion themselves into actresses—are thus legible as a process similar to that by which actresses transform themselves into their characters on the stage.

Costly costuming

The actresses' preparation process mirrors Carrie's own mimetic rehearsals; this allows us to re-read Carrie, not as simply venal or vain, but as a figure—like the actress—to be admired. This retroactive re-visioning extends also to what is Carrie's least comprehensible and most repugnant act, the act that invites the most readerly judgment: Carrie's abandoning Hurstwood in order to buy herself new clothes. This is a particularly uncomfortable moment for the reader, for it is here that Carrie's and Hurstwood's trajectories diverge sharply and permanently. She abandons him to starve, literally, while she rises to the heights of luxury. But even this act is comprehensible with enough context. Practically speaking, the financial burden upon the beginning actress was considerable. Fashionable dress on hopeful actresses did not only display their beauty and grace, and set them apart from the crowd; it also indicated that the hopefuls would be able to *afford* to go on the stage, for actresses at the turn of the century were responsible for their own costuming: designing, buying material for, and producing the costumes. When the reader has a clear sense of this financial burden that Carrie takes on to support herself, her refusal to continue to support Hurstwood looks less calculatedly selfish and more desperate. In order to make her own way in the world and earn a living on the stage, she was required to invest—literally—in her career.

Since the beginning of professional theater, actors and actresses had supplied nearly all of their own costuming.[105] This custom was beginning to shift at the end of the nineteenth century, due in equal measures to changing labor patterns in the theater, structural changes in the theater system, and a shift in aesthetic style favoring realism. Although certain producers known for their interest in especially spectacular or especially realistic effects were beginning to pay for or heavily subsidize the contemporary fashionable costuming for fashion plays, producer-subsidized costuming was by no means universal at the turn of the century. Approaches ranged from entirely producer-supplied costumes to a range of partial subsidies for costumes supplied by actors. According to Schweitzer, Charles Frohman was the first to subsidize the "contemporary stage gowns" needed for fashion plays (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 65). While Charles Frohman and David Belasco "covered most, if not all, costuming expenses," Daniel Frohman and the Shubert brothers paid only a certain percentage of the costuming expenses; according to Schweitzer, "[a]s late as 1910, Annie Russell explained to the readers of *The Ladies' Home Journal* that there was no set arrangement. 'Some managements provide them all,' she reported, 'others furnish one out of three; some share the cost; often the actress provides them entirely'" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 65). The amount paid by the management also varied by type of production; historical plays, in which it was especially important that the ensemble's costumes be visually cohesive, usually supplied costumes; contemporary plays did not.[106]

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[105] See Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance* and de Marly for extensive histories of stage costume's economics and aesthetics.

[106] Costume historian Genevieve Richardson discusses the turn in playwriting towards realism and away from comedy in the 1880s and early 1890s, when expensive fashion costuming briefly abated in favor of realistic costumes in keeping with the rest of the production (Richardson 96). However, historians of costume agree that this

Stars often negotiated costume subsidies as part of their contracts; this meant that young actresses like Carrie, new to the profession, were the ones most heavily burdened with the expense of their costumes. Actress Ethel Barrymore, a beneficiary of the star subsidy, articulated this as a problem, saying in her memoirs that "One of the sad things about the theater is that when you are beginning, trying to make a very little money go a long way, you have to pay for your own clothes; when you're a star, relatively rich, they're provided for you" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 67). Acting, while an avenue to financial independence for some women, thus ended up as unprofitable or even debt-creating for others. Actresses sometimes found themselves in hock—or as Ethel Barrymore put it, "mortgaged"— to managers or producers through a kind of costume layaway plan. Actresses had to provide their costumes before the play opened, and until

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period was brief and anomalous, for the importance and expense of fantastic costuming returned with a vengeance in the early 20th century. Charles Frohman, the first producer to pay for modern fashionable costumes, understood how big a draw the costumes were to audiences; for a history of Frohman's engagement with costuming in his company, see Loring. David Belasco, another producer who paid for his actresses' costumes, did so because he was very interested in costume realism; he was said to have bought the clothes off the backs of real hobos and shop girls that looked right to him in this quest for realistic costume (Richardson 79). Costuming was one of the heaviest expenses for the production as well as for the individual performers. Feminist performance historian Katherine Glenn argues that in early-twentieth-century performances, costumes were as or more important than the performers: "while Ziegfeld and his competitors continued to insist that legs of the girls were the raison d'etre of revues, the other stars were the costumes" (Glenn 38). Theater historian Josephine Paterek studied New York commercial stage costuming from 1914-1934, and found that musical comedies, which made up only 20% of the productions she analyzed, accounted for 65% of the total expenditure; a revue might cost $200,000, while a straight play might be only $10,000; the usual median was $30,000 to $60,000 for a musical play as compared to $10,000 to $25,000 for a dramatic play (Paterek 109). Musical comedy and revue, the most expensive productions to mount because of their dependence on the visually spectacular choruses with their lavish costumes, were on their way to becoming the most popular type of production at the turn of the century (Hardy 103). Historian of theatrical costume Diana de Marly defines the revue as "an excuse for dances, songs and glamourous clothes" (de Marly 119). The revue evolved, famously, into the Ziegfeld Follies, the extravagant, madly costumed spectacles that began in 1907, but it was not until after the actors' strikes of 1919 and 1924 that contemporary costumes were regularly provided for performers. The standard contract of the Actors Equity Association, agreed to in 1924, finally specified standard terms and expectations for performers and costuming: "Male actors must themselves furnish all conventional morning, afternoon, and evening clothes customarily worn by civilians of the present day in their country, together with necessary footwear and wigs. Any other kinds of clothes required by men, and all clothes, stockings, shoes, wigs, and so on, without exception, required by women, must be provided by the manager" (quoted in Paterek 31-32).

the Actors Equity Association was formed in 1912, rehearsals were unpaid (Hardy 111). Commonly, actresses needed loans from the theater company to purchase their costumes; the companies then deducted loan payments from their salaries for the whole season. (Actresses who still owed at the end of the season were often not rehired; Schweitzer says that in this situation actresses had "little choice but to leave the profession penniless" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 67). She tells the tale of Mrs. Leslie Carter, who "declared bankruptcy at the height of her career [because] she owed $31,169 in clothing and jewelry expenses" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 109).) The expense of costuming was heavy and ongoing, according to actress Clara Morris: "the terribly expensive garment cannot be worn for more than that one play, and the next season it is out of date. When the simplest fashionable gown costs $125 what must a ball gown with cloak, gloves, fan, slippers and all, come to?" (quoted in Richardson 74). Schweitzer gives examples of actresses spending as much as $10,000 for their costumes for a single play.[107]

Of course, as a member of the chorus, Carrie did not need to spend as much on her costumes as the stars in these examples; the chorines of the comic opera were costumed identically, and the theatrical company therefore supplied the primary costumes for the dancers. (The costume for which Carrie is fitted after her first promotion, for example, is provided by the

[107] Structural changes in the theatrical system also contributed to costuming expenses. The repertory company model, which put on different plays each night from a stock repertoire, shifted over to the long-run theater model, in which a play runs every night until it closes for lack of audience; the long-run system was already firmly entrenched by 1900, when *Sister Carrie* was published. Costuming expenses were especially heavy in long-run theater, which depended upon constantly attracting both new and repeat attendance; since the audiences came to see the fashions, managers often required actresses to re-costume themselves partway through the run. In 1873, when Clara Morris had just paid off five new costumes for the play *Divorce*, the manager Augustin Daly decided to celebrate the 100th performance by requiring new costumes. According to Richardson, "When Miss Morris explained what a hardship it was to pay the dressmaker, he answered, 'Yes, yes, I know all that; but I want to stir up fresh interest, therefore we must have something to draw the people, and they will come to see the new dresses'" (Richardson 77).

company and altered to fit her, and Dreiser describes the uniformity of the costumes. The line Carrie heads has in it "some twenty girls, all in snow-white flannel trimmed with silver and blue," and Carrie, as line leader, "was most stunningly arrayed in the same colours, elaborated, however, with epaulets and a belt of silver, with a short sword dangling at one side" (401).) Even so, chorus girls still had to buy their own "gloves, hats, shoes, and tights, which together could cost as much as $60, or half a season's earnings" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 68). Carrie's first promotion out of the chorus requires more investment than she has funds; when she is cast as Katisha the Country Maid, her first credited part, she is unable to meet her costume expenses, and uses the "mortgage" system to pay for them after she leaves Hurstwood. (In her mental accounting after she moves in with Lola, we learn that she budgets five dollars a week "to pay the regular installment on the clothes she had to buy" (443).)

Identity as object: selling the image of the self

The actress's costume expenses were not limited to her stage costumes, for many acting contracts required that the actress follow contractual dress guidelines at all times, even in her private life. This is, as we will see, emblematic of the way the actress's private and public lives converge; marketing the actress as a commodity turns her life into a professional performance that, like stage performance, requires elaborate costuming. Stars and chorus girls bore the heaviest burden, as they were required to play their fashionable, professional role at all times; according to "The Experiences of a Chorus Girl," the chorus girl "lives in a show, and she must make a show herself if she is to keep up with the procession" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 70). Costumes were seen as "part and parcel of [the actress's] tools of trade, like the carpenter's kit or

the surgeon's case of instruments" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 90), and they "define her as a professional" (90). Yet the actress wore these role-defining "professional" gowns both on and off the stage: according to Katharine Loring, historian of New York theater and costume at the turn of the century, "seldom in their discussion of costuming with the press did the society stars make any real distinction between their street wear and stage wardrobe" (Loring 125). Actresses who wore the latest fashions on the boards commonly courted professional publicity by also flaunting radically fashionable gowns on the street: Schweitzer recounts a 1908 incident in which Bertha Carlisle, a chorus girl in the company for the smash hit *The Merry Widow*, wore a Poiret Directoire gown (*very* new, *very* shocking in 1908) on the streets of Chicago to promote the production. (Carlisle's commission of this shocking act of dress earned her a headline in the May 24 *New York Times*: "Girl in Directoire Gown. Mob of 10,000 Chicagoans Catch Fleeting Glimpse of Blue Trouser"; this nearly universally-successful stunt-dressing became a routine ploy suggested by actresses' publicity agents (Schweitzer, "Search," 95).) We see in this fashionable conflation of the actress's professional and private lives both the beginnings of the commodification of the actress's identity and the role that dress plays in this commodification; like her clothes, the actress is an object of public attention both onstage and off. And like her clothes, the actress becomes an object rather than a subject in the public imagination.

Even more startling than these fashionable performances in the street were actresses' fashionable performances in other, more clearly private zones, which begin to solidify the actress's status as an object of public gaze and interest even when she is in her most private, domestic spaces. This publication of the private intensifies the perception of the actress as a transgressive, liminal figure, for her female body moved out of the private, domestic space of the

home and into the marketplace, profiting by the transgression; the anxiety about the publicizing of actresses' private lives still vibrates today.[108] The actress displaying herself in the street was performing in a space that already sanctioned social performance and self-display; Broadway especially, the location of many popular theaters, was a liminal space where stage and street overlapped, a zone of public performance where professionals and amateur social performers mingled without distinction. As Carrie says, the scene on Broadway was a "showy parade" (323) of "beauty and fashion" that inspired everyone to join in the competition of self-display: Mrs. Vance had often promenaded on Broadway "to see and be seen, to create a stir with her beauty and dispel any tendency to fall short in dressiness by contrasting herself with the beauty and fashion of the town" (323).[109] Actresses also used other, less public venues to showcase their sartorial self-performances; as Schweitzer notes, "actresses made as much of entering a restaurant as they did entering the stage" (Schweitzer, "Search," 110). As if in imitation of the actresses, well-heeled private citizens also began to use restaurants as places of self-display, as Ames and the narrator make clear in the scene at Sherry's restaurant; with its brilliant lighting

[108] This is visible, for example, in the simultaneous public consumption of and repulsion by celebrity gossip blogs and paparazzi photos, or in the public response to reality television. For more on the phenomenon of reality television, see Andrejevic. Also see Sennett, who argues that as opportunities for public expression in the commons declined, the private and public sectors began to bleed into one another; this shifts the idea of public space from a place to act together to create social order to a place where one interacts with strangers (the public) in order to develop one's personality (24). Montgomery sees the development of "display culture" (Montgomery, *Displaying* 121) as linked instead to the increase in public social life for elite classes, while Bowlby, Lancaster, Leach, and Benson connect the new public life directly to the market via the rise of shopping and the invention of department stores.

[109] Schweitzer describes Broadway as a space which allowed stage-struck girls to practice their professional performance skills: "Fashion allowed the stage-struck girl to envision herself as an actress, but it was only through the act of walking down Broadway looking for work that she (potentially) became an actress. Broadway and its tributaries in the theatre district became an important transition zone for emerging performers, a place where they experimented with and ultimately performed their newly formed identities as actresses" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 62).

and endless mirrors, "reflecting and re-reflecting forms, faces and candelabra a score and a hundred times" (332), Sherry's is a place designed for its patrons to both see and be seen—a stage for social performance.[110] The move from relatively private spaces to increasingly public ones is documented in *Sister Carrie*; as Amy Kaplan argues, domesticity in *Sister Carrie* is "reencoded as a marketable value" (Kaplan 144). The shifts in setting over the novel, from sentimental, private domestic interiors to rented living quarters to fully public spaces like hotels, indicate the commodification of the image of privacy; Carrie's and other actresses' deployment of the *image* of privacy precisely in order to publicize their careers also exemplifies domesticity's value on the market. It is, after all, the peculiarity of Carrie's "lonely, self-withdrawing temper" that makes her "an interesting figure in the public eye" (428). Privacy sells.

This is most clear in actresses' use of their own domestic spaces as sites for publicity, settings for public performances of privacy. As today, the private lives of public figures sold more papers than their public lives. Actresses were more likely to be covered in the press for their private love affairs (often marrying American millionaires or English aristocrats—Pinero referred to women thus elevated as the "actressocracy") than for their professional performances on the stage.[111] To counteract the sensationalizing coverage of famous scandals, actresses

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[110] This social performance of wealth is often read as the primary function of fashionable dress; according to Veblen, the purpose of fashionable dress is economic display rather than aesthetic pleasure. Veblen's theory, and variations on it, predominated in writing about fashion until relatively recently; for a succinct overview of the different schools of thought about fashion, see Entwistle, *Fashioned Body* 53-77.

[111] This is the moment that celebrity gossip is birthed. As Barbara Hochman has argued, there has been an interest in the private lives of authors since midcentury (see Hochman, *Author* 70-92, chapter 4:"The Return of the Author: The Realist Writer as Woman Onstage"). Barnum's promotion of Jenny Lind is often considered the beginning of the phenomenon of celebrity and the marketing of persona, but the marketing of actresses' personalities and especially the use of their likenesses in advertising began the popular interest in celebrity as it persists today. For the history of

increasingly courted press interviews that showed their quiet and respectable home lives, often inviting photographers into their homes and showing off their wardrobes (Schweitzer, "Search," 111). Indeed, actresses attempted to shape their public images to portray themselves as ordinary domestic women; as Michelle Majer *et al.* argue, actresses increasingly tried to frame themselves as typical women who just happened to be visible. This is apparent in the coverage of actresses, which changed at the turn of the century to "[p]hotographs and accompanying stories showing them in their tastefully decorated homes, engaged in such ordinary activities as correspondence, gardening, and playing with their children" (Majer et al. 39). Carrie, too, finds that her public is as interested in her private life as in her performances; she receives "mash notes" from hopeful suitors (455) who wish to meet the private Carrie, Carrie-the-subject, rather than simply watching Carrie-the-object across the gulf of the orchestra pit. (These are the "portly gentlemen in the front rows" who find Carrie so attractive in her part as the Quaker maiden—who "feel that she was a delicious little morsel," and who long to "force away" her frown "with kisses" (447).) The actress commodifies her offstage self—her ostensibly private life—in order to market herself as an actress; she creates a "personality," a role synecdochizing her complex identity, which she can market to the public both on and off the stage.[112] In other words, she turns herself into an object, a simplified image of herself, which can be sold.[113]

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celebrity, see Inglis; for a legal history of persona and likeness as a form of property, see Armstrong Jr.; for the links between actresses and advertising, see Majer et al. and Banta, chapter 14.

[112] See Susman, chapter 14, "'Personality' and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture." Also see Kaplan, who has noted a distinction between "character" and "personality," arguing that at the turn of the century "character," or personal integrity, gives way to "personality," with its sense of individualism and of the importance of the surface (Kaplan links personality to "impressionism" (35-38), which I take to comprise the increasing interaction with

The star factory

Actresses were thus seen by their audiences as objects to be consumed; they were also viewed as objects to be physically manipulated by the Broadway "star factory." Performers' staged bodies were framed as the products of a mass-production manufacturing system rather than as products of personal labor on the self. Theater critic Alan Dale wrote of the star-making system on Broadway in 1906: "Every season, we drop at least half a dozen meek young people who can neither talk distinctly, act convincingly, nor give any evidence of dramatic fitness, into the fine, open-mouthed machine, and out they come at the other end as 'star,' full fledged" (quoted in Schweitzer, "Search," 53). And, of course, the producers in this popular account of the making of the Broadway star were men. (The term "producers" has a double valence, referring both to theatrical producers and to a particular economic position in the capitalist system; the second meaning reinforces female stars' objecthood, their status as manufactured commodities for sale.)

Male producers saw themselves as the sole agents behind the transformations they worked upon the raw materials of actresses' bodies, as the producers that manufactured actresses.[114] When Georges Edwardes, a famous musical-comedy producer, was told that one of his stars was to marry, he responded:

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strangers in the American city). She argues further that Dreiser's interest in "personality" (129) is linked to the collapse of distinctions between private and public.

[113] See Armstrong Jr. for an account of changing legal decisions around celebrities' images, which indicate a shift towards the idea of the image of the self as a commodity.

[114] The 1894 bestseller *Trilby* gave us the character of Svengali, the ür-figure of the controlling manager. Purcell examines the phenomenon of *Trilby*-mania, noting that in 1895 an amateur production of the play *Trilby* was

> It's sheer ingratitude! … I've done everything for that girl--taught her to pick up her *h*'s, clean her finger-nails, had her teeth seen to, her appendix removed, her hair dyed, dressed her from her underclothes to her boots, taught her to walk … and now, when she's making good, she *marries*! (quoted in Parker and Parker 66)

This anecdote shows both the typical masculine ascription of complete passivity to female stars-in-training (she sounds like a doll, or an infant, in this characterization) and the financial stake that producers invested into the commodity of the actress—as well as the resentment she engendered by any act of self-determination. Even a seemingly private, personal act like marrying caused surprise and outrage.

The Broadway play was figured as a factory, and its product was stars. The idea of assembly-line-style rational production of actresses as objects at the hands of male "management," is, says feminist performance historian Susan Glenn, an attempt to contain the actress's transgressive power of self-definition. The rows upon rows of identically costumed chorus girls dancing in perfect sync are, for Glenn, a projection of "fantasies of rationally controlled female bodies" (Glenn, *Spectacle* 175). Glenn even titles one of her chapters "An Efficiency Expert in Girls"; she points to choreographer Ned Wayburn as an example of such an "efficiency expert." Wayburn, the inventor of "technical dancing" (the famous synchronized kick lines and complex movements of the chorus dances, performed with the same perfect timing displayed by the mechanized, Taylorized factory floor), ran an advertisement in a 1924 issue of

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performed at Sherry's restaurant in New York—one of the settings in *Sister Carrie*. The intense cultural interest in the relationship between the male genius and the female protégé upon whom he works a miraculous transformation is also evident in the heightened interest in the story of Pygmalion and Galatea at this period. W. S. Gilbert's play about Pygmalion and Galatea was staged in 1871; a London parody version called "Galatea, or Pygmalion Re-Versed" was staged in 1883; and G.B. Shaw's version, which was adapted into the famous Rodgers and Hammerstein "My Fair Lady," debuted in 1912. Richard Brodhead has examined a version of this dynamic in antebellum American literature.

Variety magazine for his dance studio, carrying the tagline "Ned Wayburn Studios of Stage Dancing--manufacturers of dancing stars" (Glenn, *Spectacle* 175). Chorus line dancers, then, are depicted as nearly pure objects: lacking any agency, subjectivity, or individual difference, they are presented as machine-like fem-bots. Wayburn said in 1920, "Ever since I have been a producer of girls shows I have had to create the chorus girl. She is a creation as completely thought out, moved about, wired and flounced, beribboned and set dancing, as any automaton designed to please, to delight, to excite an audience" (quoted in Glenn, *Spectacle* 179). The passive, receptive fem-bot of Wayburn's imagination requires a male choreographer or producer to wind her up and set her going.

Sister Carrie differs importantly from this standard version of the tale: Dreiser has Carrie make *herself* over into a marketable stage commodity.[115] Carrie is not the object of making-over at the hands of a male producer. Her transformation is at her own hands and her own initiation, and begins long before she steps foot upon the boards. This is important: the idea of objectifying the self is objectionable, especially to modern feminists, but Carrie is not a passive recipient of

[115] The notion of "making oneself over" is now applied almost exclusively to the transformation of appearance through dress and cosmetics, but it is actually a sewing term. Women "made over" old dresses to make them fit the current fashion, sometimes going so far as to deconstruct, re-tailor, and reassemble the entire garment; especially before the mass production of cloth made textiles affordable, every scrap of cloth was used and re-used. (See Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, 17-33 and 175-206 for the thriving economy of secondhand cloth and stage clothing in Renaissance England.) Kathy Peiss says the term "makeover" was used for the first time in cosmetics advertising in 1936, arguing that cosmetics advertising played upon the promise of transformation of the self rooted in American culture "from conversion experiences and temperance oaths to the appeals of medicine men and faith healers" (144). Peiss argues that the cosmetics industry dangled the promise of a new identity in a change of appearance: "In the coloring and contouring of facial surfaces, a woman could not only change her looks but remake herself and her life chances. When in 1936 Mademoiselle showed an ordinary reader, nurse Barbara Phillips, how to improve her appearance and featured her as the 'Made Over Girl,' the metamorphosis known as the makeover was born" (Peiss 144). As Peiss's story of self-transformation through physical manipulation makes clear, the idea of the makeover echoes the way that worn garments were refashioned into newly useful dresses.

male attentions. Instead, it is precisely her objectification that indicates her agency. Acting is the precondition for agency; it is acting that is the mark of the subject, and Carrie acts (on the stage and upon her own body) from the very first scene of the book. And even more strangely, Carrie's self-objectification is a feminist act. Usually men *do*, while women are *done to* (and looked at): men are subjects, women are objects. Action is masculine, reception or passivity feminine. This is not simply a nineteenth-century belief; a 1989 analysis of modern catalogue advertising still finds these gendered links: masculinity, subjectivity, and action are connected, and femininity, object-status, and reception are linked. According to Jennifer Craik, who conducted the study, female models are consistently represented in static, frozen poses: they are the *object* of action in the photographs (as well as the object of the reader's gaze at the photographs) as they pose passively. In contrast, men are depicted in action: riding a skateboard or throwing a football, men *act* upon (often female) objects. Acting is the precondition for subjectivity. As Craik asserts, "femininity becomes the product of actions upon the body: in contrast, masculinity is a set of bodily parts and the actions they can perform" (Craik, "Making Up," 6). Craik's 1989 catalogues are still playing out what J. H. Montgomery calls the "Galatea principle" (Montgomery, "The American Galatea").

Yet Carrie encompasses both positions: she acts and is acted upon. In his account of Carrie's self-transformation, then, Dreiser thus upends the Broadway star system and the gendered assumptions upon which it rests. Dreiser positions Carrie as simultaneously producer and product, for she has been both the subject and the object of her own transformation. As both the doer and the done-to, she inhabits both the masculine and the feminine roles.

The theater and the fashion system, entwined with one another, are seen to offer two possibilities for women, one feminist and one anti-feminist; as theater historian Faye Dudden says, "[t]he theatrical enterprise…contains two divergent possibilities for women: transformation and objectification [….] Theatre may enable women to rehearse the most radical projects of self-creation or may reduce them to bodies and present them as objects" (quoted in Schweitzer, *Becoming* 91). Fashion, like the theater, is another site of divergent possibilities for both female "transformation and objectification." As Lori Merish argues, the fashion system is a "symbolic structure that historically has entangled signs of liberation and oppression--of feminine pleasure and autonomy, and masculine power and domination--within the image of the fashionable female body" (Merish, "Engendering," 322). These seemingly contradictory possibilities (Dudden's transformation/objectification, Merish's liberation/oppression) can—and indeed, nearly always do—exist simultaneously. Both of these antinomies can be expressed as subject/object, and, as we have seen, these are no opposites—instead they enable one another to exist. Dorothy Smith's idea of the feminine "secret agent" may be helpful here; "women in the process of producing themselves for men are able to experience full agency. […] it is in the 'back regions' of women's performance of display as an object for male desire that women take pleasure in their preparations and in making decisions" (Montgomery, *Displaying* 134). Dreiser's emphasis on Carrie's preparations for self-display, and on the *art* involved in her self-objectification, bears witness to this form of female pleasure.

Yet Carrie is not an entirely solipsistic character, concerned only with pleasure; her performances model for her audiences something more than fashionable gowns. According to Susan Glenn, turn-of-the-century actresses and female comedians were an important vector

through which new conceptions of female identity were broached and new spheres of female activity opened to female audiences; male control over actress's bodies is an attempt to police this power (Glenn, *Spectacle*). Fashion, which was a kind of private channel of communication between women, offered an extra-linguistic mode of communication that was more difficult for men to access. Since Flugel's Great Masculine Renunciation, men had limited themselves to the "quasi-neurotic asceticism" of the suit (quoted in Carter 115), and coded interest in fashion as feminine. And as happens with any unpracticed language, men's fluency in sartorial communication was lost.[116] Though it hides female agency in ruffles and lace, the power of sartorial self-fashioning, which men had rejected for themselves, was available to all women. As Christine Bales Kortsch argues, fashion, a language nearly illegible to men, was a native form of expression for women; what Kortsch calls "textile literacy" was taught to women along with their alphabets (quite literally: sampler-sewing rehearsed both forms of literacy).

Actresses, says Schweitzer, were extremely fluent in the language of dress, and they assumed that their female audiences were as well. Actresses' costumes become, in addition to a way of embodying the role, a way of communicating information about the character to female audiences. When actress Alice Brady played a character who was in strapped financial straits, Schweitzer says, Brady wore a butterfly bow on the back of her gown, a fashionable detail from "last year's Bendel frock"; Brady articulated this as a choice that would clearly mark her character as slightly out of fashion, saying "You see for the part of Mary it can't look too new"

[116] For more information on Flugel and the male renunciation of fashion, see Carter's chapter on Flugel, which has possibly the greatest chapter title of all time: "J.C. Flugel and the Nude Future" (Carter 97-120, chapter 6).

(quoted in Schweitzer, "Search," 127). Brady assumes that this seemingly insignificant detail would be noticed by and completely legible to her female audience: "[t]his minor detail, Brady believed, would be immediately discernible to the women in the audience and act as a shorthand for her character's social status," indicating Brady's "confidence in the audience's ability to 'read' her costume" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 127). Another example of an actress depending upon her female audiences' ability to recognize small sartorial details and interpret them accurately was Frances Starr, who said in an interview that she made visible her character's financially-strapped status through dress details that would be legible to all women:

> Any woman in the audience can see that it has been 'cropped' off at the bottom. In other words, it conveys the fact that, now in hard luck, *Laura Murdock* is wearing out the finery which she sported in easier and less virtuous days than those in which she is now living…Every woman in the audience discerns that my short walking-skirt was once part of a trained afternoon dress, and she knows that *Laura Murdock*'s own hands altered it for everyday wear. (quoted in Schweitzer, "Search," 129)

According to Schweitzer, regular fashion-column-readers and theatergoers "would have been familiar with the semiotics of clothing," and that they probably "'saw' a great deal more than their male counterparts" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 129). This assertion is borne out in the example of nineteenth-century theater critic Alan Dale, who campaigned furiously against the popularity of turn-of-the-century fashion plays. Dale, claims Schweitzer, intensely opposed the fashion plays and the general theatrical importance of costume because he didn't understand fashion. According to Dale's own jeremiad, theatrical fashion leaves little room for the (male) theater critic; contemporary acting, said Dale, had become a matter between the actress, her dressmaker, and female audiences, and since the male critic is shut out of the dressmaker conferences' feminized spaces and languages, he "can never be thoroughly fitted to fulfill his manifold duties"

(quoted in Schweitzer, *Becoming* 133). Dale includes female fashion writers in this closed society when he continues (sounding a bit dejected), "[g]raceful feminine writers describe the clothes worn on the stage in terms that none but the initiated [i.e. women] can understand" (quoted in Schweitzer, *Becoming* 133). This betrays that "the source of his frustration was his inability to understand the semiotics of dress" (Schweitzer, *Becoming* 133). Dale sees fashion as a kind of gendered secret language, a code to which men have lost access since the Great Masculine Renunciation; we see that men sensed that women had found a way to leverage the object position in which society put them. In ceding the world of fashion to women, men had handed women a key to power: "By defining ladies as fine gowns and modish accessories, an unwitting fashion trade had endowed women with a chameleon potential for self-transformation, one that threatened to loose the very boundaries it had set out to reinforce" (Kaplan and Stowell 113).

Chapter 3: Pathetic Naturalism in *Sister Carrie*

We have seen already that *Sister Carrie* violates sentimental conventions, both in its focus on the atomistic self unmoored from social networks, and in its insistence that appearance and character need not align. Dreiser undoes sentimentalism in another way. By experimenting with the notion of sympathy, and with alternatives to sympathy as the ground and structure of relationships, he deconstructs literary sentimentalism's defining characteristic. While Dreiser at times deploys and at times disavows the term (and the emotion) of sympathy, I am interested in this chapter in the emotion that Dreiser calls "pathos."[117] Dreiser's pathos, we will come to see, is a distanced, yet intimate and affective relation that is structured and mediated by things, or by the affective relation to things known as desire.[118] Like desire, pathos is a democratizing relation, for it is extensible to new configurations of participants: stranger-to-stranger; individual-to-group; and person-to-thing. Pathos, most clearly articulated in the scenes of Carrie's theatrical performances, is the feeling structure that underpins emotional relationships in *Sister Carrie,*

[117] For excellent critical histories of sympathy, see Chandler, *An Archaeology of Sympathy: The Sentimental Mode in Literature and Cinema* and Marshall. For the relationship between sympathy and sentimentalism, see Brown, *Domestic Individualism*, Hendler, *Public*, Tompkins, and Chapman and Hendler.

[118] Campbell argues that the structure of desire relies upon the gap or distance between what one has and what one wants; this gap is filled by what he calls "autonomous or self-illusory hedonism," or daydreaming. According to Campbell, this structure, which grounds both modern fashion and modern patterns of consumption, leads to "an apparently insatiable desire for novelty" (loc 320-322), as it is continuously self-renewing: "the basic motivation of consumers can be regarded as the desire to experience in reality those pleasurable dramas that they have already enjoyed in their imagination, with the consequence that 'new' products are preferred to familiar ones because they are seen as offering the possibility of realizing that ambition. However, since reality can never provide that especially perfected form of pleasure experienced in daydreams, each purchase leads to literal disillusionment, something that necessarily contributes to the extinction of the want for that particular good. However, what is not extinguished is the fundamental longing that daydreaming itself generates, and hence individuals remain as determined as ever to seek out new products that can serve as replacement objects of desire" (loc 322-333).

replacing the sympathy that had structured sentimental emotional relationships. In Carrie's scenes of performance, we see the importance of distance (spatial and affective) to the pathetic relation between actress and audience. These scenes, which show artifice and naturalness in relation rather than in opposition, enact a performative logic; it is in the scenes of performance that we can most clearly see the pathetic relation between sentiment and materiality, between interior and exterior, between subject and object.

Dreiser also replaces the *techniques* of literary sentimentalism with a hybrid set of conventions that combine naturalist, realist, and sentimental techniques, bringing together the immediate sentimental literary past and the material, object-anchored present. Dreiser uses the novel's form and style to perform the novel's thematic struggle. The tension between interior feelings and the visible (surfaces and material) is reflected in Dreiser's use of radically divergent narrative voices: a documentary, objective voice, characteristic of naturalism or social realism, alternating with what Sandy Petrey calls the "oleaginous moral meditations" of sentimental narration (Petrey 102).[119] Dreiser's doubled narrative voice allows him to use the mimetic techniques developed in the sentimental novel, for sympathy and pathos share a reliance on activating the mimetic bodies of their audiences. By combining these two voices, Dreiser performs literarily the new pathetic relationship, and engages his readers in the rehearsal of pathos as a feeling structure. Dreiser's play with subject- and object-positions extends into his manipulation of his readers' positions: In other words, the audience of the novel finds itself in

[119] For a balanced view of Dreiser's detractors and boosters, see Pizer, *Documents* and Pizer, "Re-introduction." For treatments of Dreiser's work from a stylistic point of view, see Fleissner; Giles; Howard, *Form*; Pizer, "Drama"; Trachtenberg, "Presence"; and Walcutt.

the same emotional position as does Carrie's audience. In this context I consider pathos's relation to form and to performance; pathos shapes the naturalist form for Dreiser in the same way that sympathy shaped the sentimental novel's form, and both are tied to performance (in both senses of the word) in this novel. Finally, I argue that Dreiser's first novel is what Umberto Eco calls an "opera aperta" or "open work." His pathetic style re-enacts the democratic relationship to things that Carrie embodies; the objective affections (the affection for objects and the objectivity of pathetic connection) that the text depicts and participates in is exactly the logic of fashion, which is a fundamentally democratizing force (Lipovetsky).

Dreiser's pathos, developed in Carrie's performances, is the pattern for an American form of naturalism that is fundamentally more democratic and more accessible than the sympathetic model of sentimentalism. Further, Dreiser offers a viable alternative interpretation of the relation between people and commodities, which is valuable for Dreiser's contemporaries and for modern literary critics. Dreiser's naturalism integrates elements of sentimentalism and realism, bringing together sentiment and aggressive capitalist desire in its valorization of surfaces and performances.[120]

Naturalism and the problem of Dreiser

Before we look at what I contend is the primary hallmark of Dreiser's form of American naturalism—a particular treatment or relation of objects to subjects that structures personal relations—let us look at existing definitions of naturalism. Why is Dreiser considered a

[120] See Kaplan for how Dreiser deploys typical sentimental themes and techniques within the frame of the realist novel; see Fisher for an examination of how naturalism inherited sentimental relations to things.

naturalist? What is a naturalist? Literary naturalism is traditionally defined by its content and its adherence to a particular philosophy rather than by its style. Vernon Parrington asserts that literary naturalism is a direct inheritor of the philosophical and scientific thought of "Darwin, Marx, Comte, Taine," whose scientific and observational way of approaching a mechanistic and crowded world was reflected in the literary naturalist's ability to observe and document the visible, as well as in his depiction of determinism and its effects on people. Parrington epigrammatically sums up American literary naturalism as "pessimistic realism, with a philosophy that sets man in a mechanical world and conceives of him as victimized by that world" (Parrington 212). His list of the characteristics of naturalism (primarily about content, not form) is still the shorthand definition of the genre: determinism, pessimism, objectivity, scientism, and amorality in choice of matter.

But neither Dreiser's content nor his philosophy is especially naturalist in *Sister Carrie,* according to Parrington's definition; this is not a novel that is especially driven by determinism, and while Hurstwood's story is depressing enough, Carrie's rise to stardom lifts the novel beyond a charge of pessimism. Of course, we still have some amorality of subject matter, but as critics such as Lehan and Brennan have shown, Dreiser seems to have not objected to significant cuts that tended to de-sex his novel; despite Dreiser's later loud defense against moralist censorship of his writing, says Brennan, the passages of sexual candor seem to have been "merely a 'commercial feature'" whose inclusion or exclusion could "be left in the hands of others" (Brennan 59). (Frankly, I had hoped to find *Sister Carrie*'s fabled raciness in the Pennsylvania edition, and was mildly disappointed by its tameness; *Sister Carrie*'s shocking

amorality lies, it seems, in the fact that Carrie is never punished for her immoral sexual behavior, rather than any salacious descriptions of said behavior.)

Dreiser seems not to be a philosophical naturalist, then. Is he a stylistic one? Critics who have attended to the style, rather than the philosophy or content, of naturalism find two shared traits: first, narrative objectivity, or what June Howard calls naturalism's "documentary logic" (142): an objective narrative voice that describes only the visible surfaces of people and things, and implies order through sequencing of scenes rather than through direct attribution of meaning. Naturalism's second common stylistic attribute is its doubleness of form, as noted by Howard, Amy Kaplan, Charles Child Walcutt, and Michael Davitt Bell.[121] By doubleness, these critics imply a significant distancing of the reader from the characters through a mediating narrative voice. June Howard sees this distancing in terms of a fundamental narrative irony—a significant gap between the reader's and the characters' experience, and between the narrator's and the characters' knowledge. This characteristic distancing, according to Howard, frames readers precisely so as *not* to identify with the characters represented; this would seem to negate the possibility of sympathy, and to turn on its head sentimentalism's hope of bridging the gap between author and readers. For Amy Kaplan, this ironic distance between reader and characters is a kind of specular class tourism which allows comfortable middle-class readers in their

[121] Fleissner has offered a recent re-reading of naturalism that is neither purely stylistic nor purely philosophical; it attends to the stylistic effects of repetition and cyclicality—what she views as the feminine structure—of naturalist style as a reflection of naturalist philosophical concerns.

armchairs to voyeuristically look on at the dramatic troubles of the poor, with no involvement beyond a possible shed tear.[122]

Still, *Sister Carrie* remains one of the founding texts (and Dreiser the founding figure) of American naturalism; Lars Ahnebrink argues that naturalism "came of age in the writings of Theodore Dreiser" (quoted in Hakutani 4), although since its publication the novel has consistently been characterized as a "problem" for naturalism.[123] *Sister Carrie* is, I believe, problematic as a naturalist text because it has a dual focus: its interest in what critic Mark Seltzer calls naturalism's "fascination with the surfaces and skins" of persons remains in tension with a seemingly contradictory interest in the interiority of emotion so characteristic of sentimentalism (Seltzer 8). Naturalism, as Walter Benn Michaels has famously argued, is about the relation of the represented to the real (Michaels, "The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism"). Further, the primary theme of *Sister Carrie* is, according to Donald Pizer, "the relationship of a character's inner life to outer reality" (Pizer, *Novels* 85). These two sets of binaries will converge: on the nineteenth-century theatrical stage, representation becomes materialized,

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[122] See Kaplan; she compares the beautiful house magazine phenomenon to the slum articles so popular in the 1880s and 1890s as parallel examples of class tourism that both depend on a sense that the experiences of different classes are fundamentally inaccessible to one another. The idea of the luxuriously weeping armchair reader is, according to James Baldwin, precisely the problem in the project of the sentimental novel; in "Everybody's Protest Novel," he accuses Stowe of allowing her readers to feel for others only to the point of a pleasurable catharsis and an increased sense of virtue for themselves, which removes any necessity of actually acting and suffering any real distress in their "sympathy" (Baldwin).

[123] See, for example, Pizer, "Problem," and Hakutani. If *Sister Carrie* is a problem, it is the only problematic Dreiserian text. Although this first novel does have some significant differences from his later work, he maintains across his body of work a consistent use of both typically sentimentalist and naturalist narrative voices conjoined, as well as the interpolation of Balzac-style catalogues of material and historical details across all his works. Of course, naturalism *itself* is a problem. As Lisa Long, reviewing three recent books that attempt to reframe the discussion about the genre, says, "one is hard-pressed to come up with a theory of naturalism that accounts for the particularities of those writers traditionally labeled as naturalist, let alone those who are not" and that "naturalism remains largely an a priori category" (Long 170).

becomes "second nature"; Carrie's inner life comes to reflect her outer reality. Dreiser's naturalism offers a way out of the dichotomy between representation and the real with its prefiguration of performativity through performance. Dreiser's "invention of a new way of telling a new American story---a new form for a new content" (Trachtenberg 88) is, I contend, in service of figuring out how, and to what, feeling should attach.

Staging distance

As we have seen already, objects in Dreiser help to create subjects; now I will examine how objects shape the relations between people, and how Dreiser authorizes the distanced, non-sympathetic relation that he calls pathos, which is structured as a relation of the market.[124]

The novel's first scene of stage performance — the climax of the novel's first half — is Carrie's uneven (but seemingly brilliant) performance of Laura in Augustin Daly's popular 1867 melodrama *Under the Gaslight*. In this scene, Carrie achieves for the first time what she came to Chicago to seek: "[t]the independence of success" (193). She finds herself "looking down, rather than up, to her lover," and enjoys her power: "there was something in condescension […] which was infinitely sweet" (193). Carrie's new power, which manifests in the context of her public self-display on the stage, is to the men who knew her already "a revelation"—and this power comes from the increased emotional and spatial distance between Carrie and her lovers, and from the distance the actress must achieve from herself. The sudden emergence of Carrie's new power

[124] For work on the characteristically sentimental and sympathetic object relations that are a precursor to Dreiser's model, see Brown, *Domestic Individualism* and Merish, *Sentimental Materialism*. For an examination of the increasingly important role of objects in American culture at the end of the nineteenth century, see Brown, *Object Matter*. For Dreiser's own particular version of object relations, see Brown, "The Matter of Dreiser's Modernity"; Corkin; and Lemaster. For an examination of naturalism as a philosophical system, see Gendin.

under the new conditions of distance indicates that self-objectification can be *adaptive.* It is Carrie's pathetic relations, not sympathetic ones, that Dreiser shows as working in the newly urban, newly capitalist American society.

At first, though, in presenting Carrie's theatrical successes, Dreiser seems to set up a sympathetic relation between Carrie and her audience—she seems through her acting to directly transmit really-felt emotion to her audience. But as we will see, Dreiser dismantles this seeming sympathy by adding distance in several ways: spatial distance; an increasing emphasis on the "double consciousness" experienced by both the actress and the audience; and the foregrounding of mimetic repetition, not of real feeling, but of representations of feeling. Dreiser pays special attention to the audience's changing response to Carrie's performance as she varies her technique. He seems especially fascinated with the relation between Carrie and the characters she enacts, which grows increasingly distant over the novel; this relation shifts from a sympathetic identification with the character (what David Marshall terms the "loss of self") to the theatrical double-consciousness theorized by William Archer, embodying a more pathetic relation. Dreiser, in his description of Carrie's performances, thus condenses and rehearses long-running theatrical debates about the actor's relation to the characters she plays and the feelings she represents.

From sympathy to pathos

The Avery Hall scene—the climax of the novel's Chicago storyline, and the birth of Carrie's success—thus deserves close examination. The passage I quote below is at first identified with Hurstwood's point-of-view and begins by invoking sympathy. But the passage shifts quickly out of its immersion in Hurstwood's consciousness and into the narrative voice,

simultaneously replacing the "sympathy" Hurstwood felt with "pathos," both defined and enacted:

> Hurstwood began to feel a deep sympathy for her and for himself. He could almost feel that she was talking to him. He was, by a combination of feelings and entanglements, almost deluded by that quality of voice and manner which, like a pathetic strain of music, seems ever a personal and intimate thing. Pathos has this quality, that it seems ever addressed to one alone (189).

Dreiser begins here with "sympathy," the emotion that is "precisely…felt as an identification with another" (Howard, "Sentimentality," 71), but immediately casts doubt upon this initial invocation of identificatory sympathy by multiplying qualifiers: "could almost feel," "almost deluded," and "seems." More, he emphasizes Hurstwood's awareness of —his distance from — this feeling; Hurstwood feels *both* for Carrie and for himself. Sympathy, says David Marshall, is "the act of entering into the sentiments of another person": "not just feeling or the capacity for feeling but more specifically the capacity to feel the sentiments of someone else" (Marshall 3). Yet Dreiser here emphasizes Hurstwood's simultaneous feeling for himself and for the other. This is not the "self-forgetting" that Marshall posits as a danger of theatrical sympathy; it is explicitly a self-remembering, a holding-in-suspension of both self-awareness and other-awareness.[125] In fact, it offers a *revision* of sympathy. Pathos retains sympathy's access to

[125] See Marshall, chapter 4. Sociologist Erving Goffman finds this doubled awareness in an audience's reaction to theatrical performance; he argues that the audience holds a simultaneous belief and disbelief in the events on the stage, and that they intentionally participate in the shared fiction the theater creates: the audience member "collaborates in the unreality onstage. He sympathetically and vicariously participates in the unreal world generated by the dramatic interplay of the scripted characters. He gives himself over" (Goffman 129-130). This giving over of self is not the same thing as involuntary immersion into the world of the play, as mistaking the play for the real; Goffman's audience member is more sophisticated than William Archer's backwoodsman, who became "so incensed with the villainy of Iago that he drew his revolver and shot, or shot at, the actor" (Archer 33). This is a *voluntary* giving over to belief rather than the irresistible infection of sympathy that leads to Marshall's "self-forgetting."

feelings that originate outside the self, but adds a reserve, the maintenance of one's own self-consciousness. It is this self-remembering that sympathy does not have. This reminds us that pathos developed from a rhetorical technique, one that requires the speaker to hold in suspension this same doubled awareness: of self (as speaker) and the other (the audience). Pathos's rhetoricity is emphasized by critic Nan Johnson, who argues that what she calls "the pathos principle" (a "concern with the impact of subjective predisposition on interpretation" (Johnson 152-153)) is centrally concerned with a rhetorical awareness of the audience's otherness; it assumes a difference between the audience's and the speaker's feelings, and requires that the speaker take this difference into account. Pathos is thus attentive to difference in a way that sympathy is not.

The pathos of desire

The question of pathos's "address" (it "seems ever addressed to one alone"), an acknowledgement of its fundamentally rhetorical structure, further explains the differences between pathos and sympathy. Pathos's seemingly personal appeal is in fact the appeal of one-to-many: in fact, precisely the appeal of the commodity and the advertisement.[126] Dreiserian pathos is thus an *adaptation* of the midcentury cult of sympathy; it is an affective relation structured by the slightly distanced, somewhat imaginative relationship between people and things, rather than by the direct emotional contagion of sympathy. Pathos's defining combination of personal and impersonal appeals —"seem[ing] ever addressed to one alone"— echoes the

[126] See Agnew and Majer et al. for histories of the entwinement of the new advertising systems with the theater and especially with actresses and their images.

simultaneously personal and impersonal appeals that dresses make to Carrie in the famed shopping sequences early in the novel's Chicago arc. According to Philip Fisher, Carrie's acting at Avery Hall echoes and reworks these shopping sequences: Carrie's "erotic pleading, controlled and merchandized, is precisely what Dreiser had described earlier as Carrie's own relation to the clothes in department stores. […] The erotic helplessness and need is what both actress and audience, objects and shopper, court one another with across the barriers of sales and theater tickets" (Fisher 166). On stage, Carrie herself inhabits the object position, making the combined personal and impersonal appeals of the desirable object.

Just as, in the newly-built department stores, the beautiful objects on display make their seemingly personal appeals to Carrie (she finds each counter a center of "dazzling interest and attraction," where the things laid out for sale each "touched her with individual desire" (22), and she "could not help feeling the claim of each trinket and valuable upon her *personally*" (22; emphasis mine)), in Avery Hall, Carrie makes the same seemingly "individual" and "personal" appeal to her audience.[127] Dreiser thus positions Carrie as advertising herself as a commodity in her pathetically-structured appeals; the pathetic appeal is precisely the appeal of advertising. According to performance theorist Stephen Duncombe, advertising is dependent upon "directed

[127] Lori Merish points out that Dreiser "parallels the desiring gaze of the female shopper with the desiring gaze of the male spectator" (Merish, "Engendering," 322); this positions Carrie's audience (and Dreiser's reader) as shoppers—a feminized position. Recall that, as I argue in my previous chapter, Carrie's deliberate self-objectification positions her as both masculine and feminine. Action confers subjectivity, and reception marks the object of action; by her actions upon her own body to make it over, Carrie inhabits the masculine subject-position simultaneously with the feminine object-position. And, as Susan Glenn has noted in her study of feminine transgression on the American stage, "Revue […] positioned the modern female as desiring consumer and consumable object" (165). Although Carrie's performance here has little in common with the revue of the teens and twenties, the audience's simultaneous identification with the actress-as-subject and the actress-as-object that Glenn articulates does obtain; the audience's shifts between feminine- and masculine-identified positions functioned as a kind of rehearsal of Carrie's shifts between subject- and object-positions.

personal identification" (Duncombe 83) for its appeal; to succeed, Duncombe says, an advertisement must evoke in the viewer precisely the kind of relation that Dreiser articulates as pathos:

> Unless we can identify our (real and imagined) life with the one being played out before us, the advertisement doesn't work. And so we are made to feel what we know cannot be true: that an advertisement broadcast to millions and a product manufactured for a mass market speaks just to us. (Duncombe 84)

Duncombe, like Dreiser, uses the terms of sympathetic identification, but deploys them in an un-sentimental way; advertising detaches sympathetic identification from its moorings in a "personal and intimate" relationship, and distributes its affect to "millions." This is the sort of unsentimental identification that one experiences in the theater: the mass appeal *feels* personal, just as the representation *feels* real. Dreiser's pathos, like advertising, broadens the objects of its affect, allowing for affective connections between subjects and objects, or between individuals and collectives.

Framing the theatrical self

The unsentimental identification of pathos, which requires distance rather than congruence, is figured in the Avery Hall scene by what sociologist Erving Goffman calls a "frame": a delimiter that categorizes experience. Goffman's frame analysis theory holds that in the theater, actors and audience collude to maintain the mental "frame" that separates the "fictive or scripted" events onstage from non-scripted events offstage (Goffman 129). This is, according to Goffman, a form of suspension of disbelief, an agreement to emotionally participate in events that are patently not real; this temporary suspension of disbelief allows both actor and audience to be moved by the staged events, while maintaining a stable sense of the unscripted world as the

"real" one. In the Avery Hall scene, the narrator attributes Hurstwood's and Drouet's increasingly ardent desire for Carrie explicitly to the distancing effect of a "frame." In other words, the shared theatrical illusion has real effects. But the theatrical frame is also a literal one, and the newly distanced spatial relation enforced by the physical frame separating the actress from the audience also structures a new affective relation. The narrator says, "The fact that such ability should reveal itself in her, that they should see it set forth under such effective circumstances, framed almost in massy gold and shone upon by the appropriate lights of sentiment and personality, heightened her charm for them" (187). The text figures her as boxed in, even flattened into a two-dimensional picture; the "massy gold" frame evokes the frame of a painting. But at this period, the stage's traditional proscenium was flattening out and retreating, leaving what theater historian Garff Wilson calls the "picture frame stage" as the norm (Wilson, *History* 107).[128] The framing effect of nineteenth-century stagecraft was intensified by the introduction of Dion Boucicault's "box" set—instead of two-dimensional painted drops and wings, this set was a room with the front wall removed: a box framing the action within, itself set inside the larger frame of the stage.[129]

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[128] This is similar to the way in which Carrie herself has "framed" the women whose appearance she has imitated, and to the way that advertising increasingly framed women as objects to be gazed at, desired, and imitated, according to Lori Merish. Merish defines Carrie's mimetic desire as "an identificatory longing that is primarily a desire to be the other woman: to remake her own body in the image of the 'young, pretty, very satisfactorily dressed' woman; to build a new body, through the imitation of gesture and aesthetic surface, that closely resembles the (feminine) object of her desire." Merish further notes that "the exchange of bodies which Carrie imagines takes place wholly in the visual register: the woman who catches Drouet's and Carrie's eye is flattened out into a material image, and is of interest only as a visual representation of desirability and allure" (Merish, "Engendering," 321).

[129] Dreiser draws the reader's attention to the set on stage at Avery Hall: "Quite an effect had been secured by using tall, open windows in the back, extending from floor to ceiling, and by installing a piece of canvas painted blue, and slightly sprinkled with silver dust, in the far recess of the stage, to represent the sea. A balcony or promenade was also outside, making a summery prospect, not wholly devoid of realism" (188). Dreiser invokes both the realism of

Dreiser's image of Carrie as "framed" thus accurately represents the audience's view of the nineteenth-century actress, who appears as a framed *object,* set off to excellent effect in a kind of onstage display cabinet. Dreiser links Drouet's "rapidly reviving" desire for Carrie to his newly organized perception of her as a desirable object. He is "now delighted with his possession" (which had begun to seem tiresome to him); the new distance, and the frame that separates them, makes her newly visible to him.[130] (This visibility is definitional, for Goffman defines the actor in terms of her availability to the gaze: the actor is "an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offense...by persons in an 'audience' role" (124).)[131] The theatrical frame, interrupting the merging that grounds sympathy, thus highlights the distance necessary to pathos as well as its double identification, its simultaneous awareness of self and other.

Dreiser's account of the second transformative moment of performance for Carrie, her performance as a harem girl, makes even more clear the affective and economic power conferred by her voluntary inhabiting of the object-position; this performance leads directly to her being cast as Katisha and then the frowning Quakeress, which is her break into stardom. In this second

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the box set, with his description of the real windows standing open, as well as the falsity of the fly-and-canvas sets which had preceded the box sets with his reference to the canvas drop painted to resemble the sea.

[130] Drouet maintains this desire for the unattainable-yet-reachable Carrie at the novel's end, when she is in fact entirely out of his reach. Upon meeting again, Drouet "began to imagine it would not be so difficult to enter into her life again, high as she was" — he sees her as still accessible to him, despite her success, and it is in part that success, and the impossible distance it imposes, which attracts him: "Ah, what a prize! he thought. How beautiful, how elegant, how famous! In her theatrical and Waldorf setting, Carrie was to him the all-desirable" (475).

[131] See Montgomery, *Displaying* and Piepmeier for analyses of the increasing visibility of women in relation to the figure of the actress; see also Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility* for an examination of the public invisibility of respectable women at midcentury.

important theatrical moment, Carrie is just one of several pretty chorus girls playing silent parts, harem girls in a comedy; Carrie risks ad-libbing a line, and the line condenses the self-objectification that I have been discussing. One evening the comedian playing the sultan ad-libs a line to Carrie: "Well, who are you?" Carrie responds, "I am yours truly." This makes the audience laugh, pleasing the comedian, who allows her to keep the line in for the rest of the shows. But beyond displaying Carrie's good sense of comic timing, this line takes up her own awareness of the play of subject and object that I have been positing, for Carrie here articulates the simultaneous self-objectification and assertion of subjectivity that I have been drawing out of the novel. Like Carrie-as-actress, Carrie-as-harem-girl is an object-position: within the play, she is a simple object of sexual desire, a harem girl owned by the sultan, and as an actress, she is an object of the audience's gaze, part of the assembly line of girls on display in the type of theatrical production that Susan Glenn characterizes as a spectacle of eroticized body parts. Both roles — actress and harem girl—are nameless, for Carrie's part is uncredited; she is in both cases whatever her audience desires her to be.[132] The line itself acknowledges her status as object,

[132] The question of names is an important one; one's name is supposed to be a unique identifier, which, like a fingerprint, belongs to you and you alone. (See Brown, *Object Matter* for the identificatory importance of the fingerprint.) But in this novel names are fungible; Sister Carrie's real name is Caroline, though she retains throughout the novel the nickname, "Carrie," given to her by her family. Her original last name is Meeber. She never takes Drouet's or Hurstwood's real last names through marriage, but in the first act Drouet, in a panic, christens her Carrie Madenda to his lodge brothers, who know he is unmarried. He does not consult her about using a stage name or about the name he gives her, yet Carrie accepts this passively. When Hurstwood takes her off to Montreal, he signs in the hotel under an assumed name (Murdock) for the both of them, but Carrie is developing opinions, and when he goes to get the "marriage license" for them, she objects to Murdock. He offers Wheeler instead, which she accepts. There is an element of passivity here, but there is also the beginning of self-assertion. When she applies to work in the chorus, she remembers her success in Chicago under the name "Madenda" and volunteers that as her name. Her adoption of the name Drouet gave her savors of the reclamation of "queer" by the LGBTQ community; to recolonize a name is an assertion of agency and of selfhood. None of these names are legally hers save Meeber.

essentially inviting the sultan (whose possession she is) and the watching audience to project their desires onto her. Yet the line simultaneously asserts subjectivity. It leans upon the notion of self-ownership that Gillian Brown and others have posited as the basis of liberal subjectivity in America. As it is today, "yours truly" was in this period a conventional closing salutation in a personal letter, and it indicates a connection between the two parties: esteem, affection, even love. It also metonymizes the self as subject; the slang phrase "yours truly" ("who should I give this money to?" "Yours truly!") is probably derived from the conventional letter closing, and heightens the phrase's evocation of the self as subject. Dreiser plays upon the affective connection implied in "yours truly." Carrie's spoken act of self-objectification posits an emotional relationship between the subjects in the audience and herself in the object-position. She invites the audience, as she does the character of the sultan, to imagine themselves in a *relation* with her. Certainly, it calls forth the image of a sexual relationship; her role as a harem girl, paired with the line's other possible meaning—"I am whoever you want me to be" —invites the audience to imaginatively substitute themselves for the sultan. But in the act of positing relationship, the line also entails that the audience relate to her as subject. They must relate to her as both subject and object simultaneously (which indicates how far the categories are entangled).

This promise of relationship grounds both sympathy and pathos; like the ribbons and corsets and gloves at The Fair, Carrie-as-actress offers the promise of particularity, of intimacy, of *relationship* as the grounds of longing. As Joanne Dobson points out, sentimentalism "envisions the self-in-relation" (Dobson 267). Naturalism, too, sees the self in relation--but the *object* of relation differs. Sentimentalism prizes relationships with other people: "family (not necessarily in the conventional biological sense), intimacy, community, and social responsibility

are its primary relational modes" (Dobson 267). Carrie, however, envisions her self-in-relation to objects, not to people: "seeing a thing, she would immediately set to inquiring how she would look, properly related to it" (98). And, as she shops, she constantly imagines her possible future self in relation to the dresses on display: "How would she look in this, how charming that would make her" (67).[133]

Dreiser thus revises the feeling structures of the theater and of sentimental literature and deploys them in the novel. What differentiates *Sister Carrie* from sentimental texts is its acceptance of performance and artifice as effective modes of relating, and its depiction of the interchangeability of subjects and objects (which Bill Brown describes as the way that "things seem slightly human and humans seem slightly thing-like" (Brown, *Object Matter* 9) in *Sister Carrie*). Affective relations mediated by things are not necessarily alienating. What Dreiser shows us, then, especially in the theatrical scenes in *Sister Carrie*, is the way that object relations can fruitfully structure affective relations between people. In *Sister Carrie* it is, in large part, through dress that people understand one another, communicate themselves, and see one another as separate but connected; object relations *are* un-sentimental affective relations in *Sister Carrie*.[134]

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[133] As I argued in the previous chapter, Carrie's identity, as well as her body, is shaped by the things she chooses; her relationships with her dress are real ones, and these considerations of the kind of self she would be in relation to these desirable objects are valid.

[134] Object relations is a theory of attachment that arose in psychological circles in the 1920s and flowered in the 1950s; it holds that infant attachment is first focused on a part of the mother (usually the breast), which the infant treats as an object that comes to stand in metonymically for the mother, and which serves as a transitional attachment between the infant and the mother. For links between the theory of object relations and the rise of capitalism, see Woodward. Anthropologist and performance theorist Richard Schechner has traced the connections between D. W. Winnicott's object-relations theory and performance; he asserts that Winnicott's theory, which sees the transitional object as a part of "the infant's journey from the purely subjective to objectivity" (quoted in

Infectious sympathy

Goffman's frame, which represents an agreement between actor and audience to participate emotionally in "fictive" events, represents a very limited, and wholly voluntary, form of emotional interchange; the audience is not meant to immerse themselves so completely in the staged events that they confuse the "fictive" and the unscripted worlds. In fact, as David Marshall has argued, the idea of "self-forgetting" in the theater was a source of anxiety for eighteenth-century theater critics.[135] This anxiety continues through the nineteenth century. (The cultural fear of mesmerism reflects the dark side of the sentimental valorization of sympathetic identification.[136]) Nineteenth-century sympathy was something very like what, according to Suzanne Keen, we now call empathy: "a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect" (Keen 208), or

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Schechner 110), positions the object as a liminal space, gap, or what Winnicott calls "potential space" that, like the performance space, is a threshold between what Schechner calls the me and the not-me (Schechner). This zone of connection between self and other as an object rather than as the space where two people merge echoes Donald Pizer's assertion that in Dreiser, objects are correlatives to feelings (Pizer, "Drama"). The literature on sentimentalism's object relations is extensive; Philip Fisher has described the sentimental novel as "a romance of the object rather than a romance of the subject," because it "draws on novel *objects* of feeling rather than novel feelings" (quoted in Merish, "Sentimental Consumption," 152). This expansion of sympathy to objects resulted in the extension of "full and complete humanity to classes of figures from whom it ha[d] been socially withheld" (Merish, "Sentimental Consumption: Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Aesthetics of Middle-Class Ownership," 17).

[135] See Marshall, chapter 4. For a history of anti-theatrical prejudice, which during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries comes in part from worries about audience suggestibility, see Barish.

[136] There are multiple links between mesmerism and performance. By the 1880s, mesmerism and hypnosis were being used by Ribot and Charcot in the clinical treatment of hysteria; see Ellenberger. Joseph Roach notes that in 1900 Max Martersteig proposed that actors undergo hypnosis before performing, claiming that this would free the actor's creative energy "without voluntary participation" (quoted in Roach 180); this echoes my previous chapter's discussion of the figure of Trilby and the manager, as well as novels such as *The Bostonians* and *Blithedale Romance*. For examinations of the nineteenth-century fear of mesmerism, see, for example, Brown, *Object Matter*, Taylor, "Edgar Allan Poe's (Meta)physics: a prehistory of the post-human", and Brodhead. The fear of and fascination with mesmerism displayed in mid- to late nineteenth-century literature reflects, I believe, the flip side of sympathy, which was considered a direct physical connection, like infection or hypnosis. Brown sees mesmerism as precisely a state of non-self-possession (echoing Marshall's "self-forgetting"), in which the mesmerist's will colonizes the mesmerized subject's mind (Brown 89).

even "emotional contagion" (209): almost unrecognizably different from the mild pity denoted by the modern usage.[137] Sympathy in the nineteenth century was colonizing, a form of irresistible merging—a softening or erasure of individual identic boundaries in which two people share the same feelings and reactions to events. It was this form of sympathy that made possible literary sentimentalism's project, which attempted to use sympathy to extend human subjectivity to the marginalized through the reader's sympathetic identification with characters who already "feel right."

But nineteenth-century sympathy depends as a mechanism of identification upon what Glenn Hendler calls "coincidence," or the possibility for equivalence between the sympathetic subject and the sympathetic object; you sympathize with people whose feelings and motivations you can understand and imagine, with whom you can become emotionally identical. This affective merging presents a problem. It requires that the sympathizer and the sympathizee be similar; it erases difference. In Hendler's formulation, "Even as it produces an affective connection between individual subjects, then, sympathy threatens to negate their individuality by confusing the analogy it posits between subjects with a fictional and dangerous coincidence between them" (Hendler 5).

This question of proper affective relation was taken up in theater criticism of the nineteenth century, whose pressing questions had to do with sympathetic merging. Should actors lose themselves in their roles, and audiences in performances? It is these questions that theater

[137] To complement Marshall's excellent account of eighteenth-century sympathy, see Chandler, *Archaeology*, whose account of sympathy moves from Adam Smith's "high sentimentality" through the sentimentalism of midcentury America to its twentieth-century cinematic inheritors.

critic William Archer engages in his 1888 *Masks or Faces*?, a sort of ethnography of acting centered on the question of emotionalism in acting. The two opposing positions are formulated by Archer thus: "the emotionalist position is that both actor and audience should yield themselves up to the illusion to a certain extent; the anti-emotionalist position is that the actor will more easily and certainly beget illusion in the audience if he remains entirely free from it himself" (Archer 26).[138] The central figure of the anti-emotionalist side was Denis Diderot, who had taken the position that actors should not feel the emotions they present in his *Paradoxe sur le comédien.*[139] Diderot sees the actor's represented emotion as *pure* representation —the signs of emotion without the signified feeling. For Archer, working at a peak of interest in psychophysical discourses (Darwin's work on emotion was published in 1872 and the James-Lange theory in 1884; see Warhol, *Cry* 19-21), emotion is a corporeal matter, and the actor's emotion is a consequence, rather than a cause, of the actor's representations of emotion.

Despite being cast as a champion of emotionalist acting, Archer is in fact a mediating figure who falls somewhere between the purely emotionalist type of acting (as crystallized in, for

[138] Theater historian Garff Wilson argues for two primary styles of "emotionalist" acting at the turn of the century in America, both dominated by actresses of "youth, beauty, and personal magnetism" (Wilson, *History* 110). The first type of emotionalist actresses "were content to suggest the overt responses of emotion and to suppress ugly details" in their portrayal of emotion, while the second type "shunned idealization" and instead gave "extravagant displays of the more violent feelings" that were increasingly represented in a more "realistic and naturalistic" way. Wilson notes that "Instead of refining or sentimentalizing their emotional exhibitions, the later actresses reproduced the overt manifestations of passion in detail and with clinical accuracy. By these means they shocked and fascinated their audiences and won notoriety for themselves" (Wilson 122). This split in emotionalist acting styles tracks neatly with generic differences between literary sentimentalism and naturalism; the shift from the first style of infectious feeling and the second style of spectacular feeling also mirrors the shift from sympathy to pathos that I examine here.

[139] See Roach, especially chapter 4, for the development of Diderot's philosophy on acting, which was deeply informed by his scientific and encyclopedic work. Diderot's ideas on acting culminated in the *Paradoxe* (which was privately disseminated in 1770, published in full in 1830, and translated into English in the 1880s.) Archer's *Masks or Faces?* is a direct response to Constantin Coquelin's 1880 *L'art et le comédien,* specifically to Coquelin's ongoing conflict with actor Henry Irving over the role of sincerity in acting (Roach 157-158).

example, early-twentieth-century Method acting) and Diderot's purely representative position. Archer explicitly disavows sympathy as the basis of the actor's portrayal, and argues instead for something like the representative performativity explored in Chapter 1: "acting *is* imitation; when it cease to be imitation is ceases to be acting and becomes something else" (Archer 195). Archer's is not a sympathetic vision of direct transfer of emotion: "[t]he grief or laughter of another [that] may seize and overmaster us, through the action of sympathy […] is not imitation: it is infection" (Archer 197).[140] Archer, in arguing against the contagious sympathetic emotion, argues for something that begins to sound like Dreiserean pathos: he posits that the actor's craft must focus on the surface (the appearance or representation), not on the authentic emotions and inner feelings that sympathy would demand. As he distinguishes between "mimicking tricks or habits and yielding to emotional contagion," Archer asserts that "the one is an affair of the surface, the other of the centres" (Archer 197). It is the surfaces, the representations, with which Archer —like Dreiser —is concerned. As in Diderot's theory, it is the representation of the

[140] This formulation leans on ancient Greek theories of acting as divine possession. Theater historian Joseph Roach, who articulates the basis of theories of acting in contemporary science and philosophy, sees acting theories as divisible into two broad groups: those founded on inspiration (spontaneous feeling, or, in the terms of the Archer/Diderot debate already discussed, emotionalism) and those founded on technique (the anti-emotionalists, who believed that acting was a matter of re-presenting automatic, rehearsed visible behaviors as *signs* of emotion). Until the eighteenth century, theories of inspiration (the idea that the artist was possessed by the breath of the gods) predominated. The Greeks theorized the transfer of spontaneously-felt emotion with the actor's breath, or *pneuma,* as the medium of emotional transfer from actor to audience: "radiating outward from the heart and lungs, [*pneuma*] displayed inward feelings as outward motions" (Roach 27). For the ancient Greeks, acted emotion was authentic, or "sincere" (in the terminology of Karen Halttunen): it originated inside the actor and was simply represented on his or her body. The actor could act upon the shared performance space, and thus on the spectating bodies sharing in the same space: "His passions, irradiating the bodies of spectators through their eyes and ears, could literally transfer the contents of his heart to theirs, altering their moral natures" (Roach 27). This could stand as a statement of Stowe's and the sentimentalists' intentions, which followed Romanticism (somewhat anomalously, considering their post-Enlightenment moment) in leaning on spontaneous emotion and inspiration as their model.

emotion's *signs* that matter. Yet for Archer, steeped in contemporary ideas of the connection between body and mind, representing the signs of emotion actually creates the represented emotion as a *consequence,* not a cause. For Archer, the actress's emotions move from the surface of her body inwards —from gesture to "nerve-centres" —rather than originating inside and then registering on her body's surface, but this does not imply falsity: "it is surely illogical to deny the 'reality' of this mimetic emotion, since all emotion […] is due to the action of the imagination upon the nerve-centres" (Archer 207).

This conversion of representation to real emotion by the outside-in action of repeated physical movements is called by Joseph Roach "second nature." Second nature comes from the physical habits of performance issuing from "an ethics of rehearsal" (Roach 168), not from the spontaneous inspiration of genius. As Edmund Kean complained, "Because my style is easy and natural they think I don't study, and talk about the 'sudden impulse of genius.' There is no such thing as impulsive acting; all is premeditated and studied beforehand" (quoted in Roach 168). These proto-Foucauldian accounts of how one converts the artificial into the natural, incorporating new behaviors into the self, echo William James's contemporary ideas about habit (1887); habit, James argues, fashions character through repeated bodily action, which in turn affects neurology.[141] These nineteenth-century actorly accounts also evoke modern accounts of performance; anthropologist Richard Schechner, one of the founding theorists of performance studies, argues that it is precisely the actor's ability to exist in what he calls a "double negative

[141] See Roach, chapter 5. If this does not remind you of my Chapter 2 account of how Carrie's physical transformation is achieved, I don't know what to say.

relationship," the threshold where the "real" (the actor's self) and the "unreal" (the character portrayed) meet, that is the actor's defining ability. In other words, the central capacity of the actor is to incorporate the other into the self without erasing their difference: "Elements that are 'not me' become 'me' without losing their 'not me-ness.' This is the peculiar but necessary double negativity that characterizes symbolic actions" (Schechner 111). In other words, as Philip Fisher has said of *Sister Carrie,* "Acting…is not sham, but rather a form of practice" (Fisher 160). Dreiser thus begins to figure, like Archer and James, something very close to the notion of the Austinian performative, or to Michael Taussig's idea of the mimetic.[142]

Artificial feeling

In Dreiser, as on the nineteenth-century stage, it is the visible, performed representation of feeling that matters, not its essential authenticity: we are now a long stride away from the transparency, sincerity, and authenticity valued by Halttunen's midcentury sentimental culture. This ascendance of representation over real, of artifice over naturalness, is deployed in the final transformational scene of Carrie's acting, her big break in the part of the Quaker maiden. In this scene, Carrie's famous frown, the wordless performance of emotion that catapults her to

[142] Performativity as a concept was originated in J.L. Austin's speech act theory, which defined performative utterances as statements that accomplish what they name in the act of the utterance (see Austin). It was taken up and expanded by Judith Butler to explain how gender is inscribed on bodies by the physical repetition of stylistic acts (Butler), and has become an influential concept in the post-Foucauldian landscape. The performative shares some traits with the notion of mimesis, according to performance theorist and anthropologist Michael Taussig; mimesis, for Taussig, links the not-yet-real with the already-real, and he defines humans' "mimetic faculty" as their innate ability "to get hold of something by means of its likeness" (Taussig 21). This mimetic faculty, a form of "sympathetic magic," is based on the magic power of the fetish, a copy which partakes of the character of the original, and which allows people to access the power of the original through contact with the copy. (For an excellent overview of the anthropological version of the fetish, see Jones and Stallybrass, "Introduction," 65-70.) Mimesis' emphasis upon the material as the medium of the "sympathetic magic" is very like the structure of pathos as described in the previous last section of this chapter.

stardom, is a repetition of what began in rehearsal as a natural, unintentional frown: a visible manifestation of her inner feeling. But it is, crucially, her *imitation* of the frown — the re-presentation of the frown as the sign of felt emotion — that catches the audience's favor.[143] Dreiser makes it clear that it is precisely the *artificiality* of the restored and represented frown that makes it so effective for the audience: "At first the general idea was that she was temporarily irritated, that the look was genuine and not fun at all." If this had been a sincere, internally-originated frown — if Carrie-the-actress had been frowning, as in rehearsal, for a personal reason, idiosyncratic to her — it would have been "genuine" and therefore "not fun at all." As the audience realizes that it is instead *performed* emotion, they become more and more engaged by the frown. They receive the frown as a rhetorical appeal, intentionally structured to engage their emotions. It is its very calculation that gives it its effect. The audience's interest in Carrie thus depends upon the difference between whatever she might be authentically feeling at the moment of performance and the feeling she represents in her performance: the difference between the outside and the inside. It is this difference between the outside and the inside that Paul de Man (according to Rei Terada) calls "pathos."[144] Pathos, like desire, is a doubled

[143] This is an example of what performance theorist Richard Schechner calls "restored behavior," or the intentional repetition of behavior that was originally natural. Schechner sees performance as beginning with the outside, the surfaces: "Restored behavior can be put on the way a mask or costume is. Its shape can be seen from the outside and changed" (37). Furthermore, the rehearsed behavior is entirely mechanical; not only is it unrelated to the actor's actual feeling at the moment, but it is entirely separable, almost a material object: "the behavior can be stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed" (36). (In fact, behavior, in Schechner's description, sounds like a costume.) These behaviors —like Diderot's "second nature"—are internalized through repetition and habitual mechanistic practice, and come technique rather than inspiration: "The work of restoration is carried on in rehearsals and/or in the transmission of behavior from master to novice" (36).

[144] Rei Terada, in her examination of emotion as rhetorically structured in Paul de Man's *Allegories of Reading*, terms this difference between outside and inside "pathos." She contrasts pathos, a "second-order, allegorical emotion" (Terada 30), with Anita Sokolsky's view of sentimentality, which Sokolsky defines as too much

structure: both maintain a simultaneous awareness of the self and the other, and both hold the distance between the self and the other as their defining trait.

Pathos, then, echoes what Diderot and Archer called the actor's "double consciousness;" Carrie's frown is artificial, but it is also natural in the sense of second nature. It is both representation and reality. Just as Goffman's frame demarcated the difference between the real and the performed for the audience, "double consciousness" —the actress's ability to hold in suspension a sense of self-consciousness, of her own emotion and concerns, with her simultaneous experience of the emotions of the character she portrays —marks off the actress's self from her character. Archer wryly notes that the sympathetic ideal, "total absorption in one mode of feeling which numbs the intellect and deadens the sense," is rare in real life, "and still rarer, of course, on the stage. If this were not so, we should hear every day of some mediocre Othello strangling his Iago, or some second-rate Juliet stabbing herself in sad earnest" (Archer 166-167).[145] According to Archer, this double consciousness is the crucial element of the actor's

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authenticity, or too-close identification with the self (Sokolsky). Terada's distinction between the "self-distance" (Sokolsky, quoted in Terada 44) of pathos and the self-identification of sentimentalism echoes the "double consciousness" of Archer and Diderot.

[145] Yet Archer and Diderot are not so far apart as they seem. Archer does not espouse sympathetic acting (he terms the over-identification of the actor with his character an "infection," which he clearly distinguishes from imitation, the real province of the actor), and as Roach points out, Archer's emotionalism sounds very much like Diderot's anti-emotionalism. As Roach puts it, Archer "posed Diderot's question to a generation of actors and ultimately accepted Diderot's answer on their behalf. Archer's attempt to refute the *Paradoxe* ends with his appropriation in the name of Victorian science of most of its contents" (Roach 162). Both theorists solve the problem of actorly sympathy through the concept of "double consciousness," but they define the shared term quite differently: for Archer, the actor's double-consciousness is a simultaneous sense of the actor as himself held in suspension with his sense of inhabiting the character portrays, while for Diderot, on the other hand, it was "the separation of manifestation from the mental experience" that stood as "the measure of an actor's art" (Roach 148). In other words, for Diderot's actor, the character is produced purely mentally, in the imagination, and then represented bodily, while for Archer's actor, emotion is what we would call performative: the actor's representation of the physical signs of emotion actually causes him to experience the accompanying feeling.

art, for he believes that the actress can both maintain a sense of herself *and* feel the character's emotions consequent to the representation of those emotions. Alternatively, as contemporary theater critic Arthur Symonds put it, the actress "is always the actress as well as the part; when she is at her best, she is both equally, and our consciousness of the one does not disturb our possession by the other" (quoted in States, "Presence," 363). (Modern performance theorist Bert States articulates the pathetic distance between the actor and his role in rhetorical terms: the actor "is always slightly 'quoting' his character," for "No matter how he acts, there is always a ghost of self in his performance" (States, "Presence," 360).) Though modern American actors laud their complete absorption into characters, nineteenth-century actors prided themselves on maintaining this double consciousness of their own identity and of their character at the same time.[146] This actorly doubled self-awareness, Schechner's "not not-me," reflects the distanced and doubled structure of pathos.

In accounting for the difference in the feelings of the other and the self, pathos opposes the monistic merging of sympathy, requiring that one feel simultaneously one's own feelings and the feelings of the other; the actress is thus both a participant (in her own feelings) and observer (of the feelings of the other). As Rei Terada has expressed it, "Pathos, as opposed to sentiment, assumes a sense of self-distance" (Terada 44).[147] Terada is here paraphrasing Anita Sokolsky's argument; Sokolsky sees pathos as the precise opposite of sentimentalism. For Sokolsky, pathos

[146] According to Roach, the American Method acting, the most commonly known acting theory and a nearly-pure example of emotionalist acting, descends from Meyerhold's adaptation of the Stanislavsky System (Roach 197-211).

[147] See Porter for an extended discussion of the relation of the observing self to the participating self— what she calls "seeing and being" — in American literature.

counters sentimentalism's demand for semiotic identicality; sentimental culture's central tenets, sincerity and sentiment, are both repulsive in their desire to erase the pathetic gap: sincerity, says Sokolsky, is the "desire to be equal to oneself, a refusal to acknowledge the slippage of meaning generated in the act of representation," and sentiment is "the excessive indulgence in emotion" that "grotesquely inflates the impulse to unify referent and signified, artist and image, rather than to fetishize the gap between them as that out of which desire is generated" (Sokolsky 82). Sokolsky's reading, given in explicitly semiotic terms, of sentimentalism's merging and pathos's distance can help us to examine how and why Dreiser uses—and revises—*sentimental* literary techniques in *Sister Carrie*, the founding novel of American naturalism.

Dreiser's pathetic style

One of the most consistently reviled characteristics of Dreiser's style is its tone, which is "almost universally" termed "pathos," in the "pejorative, specifically maudlin" aspect of the term (Wadlington 412). As Wadlington has noted, there is a strong modernist antipathy to pathos as a term and as a mode, in part because of the anti-sentimental bias of modernism: what Wadlington describes as pathos's lack of irony—its "maudlin" tendencies—are enough to turn the modernist or post-modernist stomach. But Wadlington is talking here about *sentimentalism*, not about Dreiserean pathos, and he goes on to switch the terms as if they were interchangeable: "As good rebellious scions of the Victorians—who at their best were masters of pathos—we feel queasy at anything we suspect of facile sentimentality" (Wadlington 412). Pathos and sentimentalism, I have shown, are two fundamentally different structures of feeling. Pathos is based upon distance, while sentimentalism is based upon merging. It is sentimentalism's desire to merge, says Robert

Solomon, that grounds its status as an aesthetic failure. Sentimentalism, says Solomon, transgresses the reader's emotional boundaries: "Sentimental literature violates the reader's sense of self by provoking these unwelcome emotional intrusions at an intensity that cannot be controlled (except, perhaps, by firmly putting down the book in question)" (Solomon 9). This erasure of boundaries is also characteristic of sentimental style; consider its use of metalepsis, its consistent breaking of the fourth wall, and its insistently heightened emotional tone. This sentimental boundary violation, says Solomon, is characteristically both an ethical and an aesthetic violation: "And if one adds to this [readerly ethical queasiness] any one of a familiar set of ideas about aesthetic 'detachment' or 'appreciation of form,' the ethical flaw becomes a failure in aesthetics as well. Whatever else literature is supposed to do to us, goes this account, it ought not to 'manipulate' the reader's emotions, interfering with both autonomy and aesthetic appreciation" (Solomon 9). Sentimentalism, then, in its insistence on the erasure of ethical and aesthetic boundaries, is about the negation of form. Pathos, on the other hand, values the distance between two things; we can see this in, for example, the double consciousness of the actor, as well as in Sokolsky's insistence on the gap between referent and signified. And distance is ostensibly the defining characteristic of literary naturalism; its definitional narrative objectivity — what June Howard calls naturalism's "documentary logic" (Howard, *Form* 142) — emphasizes precisely the distance between the reader and the novel's events and characters.[148]

[148] According to Howard, the typical naturalist narrative voice is objective: it describes only the visible surfaces of people and things, and implies order through sequencing of scenes rather than through direct attribution of meaning. Howard, *Form* examines the narrative techniques of naturalism and the effects its "documentary logic" has on the forms it produces; for Howard, the defining formal attribute of American naturalism is its irony—the distance between the reader's and the characters' experience, and between the narrator's and the characters' knowledge. This

Dreiser's first novel, usually named the founding text of American naturalism, is also one of the stylistically most hated novels, but it is far from formless. Donald Pizer has admired Dreiser's handling of the overall structure of the novel, with its three "intertwined structural strands" commenting upon one another across the novel (Pizer, *Novels* 82), and especially his pacing and narrative structuring in the middle section (Pizer, *Novels* 81-84). In fact, it has a decidedly pathetic structure: pathos values the distance between two things, as we can see in, for example, the double consciousness of the actor and in Sokolsky's insistence on the gap between referent and signified; this pathetic doubleness is also a defining formal characteristic of American literary naturalism, for critics who attend to the style of naturalism find in it a formal doubleness (Walcutt's "divided stream"). This doubleness is as the heart of *Sister Carrie.* As Paul Giles has noted, Dreiser's "aesthetic realism" comprises a dialectical relation between opposites: "allegory and realism, spirit and matter" (Giles 50), and it is the tension between these opposites that drives the novel's events forward. This doubleness also appears in the novel's structure. Its two story arcs (Chicago and New York) seem to be incommensurable, making the novel seem what Mencken called "broken-backed" (Pizer, *Novels* 82). Notoriously, the seam between the two halves marks Dreiser's blocked plotting; he wrote the first half of the novel, through Carrie and Hurstwood's meeting, in two months in 1899; he wrote on and off, quitting "disgusted" several times, in the winter of 1899-1900, and then finished the novel's second half in one swoop beginning in the spring of 1900 (Pizer, *Novels* 43). The novel's doubleness is usually seen as a flaw; the fracture at its center is usually read as an artifact of Dreiser's

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characteristic distancing frames readers precisely so as *not* to identify with the characters represented. This neatly echoes the pathetic distance that I have been examining.

stuckness. Dreiser's narrative tone, too, is doubled, and this tonal "inconsistency" is one of the most-hated characteristics of Dreiser's style; his most generous readers see the tonal shifts as the mistakes of an imperfect novelist; his harshest critics take them as signals of Dreiser's bad taste. I contend that these elements of doubleness in the novel's form and style are not artifacts of an inexperienced novelist's first attempt; instead, they carry through Dreiser's project of undercutting the sympathetic merging at the heart of sentimentalism and replacing it with the distanced, doubled structure of pathos.

The particular passages that draw the most critical ire are passages I will call "narratorial interruptions"; they are the moments when Dreiser himself, or his narratorial proxy, break into the novel's flow of objective narration. These passages, which tend to appear at the beginning of chapters (Pizer, *Novels* 124), are readily identifiable by a distinct shift in diction and syntax, marking a shift from objective, externalized narration to a more subjective and pre-interpreted narration.

Some of the passages are philosophical meditations, some are intended to coach the reader in how to interpret particular events and characters, and some are seen as meditations from Dreiser himself. Most people find them all awful: Warwick Wadlington says "Dreiser's attempts at lyricism, if they are noticed at all, are usually classified with his philosophizing as being among his more painful aberrations" (Wadlington 421). The tone, then, of the interruptive voice connects these passages of "philosophizing" and "lyricism."[149] In fact, the doubled

[149] Many critics who have discussed how Dreiser's own voice seems to saturate the narrative use these passages of narratorial interruption as the basis for much of their argument; see especially Trachtenberg, "Presence" and Corkin.

narrative voices are the same tone; it is only their content that varies, swinging between sentimental "lyricism" and naturalist "philosophizing." No matter which content, though, the shared *language* of these passages (which is the thing people hate most about Dreiser's style) closely follows Robyn Warhol's list of the characteristics of sentimental narration that invoke readerly emotion—what she calls "technologies of affect": the sonority of the rhythms, the piling up of parallel clauses, the archaic, poetic diction and syntax, and the alliteration and other sound-devices that physically thrill the reader's body, are all techniques that Dreiser borrows from sentimentalism.[150]

The tone of these passages, then, is simultaneously strongly subjective and personal, as one would expect from their reliance on sentimental techniques; they are also, oddly, *objective*. Dreiser's "philosophizing," which uses the same poetic, flowery language as do his passages of absurd lyricism, is often typically naturalist in its content: the narratorial interruptions are often passages of factual or scientific (objective) information, offering a description of Chicago as evening falls, a speculative "scientific" discourse about karastates and anastates, or a brief history of the rise of the department store at the turn of the century. And the dominant tone of *Sister Carrie* is quite typical of naturalism: it conveys a certain objectivity of stance by its

[150] For a close examination of the sentimental linguistic patterns in *Sister Carrie*, see Petrey. The archaic diction and poetic rhythms are most clearly visible in the chapter titles that Dreiser inserted in revising the manuscript for Doubleday, Page; see Williams for an examination of the chapter titles; see Ruotolo for the links between *Sister Carrie* and the sentimental popular songs of the day, including those written by Dreiser's brother Paul Dresser, a popular Tin Pan Alley composer. In addition to the linguistic technologies of affect I examine, Warhol's list includes several other more global sentimental characteristics: poetic language and devices; an emphasis on the inadequacy of words to convey emotion; focalization through characters which move from repression to triumph; direct address to the narratee; plot reversals that thrill through the vicarious identification with the unexpectedly victorious; characters that work against stereotypes; and a mixture of sad and happy scenes. All these are present in *Sister Carrie*.

dispassionate recounting of visible, material, documentary events. Stanley Corkin has noted both this typically naturalist objective basis of the novel's narration and the way the narratorial interruptions violate of that objectivity: "On one hand, it employs the immanent frame of the classic realist novel, a form that William Dean Howells claimed allowed stories to tell themselves; on the other hand, it embeds that frame within a larger narrative strategy, one that employs a strident, 'objective' narrator's voice that mediates the novel's action and instructs us how to read the text" (Corkin 607). Although Corkin finds these interruptions stridently "objective," I do not. These "narrative interruptions," as Corkin himself notes, introduce a subjective element: the opinion and interpretation of the narrator himself, which "instructs us how to read the text." And the narratorial interruptions break the fourth wall; address to the reader is patently a tool of sentimentalism.[151] The most famous example of this sentimental technique of readerly address is, of course, Harriet Beecher Stowe's direct appeal to all mothers, asking them to feel with Mrs. Bird on her lost child: "And oh! mother that reads this, has there never been in your house a drawer, or a closet, the opening of which has been to you like the opening again of a little grave? Ah! happy mother that you are, if it has not been so." Stowe's is a classic example of a sentimental appeal to the reader; it is an instance of metalepsis, which asks the reader to interpolate her own private experience into the storyworld and to identify herself with the character. This is a *personal* appeal, founded on sympathy, which asks the individual

[151] As States, "Presence," has noted, violation of the fourth wall in the theater by the actor's direct address to the audience erases the gap needed for pathos: "It would be unthinkable for a character like Lear or Macbeth--or even Hamlet, who is brother to the clown--to peer familiarly into the pit because there is something in the abridgment of aesthetic distance that gives the lie to tragic character and pathos" (366). Direct address, the violation of the fourth wall, is thus inherently sentimental in its attempt to erase the gap between the speaker and the audience.

reader to feel with the individual character, directly and immediately, on the basis of a shared tragic experience.

Dreiser's narrative interruptions work very differently than Stowe's (although the two types of interruptions share many linguistic and literary conventions). While Dreiser also addresses his reader, he does not ask her to interpolate her own experience metaleptically into the narrative; he does not seek to build readerly sympathy through direct sympathetic identification. Instead, Dreiser's narrative interruptions assume that the reader does *not* share experiences with his characters; he uses his interruptions to give additional information. Sentences like "Before following her in her round of seeking, let us look at the sphere in which her future was to lie," and "Lest this order of individual should permanently pass, let me put down some of the most striking characteristics of [the masher's] most successful manner and method," indicate Dreiser's assumption that his reader does not share Carrie's experience of cities and mashers. In other words, he emphasizes with his interruptions the *distance* between Carrie's and his reader's experience; this is quite different from the sentimental narrator's metaleptic invitation to identify directly with the emotional experience of her characters.[152]

Dreiser's narrative interruptions also revise sympathy towards pathos in their generalization of the object of readerly affect. Unlike Stowe, who asked her readers to sympathize directly with the individual, particular experience of one character, Dreiser asks his

[152] See Warhol, *Interventions* for a discussion of the "engaging" sentimental narrator (who pulls readers into the storyworld using direct address) and the "distancing" narrator (who reminds the reader of the fictional frame that separates the storyworld from the reader's world). See also Warhol, "Imagine", which examines what happens when a black narrator "has to assume otherness" in place of the "affinity between the speaking subject (the narrator) and the audience" (63) that white middle-class female narrators could depend upon.

reader to *generalize* her reaction; Dreiser's readers must distribute their invoked feeling among corporate objects, attaching it, not to an individual, but to a class or group of people. [153] For example, in the novel's opening scene, the narrator says "When a girl leaves her home at eighteen, she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse. Of an intermediate balance, under the circumstances, there is no possibility" (3-4). In this interruption, the narrator asks the reader to understand Carrie, not as an individual, but as a representative of a class: all eighteen-year-old girls that move to the city. The effect of this is to spread the reader's sympathy to a corporate object, to all the members of the collective group to which Carrie belongs.[154] It serves equally as well to distribute blame as to distribute sympathetic feeling, for the reader's possible moral judgment does not attach to Carrie the individual, for Carrie does not fail or succeed personally, based on the flaws or merits of her character. Instead, the moral judgment is distributed: some girls will fail and some will not, and Carrie will belong to one class or the other. In other words, Dreiser's generalization of sympathy asks us to think statistically or epidemiologically; moral failures become attributable to a statistical likelihood rather than to

[153] Eric Carl Link sees this generalization, or universal applicability, as the heritage of the romantic aesthetic tradition in naturalism; Link plays on Howells's assertion that "it were...almost precisely the business of the romance to deal with types and mental conditions" (Howells, qtd in Link 32) to argue, with Howells, that romance is allegorical and ideal, not specific and real, and that naturalism shares in this romantic tendency. This reading does not take into account Dreiser's sentimental language. Additionally, in sentimental literature, there is an *implicit* directive to generalize your sentimental identification to the members of the class depicted (if you sympathize with Uncle Tom, you should sympathize with the plight of all slaves).

[154] While Corkin observes this generalization of Carrie's experience in Dreiser's "broad statements," he does not connect this with sentimental literary techniques. For Corkin, Dreiser's strategy is simply a way to indicate Carrie's increasing objectification and commodification; he reads the ever-increasing distance between Carrie's particular experiences and the narrative voice as emblematic of her conversion into an object for sale.

internal moral weakness.[155] Dreiser thus evokes a generalized sympathy for Carrie as a *type* rather than as an individual, which is a more capacious and democratic affect than sentimentalism's "impulse toward sameness" (Warhol, "Imagine," 64), its ability to engage only with someone very like oneself.[156] In other words, Dreiser replaces the reader's sentimental identification—Hendler's "coincidence"—with pathetic identification.

Pathetic democracy

Dreiser thus foregrounds the difference between sympathy and pathos, a difference in the object of relationship; this offers a solution to the problem of sympathy's tendency to colonize the other, or even subsume the other into the self. Literary sentimentalism's attempt to use sympathy to extend human subjectivity to the marginalized had suffered from this problem. Sympathy, what David Marshall calls "the contagious disease of self-forgetting or self-loss," depends upon "resemblance": "in order to pity someone, we must see the person as our *semblable*, imagine the person as a reflection of ourselves rather than an other" (Marshall 149).

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[155] See Seltzer for an extended discussion of what he calls "statistical persons" in American naturalism; also see Thrailkill for a discussion of how statistical thinking, rather than individual particularity, operates sympathetically in Oliver Wendell Holmes's *Elsie Venner*. Eric Carl Link sees this generalization, or universal applicability, as the heritage of the romantic aesthetic tradition in naturalism; Link plays on Howells's assertion that "it were...almost precisely the business of the romance to deal with types and mental conditions" (quoted in Link 32) to argue, with Howells, that romance is allegorical and ideal, not specific and real, and that naturalism shares in this romantic tendency. This reading, however, does not take into account Dreiser's reliance on sentimental narrative techniques. Additionally, in sentimental literature, there is an *implicit* directive to generalize your sentimental identification to the members of the class depicted (if you sympathize with Uncle Tom, you should sympathize with the plight of all slaves), but this is quite different than Dreiser's universalizing speculations about types.

[156] Umberto Eco calls this generalization or abstraction "ostension" when it happens in the theater. He defines ostension as a form of signification "consisting in de-realizing a given object in order to make it stand for an entire class" (Eco, "Theatrical," 110). Stanley Corkin also notes this generalization, but reads the increasing step-wise distancing of the narration from Carrie's particular experience as a form of commodification; as I have argued in the previous chapter, Dreiser asks us in *Sister Carrie* to view the objectification of persons as not inherently negative.

The "collapse of difference between self and other that occurs in the 'too much sameness' of sympathy" (Marshall 103) is precisely the problem with sympathy, for it is not a relationship that can any longer obtain in newly-urban, increasingly diverse America.[157]

Dreiser articulates pathos as an alternative to sympathy, a new "structure of feeling" that is mediated through things and that maintains the self in the double-consciousness of the actor.[158] The social and economic changes occurring at the turn of the twentieth century had, as I noted earlier, placed a new emphasis on surface and self-presentation, and it also entailed contact with strangers. Thus Dreiser's shift to pathos, which does not demand sympathy's elision of distance and of difference, as the organizing structure of feeling in *Sister Carrie* makes two important moves. First, it takes into account the new importance of objects in America, and the increasingly emotional and affective relationships that people form with these desirable objects; this shared experience, what William Leach calls the "democratization of desire" (Leach 3), is an agent which binds together large groups of disparate Americans. Second, this commodity-structured relationship also *broadens* the notion of affective relation by extending it to different objects: to collectives and even to things. It allows for connections with the other and maintains the fundamental distance between the parties to the relationship that sympathy does not. Gilles Lipovetsky points to "the role of the frivolous in the development of a critical, realistic, tolerant

[157] Warhol, "Imagine" points out the specifically racial politics of sentimentalism, and the modern feminist critique of the "potential for racism in that impulse toward sameness" (Warhol, "Imagine," 64).

[158] I borrow the term "structure of feeling" from Raymond Williams by way of Glenn Hendler's deployment of it to describe public sentiment.

consciousness" (Lipovetsky 10), and argues that it is precisely the development of fashion and the restructuring of social relations based on the logics of fashion (ephemerality, seduction, and proliferation of minor differences) that created the conditions of possibility under which individualism and democracy emerge. I would extend Lipovetsky's claim: the "tolerant consciousness" developed by the logics of fashion is linked to the shift from a sympathetic model of connection to a pathetic one, a far more democratic one, which is structured by fashion and other commodities. Pathos, at the turn of the century, thus begins to seem more capable of carrying out sentimentalism's project than sentimentalism itself.

Chapter 4: Reading James's Realism

"In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing." — Oscar Wilde

As we have seen, Dreiser toyed with the conventions of naturalism as a genre, reshaping it to reflect the changing feeling structures it enacted. Like Dreiser, James expanded the boundaries of his chosen genre, literary realism.[159] But unlike Dreiser, James does not use dress to pattern relationships or structures of feeling. Instead, James uses dress to teach his audience how to read his novels. While Dreiser shows the role of dress in the development of double consciousness (the sartorially-learned ability to shift from subject- to object-position and consequently to engage in pathos-structured relations), James approaches a different problem. Like Dreiser, James is interested in the way clothes shape the self, and specifically in how dress helps to produce the self-distanced, or rhetorical, self: the author-functions of dress, its power to fashion. But James is more interested in the readerly functions of dress. He primarily explores dress as a figure for language and as an object of interpretation.[160] James uses dress to experiment with the boundaries of representation as such; like his well-known stylistic idiosyncrasies, Jamesian representations of dress teach interpretation, and serve to train up the

[159] For work on American literary realism, see Glazener, Kearns, Furst, Kaplan, Fisher, Barrish, and Brown, *Object Matter*.

[160] Dress has been examined in terms of language by several scholars, most notably Roland Barthes (see especially Barthes, *The Fashion System* and Barthes, *Language*), and also including Lurie and Davis, "Do clothes speak? What makes them fashion? ." Tseëlon performed an empirical study examining how well people were able to "read" others' clothing; she finds (with Barthes) that clothing is not as easily read as language.

ideal audience for his ideal realistic novel.[161] This ideal audience, as we will see, can "read in" just enough but not too much—they are simultaneously an audience not overly interested in the back of the tapestry and an audience on whom nothing is lost.

Patterns and pieces: "the elements of Appearance"

James makes the relevance of dress to interpretation clear in one of the early scenes of *The Ambassadors*, one of James's three great late novels. One of the novel's key scenes involves the protagonist, Lambert Strether, considering his own appearance in relation to that of his new friend Miss Maria Gostrey. This scene, which depicts Strether's first morning in Europe, figures some of the book's main themes: Strether ditches his past and his obligations, in the person of Waymarsh, to frivol among the European aesthetes. This scene condenses the transformation that Strether is undergoing, the story of which will make up the bulk of the novel. In this scene, he meets his new friend Miss Gostrey in the garden for an impulsively-planned day of shopping: as he crosses the lawn to meet Miss Gostrey, taking in her outfit, he feels that "he was launched in something of which the sense would be quite disconnected from the sense of his past, and which was literally beginning there and then" (James, *Novels VI* 27). This is a literal new beginning for Strether, of course; Europe is quite different from Woollett, Massachusetts. Yet Strether himself identifies this new "sense" of experience with both his own and Miss Gostrey's *dress*. Miss

[161] Short, "The Sentence Structure of Henry James" discusses several peculiarities of James's style: weak conjunctions, loose punctuation, violations of sentence order conventions, parenthetical expressions, and unusual deployments of what he calls "relating expressions." For further work on James's manipulation of referents, see Rivkin, *Positions*; Steele, "Sentence"; and Steele, "The Drama of Reference in James's *The Golden Bowl*." For more on James's periodic sentences and their deferment of meaning, as well as on the importance of grammatical and syntactical detail in James's work, see Yeazell.

Gostrey's outfit —her "perfect plain propriety, [her] expensive subdued suitability" —is put forward as the immediate cause of Strether's sense of newness: "Nothing could have been more odd than Strether's feeling, at that moment" (27)[162] This sartorially-triggered sense of newness calls to mind his own dressing, a few minutes earlier:

> It had begun in fact already upstairs and before the dressing-glass […]; begun with a sharper survey of the elements of Appearance than he had for a long time been moved to make. He had during those moments felt these elements to be not so much to his hand as he should have liked, and then had fallen back on the thought that they were precisely a matter as to which help was supposed to come from what he was about to do. He was about to go up to London, so that hat and necktie might wait. (James, *Novels VI* 27)

Strether's "sharper survey" of "the elements of [his] Appearance" is named as the beginning of his sense of newness, of his break from the past; his clear-eyed self-examination will lead to his own refashioning, both literal and metaphorical. The dissatisfaction he feels in his appearance, which indexes the dissatisfaction he feels with his life, is strongest in retrospect, in the act of comparison: it is not until he is confronted with Miss Gostrey's sartorial perfection that he crystallizes the disappointment produced by his earlier mirror-gazing. And it is to a sartorial source—to a new hat and necktie—that Strether looks for the resolution of his feelings of discontent; new clothes index the new life to which he looks forward, as well as his new self, for

[162] Strether's impression of newness has been marked by many critics; *The Ambassadors* (1903) is often seen as a bildungsroman, in which Strether enters upon a new perceptual life in Europe, making a *salto mortale* from his past to the present. The novel is read as a return to James's international theme, and Strether's sense of newness is considered to be the result of the awakening of his aesthetic or erotic perception through the European influence, often read *The Ambassadors* as the story of what Richard Salmon calls "Strether's hermeneutic desire." Ruth Bernard Yeazell has argued that the central experience of reading James is that of bringing to conscious awareness things that are felt, but not yet articulated; the reader of James, like Strether, "sens[es] more than he can allow himself to know" (Yeazell 25). While I disagree with the fundamentally psychoanalytic model that underlies this stream of James criticism, in which there is a hidden truth that can be uncovered by a sufficiently astute reader, I agree with Yeazell that the act of translation is the central one of reading James. As does Clair Hughes, I connect this readerly hermeneutic with dress in James.

his problems are ones "to which help was supposed to come from what he was about to do" — shop. In other words, Strether, like Carrie Meeber, will solve his problems through dress.

While this scene foregrounds the importance of dress to identity, echoing Dreiser's uses of dress in *Sister Carrie*, it also links dress explicitly with the peculiarly Jamesian problem of interpretation. Strether, "struck" by his impression of Miss Gostrey's appearance, is uneasily aware of his "instantly acute" "consciousness" of her dress, a holistic impression that he "was not free to analyse." Yet in order to work at this analysis, he manufactures a pause in his progress towards her, indulging his "impulse to gain time" for interpretation. Faced with appearances-- Miss Gostrey's or his own— Strether's impulse is to "analyse": to break apart his impression into its elements and then to stitch them back together. In this scene, Strether, in his analysis of "the elements of Appearance," models the method of reading that James's novels require of their readers. Like Strether, the Jamesian reader must focus on disparate "elements"—often sartorial elements—and then stitch together those elements into a coherent reading.

The work of interpretation that Strether begins here is a central concern across James's oeuvre. James's famous articulation in *The Art of Fiction* of the ideal artist's "cluster of gifts" centers on interpretation: "[t]he power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern" (James, *Essays I* 53). The theme of interpretation extends beyond his critical writings into the novels. The ability to interpret, to actively "judge the whole piece by the pattern," which develops in Lambert Strether over the course of the novel, is also an ability James demands of his reader. The Jamesian reader must also — like the artist and the Jamesian character— learn to "judge the whole piece by the pattern."

This phrase, however, is an odd one. Why does James articulate the act of interpretation in terms of a move from a "pattern" to a "whole piece"? To modern readers, it would seem that the pattern should be the overall structure and the piece a small part of that pattern. But James turns this inside out. His inversion makes sense in reference to dress: One can imagine an entire piece of fabric from the repeating *pattern* represented on one small bit; one can sew an entire finished *piece*, or garment, from a pattern that indicates the whole; one can read from a small sartorial detail—a ruffle, a hat, a shoe—and deduce a whole outfit.

The *pattern* is a part of the story of home-constructed clothing in nineteenth-century America. The story of American dress begins with patternless home sewing and dressmaker-produced garments; it moves to the introduction and mass marketing of sewing patterns in the 1860s; and it ends with the development of the ready-to-wear garment. Many scholars read this sartorial story as a story about industrialization and the rise of capitalism.[163] But the particular history of the sewing pattern might be read instead as a story about the rise of pragmatic reading. The active, provisional style of reading required by James's late work is the same model of reading demanded by sewing patterns. In both these models, meaning, like a garment, is *constructed*—and like a garment, meaning is alterable and revisable.

It is hard for modern readers to imagine that much sophisticated interpretive labor happens in reading sewing patterns. Modern-day sewing patterns require only a very basic form

[163] See Putnam, "The Sewing Machine Comes Home" and Brandon for an account of how the production, patent disputes, and marketing of the sewing machine inaugurate several tenets of capitalist production and industrialization in the United States. Also see Ley for an argument about the democratizing effect of the rise of pre-made, or "ready-to-wear," clothing over the nineteenth century. Lipovetsky argues that the larger theoretical movements of fashion are the precursor and conditions of possibility of democracy itself.

of literacy. The primary active labor in modern sewing is the work of cutting, fitting, and seaming the fabric; all the information the sewer needs is explicitly laid out in the pattern, which targets beginning sewers. Patterns are graded, or sized, and include tissue pre-printed with labeled cut, dart, and seam allowance lines, along with very clear narrative instructions. Modern patterns are, by design, closed texts that intentionally limit interpretive possibilities. In contrast, the earliest American sewing patterns were far more difficult texts; making a successful garment depended upon expertise, not only in the actual handwork of garment construction, but also in reading—in pattern interpretation.[164] Early American patterns came as a set of pre-cut, unlabeled, unsized pieces of tissue, and included no instructions. In fact, there was no printing at all on most American sewing patterns until 1919. Instead, darts, stitching lines, and other details of construction were represented on the pattern by perforations of different sizes. The sewer had to fill the gaps left by the pattern's lack of narrative instruction with her own non-linguistic, spatial, social, and embodied knowledge of how fashionable dress of the day was constructed, how it moved, and how it looked. The sewer thus needed to have a relatively extensive acquired

[164] See Emery, "Dreams." The earliest known paper patterns, which were not publicly available, were drafted in 1580; in an interesting overlap with the theatrical history given in my previous chapters, the first patterns available to the public were issued (coincidentally) by Diderot in his *Le'encyclopedie Diderot et D'Alembert: Arts de l'habillement* in 1776. In the United States, which became the center of the commercial pattern industry, the first full-size commercially published patterns appeared in *Frank Leslie's Gazette of Fashions* in 1854. Patterns began to be available via mail order in 1860, and almost immediately, pattern magazines were established to disseminate the patterns. These early patterns were scaled to fit the page size of the book or periodical that printed them, and the sewer had to scale them up to fit human proportions. Between 1863 and 1866, Ebenezer Butterick introduced the innovation of the graded pattern, which came in different sizes, needing little size conversion on the part of the sewer. The next leap forward in pattern technology was in 1919, when McCall's (founded in 1870) patented the printed pattern, which replaced the cut-and-punched style; these patterns were marketed starting in 1921. Emery argues for the importance of the sewing pattern, quoting a 1917 advertisement for Standard Designer: "There is nothing so cheap and yet so valuable; so common and yet so little realized; so unappreciated and yet so beneficial as the paper dress pattern. Truly one of the great elemental inventions in the world's history - Tissue of Dreams" (quoted in Emery, "Dreams," 251).

expertise in both garment construction and in the decoding of the pattern markings themselves; this decoding was a far more specialized form of interpretation than normal print literacy.[165] Early sewing patterns thus demanded a particular form of *reading*. This combination of material and spatial understanding with semiotic ability, as Christine Bayles Kortsch points out, was possessed by nearly every woman of the nineteenth century; authors could count on their female reading public to be able to stitch together meaning from scanty semiotic clues, as well as to supply the embodied, material, sartorial experience that subtended his sartorial images. As Anne Hollander says in her landmark study of dress in art, *Seeing Through Clothes* (1993), "The visual character of clothing […] is something so large in life as to be omitted in writing as unnecessary. [...] And yet this missing material, this essential quality of dress, creates at least half the physical self. Moreover, in most fiction it is […] assumed to be provided by the mental image the writer has and expects the reader to have" (Hollander, *Seeing* 422-423). Just as the sewer must bring her own knowledge and experience to bear in using the minimalist guide of the sewing pattern, the reader of James must fill in the sartorial blanks left in the narrative; James's telegraphic descriptive style depends upon his readers' ability to interpolate their own knowledge, their own experience in the material world, into the descriptive gaps. The Jamesian reader must thus engage in acts of construction, not simply acts of recognition; just as Strether must learn to

[165] Christine Bayles Kortsch describes nineteenth-century women as holding a "dual literacy" in both textual print culture and in "dress culture" (Kortsch), and argues that women had to be versed in both print reading and in the reading of "dress culture." Kortsch includes garment construction skills and all the types of embodied knowledge that I have mentioned here under the heading of "dress culture;" she also includes under this heading the ability to interpret social meanings of others' dress. Kortsch is less interested in the form of literacy required to properly read patterns.

"judge the whole piece by the pattern," so must James's reader stitch discrete impressions into a coherent whole.

The feeling of the real: sentiment, realism, and description

Despite the emphasis that James, through Strether, had laid on "the elements of Appearance," James himself includes less and less material detail, sartorial and otherwise, in his late work. As Bill Brown has put it, James's late work exemplifies his "ambivalent effort to conquer the hyperpresence of objects within realist fiction" (Brown, "A Thing about Things: The Art of Decoration in the Work of Henry James," 224).[166] Reading James's realism, with its intentional gaps in description, was uncomfortable for readers unused to applying their sartorial semiotic abilities to literary texts. Readers accustomed to Howellsian descriptive realism, or to the highly descriptive and concrete closed texts of sentimentalism, found James's late works especially difficult. Increasingly, James moves away from the typical realist catalogue of concrete detail—a style so focused on material detail that Frank Norris dismissed it as "the drama of a broken teacup"—and towards a more telegraphic, elliptical style.[167] By his late period (not coincidentally, a period of declining sales of James's work), James has moved decisively

[166] Brown reads *The Spoils of Poynton* as a complication of the usual visual orientation of realist novels; *Spoils*, a work that is explicitly about the relationship of the domestic object to its possessor, ends with a massive conflagration erasing all the auratic domestic and aesthetic treasures of the house. Brown argues that the fire with which *Spoils* closes "literalizes the absence of the spoils within the novel's descriptive register" by consuming them, and that this fire thus becomes "the conflagration in which realism as such is consumed" (Brown, "A Thing about Things: The Art of Decoration in the Work of Henry James," 228).

[167] Greenwood argues that James's late elliptical style develops out of his experience writing for the stage.

away from the Barthesian "reality-effect."[168] The discomfort this caused readers who expected traditional descriptive realism, like that of *Daisy Miller* or *Portrait of a Lady*, emerges clearly in the responses to *The Golden Bowl*, James's last completed novel. Henry James's close friend and fellow writer Edith Wharton was one of many readers muddled by missing *stuff* in James's late style. Many readerly objections center on the absence of description, of concrete material things: Wharton asked him, for example, "What was your idea in suspending the four principal characters in 'The Golden Bowl' in the void? What sort of life did they lead when they were not watching each other, and fencing with each other? Why have you stripped them of all the human fringes that we necessarily trail after us through life?" (Wharton, *Novellas* 926). A similar complaint about *The Golden Bowl* came from Virginia Woolf, who said "For all the skill and care that have been spent on them the actors remain but so many distinguished ghosts. We have been living with thoughts and emotions, not with live people" (Woolf 23). Both these responses (interestingly, both from women) object to James's erasure of everyday things: Wharton to the missing "fringes," without which the characters seem suspended in the void, and Woolf to the ghostly characters—ghostly precisely because they are not corporeal, because we see only the

[168] Barthes defines the reality-effect as an illusion of reality produced by description and the "luxury" of useless details, all of which point only to the idea of reality: "Flaubert's barometer, Michelet's little door finally say nothing but this: *we are the real;* it is the category of 'the 'real' (and not its contingent contents) which is then signified; in other words, the very absence of the signified, to the advantage of the referent alone, becomes the very signifier of realism: the *reality effect* is produced, the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity" (Barthes, "The Reality Effect," 148). And this over-description is sensational, as James intuited; Barthes discusses it in terms of hypoptosis, which puts things before the reader "not in a neutral, constative manner, but by imparting to representation all the luster of desire" (Barthes, "The reality effect," 145-46). For James's declining readership, see, for example, Flatley and Sedgwick, "Friction."

immaterial elements, their thoughts and emotions, rather the material accoutrements that live people trail behind them through life.[169]

But the erasure of detailed description is not a late-period idiosyncrasy of James's. As early as 1865, James was dissociating his idea of realism from description. He registered his objections to the overuse of description in novels in a review of Harriet Prescott Spofford's work, of whom he remarks maliciously (almost prefiguring Wharton's and Woolf's laments), "we have often devoutly wished that some legal penalty were attached to the use of description. We have sighed for a novel with a *dramatis personae* of disembodied spirits" (James, *Essays I* 605). While James, like Woolf later, connects loss of description with ghosts, or "disembodied spirits," this would be for James in improvement on Spofford's sentimental description.

In his critical work, James often associates the tic of over-description with sentimentalism, which he classified, with its sibling the romantic tale, as a type of sensational fiction. I mean "sensational" in its most literal etymological sense—these descriptive genres were sensational because they activated physical sensation in the reader's body. Both sentimentalism and romantic literature, according to James, were coarse and inartistic because of their flood of descriptive detail and their reliance on readers' embodied responses:

> Was it not as if the sentimental had been more and more noted as but another name for the romantic, if not indeed the romantic as but another name for the sentimental, and as if these things, whether separate or united, had been in the same degree recognised as unamenable, or at any rate unfavourable, to any consistent fineness of notation, once the tide of the copious as a condition of the thorough had fairly set in? (James, *Essays I* 130)

[169] See Cameron, *Thinking*.

Over-description—the "tide of the copious as a condition of the thorough" that ruins "any consistent fineness" of literary art—is for James a characteristic, not of realism, but of varieties of sentimentalism, all of which he sees as inartistic. Sensational fiction bypasses the reader's critical faculties and instead directly activates her body (as Robert Solomon has put it, "Sentimental literature violates the reader's sense of self by provoking […] unwelcome emotional intrusions at an intensity that cannot be controlled (except, perhaps, by firmly putting down the book in question)" (Solomon 9).) This authorial manipulation of readerly emotion is the opposite of James's style, which depends upon the reader's interpretive effort.

James's distaste for description extends to genres not normally classed as sensational. According to James, what he calls descriptive realism—realism that relies upon flooding the reader with realistic detail—is also a form of sensationalism. James sees realist description as sensational because of its ability to force the reader into identification with its situation: the reader identifies too strongly with the hyper-realistic portrayal of circumstances. (He connects description and realism with sensation in his review of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's crime novels: "the nearer the criminal and the detective are brought home to the reader, the more lively his 'sensation.' They are brought home to the reader by a happy choice of probable circumstances; and it is through their skill in the choice of these circumstances—their thorough-going *realism*—that Mr. Collins and Miss Braddon have become famous" (James, *Essays I* 743).) Descriptive realism is no better, no more artistic, than the sentimental or the romantic novel. James would later, in his extensive essay on "The New Novel" (1914), use the literary reliance on description as a definitional difference by which he distinguishes between types of realism: *descriptive* realism (which he also calls realism of saturation, of the "slice of life" type) and *extractive*

realism (what James calls realism of fact; as we will see, by "fact" he means, not details, but something more like "truth"—not simple observation and mimetic reproduction of the real, but the artistic capacity for selection, or the ability to choose the one perfect representative detail).[170]

Convert, convert

James objects to over-description because it has not undergone the artistic process of conversion: the nearly alchemical transformation of observation into art, of reality into representation. "Conversion" is James's own shorthand for the active process of converting impressions into meaning, and applies to both writers and readers. In other words, conversion requires the objective, external real to be subjectivized, colored by the selecting and interpreting consciousness. In his autobiography, *A Small Boy and Others*, he discusses "the inveterate process of conversion," framing it as a performative process in which one collects experiences, interprets them, and takes them into the self:

> it is quite for me as if the authors of our being and guardians of our youth had virtually said to us but one thing, directed our course but by one word, though constantly repeated: Convert, convert, convert! […] We were to convert and convert, success--in the sense that was in the general air--or no success; and simply everything that should happen to us, every contact, every impression and every experience we should know, were to form our soluble stuff" (*A Small Boy and Others*)

This act of conversion, which lies at the center of the Jamesian method for both artist and reader, is fundamentally active: from impression to experience, from experience to representation, from

[170] For James, the overwhelming detail of descriptive realism functions to obscure, not illuminate, truth; this is similar to Barthes's argument that concrete details alone create a "referential illusion" (148), which is illusory because it ejects meaning, or signification, from what becomes an iconic relation: "Semiotically, the 'concrete detail' is constituted by the *direct* collusion of a referent and a signifier; the signified is expelled from the sign" (Barthes, "The Reality Effect," 147).

representation to interpretation (and the interpretation is also another impression, ready to undergo the process again, echoing Peirce's infinite regression of signification); all these conversions require active, effortful labor on the part of the perceiver. This is consciousness actively at work, continuously sifting, connecting, reshaping, revising, and rejecting material. James condenses in his idea of "conversion" the necessity for one to come into active relations with his own impressions and perceptions, and to shape them into the material of experience and subjectivity.

James's late-period erasure of concrete details thus comes to look like an intentional revision of realism. By relegating description to a subordinate position and elevating the act of conversion, Jamesian realism becomes a readerly realism. James shifts realism from a descriptive genre that depends upon the author's activity—his eye for concrete detail, his ability to describe them convincingly—to a genre that depends equally upon the reader's activity, her ability to fill gaps and make meaning. In other words, the reader's process of making meaning from a James novel *feels* very like the process of making meaning from actual events and experiences. But this is not pure subjectivity, a purely relativist ontology. Jamesian realism, then, is not after the real offered by broken teacups and catalogues of stuff. Instead, it is the pragmatist real, the pragmatist truth: a convergence of interpretations. Late James demands, and, I shall argue, *creates* a pragmatic reader by recreating the feeling of the real.[171] James's experiments—with dress as an

[171] I choose the term "pragmatic reader" because, as I have explained in the previous chapter, the philosophical underpinnings of American pragmatism—action, revision, particularity, connection, and flux/experience—also underlie the readerly position that I posit. ("Radical empiricist reader" might, perhaps, be more accurate, but it is far less catchy. I also wish the term to evoke pragmatism's holism and systems thinking via the Deweyan idea of the reflex arc, in addition to the Jamesian convertibility of words into action and vice versa.)

index, a communicative material sign, and with language's capacity to symbolically represent—create in the reader the impression of having experienced something real.

Fashioning Jamesian readings

While James uses careful, sparing representation of dress throughout his oeuvre, his use of fashionable description changes across his career. His sartorial representations index his linguistic experiments and manifest his changing attitudes towards realism. James's early work, more typically realist in its materiality and descriptiveness, is also more conventional in its uses and descriptions of all of life's fringes, especially clothes. In his late work, glimpses of clothing are both less frequent and less intensely described, but all the more important when they do appear. Clothes are not completely erased, but they are often occluded—they become more and more dependent on the reader's pre-existing experience of a shared material world, and on her active interpolation of this pre-existing sartorial knowledge. These shifts in material description make up part of James's redefinition of realism from a purely authorial effect produced by description to a readerly effort requiring experience and interpretation. James's fiction increasingly requires the reader to stitch together interpretations from smaller and smaller pieces of the pattern.

James's contemporary readers would have been very familiar with the originals of the dresses glimpsed in the Jamesian text, and would have easily called to mind the "look" of contemporary dress (although, as mentioned, the need for them to do so was off-putting to some readers). This task is more difficult for modern readers, who have lost the sartorial referent: the details of nineteenth-century dress have receded into what Clair Hughes calls "the generalized

modern memory-bank" (Hughes 3). The modern reader of James needs to have a visual idea of how fashion cycles across James's career to understand the sartorial "patterns" James takes for granted.

Broadly, James's early-period representations of dress, which are more classically realistic, show some of his early experiments with sartorial semiotics. In James's early fiction, dress functions semiotically both as the familiar sign or symbol and also as a Peircian index. James's careful deployment of dress puts the indexical alongside the symbolic in the space of the novel, thereby expanding the novel's representational capacity; James's use of indexical dress also imports a familiar reading mode, sartorial reading or "textile literacy," into the difficult task of reading his telegraphic, elliptical novels. The familiar mode of reading—reading dress, which, as Kasson has shown us, was a kind of reading everyone in the nineteenth century engaged in—serves as a model for reading the Jamesian text.

The Peircean index, an important concept in my examination of James's early work, is worth a brief recapitulation. (See Chapter 1, pages 80-89, for a fuller review of the Peircean semeiotic.) First, the index names a real relation between a material referent and that referent's sign. This invocation of the real functions precisely as Hanna Pitkin has claimed that representation does: to bring the absent (here, the absent material) into presence (the symbolic space of the novel). Second, the index both requires and limits readerly involvement. The index, peculiar to Peirce's triadic system of semiotics, invokes the importance of interpretation. Peirce's semiotics offers a *triple* relation between the sign, the object, and the interpretant. This foregrounds the necessity for an interpreter; the interpretant is a mental concept, which entails the presence of an interpreter who is actively conceptualizing that mental concept. The third

term, the interpretant, also indicates the contingency and subjectivity of the sign's meaning, for the interpretation is itself another representamen of the object, which necessitates another act of interpretation, and so on. This never-ending interpretation reiterates the pragmatist conviction that truth, the real, comes out of converging interpretations. The index, then, highlights the importance of active meaning-making to pragmatic reading. Yet the index also *limits* interpretation, for, according to linguist Albert Atkin, a defining characteristic of the index is its "independence feature," by which he means the index's resistance to mis- or over-interpretation. (In Atkin's example of indexical independence, he says that the "direction of the weathercock is totally independent of my interpreting it as an index of the wind. Clearly, the weathercock would still point westward whether I interpret that as a sign that the wind is blowing from the east or not" (Atkin 169).) In other words, dress, as an indexical sign, means, or points, whether we interpret it properly or at all. In his deployment of the sartorial index, James offers a double injunction: to interpret and to limit interpretation.

The first Jamesian texts I examine are ghost stories: one very early, one towards the end of his middle period. The first is "Romance of Certain Old Clothes," a little-read very early ghost story that uses dress as the crux of a troubled relationship between two sisters. Next I turn to *The Turn of the Screw* to examine James's apparent obsession with hats; I argue that James uses dress cues as he does linguistic cues in this novella, to both authorize and undercut the governess's reliability as narrator. In fact, I argue, the misunderstanding of Quint's hatlessness in the post-World-War-Two sartorial climate may have contributed to the explosion of critical debate over the status of the governess's reliability as narrator that began in the 1950s. The period of *The Turn of the Screw* marks the beginning of the turn in James's career from relatively accessible

and popular works in the more typically "realist" style to the style that will culminate in the abstract consciousness novels of the late period.[172] In these late novels, dress becomes an even more crucial marker of how to read for meaning to the reader. Just as James's ghosts, according to Clair Hughes, "start as literal and externalised [….] but become progressively metaphorical and subjective" Hughes, *Art* 171, James's narrative style sublimates the concrete representation of the object — and especially the sartorial object —more and more deeply. I thus turn next to some representative examples of his more realistic works. *Daisy Miller,* an early (and popularly successful) novella, helps me to examine how James uses dress cues to guide his reader's sympathies toward Daisy, rather than to Winterbourne, the novella's narrator; I also examine Daisy's vexed relations with symbolic language, and her skill with the mode of the sartorial indexical, to show the beginnings of James's interest in using objects as sort of extra-textual narrators.[173] Finally, I turn to *The Golden Bowl,* which contemporary readers found difficult (as, frankly, do modern readers). Dress, which develops over his oeuvre as a primary site of James's inquiry into the status of representation and language, ends by being a valuable guide to interpretation in the late novels.

[172] For scholarship that links late changes to James's style to his encounter with the theater, see Greenwood, Litvak, Weisenfarth, and Hansen.

[173] Or as alternative narrators that undercut or are in discord with the human narrators, who are not fully unreliable, but whose interpretations are not to be trusted. (James was always a fan of the limited narrator as his central reflecting consciousness, regarding it as a pretty authorial problem; this is the source of his experiment with point of view in *What Maisie Knew.*) For an explanation of discordant narration, see Cohn.

Real ghosts in "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes"

"The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," a relatively little-read story originally published in 1868, is a rather rare event in the Jamesian canon, for it explicitly centers on dress: in this story, dress serves as the site of two sisters' battle over a man. In this early story James describes dress in sensuous, concrete detail; the reader can almost feel the textures of the "beautiful piece of white silk, brocaded with heavenly blue and silver" (251) and the "stiff brocade and masses of heavy lace" that the women of the story fashion into gowns, as well as some of the labor involved in making a trousseau of the day (the sewing women "worried and wondered over their materials, oppressed by the multitude of their resources" (251), by the "yards and yards of lovely silks and satins, of muslins, velvets and laces" that wait to be sewn into garments appropriate for the bride (251-52).) Indeed, James's sensory descriptions of the "certain old clothes" of the story's title surpass his descriptions of the sisters themselves; the dresses serve as both the setting for the sisters' silent rivalry and as perhaps the story's most vibrant character. Yet despite the realism of description, even in this early work the relationship between dress, language, and communication is already a complex one.

The story tells the tale of two sisters in pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts (around 1756), Viola and Perdita Willoughby, who compete for the affections of Arthur Lloyd.[174] The

[174] James changed the names in this story in his 1885 revision, from "Willoughby" to "Wingrave" (a name that he used again in "Owen Wingrave"), and from "Viola" to "Rosalind." The story is, in many ways, indebted to Shakespeare, from which both names for the older sister come. Viola and Rosalind are, of course, two famous Shakespearean heroines who assume alternate identities by assuming the costumes of those identities. The text itself points the reader to the Shakespeare plays, stressing that "Mr. Willoughby had been a great reader of Shakespeare, at a time when this pursuit implied more penetration of mind than at the present day, and in a community where it required much courage to patronize the drama even in the closet; and he had wished to record his admiration of the great poet by calling his daughters out of his favourite plays" (243). Both Rosalind and Viola in the original plays

competition is carried out entirely silently; dress is the battlefield upon which they strive. The sisters make a silent pact to help one another look as well as possible, beginning, by "tacit agreement," "to wear all their choice finery, and to devise such little implements of coquetry, in the way of ribbons and top-knots and furbelows." They spend their time honing their sartorial weapons: they were "forever stitching and trimming their petticoats, and pressing out their muslins, and contriving washes and ointments and cosmetics" (247). All the while neither girl "flinched nor fluttered beneath the silent batteries of her sister's eyes" (247). When the younger sister, Perdita, becomes engaged to Arthur, Viola, the older sister, seems eventually to bury her resentment; the rapprochement appears complete when Viola, seduced by her "inordinate love of dress" (251) and the gorgeousness of one particular length of fabric, uses her taste ("the very best taste in the world") to help in designing and making up Perdita's gorgeous wedding trousseau: she "falls to work and solves all their silken riddles" (251).

The riddle of the sister's relationship remains, however, and the dresses Viola has helped to make do not solve this riddle. In fact, they intensify it. About a year after the wedding, Perdita dies from the birth of her first daughter. She makes a final, urgent, inexplicable request to her husband: that he swear to lay away her dresses "under a double-lock" and to "never give [the key] to any one but your child" (256). At the end of her life, Perdita's last desire is to keep her dresses from her sister.

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cross-dress, and both are wed as a result of the freedom of action and position that this ruse allows them; both, in other words, take advantage of the presumed indexicality of dress to gender in order to play with notions of same-sex and heterosexual desires (see Garber). Though James's Viola/Rosalind, in contrast to Shakespeare's, "was not cut out for adventures" and "would never have put on a man's jacket and hose," her originals' usurpations of desired identic positions via dress is, perhaps, significant.

The story explains this as Perdita's attempt to maintain a connection to her newborn daughter via the dresses; she has a presentiment of "her sister's rapacity" (both for the dresses and —far behind in second place--for the husband who can bestow them), and Viola's sartorial desires "seemed to cast a dark shadow between her [Perdita] and the helpless figure of her little girl" (255). Perdita fears that, if Viola takes the dresses, it will break the sartorial connection between herself and her daughter. The trousseau is Perdita's legacy to the little girl: as Perdita tells Arthur, the jewels and dresses "will be a great inheritance for my daughter" (255).[175] But this wearable legacy is not only economic: it is also sentimental and identic. The dresses seem, in Perdita's mind, to be something *more* than symbol, to stand as a substitute for herself — absorbing into their fabric her identity, and investing her daughter with that identity. In other words, as Perdita seems to sense, who wears her dresses will take her place. This idea of clothes as conferring power or status is a notion that Peter Stallybrass has called "investiture." For Stallybrass, as for Perdita, clothes are little bundles of experience, history, and meaning: accretions of events, wearers, and history are all absorbed into the "worn worlds" of clothes. For Stallybrass, investiture is "the means by which a person was given a form, a shape, a social function, a 'depth'"; "it was investiture, the putting on of clothes, that quite literally constituted a person" (Barnard 59). (Although Bill Brown does not call it investiture, he examines a precisely similar mechanism in his reading of Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper,* where the king's power resides in his seal ring, not in the person wearing it; whoever wears the ring holds the power, is invested with it.) Investiture is the mechanism by which the indexical sartorial sign operates.

[175] Dress was indeed an economic legacy; see Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance*, chapter 1 (15-33) on the history of dress as convertible into wealth and as heritable by women.

It is this indexical power of investiture that Perdita seeks to control by controlling the disposition of her wardrobe. Perdita's daughter is, of course, the natural, rightful inheritor of that place —the rightful object of the dresses' sartorial syntax; her dying wish is an attempt to ensure that Viola cannot usurp the daughter's right to inherit. Until the daughter is old enough to wear them, Perdita ensures, the dresses will stand in for Perdita herself. Dress and wearer thus achieve a kind of equivalence; the dresses, in Perdita's mind, will function as a substitute for the lost presence of the mother (Perdita in Spanish means "lost"). The tight, stayed bodices of the dresses will, perhaps, hold her daughter in the absence of her motherly arms; the rustle of the velvets and silks will speak in the absence of the mother's voice.

In her deathbed speech, Perdita articulates the role the dresses will play in connecting her to her daughter. She also reveals her sense of the identic slippage between herself and the baby, which is both mediated and accomplished by the dresses that will take Perdita's place until the baby can do so:

> It's such a providence that she should be my color; she can wear my gowns; she has her mother's eyes. You know the same fashions come back every twenty years. She can wear my gowns as they are. They'll lie there quietly waiting till she grows into them,–wrapped in camphor and rose-leaves, and keeping their colors in the sweet-scented darkness. She shall have black hair, she shall wear my carnation satin. (James, *Stories I* 255-56)

This speech interleaves the shared physical qualities of daughter and mother (their hair and eyes); it also conflates the physical characteristics of the human women with the dresses that equally seem to embody the pair. Perdita's thought shifts from shared physical characteristics to dress, back to physical characteristics and again back to dress: the dresses seem equivalent, in

her mind, to both her physical self and her daughter's.[176] The dresses, indeed, sound practically alive in Perdita's imaginings: the image of them lying there, waiting, quietly breathing in the camphor- and rose-scented darkness of their tomb is mildly unsettling, as though they have been buried alive. This rather gothic emphasis on the dresses' nearly-human embodiment also emerges in her desire that the daughter "wear the gowns as they are," insisting that the fashion will "come back." This desire that the gowns not be made over speaks also to the equivalence of dress to person —and the potential for horror that it entails. It is as though cutting and remaking the dresses, which lay so long and so quietly in their sweet-smelling coffin, would be akin to dismembering and re-sewing a person —to producing a kind of Frankenstein monster.

This monstrous, undead image is confirmed in the story's murderous ending. As Perdita had suspected, Viola eventually marries the grieving widower. She is not satisfied by finally gaining her sister's husband, and becomes obsessed instead with the loss of her sister's gorgeous clothes. Perdita has locked the dresses away from Viola as well as possible, wringing a promise from Arthur that they be "la[id] away under a double-lock" in "the great chest in the attic…with the iron bands" (256), and that he shall "keep the key in [his] secretary, and never give it to any one but [his] child" (256). Viola finally, through chance, gets hold of the key to the locked trunk in the attic where the clothes are kept; she is found dead that evening, kneeling in front of the opened trunk of clothes, with ten livid scratches upon her face. The story offers no closure, no explanation of exactly how Viola died. It leaves open the question of how the scratches came

[176] This alternation from one to the other also engages the reader's desire to see causation in things that happen sequentially; the "post hoc ergo propter hoc" fallacy is one that narratologists claim is at the heart of the way that people read narrative and attribute meaning to events in sequence. See Abbott.

there: did the clothes themselves come to life and kill Viola? or did the ghost of Perdita return through the clothes to revenge herself upon her replacement? Either reading offers an unusually strong sense of the affective agency of dress. These are no inert bundles of fabric; they absorb their owner's identity and serve as her physical extension in the material world.

In this short synopsis, the dresses sound like a simple allegory for the sisters' competition over the real object of their strife, Arthur Lloyd; they could be taken as a simple literary device intended to expose the sisters' "real" competition for the desired husband. In other words, the dresses could be read as having a purely formal meaning: as exposing, through structural similarity, another problem that they "really" explicate; as simple symbols of the sisters' jealousy and competition. But the dresses operate as far more than symbol. The sisters' conflict, ostensibly about the husband, is in fact localized in the clothes; this is not a conflict displaced onto the dresses from its "real" object, Arthur Lloyd, for the dresses *are* the object of the sisterly conflict. Perdita recognizes this before her death; while she comforts herself with Arthur's constancy, she also reminds herself that Viola "covets my rings and my laces more than she covets my husband" (255). The narrator practically tells us that Viola wants something more than Arthur himself. Upon their marriage, the narrator says "each party obtained what each had desired,--Lloyd 'a devilish fine woman,' and Viola—but Viola's desires, as the reader will have observed, have remained a good deal of a mystery" (259). These mysterious desires are not aimed at Arthur. The dresses —not the man—are for both sisters the real objects of desire.

Viola wants everything her sister has, everything she herself she does not have: to occupy her sister's role as grand lady, to marry Perdita's husband, to mother her daughter, to live in her house. But most of all, Viola wants to wear Perdita's clothes. Viola's desire is to literally take

over her sister's role, to inhabit her sister's life; this desire to become the other echoes Poe's obsession with the transmigration of personality —what Joan Dayan calls "convertibility" (Dayan). Convertibility, or the usurpation of another's identity, is a common thread in James's early ghost fiction, according to Clair Hughes: "James's ghost stories are very often concerned with the possession of one character by another, and such a process is confirmed not just by interior feelings but also by appearance. Dress thus contributes to a confusion of identity or a usurpation of identity in a series of narratives" (Hughes, *Art* 170). Viola wishes to usurp of her sister's identity, and the clothes are the mechanism by which she wishes to complete the conversion.[177]

This is clearly marked in a scene midway through the story. Before the newly wed couple has even left the house, Perdita catches Viola trying on her wedding veil and pearls: Viola,

> as usual, was before the glass, but in a position which caused the other to stand still, amazed. She had dressed herself in Perdita's cast-off wedding veil and wreath, and on her neck she had hung the heavy string of pearls which the young girl had received from her husband as a wedding-gift.[…] Bedizened in this unnatural garb, Viola stood at the mirror, plunging a long look into its depths, and reading Heaven knows what audacious visions. (James, *Stories I* 252)

The diction here casts Viola as a usurper. The term "bedizened" connotes decorating oneself with undeserved or unearned finery. The fact that the garments are "unnatural" on Viola, and the ominous characterization of her visions as "audacious, reinforce the illegitimacy of Viola's

[177] Dress's potential as a site of the convertibility of identity is explained in Stallybrass, "Worn" and Stallybrass, "Marx's Coat", where Peter Stallybrass argues for the power of "investiture," and further, that dress can absorb personality and character from its wearer ("Cloth *is* a kind of memory" [38]) and can then transfer that absorbed identity to later wearers. See also, for example, the discussion of Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* in Brown, *Object Matter*; the king's ring functions in a similar way.

borrowed garb."[178] And her arrogation of Perdita's dresses is framed in terms of violence: Viola does not simply look into the mirror, she "plung[es]" a look into the mirror, as one might plunge a knife into a hated rival's back. This scene, recalling as it does Bertha Mason's hideous doubling of Jane Eyre, sets off echoes of madwomen and violence within the text, casting a pall of horror over the story's subsequent events; the trousseau is allusively linked to violence, death, and questions of legitimacy from this moment.[179] And the veil itself, as a ritual object, is associated with the logic of substitution (another version of Dayan's convertibility): it is designed to mask identity, to hide the face, thus enabling the substitution of one bride for another. Substitution is fundamentally indexical: the veil points to "bride," and "bride" is whoever wears the veil.[180]

The story seems equally ambivalent about the power, and the horror, of both dresses and reading. This scene asserts, on the one hand, a connection between reading and dress, for it describes Viola as "reading" her veiled image in the mirror. But it simultaneously substitutes for reading—a symbolic act—the indexical logic of the veil itself. In usurping the veil, a symbolic

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[178] In connection with James's term "bedizened," see Valverde on the term "finery," which was applied peculiarly to women in the nineteenth century. The term marks its target's dress as the illegitimately-acquired badge of sexual immorality.

[179] See Gilbert and Gubar on the Bertha Mason archetype. Bertha is both a legal and physical obstacle to Jane's marriage; perhaps this echo indicates Viola's wish to block Perdita's marriage.

[180] Derrida connects the veil with the shroud, and both veil and shroud with substitutability Cixous and Derrida, and, according to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "The veil is the place of any voided expectation" (Sedgwick, "The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel," 258) —substitution again, and often, according to Sedgwick, the substitution of death for the expected bride. See also Calefato, Chapter 3, on the face, the gaze, and the veil.

garment, Viola disarticulates symbol from meaning; the illegitimacy of her wearing of the veil explicitly dismantles the veil's symbolic value.[181]

I mean this literally and linguistically rather than metaphorically. Viola's assumption of the veil demonstrates that within the story, the veil does not operate as a literary *symbol* of the romantic and sentimental conventions around weddings. Neither does it function as a linguistic symbol, an arbitrary and purely formal relation of the signifier to the signified. The veil serves instead as an index.[182] The index points, denoting a real relationship between signifier and object; in putting on the veil, Viola literally takes Perdita's place as Arthur's bride, for the veil now points to Viola instead of Perdita. And Perdita clearly understands her sister's desire, both in the moment of discovery ("Perdita was horrified. It was a hideous image of their old rivalry come to life again. She made a step toward her sister, as if to pull off the veil and the flowers" (252)) and in her deathbed request to Arthur to keep the dresses from Viola. Perdita's impulse in

[181] The story is set in pre-Revolutionary America, when wedding conventions were quite different than those of today. It is unlikely that this scene is historically accurate; while the veil was commonly worn at weddings in James's own time, it would not have been worn in the Colonial period. According to Monsarrat, "The veil, most tell-tale of all bridal gear today, was not worn at all during the 18th century; and the garland of flowers was replaced, at both private and public weddings, by caps, bonnets, or hats, all usually trimmed with lace" (Monsarrat and Trimby 83). The tradition of the "white wedding" as we now know it did not become dominant in America until the late nineteenth century. According to Monsarrat, white (or white and silver) wedding dresses became common in England in the eighteenth century, but "In America the virgin trend gained ground more slowly. There, judging by the many wedding dresses still in existence...yellow was the favourite colour, and heavy brocade the most popular fabric" (Monsarrat and Trimby 79). See Ktorides for a full explanation of the shifts occurring in New England Puritan communal festivities during this period; for information on changes in the legal and religious administration of the marriage ceremony, see Hochstetler and Daniels. There is limited scholarly work available on wedding attire of the Colonial period; the most useful are Stevenson's account and the work of Monsarrat and Trimby. For a lay history of wedding dresses, see Haines and Haines; for a history of wedding traditions in James's own time, see Lansdell.

[182] For the linguistic function of the index, see Atkin, Goudge, and Sebeok. For metaphorical uses of the index as a concept extending beyond its linguistic functions, see McNeil; Gunning, "What's the Point of an Index? or, Faking Photographs"; and Gunning, "Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality."

both cases is to wrench the matrimonial index back to herself, to stop it pointing to Viola, and this indicates the felt power of the indexical sartorial sign. It is this same impulse that will later drive Perdita to lock her trousseau away, to keep the indexical dresses for her daughter, safely out of Viola's reach until they can confer upon the baby her rightful place as Perdita's heir.

These may seem heavy readings to pin upon a relatively fragile story, but the story's ending can, I believe, support their weight: The dresses, figured as absorbing Perdita's life and extending it beyond death, take on horrifying life, accomplishing Perdita's revenge at the story's end. James sets the scene for Viola's death as if for a play, with visual, concrete details: she is in an attic, up a flight of stairs that opened "upon a wide hall, lined with wooden closets, and terminating in a window which looked westward, and admitted the last rays of the sun. Before the window stood the great chest." The story ends on a last, unexplained, horrifying image: the open chest, spilling out its freight of sartorial treasure, and Viola, silhouetted against the setting sun, kneeling before the riot of textures and colors, stiff in death, showing "on her bloodless brow and cheeks […] the marks of ten hideous wounds from two vengeful ghostly hands" (262). This ending—the weirdest moment of a weird story—brings together all the themes that the story has foreshadowed: dresses' indexicality is vindicated, for in this ending we, too, see —like Perdita, like Viola herself--that dresses and persons are substitutable for one another. If Viola had simply died of fright without a mark on her, the story, and the role of the dresses, might be less remarkable. But the ending confirms the imbrication of the dresses with Perdita's identity: either the dresses themselves have risen up in revolt against Viola's illegal usurpation, or Perdita herself, absorbed into the stuffs of the dresses, uses them as her physical manifestation to take her revenge upon her sister. The clothes of the dead are always haunted, as Peter Stallybrass

observes: “There is, indeed, a close connection between the magic of lost clothes and the fact that ghosts often step out of closets and wardrobes” (Stallybrass, "Worn," 41). The twist of horror at the end of this story lies in the story’s conversion of the abstract and incorporeal (the ghost, the identity, the symbol) into all-too-real physicality: dresses that confer identity, dresses that hide the vengeful dead in their living folds.

Hats, misreadings, and narratorial ‘authority’ in *The Turn of the Screw*

James wrote that “A good ghost-story […] must be connected at a hundred points with the common objects of life” (James, *Essays I* 742), for, as he notes, “The supernatural […] requires a powerful imagination in order to be as exciting as the natural” (742). This is true in *Turn of the Screw*; this particular ghost-story, like “The Romance of Certain Old Clothes,” has more concrete representations of dress than the more typically “realist” Jamesian fictions of the period. In fact, it is often true, as Clair Hughes notes, that James’s ghost stories contain more concrete depictions of dress than his realistic work; and as Hughes also asserts, “in paying attention to these spectral clothes, we find that they illuminate James’s narrative methods in a surprisingly clear way” (Hughes, *Art* 171). This is partly in service of a “reality-effect” that might otherwise be lacking in stories of the supernatural, for, as Lilian Furst has argued in reference to place, adding real-world elements to fictional work is “one of the ideal means for […] creating a bridge between the real and fictional realms” (Furst 40). If James’s special use of the “reality-effect” in ghost stories is intended to anchor the supernatural in the real, his use of details of ghostly dress in *The Turn of the Screw* reinforces the ghosts’ reality—or at least their effect of reality, thus justifying the governess’s ghostly sightings and her reporting.

James's deployment of dress highlights thematic patterning that can help us to open up, even begin to pick apart, one of James's most tightly-knotted narrative and interpretive problems: *The Turn of the Screw*, which, like "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," ties dress to questions of interpretation, symbolic language, and indexicality. In *Turn*, as we will see, James uses dress to both authorize and undercut the governess's interpretations, and thereby to draw the reader's attention to the acts of interpretation she herself commits in engaging with this text.[183]

The Turn of the Screw, published thirty years after "A Romance of Certain Old Clothes," is perhaps the most famous of James's ghost stories, and, like "Romance," it too examines clothes as indexical. This time, though, clothes neither absorb selves in order to act as their physical extensions, nor do they make investiture go. Instead, in *Turn*, the indexical sartorial is used as a measure of proper reading. James's depictions of clothes in *Turn* take up the problem of reading—by which I mean, broadly, the act of interpretation or meaning-making. Reading dress in *Turn* especially indicates the dangers of over-reading. Both the governess and the reader are on solid interpretive ground only when they read indexically—in other words, when they remember that the index limits the action of interpretation, and when they read empirical, visible, material signs (like dress).

Reading dress in *Turn* — the act of reading clothes and of reading beyond clothes — draws attention to the act of interpretation. And drawing attention to the act of interpretation, says Sheila Teahan, is one function of the ghost story genre: "there exists a longstanding

[183] See Felman.

association between ghosts and writing, and especially between ghosts and figurative language. The ghost undoes the distinctions between present and absent, present and past, and literal and figurative, which is also to say that it disrupts the temporal and ontological categories constitutive of the sign" (Teahan, "The Literal Turn of the Figurative Screw," 68). As Teahan points out, ghosts are evidence of semiotic confusion; they emblematize the crossing, confusing, muddling of categories, and the troubling of categorization itself. Ghosts are a figure for the act of writing and also for the act of interpretation. James's ghosts and their hats teach us how—and how not—to read.[184]

At Bly, words consistently fail, are elided, or are meaningless: illiteracy abounds, letters are never sent, people break off in the middle of sentences, and some characters—the ghosts themselves—never speak at all. The act of communication—writing and reading—is nearly always interrupted, and is often replaced by a kind of mind-reading.[185] This confusion around interpretation, and the debate over the governess's acts of interpretation and the tale's meaning, has given this text a nearly mythical status as an insoluble puzzle.[186]

Yet not all of the tale's reading is bad reading. Some of the governess's readings are authorized by James: the indexical readings, the readings from the ghosts' physical, observable characteristics, and especially the readings from dress. The ghosts' appearance seems to be the

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[184] Teahan has also written specifically on the problem of reading in *Turn*: see Teahan, "Ghostly Effects."

[185] See Cameron, *Thinking*.

[186] See Willen for an overview of the debate up to 1960; see *Henry James, The Turn of the Screw: Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* for an overview of more recent entries into the ring; also see Felman; Hanson, "Screwing with Children in Henry James"; Lustig; and Schleifer.

one inevitable fact; it is one thing that governess-doubters, both within and without the text, find difficult to explain away. The governess herself is aware that her description of Quint's appearance is incontrovertible, evidence that brings Mrs. Grose "all the way with me as to its being beyond doubt that I had seen exactly what I had seen." Finding that Quint's appearance is her trump card, the governess uses it to lock down Mrs. Grose's belief in her accuracy and honesty: "I found I had only to ask her how, if I had 'made it up,' I came to be able to give, of each of the persons appearing to me, a picture disclosing, to the last detail, their special marks—a portrait on the exhibition of which she had instantly recognized and named them" (674). The governess's complete, accurate description of Peter Quint's appearance, right down to the borrowed clothes, is a very difficult sort of knowledge to explain away. But in this novella, only the ghosts are tightly linked with sartorial signs; other characters are rarely described in connection with clothes (the children sometimes, as in Flora's nightdress; the other adults almost never). The governess's Quint and Jessel sightings, however, are very often paired with some sort of detail about dress, although dress is otherwise very little described or mentioned in the story.[187] This acts to authorize the governess's readings of the ghosts; she is correct when she reads clothes, and her indexical readings are authorized. When the governess treats signs as

[187] The governess sees the ghosts a total of eight times in the novella; of these eight, five are descriptively tied to dress in some way. Of the governess's four sightings of Quint, two (on the tower, when she addresses the confusion about his identity caused by his clothes, and remarks upon his hatlessness, p. 652-54; and outside the dining room window, when she has returned to find a pair of left gloves, p. 658) are linked with dress. Her final two sightings of Quint (on the staircase, p. 683-84, and outside the window in the final confrontation with Miles, 736-40) are not linked to dress. Similarly, of her sightings of Miss Jessel, three out of the four are connected with dress: the first sighting (across the Sea of Azof, p. 668-70, with Flora) gives the governess her description of Miss Jessel; the third (in the governess's schoolroom, p. 705) gives us detail about Miss Jessel's black attire and hatlessness; and the final time (by the lake after Flora's escape, p. 719-22), with the orgy of female hatlessness, are all connected with items of dress. Only the governess's second sighting of Miss Jessel, a brief glimpse of her back as she sits on the stairs (p. 686) does not mention dress at all.

indices—as signs that point to real knowledge, but that are not interpretable due to the tight bond between sign and referent—she does fine. It is when she stops treating signs as indices, and begins treating them as symbols (signs with an arbitrary relation between signifier and referent, and which allow interpretive play), that she goes off the rails. Let us first turn to the governess's readings of ghostly hats, and the authorization provided for her readings by social norms surrounding nineteenth-century dress.

Peter Quint lacks a hat.[188] Few critics of *The Turn of the Screw* seem to have grasped the potential significance of this fact; in all the critical fuss about this text, no one that I have found has leaned upon the importance of this detail in explaining the governess's utter surety about Quint's ghostliness.[189] The governess herself gives this sartorial absence its due weight. Upon being asked by Mrs. Grose what the figure on the tower was like, the governess responds, "he's like nobody" (662); the reason she gives for describing him as "like nobody" is precisely this sartorial absence: "He has no hat" (662).

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[188] James was, in his personal life, attuned to the communicative power and the appropriateness of various types of hats. As H.G. Wells recalls in his autobiography, by the door at Rye "lay a number of caps and hats, each with its appropriate gloves and sticks, a tweed cap and a stout stick for the Marsh, a soft comfortable deer-stalker if he were to turn aside to the Golf Club, a light-brown felt hat and a cane for a morning walk down to the Harbour, a grey felt with a black band and a gold-headed cane of greater importance, if afternoon calling in the town was afoot" (Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* 453).

[189] Hughes says of Quint's hatlessness only that it is "a sign that he belongs to the house" (176); however, combined with the governess's horror of him, the fact that she paints him as "like nobody," I think my reading takes this detail with the weight that James gives it. Hughes does note the importance of hats, and the ways that modern readers tend to misinterpret them, in her chapter on *The Princess Cassamassima*: "Because we have largely ceased to wear hats, we have lost the 'hum and buzz' of their implication, but until the mid-twentieth century hats were a mandatory item of one's outward appearance [….] 'Males and females alike,' Gwen Raverat remembers of the 1890s, 'we had always to wear something on our heads out of doors'" (Hughes, *Art* 91). Also see Crane, who argues that until the 1960s hats were highly important semiotic objects, because they were cheaper and easier to change out than other fashionable items; according to Crane, a man's hat represented the social status of the entire family.

Why does Quint's lack of a hat make him "like nobody"? Hatlessness marks him as, at the very least, outside of social norms for the period in which it is set. (The nouvelle, published in serial form in 1898, is set at least fifty years before then—1838 or earlier.[190]) It was simply not done for men to appear outdoors without a hat, unless on their own property, until after World War I.[191] A bareheaded man outdoors in public would, indeed, be a "nobody" in the social sense. Without a hat, Quint is set apart. What seems to modern readers like an overreach is historically accurate. Similarly, the governess intuits Miss Jessel's iniquity of character from her appearance. Miss Jessel is described more vaguely than Quint, but James repeats consistently the fact that she is beautiful, that she wears black, and that she, too, has no hat. The governess describes her after her first sight of her as "a woman in black, pale and dreadful" (671). The color of her dress seems important, for Mrs. Grose checks this information: "The person was in black you say?" (672). The governess repeats her description: "In mourning—rather poor, almost shabby. But—yes—with extraordinary beauty. […] Oh, handsome—very, very, […] wonderfully handsome. But infamous" (672). As with Quint, bareheaded, "like nobody," we see the governess describe

[190] One of the continual interpretive problems of the story is, of course, the timeline and provenance of the manuscript posited in the frame story. Working back from the publication date of 1898, and operating on the simplest possible timeline, the events of the story happened at the least fifty years before the events of the frame story. (Douglas met the governess after his second year up at Trinity, when he would have been about twenty years old. The events at Bly had happened ten years before the meeting, for he tells us that she was ten years older than he—thirty —and we know that she was twenty when she went to Bly. Douglas's friends say that he has kept the story quiet for forty years (638) since his encounter with the governess. She has been dead for twenty of those years, putting Douglas somewhere around sixty years old at the time of the reading. We have no idea how long the period between the reading of the story and its publication was, though, for the frame-story narrator tells us that, before his death, Douglas sent on the manuscript he read that night, "much later" (638). All this is to say that the events of the tale could not have been set later than 1838, given the dates in the frame story and the publication date.)

[191] For the history of men's hats, with a focus on the bowler hat (the ür-hat of the nineteenth century in both America and England), see Robinson; for men's hats in the context of men's fashion more generally, see Chenoune. For information on the social meanings of hats and the etiquette of hats, see Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*.

and assess a character based on dress: she gets infamy—a moral judgment—from Miss Jessel's appearance, and Mrs. Grose later confirms her assessment. This seems like over-interpretation: How does the governess get from shabby black mourning wear to infamy?[192] There is a connection. The answer, at least in part, lies in the color black itself, for Anne Hollander notes that, of the two archetypes to which the color black points ("the blackness of the devil and the blackness of godly renunciation" (Hollander, *Seeing* 367)), it was not until the nineteenth century that black's connotations of practicality were the most common; until that time, black's erotic, dangerous, devilish character was ascendant. Miss Jessel's black dress could, then, imply *either* the respectable moral condition of proper mourning or a kind of flaunting eroticism.[193]

So the governess's aggressive certainty about her interpretations (which, to the modern reader, seem to be sheer exuberant over-readings, founded in nothing with reference to anything outside the governess's own mind) are what paint her for modern critics as an unreliable interpreter. But her certainty—at least about her first assessment of the ghosts' moral and social statuses—would have probably seemed perfectly normal to the reader of the 1890s, who would probably have *also* read Quint's outdoor hatlessness as shocking and abnormal, and would also have seen the erotic charge latent in Miss Jessel's all-black wear. Thus, the modern reader misses

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[192] See Hollander, *Seeing* 365-390. Also see Hughes, *Art* for an account of how black became a sartorial staple of the respectable American middle class ("the American fall-back position in respectable female dress" [124]), and Harvey for a comprehensive history of black's evolution in men's dress.

[193] The wearing of nineteenth-century mourning was part a highly conventionalized and stylized performance of grief, which dictated precisely what dress signals should be worn at each point in the mourning process to communicate the proper amount of feeling for the dead. Queen Victoria remained in mourning for her dead husband, Prince Albert, from his death in 1861 until her death in the opening year of the next century, beginning a fashion for extreme long-term mourning linked with the Victorian cult of death. We cannot tell whether Miss Jessel's black is a sign of her sexuality, a class marker, a measure of practicality and economics, or a sign of grief. See Taylor, *Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History* for a history of mourning.

James's sartorial cues within the story, which authorize at least some of the governess's interpretations; the governess, reading indexically Quint's bare-headedness and Miss Jessel's black dress, is confirmed as accurate within the tale by Mrs. Grose's recognition.[194]

Yet this authorization is undercut by James in several ways, most notably (for my purposes) by the fact that the clothes upon which she is basing her interpretation of Quint are not his: they belong to the master. As we saw in "A Romance of Certain Old Clothes," clothes point to a position, here that of the master; by wearing the master's clothes, Quint steps into his role. This is confirmed within the story itself, for we learn from Mrs. Grose that the master went, leaving Quint "In charge" (663). (We learn also that Quint overstepped his authority: he "was much too free" (665), and his over-freedom is connected with the fact that Quint "never wore his hat, but he did wear—well, there were waistcoats missed!"(663). Quint is apparently willing to steal waistcoats, but not to wear hats—as if the master's hat, like a king's crown, confers *legitimate* power, power that cannot be taken over by Quint.) But does the sartorial confusion between the two men really undercut her powers of observation?

The moment in which the governess, seeing the figure of Quint for the first time, mistakes him for the master, is the basis for one of the most persistent readings of the story: that

[194] As does James's own uses of the Preface to give her some "authority." James himself seems to have seen the governess as a good recorder, if not a good interpreter; he says in the Preface to the New York Edition of *The Turn of the Screw*, "It was 'déjà très-joli,' […] the general proposition of our young woman's keeping crystalline her record of so many intense anomalies and obscurities—by which I don't of course mean her explanation of them a different matter; [….] It constitutes no little of a character indeed, in such conditions, for a young person, as she says, 'privately bred,' that she is able to make her particular credible statement of such strange matters. She has 'authority,' which is a good deal to have given her, and I could n't have arrived at so much had I clumsily tried for more" (James, *Essays II* 1185-86). Of course, the "authority" of the Prefaces has been called into question; Sharon Cameron has argued that the Prefaces represent an intention to revise rather than to introduce the works they address. See Cameron, *Thinking*, Chapter 2: "Prefaces, Revisions, and the Idea of Consciousness."

the governess, in love with the master, is driven mad by her repressed desire for him. Having been daydreaming of fairy tales involving the master, she sees a figure atop a ruined tower. Her "bewilderment of vision" (653) leads her to assume for a moment that it will be the face of the master, the face "[t]hat was exactly present to" her in her daydreams (652), and she has a momentary feeling that "in a flash" her "imagination had […] turned real" (653). Her confusion between imagination and reality is suggestive, but almost immediately, it gives way to the shocking recognition that "the man who met my eyes was not the person I had precipitately supposed" (653). Practically speaking, it does not seem *such* a hysterical error to take Quint for the master when Quint is wearing the master's clothes.[195] We need make no reference to the pointing function of clothes, to the indexical, to understand the identic confusion that clothes can provoke. And the governess recovers her mistake, for she recognizes that Quint's clothes are not his own, describing him to Mrs. Grose as being dressed "In somebody's clothes. They're smart, but they're not his own" (662). She sees him, not as a substitute for the master, but as an impostor playing the part of the master: Quint gave her "a sort of sense of looking like an actor" (662).

The governess's mistaking of Quint for the master, then, is not, I contend, intended to be evidence for her hysteria, for clothes lend themselves to identic confusion on both levels: the

[195] There was a distinct nineteenth-century anxiety around the idea that a servant could dress like, and be mistaken for, his betters. This anxiety manifests itself, not only in the horrific idea that Quint could imitate the master and usurp his power (horrific as it was when Viola did the same to Perdita), but in the governess's descriptions of her encounters with Quint to Mrs. Grose: Mrs. Grose asks, "Was he a gentleman?" The governess "found I had no need to think. 'No. […] No'." Her easy identification of him as no gentleman—"I found I had no need to think"—shows that this class anxiety over substitution may be at least part of the "horror," the unnaturalness and ghostliness, of the figure of bareheaded Quint in his master's clothes. See Aindow and Valverde.

practical (mistaking one man for another at a distance) and the semiotic (using dress to usurp someone's legitimate place). James's use of dress here is of a piece with his thematic deployment of other liminal zones, such as thresholds, windows, and mirrors, all boundaries where identity is blurred.[196] And this blurring of boundaries is characteristic to the genre of the ghost story. As we saw in "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," the ghost story is "very often concerned with the possession of one character by another," and this "process is confirmed not just by interior feelings but also by appearance. Dress thus contributes to a confusion of identity or a usurpation of identity" (Hughes, *Art* 170). I think that the governess must be forgiven for mistaking Quint for the master here, and that we must, so far, trust in her indexical readings of visible dress and appearance, which have been up until now justified.

Yet James now begins to use hats and other indexical cues to dress to indict, not only the ghosts, but the governess herself—along with the other characters in the story. Following the sartorial clues, we find that James embroils first the children, and ultimately both Mrs. Grose and the governess, in whatever evil or extra-social positioning that the ghosts are a part of. Hats, and the lack of hats, have by the end of the tale become powerful indices to moral status: Miles' simply holding a hat in his hands seems to be enough to make the governess question whether her ascription of evil to him is mistaken ("He had picked up his hat, which he had brought in, and stood twirling it in a way that gave me, even as I was just nearly reaching port, a perverse horror of what I was doing" (735).) James thus uses hats to sartorially *de*-authorize precisely the character he began by authorizing. For if Quint in the master's waistcoat is attempting to

[196] See Lustig for more on the physical and spatial thresholds in *The Turn of the Screw*.

substitute for the master, then Miles, who is “turned out for Sunday by his uncle's tailor, who had had a free hand and a notion of pretty waistcoats,” is tied to both men by a kind of transitive property of waistcoats. (Is Miles thus marked as being convertible into either the master or Quint, or both of them?)

And if hatlessness marks Quint as “like nobody,” and also marks the iniquity of Miss Jessel (who is consistently bareheaded throughout the story), it also comes to characterize Flora, Mrs. Grose, and the governess herself. By the end of the tale, James is ever more intensely stressing this orgy of shared hatlessness, and its seeming moral implications. At the opening of the climactic scene by the lake, after Miles has lulled the governess into inattention and Flora has escaped, Mrs. Grose’s first concern is what Flora is wearing: When the governess tells her the child has run off, Mrs. Grose responds, “Without a hat?” (714). This worry of Mrs. Grose’s seems out of place; when a child is missing, is the natural first concern for their attire? But the lack of a hat is not simply the flouting of a social convention in an emergency; the governess makes it clear that Flora and Miss Jessel are connected by their hatlessness, and by extension, they share the iniquity that the ghosts’ constant hatlessness has come to emblematize: “Isn't that woman always without one?” Yet when the governess is set to run outside to find Flora, we find that she herself now succumbs to the epidemic of bare-headedness. Importantly, she connects her willingness to go bareheaded to Flora’s, as though she has caught the germ from the child: When Mrs. Grose asks with shock, “You go with nothing on?” the governess responds scornfully, “What do I care when the child has nothing?” (715). And finally, Mrs. Grose herself succumbs: “on this, the poor woman promptly joined me!”

James continues this intense focus on hats, giving it another turn of the screw by putting the question of hatlessness into Flora's mouth. When the governess and Mrs. Grose find her at the lake, the child is "struck with [their] bareheaded aspect," and the first thing she asks them is a wondering, "Why, where are your things?" (718). The governess again links her own hatlessness with Flora's and, by implication, with Miss Jessel's: "Where yours are, my dear!" It is as though the governess has thrown her metaphorical hat into the ring with those discarded ones belonging to Flora and Miss Jessel. In this scene by the lake, as Clair Hughes points out, "Hatlessness has now expanded metaphorically to a general and dangerous nudity [….] The circuit of exposed, hatless females is completed with the arrival of Jessel" (Hughes, *Art* 177). While Hughes reads the shared hatlessness as a shared female vulnerability, I think that the spreading of hatlessness from one character to another points back to the idea of investiture and the power of clothes to blur identities. The hatlessness of the governess and even Mrs. Grose aligns them, too, with the ghosts.

It seems to be precisely at the moment when the governess stops reading the sartorial index, and begins "reading in" (over-reading) that she goes wrong. If we the readers are to continue reading indexically—reading appearances—we must attend to James's disavowal of the governess's interpretations when she fails to read indexically. I argued at the beginning of this section that the governess begins as a reliable narrator, but by the time she has succumbed to the contagious bareheadedness she seems locked instead in an always-intensifying arms race of overinterpretation. As James himself makes explicit in the 1908 Preface to the New York Edition of *The Turn of the Screw,* he authorizes her reliability as a reporter, remarking upon "our young woman's keeping crystalline her record of so many intense anomalies and obscurities."

However, he immediately withdraws this authority with the next clause: "—by which I don't of course mean her explanation of them, a different matter" (James, *Essays II* 1185-86). He makes yet another turn in the very next sentence, holding out authorization again: "She has 'authority,' which is a good deal to have given her, and I could n't have arrived at so much had I clumsily tried for more." But the scare quotes around "authority" in this sentence again undercut it: she has 'authority,' not authority. (The root of the word "authority" is, of course, shared with the word "author"; by giving the governess-as-reader "authority", and by taking it away, James simultaneously plays with the reader's ability to "author" the text by reading in, by interpolating one's own personal, concrete, subjective experiences into the experience of reading the text. Yet going beyond the indexical, reading in beyond the clues he gives, marks the reader as unreliable just as it does the governess.)

In *The Turn of the Screw*, then, James authorizes a particular kind of reading (reading indexically, reading from visible appearances, from sartorial clues), but de-authorizes what I shall call "symbolic reading." He disavows the governess's *interpretations*, her tendency to go beyond the index, the empirical, the physical cues that cannot be explained away. In fact, the disavowal of interpretation is the definitional difference between the indexical and the symbolic, according to philosopher Albert Atkin, who calls this the index's "independence." Using the most common example of an index, Atkin says of the independence feature that the "direction of the weathercock is totally independent of my interpreting it as an index of the wind. Clearly, the weathercock would still point westward whether I interpret that as a sign that the wind is blowing from the east or not" (Atkin 169). The governess's indexical readings—readings that follow the

pointing finger of James's clues, so often sartorial—are authorized by James; her symbolic readings (her readings-in, her going-behind) are not.

That is what we are, I think, to take away from the patterns of dress in this novella: how to follow the governess in her authorized reading, but to refrain from her over-reading. James tells us in the Preface that he designed *The Turn of the Screw* as a deliberately-set puzzle for readers, one that invites the reader to follow the governess and to read into the gaps in the text—what Christopher Greenwood calls ellipses.[197] Since, as we all know, a monster is only scary until you see it, James's method is to use "adumbration" to save his reader's necessary sense of evoked evil from "the drop, the comparative vulgarity, inevitably attending, throughout the whole range of possible brief illustration, the offered example, the imputed vice, the cited act, the limited deplorable presentable instance" (1187). James leaves the monstrous in this story where it belongs—in the reader's own mind. As he says, "my values are positively all blanks save so far as [the reader's] excited horror, a promoted pity, a created expertness […] proceed to read into them more or less fantastic figures" (James, *Essays II* 1188). In other words, as Douglas famously says in the frame narrative, "The story *won't* tell, not in any literal, vulgar way" (James, *Stories V* 637). This is an invitation. But at the same moment, it is a challenge, a slap to the reader's face with a textual glove; Douglas's audience responds by saying (as James's

[197] See Greenwood. James also characterizes the story in terms of a trap: "an *amusette* to catch those not easily caught […], the jaded, the disillusioned, the fastidious" (James, *Essays II* 1185). James baits this trap with his soon-to-be typical tricky reference, muddled pronoun use, deixis, and periodic sentences. And, of course, the notion that we can avoid being caught in this trap is impossible; by even discussing this I'm already wriggling on James's hook. The juiciest tidbit in James's trap is the way that the governess knows things without actually *knowing* them: her unholy intuition is a most irresistible draw for a critic of any stripe: Sharon Cameron has noted that meaning within James's texts is conveyed almost entirely without words; Yeazell argues that the reader must fill the syntactical gaps in James, as do the characters in the works; and Felman argues that the reader caught in James's trap must inevitably recapitulate the governess's own over-readings.

audiences seem to have also done), "More's the pity, then. That's the only way I ever understand" (637).

This is indeed what James seems to have thought about readers—about audiences in general—at the moment of the writing of *Turn*. According to Leon Edel, after James's adaptation of *Guy Domville* for the stage failed abjectly and publically, James was angry with the vulgar audiences who were unable to appreciate his work. This anger spilled over, according to Leo Levy, into the writing of *The Turn of the Screw*, which Levy conceives of as "a primitive and symbolic expulsion of the audience which did not respond to the plays" (Levy 286). James deeply distrusts the public as interpreters, and the governess is, in some ways, perhaps a figure for them. Yet, argues Christopher Greenwood, James's theory of realism insisted that he must leave some of the work up to the reader: "his effort was to locate his drama in the imaginations of his audience through careful positioning of provocative emptinesses" (Greenwood 8).

So we are to learn from the two types of interpretation in which the governess engages: one credible or authorized, the other not. Just as Douglas's fireside tale both invites and repels interpretation by the narrator, and as *The Turn of the Screw* invites and repels the reader of the novella, the governess's readings are both authorized and rejected; her readings of dress as indexical are authorized by the historical meanings of hats and of black dresses, while her more wildly interpretive forays into symbolic interpretation are not. Her readings of indexical signs are reliable, for the value of the index is in its lack of susceptibility to misreading (as defined by Atkin). But her readings of the symbolic, with its arbitrary and formal relation between form and meaning, slip. As the governess says of one attempt to work in the symbolic mode, "I recognised the signs, the portents—I recognised the moment, the spot. But they remained unaccompanied

and empty" (696). This figures the retreat of meaning from signs that do not point; the sign is there, the meaning is not. It has slipped away from her. In fact, the problem here for *all* readers, within and without the text, is the slippage of signs. James made this text to be both irresistible and impossible as an object of interpretation; he admits that the novella has a "conscious provision of prompt retort to the sharpest question that may be addressed to it" and is the type of work that is "the very kind […] least apt to be baited by earnest criticism" (James, *Essays II* 1181-82). James made his tale not "apt to be baited" by baiting its trap with indefinite and slippery signs: the multiplication of reference and the lavish use of deictic pronouns (whose referents "slip" depending on the context in which they are used) contribute to the heady confusion of the text, which, finally, remains unassailable except insofar as one is willing to proceed, despite the human condition of uncertainty, as the pragmatic method demands, testing your theories against (sartorial) facts.

Chapter 5: Unfashioning Language in Jamesian Realism

Daisy Miller and the refusal of language

In "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," we saw the way that dresses dismantled the notion of dress as pure symbol, materializing instead into identic extension, into the index. In *Daisy Miller*, published eleven years after "Romance," dress operates as a second, indexical "language" embedded in and running in counterpoint to the symbolic language of the text. In *Daisy Miller*, dress contradicts what is said and communicates meanings that go otherwise unsaid. It is a crucial rhetorical cue to the reader —one of the ways that James shapes his reader's interpretations of the text against the interpretations of Winterbourne, the narrator; we should listen to Daisy's dress, not to her words, in judging her character.[198] Dress in *Daisy Miller,* operating as an index (here a real object dropped into the text, pointing rather than symbolizing, and bypassing the need for interpretation), calls into question the primacy of symbolic, verbal language; dress in this novella is, as it appears in *Turn,* a more reliable object of interpretation than language.[199]

In *Daisy Miller*, Frederick Winterbourne, an American who has lived in Europe for many years, approaches Daisy Miller, a pretty, young, rich American girl, at a watering spot in

[198] Winterbourne is a famous example of what Dorrit Cohn calls a "discordant" narrator, one who reports facts accurately but whose interpretations of those facts are suspect. See Cohn. For a different analysis of James's use of rhetorical signals to shape readerly response to the text without resorting to overt intrusion into the novel, see Booth.

[199] This is, of course, highly ironic given its placement in a novella, but this experience of dramatic irony is a part of the novella's meaning. As H. Porter Abbott notes, books with unreliable narrators automatically take the problem of narration as their subject, and narration is certainly a subject of this book (Abbott).

Switzerland and curries a friendship with her. Throughout the novella, Winterbourne struggles with Daisy's "inscrutable combination of audacity and innocence" (274) — he seems to need to decide which is her defining characteristic. The reader of the book must also choose, for the central problematic of the book is that of Daisy's character. Is she an innocent little American girl, or is she a shameless flirt who does not deserve one's esteem? Winterbourne decides that Daisy is a shameless flirt, reading her openness and directness as indicators of her immodesty, perhaps of her immorality; the reader of the story may (and, I argue, should) come to a different conclusion.[200] The tension between the differing interpretations of Daisy's character—those of the reader and those of Winterbourne and the other Americans in Rome—is a productive tension; it is one of the ways that the novella calls into question the model of symbolic language. The other characters in the novella read Daisy's public behavior as *symbolic*; they assume that her public behavior is only the tip of an iceberg, which entails more and worse private bad behavior. But in actuality, it is not Daisy's behavior, but her dress, that conveys her character, and it does so indexically; as Clair Hughes argues, "Dress is the conspicuous outward aspect of Daisy's moral code" (Hughes, *Art* 16).

Winterbourne is attuned only to symbolic readings of Daisy's behavior, and to the gossip and talk of the expatriate community. He witnesses and participates in Daisy's social downfall

[200] Apparently this was not an uncommon mistake; according to etiquette book author Mrs. John Sherwood, "Europeans have been in the habit of taking care of young girls, as if they were the precious porcelain of human clay. The American mamma treats her beautiful daughter as if she were a very common piece of delft indeed, and as if she could drift down the stream of life, knocking all other vessels to pieces, but escaping injury to herself. Owing to the very remarkable and strong sense of propriety which American women innately possess—their truly healthy love of virtue, the absence of any morbid suspicion of wrong—this rule has worked better than any one would have dared hope" (Sherwood 215-216). Hale's discussion of the importance of chaperons immediately follows an explicit mention of *Daisy Miller*.

and eventual ostracism in Italy; he is swayed by the American expatriate community's social disapproval of Daisy, voiced by his aunt, Mrs. Costello, and by Mrs. Walker. It is not until after Daisy dies from Roman fever and her mother delivers to him Daisy's deathbed message that he discovers and regrets his misreading of her character. Plainly, the reader is meant to come to a different opinion than Winterbourne, to read Daisy as innocent. James himself seems to have wanted readers to see Daisy's innocence over her audacity. According to Viola Dunbar, in revising *Daisy Miller* for the 1909 New York Edition, James "repeatedly inserted comments on Daisy's loveliness or heightened those which already existed," and Dunbar argues that the result of these revisions is to make misreaders of her character seem more mean-spirited: "As Daisy grows more attractive, her critics grow less so" (Dunbar 313). And James directly defended poor maligned Daisy's innocence to the novelist Eliza Lynn Linton in a letter of October 1880:

> Poor little D.M. was (as I understand her) above all things *innocent*. It was not to make a scandal--or because she took pleasure in a scandal--that she 'went on' with Giovanelli. She never took the measure, really, of the Scandal she produced, & had no means of doing so: she was too ignorant, too irreflective, too little versed in the proportions of things. […] The whole idea of the story is the little tragedy of a light, thin, natural, unsuspecting creature being sacrificed, as it were, to a social rumpus that went on quite over her head & to which she stood in no measurable relation. (Quoted in Jobe 84-85)

James's explanation of Daisy's character is telling: he emphasizes her inability to comprehend the talk about her, which went "quite over her head" and to which she could not relate. It is as though the scandal were being discussed in a language to which Daisy had no access. And indeed, for Daisy, verbal language may as well be a foreign language; her native language is dress.

It is in Daisy's sartorial native language, I think, that we are meant to read this novella: The reader is intended to read against the grain of Winterbourne's interpretations. Daisy's dress

indicates her innocence and her natural refinement in more authoritative terms than do Winterbourne's weak interpretations of her —more clearly than do her own rather vulgar verbal accounts of herself.[201] Her sophistication in the language of dress cannot be ignored. Even Mrs. Costello, Winterbourne's acerbic and exclusionary aunt, says of her that "she dresses in perfection—no, you don't know how well she dresses. I can't think where they get their taste" (251). And Daisy's highly aesthetic deployment of the language of dress, authorized by James within and without the text, is used throughout the novella to actually *contradict* the import —and the value —of verbal language. Daisy's dress thus functions as a sub-aural ironic running commentary murmuring beneath the surface of the text; it actually undercuts the value of symbolic language, instead valorizing, or at least thematizing and bringing to the reader's attention, the indexical mode.

The primacy of the sartorial indexical over the symbolic for Daisy is shown in her vexed relationship with words. When it comes to language, Daisy is positioned, not as a speaker or writer, but as an object of interpretation —both for Winterbourne and for generations of literary critics after him. She seems sealed off from symbolic language, and seems to know that symbolic language fails her, turning instead to the indexical mode, using dress to point rather than language to symbolize. Her communications undercut the "natural" symbolic relationship between words and meaning in several ways. She often thwarts verbal communication either by

[201] Friedl argues that, in narratives of travel (such as *Daisy Miller* and Howell's *Lady of the Aroostook*), dress was the only way for strangers to determine the morality and social class of travellers. She, also, sees Daisy's dress as indicating a natural refinement, and reads Winterbourne and the other Europeanized American expatriates as rigid and mired in a mistaken equation of morals with manners that no longer obtained in the U.S. proper, where "natural aristocracy" was prized over old-world manners that had no relation to the character beneath; in my terms, Friedl argues for manners as an index rather than a symbol.

a lack of response—simple silence—or by responding with odd non-sequiturs; she also resorts to either explicitly refusing the meaningful import that the words carry, or to divorcing words from meaning and communication through overuse. And, as we shall see, at these moments of high interpretive tension, the text makes explicit each time that she turns, instead, to dress. At nearly every moment where she engages in one of the tactics that deny the primacy of the verbal, she physically highlights dress—the indexical—as an alternative.[202]

This first becomes clear in an early scene in Part I, when Winterbourne meets Daisy for the first time. It is worth reading this scene's silences, meaningless talk, and referrals to dress closely, for understanding how Daisy operates here in Part I sets up our response to Daisy's behaviors in Part II; if we do not learn to read Daisy properly in these early scenes, we risk misreading her, as Winterbourne does, entirely. Our first glimpse of Daisy, through Winterbourne's eyes, show her "dressed in white muslin, with a hundred frills and flounces, and knots of pale-colored ribbon. She was bare-headed; but she balanced in her hand a large parasol, with a deep border of embroidery; and she was strikingly, admirably pretty" (241). Daisy is in virginal white, and wears muslin, the classic fabric of youth.[203] This first sweet picture gives the reader the visual impression of Daisy's innocence: it is an image of a feminine, lovely young girl, who is freshly, appropriately, and innocently dressed. Her behavior, though, is not that

[202] Clair Hughes also notes Daisy's fiddling with dress at moments of discomfort, but ascribes it to simpler causes: nervousness and lack of social savoir-faire.

[203] The association of muslin with youth, innocence, and freshness has a long history. Norah Waugh notes that a cult of simplicity developed around Rousseau in the 1780s, which produced a craze for wearing home-produced cotton and muslin. The lightweight fabric was especially well-suited to the Greek-influenced empire-waisted dresses of the late 18th century (Waugh 74). Clair Hughes traces the history of muslin as a fabric for young girls' dresses in her chapter on Jane Austen (Hughes, *Dressed in Fiction*).

expected of a white muslin-clad girl. When Daisy' little brother Randolph putatively introduces her to Winterbourne, she ignores the words by which he attempts to direct her attention to Winterbourne's presence ("He's an American man!"). Rather than looking at Winterbourne, the object of this declaration, she stares steadily at Randolph and says simply, "Well, I guess you had better be quiet" (241). This command to be quiet stops the flow of verbal information; it also ignores the intention behind it, for Daisy does not act on it, does not direct her notice to Winterbourne. It is as though she does not hear the meaning behind the words, as though words point to no meaning at all. (Later, at one of the story's cruxes, Daisy makes clear how deliberately she turns away from the meaning carried by symbolic language: on an unchaperoned walk through the Pincio, Daisy refuses to get into Mrs. Walker's carriage, and declines Mrs. Walker's offer to explain the gossip going around about her, saying "I don't think I want to know what you mean. I don't think I should like it" (275). As Daisy shows here, it is not that she cannot decode verbal language; instead she deliberately refuses to hear meaning when it goes against her wishes. Like her injunctions of silence to Randolph when he says something she does not wish to know, her direct refusal to Mrs. Walker is a form of silence: If words have no meaning, one might as well be silent.)

When Winterbourne takes this opportunity to speak to her, Daisy "simply glanced at him; she then turned her head and looked over the parapet, at the lake and the opposite mountains" (242). It is as if he has not spoken; she does not take up the conversational opening. She does, however, attend to her costume: she "glanced over the front of her dress, and smoothed out a knot or two of ribbon" (242). Instead of responding in words, she responds with a sartorial gesture. Winterbourne makes another approach; this time she does reply, but stymies him by

simply answering his question as briefly as possible—and again, at the same moment, "inspected her flounces and smoothed her ribbons again." These pairings —weak, nonexistent, or noncommunicative verbal replies from Daisy linked with explicit references to her touching items of dress —will appear in nearly every major scene in the book.[204]

> Winterbourne takes these retreats into silence for shyness at first, or embarrassment, but
>
> she was not in the least embarrassed herself. There had not been the slightest alteration in her charming complexion; she was evidently neither offended nor fluttered. If she looked another way when he spoke to her, and seemed not particularly to hear him, this was simply her habit, her manner. (242-243)

In fact, the last thing one would call Daisy is shy; Winterbourne soon realizes this, noting that the gaze that she turns upon him is "perfectly direct and unshrinking," though not "immodest," and that her eyes are "singularly honest and fresh" (243). This precludes the "shyness" explanation. Daisy simply does not seem to communicate verbally. Instead, she substitutes indexical communication for symbolic, directing her interlocutor's attention to her dress rather than her words. Even in this very early scene, we see that Winterbourne is unable to understand her. Her sartorial gestures are, for him, meaningless: "simply her habit, her manner" (243).

[204] In the nighttime scene in the garden at Vevey, where Winterbourne must explain his aunt's refusal to meet Daisy, she toys with a large fan, to which James directs our attention over and over, and with her mother's shawl; when she asks Mrs. Walker's permission to bring Giovanelli to the party, she tugs at Mrs. Walker's ribbons and bows; she smooths her bonnet ribbons while announcing her intention to walk in the Pincio alone with Giovanelli; in her clash of wills with Mrs. Walker over her unchaperoned state, Daisy refers attention to the carriage rug, of all things; when Winterbourne leaves Daisy and Giovanelli alone in the gardens, his attention focuses on her parasol, raised to hide their heads; at Mrs. Walker's fateful party, Daisy's ball dress is a great point of discussion between Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Walker, conveying what Mrs. Walker takes as the intentional insult of lateness, and when Daisy greets Mrs. Walker after her late entrance, she pats the shoulders of her dress. Interestingly, dress drops out for the final scene in the Colosseum, which is an open and explicit debate about words and the meaning of words through Daisy's and Winterbourne's discussion of her engagement or lack of engagement to Giovanelli.

When Daisy does talk, it is in endless, meaningless chatter, further negating the power of verbal communication: her talk becomes, finally, nothing but pleasant sound. Daisy finally breaks her uncomfortable-for-Winterbourne (though seemingly unstrained and natural to her) silence with a stream of chatter, as Winterbourne observes: "she was much disposed towards conversation" (243). But at the same time that he points out her stream of endless talk ("It was many years since he had heard a young girl talk so much. It might have been said of this unknown young lady […] that she chattered" (245)) he immediately describes her as "very quiet." This juxtaposition is an odd one; how can one simultaneously chatter and be "very quiet"? Daisy's constant chatter becomes for Winterbourne oddly *silent*; when words have no meaning, they become a kind of silence —sound rather than sense. Her chatter is simply sound, not communication. When chatter has the same consequence as silence, the two become equivalent.

Further, Daisy seems simply unable to communicate coherently in language, as is pointed out in several ways. The narrator notes that "Miss Miller's observations were not remarkable for logical consistency; for anything she wanted to say she was sure to find a pretext," making clear the lack of connection between words and meanings for Daisy; she simply says whatever she wants whenever she wants. Her actual talk seems completely arbitrary, with no natural relation to meaning —almost the limit-case, the *reductio ad absurdum,* of the symbol. Daisy's words are unlinked from context and from appropriateness; her chatter exposes the arbitrary symbolic nature of the relation between words and meanings by unmooring them from logical

coherency.[205] Words' meaninglessness for Daisy becomes apparent in the bizarre word-games she plays with Winterbourne. As Winterbourne he tells her explicitly during the episode of the walk upon the Pincio, "I beg your pardon if I say it wrong. The main point is to give you an idea of my meaning" (272). For Winterbourne, words do have meaning; it is meaning, and conveying that meaning through words, that is Winterbourne's primary concern. And this is, of course, the general view of verbal communication—that, however imperfectly, it communicates meaning.[206] But Daisy seems to not care whether words have meaning. She wants to make Winterbourne say something, anything—it does not matter what: "I was bound I would make you say something" (259). He offers to row her in a boat upon the lake at midnight, but for Daisy the words entail no meaning, imply no action; she observes that the *way* he says it is lovely, but Winterbourne has to point out that "it would be still more lovely to do it." And although she agrees with him that it would indeed be lovely, she "made no movement to accompany him; she only stood there laughing" (259).

For Daisy, words are so meaningless as to have no consequences —and this is precisely what leads to her destruction. (I don't think that Daisy's position on language is identical with James's final position on language, by any means. But it is part of James's development and

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[205] We shall see something like this happening with Adam Verver in *The Golden Bowl*, who wears a standard uniform for all occasions and ends by unlinking meaning from the sartorial sign; if the same sign is linked to multiple, or infinite, possible meanings, it is ultimately meaningless.

[206] As I continue to argue, James certainly subscribes to this notion—he is not interested in the deconstructive pathos of the failure of communication. However, he does seem to want to expand the communicative possibilities of the novel, and having this second, indexical mode of communication which runs throughout the books; the insistent counterpoint of objects and, especially, dress, opens out possibilities of communication and interpretation that are not limited to traditional symbolic modes of communication. This is perhaps the source of the magisterial, meaningful, yet ultimately empty symbol, so characteristic of James, as noted by H.G. Wells, Brown, and Otten — something I will examine in more detail in my treatment of *The Golden Bowl.*

experimentation with sartorial indices and with their consequences for interpretation.) Daisy seems not to be able to imagine that other people interpret (and mis-interpret) her words rather than her sartorial gestures, or that their interpretation of her words will have consequences for her. She treats words—*everyone's* words—as pretend or meaningless. When Winterbourne and Daisy discuss her "go[ing] round" with Giovanelli too much, he tells her seriously, "Every one thinks so—if you care to know." Daisy responds, "Of course I care to know! […] *But I don't believe it. They are only pretending to be shocked*. They don't really care a straw what I do" (289, emphasis mine). She can't imagine that the social talk about her has any more meaning, or more consequence, than her own streams of meaningless chatter; she discounts this possibility even when Winterbourne tries to impress upon her that this is talk with teeth, talk that leads to action: "I think you will find they do care. They will show it disagreeably" (289).

One of the central ways the two differ is in the question of how words are to be interpreted. Daisy, who seems to insist on a stable, indexical form of communication, is in direct contrast with Winterbourne, who emphasizes symbolic interpretation. Interpretation is the domain of the subjective (what Benjamin Hrushovski has called an internal field of reference: "a whole network of interrelated referents of various kinds" (Hrushovski 230)), which is located in the gap between sign and referent offered by symbolic language. In contrast to the symbol's slippery and highly interpretable relation between sign and meaning, the index, upon which Daisy leans, names a relatively stable, enduring, and "natural" relationship between sign and object. This stable relationship—the lack of interpretation in the indexical relationship--is termed by linguist/philosopher Albert Atkin the index's "independence feature": the index points "totally independent of my interpreting it as an index" (Atkin 169). This refusal of interpretation

characterizes Daisy's attitude toward language; she is so embedded in the indexical that she is unable to imagine that others, who see the relation of meaning to sign as sliding and arbitrary, see language as subject to interpretation. Indeed, she seems unable to understand the concept of interpretation. She simply cannot imagine that others interpret her behaviors in ways that she does not intend, and that she knows are simply not true.

Daisy's inability to grasp the act of interpretation may be clearer in an example. The text conducts a debate over the terms by which to call Daisy's friendship with Giovanelli, and what their relationship is called is given heavy importance in the text. By examining the text's emphasis on the question of whether Daisy is conducting an "intrigue" or, alternatively, whether her behavior is exactly (and only) as it appears in public, what I see as Daisy's inability to comprehend interpretation or symbolic reading becomes clearer, and illuminates further the problem of over-interpretation (what James would call "going behind").

The term "intrigue" is the one preferred by the gossiping expatriate set: Mrs. Costello, for example, insists on calling Daisy's relationship with Giovanelli an "intrigue." What this term implies is a symbolic view of their relationship: "intrigue" implies that there is more going on in private, behind the scenes, than what is displayed in public. This is the natural consequence of symbolic thinking; what one *sees* is representative of far more that is *unseen*, unstated.[207] Winterbourne at first challenges Mrs. Costello's assessment, pointing to the visible, surface character of Daisy's interactions with Giovanelli: "'Do you call it an intrigue, […] an affair that

[207] See Auerbach, "Odysseus's Scar," pages 3-23, on the Judeo-Christian roots of this thinking; Auerbach argues that, while classical works offer on their surfaces everything the reader should or will know, the Hebrew Bible requires that one read in, fill in gaps, untangle parables. James is especially interested in the force of the unspoken.

goes on with such peculiar publicity? […] I don't believe that there is anything to be called an intrigue" (284). Her response indicates that it is the talk, the interpretation, to which she attributes her understanding, responding sourly, "I have heard a dozen people speak of it" (284). Yet in the next line of the story, James disavows the idea of the intrigue, surrounding the term with scare quotes, which indicates to the reader that this is an incorrect characterization of Daisy's relation with Giovanelli: "Of the observation excited by Daisy's 'intrigue,' Winterbourne gathered that day at St. Peter's sufficient evidence" 285).[208] By using scare quotes in his characteristic fashion, James ironizes the term, underlining the American community's questionable assumption that the tip of the iceberg — Daisy's public behavior—entails more iceberg below the surface. Instead, it seems, James subtly authorizes an indexical reading of Daisy's behavior. Her misbehavior begins and ends with her *public* interactions with Giovanelli; her behavior does not symbolize further, hidden naughtiness, but is the thing itself, the limit of her defiance.

The question of Daisy's engagement is an oddly fraught one, and is not resolved for Winterbourne until after her death. The penultimate confirmation comes from Daisy herself, for she sends Winterbourne a final deathbed message via her mother: "she told me to tell you that she never was engaged to that handsome Italian. […] Anyways, she says she's not engaged. I don't know why she wanted you to know, but she said to me three times, 'Mind you tell Mr.

[208] Mitchell calls this irony engendered by scare quotes "the double perspective registered through inverted commas," pointing to their use around "stylish" in the opening of *Daisy Miller*: "the girls may think themselves stylish even as the narrator distances himself from any such soi-disant presumption [….] It's as if the physical signifier […] were detached from its signified, alerting the reader that 'stylish' is being at once invoked yet questioned" (Mitchell 224).

Winterbourne.' And then she told me to ask you if you remembered the time you went to that castle in Switzerland" (294). Even this is not enough finality for Winterbourne; his interpretation of her character remains ascendant until Giovanelli himself confirms at the funeral that he was not, never had been, never could have been, engaged to Daisy. Finally, Winterbourne believes: Daisy was nothing more, and nothing less, than she seemed.

It would seem that Daisy's engagement to Giovanelli would have marked their relationship as legitimate, legally (if not socially) sanctioned, and moral; why, then, is it the *absence* of the engagement that finally allows Winterbourne to see her as innocent? After all, a flirtation without benefit of an engagement would seem to modern readers less in keeping with Victorian morality. The oddity of the story's resolution turns on the question of symbolic language versus the mode of the index; the debate over whether public signs entail private meaning helps to explain this peculiar conundrum. Basically, the existence of a secret engagement would have confirmed the symbolic mode of reading; it would retroactively define the relationship as *having been* an intrigue. But her final repudiation of the engagement, along with Giovanelli's confirmation of the engagement's absence, means that the relationship was, finally, *not* symbolic, but equivalent to its appearance. Like Daisy's dresses, the relationship finally refers to innocence, to natural good taste, and to the dangers of over-reading. As an acquaintance of James said to him in Rome, discussing two vulgar American girls that someone called Daisy Millers: "How can you liken *those* creatures to a figure of which the only fault is touchingly to have transmuted so sorry a type and to have, by a poetic artifice, not only led our judgement of it astray, but made *any* judgement quite impossible?" (James, *Essays II* 1271). James's friend understood the consequences of *Daisy Miller*: the end effect was to call into

question the possibility of judgment, because it calls into question the status of interpretation beyond the simple pointing of the index.

Relational sartorial semiotics in *The Golden Bowl*

We have seen various Jamesian ways of reading modeled. Strether, with his ability to move from piece to pattern, became a good reader. The governess was a good reader only in her indexical sartorial readings; she was an atrocious one when reading symbolically. Winterbourne was a bad reader, and Daisy's failed attempts to communicate to him indexically perhaps imply that good reading might be impossible. *The Golden Bowl* continues James's questioning of the semiotics of interpretation, and extends his play with deploying the mode of the indexical alongside that of the symbolic.

As we have seen, dress and language both *mean,* but they convey meaning in semiotically distinct ways that make different demands on their readers. We have seen James examine the indexical relationship between dress and meaning, produced in tension with the looser symbolic relationship between language and meaning. *The Golden Bowl* plays with both these modes of reading. James himself says of it in its Preface: "Among many matters thrown into relief by a refreshed acquaintance with *The Golden Bowl* what perhaps most stands out for me is the still marked inveteracy of a certain indirect and oblique view of my presented action; unless indeed I make up my mind to call this mode of treatment, on the contrary, any superficial appearance notwithstanding, the very straightest and closest possible" (James, *Essays II* 1322). This is an account of both modes of reading, both of which are applicable in *The Golden Bowl*: the

"indirect and oblique" reading comes from readers who read it fully symbolically, while the "very straightest and closest possible" relation between the meaning and the sign is an indexical reading of the novel. The characters, too, seem to be able to access both modes of reading: "There were hours when she spoke of their taking refuge in what she called the commonest tact—as if this principle alone would suffice to light their way; there were others when it might have seemed, to listen to her, that their course would demand of them the most anxious study and the most independent, not to say original, interpretation of signs" (James, *Novels VI* 649). But *The Golden Bowl* raises the specter of yet another kind of relationship between signifier and meaning: a null relation. Within the novel, the central symbol of the Bowl itself seems to slide between the overdetermined and the meaningless; this slide is the source of H. G. Wells's devastating parody of the Bowl in his 1915 *Boon*: "The thing his novel is about is always there. It is like a church lit but without a congregation to distract you, with every light and line focused on the high altar. And on the altar, very reverently placed, intensely there, is a dead kitten, an egg-shell, a bit of string" (Wells). What Wells is lampooning here is both James's reverent treatment of the central object, the Bowl, and the reader's inability to read any coherent meaning into it; this is the simultaneous invitation to and refusal of interpretation that we have seen in other late-century works. This same slide between invitation and refusal of interpretation can happen as a result of James's semiotic play, for the symbolic mode invites unlimited intepretation, and the indexical refuses and limits interpretation in its bound relation between signifier and referent. And this slide may also happen with the novel itself. Does James's insistent pressure upon alternate modalities of communication finally break the connection between meaning and representation entirely, as we will see Adam Verver's uniform do?

Charlotte's varying approaches to reading are important here because in *The Golden Bowl* James structures human relations by these structural semiotic relations. In this chapter I have so far spilled gallons of printer ink to lay the groundwork for the structural relations I am tracing between dress, language, and meaning. By the time we reach *The Golden Bowl* these concerns are almost completely submerged; one must track these concerns from their infancy in his earliest work to grapple with their wilier and less visible mature incarnations. Unlike the earlier works we have examined, in this novel dress (and other objects) are not strongly thematized, as Wharton voiced in her query about the absence of the "human fringes" of the characters. Neither is dress deployed primarily as a mode of meaning alternative to that of symbolic language. Instead, in *The Golden Bowl*, the structural and logical relationships I have examined as the "indexical" and the "symbolic" are embodied, converted into *human* relationships. In other works, we have seen words turn into things and things turn into words; in this very late work, James's last completed novel, *characters* turn into words, into abstractions suspended in the void. Dress and other objects are the sites where the characters negotiate the questions of meaning that James's texts engage. As objects have done in other works, *characters* here exemplify the modes of communicating and reading meaning. Characters model the reader's work by enacting the work of interpretation.[209] Dress and objects here do not simply

[209] This question of substitution, equivalence, or exchange is one taken up by many critics in relation to late nineteenth-century American literature. The terms come from Cameron, *Corporeal*, who uses them to examine the relations between the body and allegory in Hawthorne, Melville, and other American authors. Michaels, *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Century* argues in "Gold Standard" that money was the site of questions about the status of representation and equivalence in the mid- to late-century public debates over the gold standard. Joan Dayan argues for the centrality of the concept of conversion to Poe's narratives. And Dimock argues that in Wharton the model of equivalence and exchange is negated by Lily Bart's insistence on the uncompensated gesture.

offer another turn of the screw of the relationship between meaning and sign. Dress tracks the characters as they grow out of, into, and beyond representation. Dress is the clew by which we can track the characters as they shift between and occupy the different semantic spaces and meaning relationships that James has been experimenting with, as I hope I have shown in the beginning of this chapter, throughout his oeuvre.

The dress of three of the key characters, Charlotte, Maggie, and Adam, reveal much about James's ideas of the semiotic relation of form to content and of representation to reality. I will offer a thumbnail sketch of the changing relations of these three main characters in order to show their relations to meaning, to semiotics, and to genre broadly before I turn to a detailed analysis of each in the sections that follow.

Charlotte's clothes signal her changing relationship to signification and representation, and descriptions of her dress help us track through her peculiar trajectory from self-referential independence to owned object. Charlotte begins the novel as the object of her own self-representation through dress; she is the referent of the sign of her self-chosen and self-owned clothes. By the end of the novel, her dress no longer represents her; instead, it becomes an indicator of Adam's wealth and taste.[210] Charlotte moves from occupying the semiotic position of a sign's object of reference to functioning as a sign herself. Her dress is originally a self-chosen sign with her as the referent, which bears a symbolic relation to her, denoting her as the

[210] Veblen argues in *Theory of the Leisure Class* and elsewhere that women's dress functions primarily to signify their husbands' incomes. See Veblen, "The Economic Theory of Women's Dress" and "The Barbarian Status of Women." Burbank takes as a founding assumption Veblen's model of women as signifiers rather than referents. Charlotte Perkins Gilman follows Veblen in her sociological analysis of women's dress, though she accords more agency to both dress and woman in the possibility of redemption she finds in the reform of dress (Gilman).

signified. This semiotic relation shifts after her marriage, as Charlotte comes to symbolically represent *Adam*'s wealth and taste. Her clothes now stand for Adam, are bought by his money and subject to his famous taste; she becomes a transparency that is pointed through, rather than an interpretant. As Sharon Cameron has put it, Charlotte becomes a symbol herself, "the text rendered inscrutable so that other characters can 'interpret' her in the absence, specifically the annihilation, of any meaning she herself might specify for it" (Cameron, *Thinking* 100). Cameron's formulation makes clear the consequences of this shift for Charlotte as an agent; Charlotte ends trapped in her role as a sign of Adam, her final accessory the silken noose, or halter, whose other end is held by Adam.

Maggie's relation to her dress tracks a nearly opposite, chiastic trajectory to that of Charlotte. Maggie's increasing mastery over her dress over the course of the novel indicates her development of control over her own self-representation; for Maggie, the tightly bound meaning relation between index and interpretant, which allows for little or no play or slippage between sign and meaning, loosens into the freer play of the symbol. Maggie's dresses begin as purely indexical, perhaps even near to Peirce's notion of the "icon," which describes a literal one-to-one relationship where the sign is (visually) equivalent to its referent (a cobbler's shop might have a sign shaped like a shoe). Maggie's dress in Book I is practically an expression of her nature, like an animal's pelt. As Maggie's self-consciousness increases, it is indicated through her consciousness of dress, and she develops the ability to control her own self-representations via dress. She develops, in other words, the semiotic distance that I termed "pathos" in Chapter Three; she becomes able to see herself as others see her, and to revise her behavior in response to their responses. Crucially, through these calculated deployments of dress, Maggie (unlike Daisy

Miller) also gains the ability to control actual events in the world; she causes, in large part through her manipulation of dress as a communicative and deceptive mechanism, the novel's final event, Adam and Charlotte's move to American City.

Adam Verver offers a heretofore-undiscussed fourth type of relation between the sign of dress and meaning, one which reaches beyond Peirce's taxonomy of signs. In fact, Adam's relation to his dress seems to figure or prefigure poststructuralist ideas about signification.[211] Adam's self-chosen uniform puts all possible meanings, denotations, and referents under the significatory umbrella of one sign, which is the same for all meanings; this breaks the bonds of even the loose relationship between symbol and meaning. In fact, Adam functions in the same way as does the Bowl itself. The reader's interpretations of Adam and of the Bowl, those purposely occluded and mystified figures, is a key to James's stylistic and semiotic experiments.

From referent to sign

Our first glimpse of Charlotte Stant has her dressed in an elegant and practical traveling costume; this is Charlotte in control of her sartorial self-representation, and we see her, through Amerigo's eyes, as independent, courageous, and competent. Amerigo's description of Charlotte's dress makes a direct—almost causative—link between her facility with languages and her abilities with dress; her language literacy and dress literacy thus are presented as part of the same broader facility with symbolic representation. Amerigo, seeing Charlotte for the first time since their split, sees a

[211] See especially Barthes, *The Fashion System,* "The Rustle of Language," and *The Language of Fashion*; and Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, *The System of Objects*, and "Fashion, or the Enchanting Spectacle of the Code."

> tall, strong, charming girl who wore for him, at first, exactly the look of her adventurous situation, a reference in all her person, in motion and gesture, in free vivid, yet altogether happy indications of dress, from the becoming compactness of her hat to the shade of tan in her shoes, to winds and waves and customhouses, to far countries and long journeys, the knowledge of how and where and the habit, founded on experience, of not being afraid. (James, *Novels VI* 485)

This vivid description highlights Charlotte's simultaneously practical and stylish attire; this is sturdy, sensible garb, intended for the rough usage of travel, but even these highly practical togs indicate Charlotte's natural taste and her instinct for the becoming and the stylish. Her dress itself seems to have absorbed the independence and competence that characterizes Charlotte in this short description, and to exhale a fragrance of far places and the knowledge and experience required to navigate them. We see in her dress Charlotte's courage, competence, and attractiveness. Charlotte's facility with dress, her ability to make dress represent her, is paired in this same passage with her extraordinary facility with languages. Amerigo speaks of the "mystery" of Charlotte's facility with languages: "It wasn't a question of her strange sense for tongues, with which she juggled as a conjuror at a show juggled with balls or hoops or lighted brands [....] He had known strangers--a few, and mostly men--who spoke his own language agreeably; but he had known neither man nor woman who showed for it Charlotte's almost mystifying instinct" (James, *Novels VI* 491-492).

Note here that Charlotte's ability to represent via language is paired by James with an explicit metaphor of performance: she speaks languages in the way that other people juggle for an audience. James directly links theatrical representation with linguistic representation, and links them both with sartorial self-representation. Do these talents for representation—fashion, performing, and languages—go together? Christine Bayles Kortsch has argued for a link

between language facility and the deep understanding of fashion; Kortsch argues that nineteenth-century Americans, especially women, have what she calls "dual literacy" achieved in two mediums: fabric and language. Kortsch argues that the ability to read and interpret dress was explicitly taught to girls through methods (including the sewing of alphabetic samplers) that joined dress skills with reading skills. [212] Charlotte (like that other famously "great" James heroine, Kate Croy, with her knack for making over, making do, and keeping up appearances on a limited dress budget) uses clothes intentionally as a form of self-representation, and they say what she wants them to say.[213]

Yet even in the same moment that we see Charlotte's independence, her ability to represent, and her competence, we also see foreshadowed how she will end: as a representation displayed to the public gaze, as a commodity, and finally as pure representation. Even in the eyes of Amerigo (a fellow purchased commodity and her ex- and future lover), Charlotte is described in terms of *objects* that are both aesthetic and exchangeable: a museum-quality replica of a human, a machine, and a silk purse, well-filled with gold pieces, caught and held by a gold ring.

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[212] Kortsch focuses primarily on producing dress, a form of authorship,, while I am more interested in reading dress. Reading sartorially was not limited to women, as Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility* and Halttunen have shown. See also Wakana for a sociological account of sartorial reading in the nineteenth century.

[213] *Wings of the Dove* makes interesting comparing to *The Golden Bowl*. In *Wings of the Dove*, James describes Kate's dress sense in a similar fashion to Charlotte's, and he pairs each of these elegant anti-heroines with a sartorially-awkward and inelegant foil: Milly Theale in *Wings* and Maggie in *Bowl*. The sartorially-structured relationships between these women are examined by Clair Hughes, who argues in her chapter on *Wings* that Kate and Milly occupy two opposite but balanced positions, each marked by their dress (Milly in black, Kate in light colors) until novel's end, when they switch roles. She sees this as indicating their convertibility with each other. This is not unlike the structural reversal of roles, marked by changes in dress, that I trace for Maggie and Charlotte here. Of course, the endings for these two novels differ greatly; as we will see, in *Bowl* Maggie triumphs through dress and self-representation, while in *Wings* Milly's triumph is a moral one, achieved through the medium of words (her last letter to Densher).

Amerigo's vision of Charlotte is at first conveyed by a list of disarticulated qualities, "a cluster of possessions" (486), which he enumerates: her hair, her arms, her hands, fingers, and finger-nails. He synthesizes these discrete elements into the image of her as a piece made to be displayed, one with which he is intimately familiar: he knew "her special movement of beauty and line when she turned her back, and the perfect working of all her main attachments, that of some wonderful finished instrument, something intently made for exhibition, for a prize" (487). She is both a wonder of function ("the perfect working of all her main attachments," which makes her sound like a marvelous robot) and of form ("her special movement of beauty and line"). She is figured here precisely by her suitability for display: She was made to serve as a publicly-visible representation, for "exhibition"—she is not in Amerigo's eyes the object of her own sartorial self-representations, but a representation herself, the object of others' gaze.

This description of Charlotte as a curiosity on display in a museum, with Amerigo perhaps as her inventor or owner, seems to call to mind the money that might be made from such a display. The next image of Charlotte, one of the novel's most famous images, compares her directly to a silk purse full of gold pieces. Again, Amerigo is intimately acquainted with the hidden inner workings of Charlotte in all her forms: Amerigo "knew above all the extraordinary fineness of her flexible waist, the stem of an expanded flower, which gave her a likeness also to some long loose silk purse, well filled with gold-pieces, but having been passed empty through a finger-ring that held it together" (487).

First, this image is powerful on a purely visual level, as an accurate evocation of the styles of 1900-1905. The image evokes the slimness of Charlotte's waist and the fullness of her "well-filled" bust and hips above and below; this is a direct reference, unusual in James, to the

style of the moment. At the turn of the century, silhouettes were in flux, transitioning from the classic hooped and corseted hourglass of the middle decades towards the more vertical lines that would reach their apotheosis in the flapper dresses of the 1920s. In 1903, though, the fashionable woman wore an S-bend corset, which had a loose blouson-style fit at the bust and was snug over the hips. The image reveals Amerigo's intimate familiarity with Charlotte's waist and its movement, giving us a sense of their erotic connection and history: since women were nearly always corseted except during sleep or sex, his knowledge of her waist's flexibility indicates their history of intimacy.[214] Beyond its visual acuity, though, the image is also metaphorically and semiotically accurate, for it aligns Charlotte with money. Money is, by definition, an object that is exchangeable and convertible, but it is also always already a representation of something else. Money has little intrinsic value. All its value is referential: its value resides in that for which it stands.[215] In this extended metaphor, we see Charlotte move from the semiotic position of the

[214] This is nearly the last gasp for the hourglass-shaped corset, and the image of Charlotte here reveals the shift in style already underway at the time towards a more vertical silhouette; Paul Poiret, the designer credited with bringing in the typical "flapper" shape, opened his design house in 1903. The straight-fronted S-bend corsets, which thrust the breasts up and out and the behind out in the back, normally did not appear especially tight-waisted because of the blousiness of dress fronts that were fashionable; in fashion historian C. Willett Cunnington's words, "Instead of caricaturing the physical outlines of nature, they invented a silhouette of fictitious curves, massive above, with rivulets of lacy embroidery trickling over the surface down to a whirlpool of froth at the foot" (Cunnington and Cunnington 201). Amerigo, who knows what lies beneath that corset—the tininess of the waist, the "well-filled" bust under her blousy silhouette--indicates their erotic history with this knowledge, for it implies that he has previously seen her without these disguising garments. This is precisely the era in which undergarments acquired their erotic connotations; the period from 1897-1908 was the beginning of the use of the term "lingerie," rather than the older, more serviceable terms "drawers" and "undergarments (Cunnington and Cunnington). For a less historical, more theoretical consideration of the issues around the wearing of corsets, see Summers, *Bound to Please* and Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History*. Kunzle, "Tightlacing" tries to reclaim the corset as a personal expression of sexuality for women in the face of feminist angst over its literal circumscription and limitation of women's bodies that corsetry accomplished and symbolized. For an account of contemporary debates over the health and propriety of corsetry, see Newton.

[215] Of course, Amerigo himself is compared to a golden coin; this indicates their shared status as owned objects, and their aesthetic value: "It was as if he had been some old embossed coin, of a purity of gold no longer used, stamped with glorious arms, mediaeval, wonderful, of which the 'worth' in mere modern change, sovereigns and half crowns,

referent, the semiotic object of her own sartorial self-signifiers, to the semiotic position of the signifier. Having moved into the sign-position, she has value only insofar as she represents another form of value—the value of the Verver name and fortune. This metaphorical movement condenses Charlotte's actual movement in the novel: from an independent and courageous woman to a sign. And, as previsioned in Amerigo's image, the transformation will be accomplished by binding her within the compass of a golden wedding ring.

After Charlotte's marriage to Adam, she becomes the public face of the Ververs. Charlotte's facility with representation perfectly suits her to represent the Verver name and the Verver fortune: "They had brought her in […] to do the 'worldly' for them, and she had done it with such genius that they themselves in consequence renounced it even more than they had originally intended" (669-70). Charlotte's role in the family is to take on the "act of representation at large and the daily business of intercourse," a position that of course "fell in with Charlotte's tested facility" for representation (James, *Novels VI* 668). Charlotte, in fact, has a "genius for representing" (668). As we have seen already, at novel's beginning Charlotte used her representational genius in service of herself; now it is turned to the service of representing

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would be great enough, but as to which, since there were finer ways of using it, such taking to pieces was superfluous. That was the image for the security in which it was open to him to rest; he was to constitute a possession, yet was to escape being reduced to his component parts. What would this mean but that practically he was never to be tried or tested? What would it mean but that if they didn't 'change' him they really wouldn't know—he wouldn't know himself—how many pounds, shillings and pence he had to give?" (James, *Novels VI* 471). Amerigo, though, recognizes the bargain he has struck, unlike Charlotte; he also recognizes that his real value is not in the 'face value' of the coin itself, but in the artistic and aesthetic value that the coin holds. The image of Charlotte is less clear on this non-convertibility of the medium of exchange into something static that has value in something other than economic systems. Michaels, in "The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism," argues that the anxiety about representation in the nineteenth century was expressing an anxiety about how value could be represented: how exchange value could be represented by paper money, how experience could be represented by a paper license from the government, etc.

the Ververs. Charlotte's twin geniuses—dress and language—are clearly *linked*, and so she represents, as usual, via her genius for dress: "Charlotte's own [dresses] were simply the most charming and interesting any woman had ever put on; there was a kind of poetic justice in her being at last able in this particular, thanks to means, thanks quite to omnipotence, freely to exercise her genius" (James, *Novels VI* 740). What she represents is Adam's omnipotence, his means.

At the beginning of the second book of the Prince's narrative, we are shown Charlotte at the apogee of the realization of her long-deferred sartorial desires, reigning belle of the ambassador's ball. On this glittering evening, Charlotte and Amerigo have come to do the social, to carry out their duties as the public ambassadors of the Verver family. Charlotte is in her element: she is "crowned" with the "unsurpassed diamonds that her head so happily carried, [with] the other jewels, the other perfections of aspect and arrangement," and these "perfections" are framed as fulfilling her private prediction that, having the sartorial "materials to work with," she could not but dazzle. These sartorial perfections thus "made her personal scheme a success, the *proved* private theory that materials to work with had been all she required" (621). Yet the crown of jewels, the sumptuous gown, the dazzle—all these prove *Adam's* success, not *Charlotte's*. The generalized splendor of Charlotte's toilette is a sign of Adam's wealth and ability to pay: "the dress is the index of the wealth of the economic unit which the wearer represents" (Veblen, "The economic theory of women's dress," 67). Charlotte's dress, which had represented her, now represents only her aesthetic qualities, the beauty of a rare objet d'art, enhanced by the best dressing that money can buy; she is now an object in Adam's collection of

museum-quality beauties, to be admired as an ambassador for Adam's taste and Adam's wealth.[216]

Charlotte's representative responsibility is made explicit within the novel. This is not a responsibility to represent herself; according to Sharon Cameron, Charlotte is emptied of agency, a pure semiotic representation that has no say in how others interpret her representations: "[s]he is the text rendered inscrutable so that other characters can 'interpret' her in the absence, specifically the annihilation, of any meaning she herself might specify for it" (Cameron, *Thinking* 100). And according to Fanny Assingham, Charlotte's responsibility is to represent nothing *but* Adam: "Charlotte should be known, for any presentation, any further circulation or introduction, as in particular her husband's wife; known in the least possible degree as anything else" (635). (Amerigo, himself similarly a possession, argues that Charlotte does not represent Adam: "on such an occasion as this and looking as she does tonight," "Charlotte speaks for herself" (634). This, however, is an attempt to cover up his own illicit relation with her, which violates her representational responsibility to Adam.) Charlotte — who "always dressed her act up," who "muffled and disguised and arranged" her self-presentation — is uniquely suited to her position within the Verver family. But the sign-position she accepts leads Charlotte, by way of dressmakers, jewellers, and dazzling balls, to her ultimate fate: "her doom was [...] to arrange appearances" (James, *Novels VI* 489), and it is indeed a doom. Charlotte has, in accepting the representative position, also and unknowingly accepted that doom: doomed to save face, doomed

[216] For more on the concept of the "ambassador" as representative, as speaking-for another, see Rivkin, "Delegation."

to pretend to Maggie that the move to American City is her dream rather than her punishment, doomed to pretend before visitors that she is not leashed.

"So complete a conquest of appearances"

Charlotte, in losing control of the sartorial referent, lost her agency. We see the opposite happen in Maggie's semiotic development. Maggie learns both to interpret others' behavior and to control her own self-representations. With Maggie, as with Carrie Meeber, we see that the introduction of distance (both representational and interpersonal) confers power; in Maggie's case, the distance forces effort on the part of her readers, as her representations increasingly demand to be read. Over the course of the novel, Maggie becomes one of James's model readers; she also, as we will see, becomes the author of her own story. She accomplishes all this by arrogating to herself Charlotte's facility with representations—both with language and with self-representation via dress.

Maggie moves away from an early position of self-identicality in which her appearance is identical with her self and her dress serves as an index to her self; I call this the state of sartorial indexicality. She ends by inhabiting the symbol, or what Barthes describes as "'complexes of meaning'; whose equivalence can be almost entirely free" (Barthes, *Language* 14). Maggie learns to use the looser and more distanced semiotic relation between representation and reality that the symbol entails. In other words, we shall see Maggie learn to manipulate representations, to dissemble; as a result, she develops a new sense of self-consciousness, a distance from the self, an ability to simultaneously have an experience and observe oneself having the

experience.[217] Maggie's self-consciousness is intimately related to the self-objectification and self-distancing I have described already in reference to *Sister Carrie,* and, as in *Sister Carrie*, it is through dress that the development of Maggie's self-consciousness is most easily traced. In fact, her self-consciousness grows out of her dress consciousness. Maggie learns, in short, to *perform*, with all that that entails.

Throughout the novel's whole first section, titled "The Prince," Maggie is identical with her dress; her dress is like a natural extension of herself, expressive of her inner nature.[218] The

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[217] I have discussed this idea of self-distance fully in terms of the actor's consciousness in my chapters on Dreiser. The idea that consciousness is dual (split into one stream of perception/sensation and one of cognition, or self-observation of the processes of one's own mind) is a fundamental tenet of consciousness studies. It begins with William James's foundational work in psychology and continues through the present day's theorization of consciousness by scholars such as Humphrey and Damasio. Porter explores how this dual consciousness is enacted in American literature, arguing that major American authors, including James, express the increasing alienation inherent in capitalist culture by inhabiting a sort of "split self" that both observes and participates. She traces this participant/observer split especially closely in her reading of *The Golden Bowl*. According to Porter, Maggie is the only character in the novel who is aware of herself as both seeing and being seen. I agree with Porter's assessment of Maggie's final state of knowledge, which combines self-awareness with awareness of how others perceive her; Porter captures precisely the trajectory I trace in Maggie's developing skill at dressing herself. I would add, though, that Adam is similarly expert at both seeing and being seen; he is so good, in fact, at being seen that he learns to make himself invisible, unreadable.

[218] Cecil Cunnington, dress historian, refers to dresses which echo the natural female body as Neoclassic; the artificiality of shape which distorts or disguises the form beneath, including extreme corsetry, bustles, farthingales, and the like, he calls the Gothic. According to Cunnington's definitions, we might say that Maggie moves from a Neoclassic style of dress-relation to a Gothic one: "'Gothic' denotes an ingrained habit of mind, possessed more by some races and by some individuals than others, which induces a person unconsciously to re-arrange phenomena at the expense of truth in order to produce an emotional reaction" (Cunnington 23). For Cunnington, realism, then, would be a neoclassical form: "The romantic mind uses its emotions to distort, and the sentimental mind uses its emotions to conceal reality. The former leans to flamboyant forms of expression, while the latter seeks shelter by 'turning all to favor and to prettiness.' The Gothic attitude may therefore be either romantic or sentimental, or indeed both" (Cunnington 23). In this formulation, Maggie is neoclassic when her dresses index, or rightly represent, her figure and her identity; she becomes more Gothic (romantic or sentimental) as her dresses increasingly shift their representation into the realm of the symbolic, with its looser relation. This tracks with the descriptions of her dress, for her early style is old-fashioned —explicitly Classical, if not Neoclassical: "the appearance of some slight, slim draped 'antique' of Vatican or Capitoline halls, late and refined, rare as a note and immortal as a link, set in motion by the miraculous infusion of a modern impulse and yet, for all the sudden freedom of folds and footsteps forsaken after centuries by their pedestal, keeping still the quality, the perfect felicity, of the statue; the blurred, absent eyes, the smoothed, elegant, nameless head, the impersonal flit of a creature lost in an alien age and passing as an image in worn relief round and round a precious vase" (582). Old-fashioned indeed; Adam sees her as "shyly

relation between Maggie and her dress is natural, tight, and simple. This relation is, in fact, so simple that until Book II we hear only about her physical characteristics, almost nothing about her dress. Maggie's dress begins as equivalent to her; to describe her dress is to describe her, because her dress indexes her nearly perfectly. Her dress does not represent her, for it is semiotically identical with her. It is simply part of her, and her body and her dress are exchangeable because of this equivalence. In fact, Maggie's dress and body so tightly index one another that her dress can serve as a placeholder for her, as her wardrobe does at Eaton Square. Substituting for Maggie's presence, her dresses maintain her rooms at her father's house, keeping those rooms hers as surely as if she still physically occupied them. And these placeholding dresses passively fight on her behalf against Charlotte; Maggie's wardrobe at Eaton Square condenses and serves as one front in the power struggle that develops between the women. As Fanny tells the Colonel, between Maggie's "twenty changes" of clothes in her old bedroom and the Principino's second nursery at Eaton Square, the house does not really belong to Charlotte, its ostensible mistress, at all: "if Charlotte, in her own house, so to speak, should wish a friend or two to stay with her, she really would be scarce able to put them up" (708-09). It is only Charlotte's house "so to speak"; the presence of Maggie's clothes marks her role as the house's actual mistress, no matter her marriage or her father's. In fact, Maggie's relation with her father, like her relation to her dress, is one of semiotic identicality. Even after his marriage,

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mythological and nymphlike" (582). She combines this classicism with an odd sentimentalism, for she is also described "even in her prettiness, as 'prim'" and as copying her mother's style of the 1850s: "discreetly heedless, thanks to her long association with nobleness in art, to the leaps and bounds of fashion, she brought her hair down very straight and flat over her temples, in the constant manner of her mother, who had not been a bit mythological" (583).

Maggie still feels and acts as her father's hostess at Eaton Square dinners; and the description of Maggie's appearance at one of these dinners foregrounds the odd equivalence between her dress and her body. We are told that at the dinner party, Charlotte's "intenser presence, her quieter smile, her fewer jewels, were inevitably all as nothing compared with the preoccupation that burned in Maggie like a small flame and that had in fact kindled in each of her cheeks a little attesting, but fortunately by no means unbecoming, spot" (672). The flush of Maggie's cheeks is here compared to Charlotte's jewels; Maggie's body has accessorized itself, expressing her internal feeling rather than "adorn[ing] the person by supplementary accessions from without" (Veblen, "The economic theory of women's dress," 66). This is a very sentimental, indexical form of self-decoration. As is typical of Book I's focalization through Prince, Maggie's dress is shown as an extension or expression of her self; her dress does not operate performatively from the outside in, but rather works expressively, from the inside out.

This same metaphor connecting Maggie's flushed cheeks to jewels is carried through and inverted in Book II of the novel, where James changes the function of this reiterated metaphor. In Book II, Maggie's same flush of the cheeks, although similarly described in terms of jewelry, is no longer a "natural" extension or expression of Maggie's self, but an externally added accessory; by repurposing the metaphor, James indicates Maggie's shifting approach to dress. This second iteration of the metaphor occurs when Maggie confronts Fanny about the affair between Amerigo and Charlotte; we are told that Fanny feels that Maggie appears "for the first time in her life rather 'bedizened'" (836). It is the flush upon her cheeks—previously seen by Amerigo as expressive of Maggie's internal state—that gives Fanny the impression of over-accessorization, and makes her wonder if Maggie "had put on too many things, overcharged

herself with jewels, wore in particular more of them than usual, and bigger ones" (836). In fact, Fanny seems to sense that Maggie is using dress in a new way, for she notes that "nothing more pathetic could be imagined than the refuge and disguise [Maggie's] agitation had instinctively asked of the arts of dress, multiplied to extravagance, almost to incoherence" (836). Yet Fanny ends by attributing Maggie's new bedizenment "largely to the bright red spot, red as some monstrous ruby, that burned in either of her cheeks" (836). It is as though Fanny is unable to believe that Maggie can consciously use the "arts of dress," that she must instead continue to dress indexically.

Over the course of Book II, though, all the novel's characters must, like Fanny, learn to deal with Maggie's increasing sartorial mastery; they must learn to "read" Maggie's self-representations as the distance between Maggie's self and her dress increases. Maggie leaves behind the indexical and the causal; by the end of the novel she has "so shuffled away every link between consequence and cause, that the intention remained, like some famous poetic line in a dead language, subject to varieties of interpretation" (James, *Novels VI* 965). In other words, Maggie escapes the indexical mode (unlinking "consequence" from "cause"), instead inviting "varieties of interpretation." As she learns to work the distance between sign and referent, between dress and self, she is able exploit the representative gap, with its possibilities of interpretation and misinterpretation, to influence events.

The shift occurs at the beginning of Book II, titled "The Princess" after Maggie; Maggie's dress becomes a consciously-considered representation rather than a natural, artless expression. The trigger for Maggie's increasing sartorial self-consciousness, which figures her increasing self-consciousness in all areas, seems to be Amerigo and Charlotte's delayed return

from Matcham. The reader knows, and Maggie suspects, that Amerigo and Charlotte are now having an affair; this suspicion seems to trigger in Maggie a sudden awareness of both her own and Charlotte's appearances. The new emphasis on dress is jarring, for it makes us realize that we have until now heard almost nothing about Maggie's dress until now.[219] Maggie's lack of self-awareness has been invisible, to both the reader and to Maggie herself; it is not until Maggie begins to compare herself with Charlotte that we realize the earlier omissions. Charlotte is, of course, as we have seen, a social success and a "genius" at dress: her dresses, thinks Maggie, are "simply the most charming and interesting that any woman had ever put on" (740). Maggie knows that she herself, on the other hand, is close to hopeless: she "was distinctly not [a genius at dress], would distinctly never be, and might as well, practically, give it up altogether" (668). As she ponders Charlotte's excellences, Maggie begins to consider her own self-representation, seeing herself as if through Charlotte's eyes: "for the last year, above all, she had lived in the

[219] Book I is seen mostly through the consciousness of the Prince, and his concerns do not include Maggie's dress (although he has, as we have seen, been attentive to Charlotte's dress). We have had a sense of Maggie's physical prettiness, however, both from Amerigo and from Adam. We have also had a sense of Maggie's *refusal* of fashion through Adam's eyes; Maggie's early aesthetic training at Adam's knee has made her "discreetly heedless, thanks to her long association with nobleness in art, to the leaps and bounds of fashion," and as a consequence to this refusal of fashion's mobility and constant self-reinvention, Maggie wears her hair in the outmoded style of her mother: "very straight and flat over her temples." According to Fanny, Maggie "dresses, really, […] as much for her father—and she always did—as for her husband or for herself" (708). Maggie's refusal of the vicissitudes of fashion, as well as her embodiment of Adam's classical aesthetic taste, is apparent in the comparisons that Adam makes between Maggie's "prettiness" and the beauty of the Greek statue: Adam sees in her "the quality, the perfect felicity, of the statue; the blurred, absent eyes, the smoothed, elegant, nameless head, the impersonal flit of a creature lost in an alien age [….] a figure thus simplified, 'generalized' in its grace" (582). Maggie is here almost a personification of a body of classical allusion, which Adam can trace in her through his aesthetic sense sharpened by the "collation of types and signs;" it is as though for Adam Maggie looks like a sort of generalized Platonic Idea of a Greek statue which Adam himself has created by superimposing multiple Greek statues upon one another, ending with an "impersonal" beauty in which Maggie shares. It is particularly interesting that Adam actually uses the word "impersonality" to describe the generalization of Maggie's appearance via this sort of spatial, visual superimposition, since this is precisely how Sharon Cameron opens her essay on "Impersonality": by discussing the generalization of the features of the Buddha by precisely this process of superimposition, carried out by William Empson using photographs. See Cameron, *Impersonality: Seven Essays*.

light of Charlotte's possible and rather inscrutable judgment" of her dresses.[220] Maggie imagines what Charlotte, who has "so perfect a critical vision," might think of Maggie's "material braveries," and wonders whether her new dress "would at last really satisfy Charlotte" (740). This difference between Maggie and Charlotte, which she begins dimly now to feel, is the beginning of self-awareness, of a distance from her self. Crucially, Maggie begins to see herself from outside her own experience.

Maggie's new ability to see herself as though from outside initiates her experiments with dress's power. She begins her experimentation by attempting to communicate to Amerigo via her dress. But we see, as the confrontation scene progresses, that the dress, which is for Maggie a source of both comfort and trouble, communicates less to Amerigo than it does to Maggie herself; her dress seems to reflect back her own fears and hopes. As sociologist Colin Campbell has argued, in rapidly-changing, unstable societies (like the industrializing and urbanizing nineteenth-century America), the act of choosing among the consumer goods offered serves as a way of gaining self-knowledge; in Campbell's words, a consumer discovers her "true identity by a process of monitoring their responses to the various styles that are brought to [her] attention"

[220] New visual technologies of the 19th century enabled this development of self-consciousness. Full-length mirrors were rare and expensive until 1835 (Melchior-Bonnet). Anne Hollander discusses how developments in photography directly changed fashion: with the advent of the snapshot and the moving pictures, dresses needed to look good on the move and also needed to be visually assimilable in an instant (because of increasingly fast shutter speeds, which meant that one no longer needed to sit completely still in order to be captured on film). G. H. Mead's theories of the formation of the self depend upon the conceptualization of the self as an integrated entity through a kind of self-objectification. While Mead argues for language as the primary medium for the production of the self (since language allows the speaker to hear himself as others hear him), I extend Mead's ideas also to visual imagery. How does seeing "objective" images of the self affect one's perception of one's appearance and of one's identity? For information about the importance of new technologies of image production in American culture, see Trachtenberg, *Reading*. For work on the body's relation to visual culture in America, see Kasson, *Perfect Man* and Kasson, "Greek."

(Campbell loc 521-522). Maggie, like Campbell's consumer, can see herself more clearly in dress's reflection.

The dress commands attention; Maggie has made herself "quite inordinately fresh and quite positively smart" for her encounter with Amerigo. She is in "her newest frock, worn for the first time, sticking out, all round her, quite stiff and grand; even perhaps a little too stiff and too grand for a familiar and domestic frock" (739). Yet while Maggie has chosen her dress for this confrontation "with an infinite sense of intention" to communicate something to Amerigo, it communicates far more about Maggie's feelings to Maggie herself. Maggie locates each reversal of feeling in the dress, which is the site for "[h]er actual multiplication of distractions and suppressions" (738); her appearance here behaves like an affective mirror, reflecting back to Maggie each shift in feeling that (without the mirror) she might have missed. She seems to know that the dress is increasing her awareness; her special toilette, she thinks, may have "added […] to that very tension of spirit" that she retroactively recognizes having felt. As she waits for Amerigo, dreading the confrontation to come, she hopes at first that her "material braveries" will make her *feel* equally brave: she considers pacing the room, for it "would make her feel, on the polished floor, with the rustle and the 'hang,' still more beautifully bedecked" (739). But on the other hand, thinks Maggie, the increased self-consciousness will also heighten her anxiety—so she does not pace: "the difficulty was that it would also make her feel herself still more sharply in a state" (739). But the only relief for her emotional state is the "refuge" offered by her dress: "The only drops of her anxiety had been when her thought strayed complacently, with her eyes, to the front of her gown, which was in a manner a refuge, a beguilement" (739-40). All these drops and flights of feeling seem available to Maggie only indirectly, mediated by her gown. In

other words, she can only recognize her emotions when she looks at them from the outside: she identifies her emotions as one identifies actorly emotions represented on stage, by the external, physical signs of the emotion. Maggie thus becomes aware of her own feelings as they manifest through the dress.

The self-distance Maggie discovers through her new sartorial self-awareness is at first uncomfortable. The exterior view of herself feels to her unnatural, or like dissembling; she feels that she is "[m]oving for the first time in her life as in the darkening shadow of a false position" (735).[221] This first scene of Book II, Maggie's confrontation with Amerigo in her grand dress, feels to her like a play she has witnessed: she remembers it as a series of "*watchable*" moments, "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" (738). Maggie, in her new external vision of her self "thrown" into the world, feels at first like a spectator watching a fictional event.

But as Maggie extends and develops the theatricality at the heart of her externally-derived self-awareness, she loses her discomfort with what had seemed to her like a "false position," and embraces it instead as performance; Maggie, who has been socially unsuccessful because of her very naturalness, her self-identicality, now learns to act a part. This becomes possible through her new sartorial self-awareness. Maggie, the Princess, "felt herself for the first time in her career living up to the public and popular notion of such a personage" (779-80), for "[t]hat was what she was learning to do, to fill out as a matter of course her appointed, her

[221] See Rivkin, *Positions*.

expected, her imposed character" (780). The role of the Princess is one that she has until now declined to play: previously, "Maggie had forgotten, had neglected, had declined, to be the little Princess on anything like the scale open to her" (780). Her play with roles is made possible by her experiments with costume: she can now, like a circus performer, "skip up into the light […] with such a show of pink stocking and such an abbreviation of white petticoat" (780).[222]

And Maggie, walking the tightrope between knowing and not-knowing Amerigo and Charlotte's secret, is, precisely, performing: in public, for an audience, and risking danger. At times Maggie imagines herself a circus dancer on the back of a horse, with Fanny there as her assistant "to keep up the pace of the sleek revolving animal on whose back the lady in short spangled skirts should brilliantly caper and posture" (780). At other times she sees herself as an actress, who is "practising" on Charlotte, Amerigo, and even Adam:

> Maggie went, she went—she felt herself going; 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 this 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 in the previous afternoon, for the second. (754)

As we saw actresses doing in my previous chapters on *Sister Carrie,* Maggie uses costume as a tool of self-objectification; for the first time, she is *acting.* (I mean this in both its senses—recall Bert States's assertion that performing and acting are both variations on *doing*.) James's performance metaphors draw attention to the increasing semiotic distance between Maggie's sartorial signifiers (her costumes, her appearance) and their referent (her self).

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[222] For histories of the American circus, see Assael, Eckley, and Stoddart.

We, like the novel's characters, should see this as a fundamental change in Maggie. She shifts from an easily-read closed text that offers only one possible meaning to an open text that must be carefully interpreted. Maggie now makes available multiple possible readings of her character; the indexical simplicity that was so under-read is replaced by sartorial symbolism, which requires effort from its reader. It is not until Maggie unbinds "consequence and cause," referent and signifier, and converts the index into the symbol that there is room for interpretation; the movement from the tightly-bound index to the symbol, with its "complexes of meaning" "whose equivalence can be almost entirely free," is liberatory (Barthes, *Language* 14). What Maggie has learned from dress is that there is meaning to be made beyond the index; she sees in every situation "the full significance—which, as was now brought home to Maggie, could be no more, after all, than a matter of interpretation, differing always for a different interpreter" (897). This new awareness of interpretation's slippery power allows her—like a performer—to tailor her representations to her audience and thus, to some degree, to shape their interpretations.

By the end of the novel, Maggie has made "so complete a conquest of appearances" (889) that she moves beyond even the role of the actor in a play. She becomes instead an author, the others seem to her like an actors in a play of her writing. As she looks in the windows from the terrace at Fawns, she sees the others' sheer vulnerability in the face of her withheld knowledge: "there was a card she could play, but there was only one, and to play it would be to end the game" (755). And she describes them as "figures rehearsing some play of which she herself was the author" (891). Maggie's move into authorship, which figures her increasing agency and self-determination, is another turn of the screw to the question of the relation between representation and reality.

By conquering appearances, moving away from the indexical and towards the symbolic, Maggie has turned herself into an object requiring interpretation. Most importantly to Maggie, she has become an object of interpretation to Amerigo. This is figured in Maggie's ability to surprise Amerigo, revealing the changed basis, "the freshness of relation" of their marriage; this freshness of relation is "produced by her having administered to her husband the first surprise to which she had ever treated him" (738). Their relation's new success lies in its distance. This is no longer the sentimental type of marriage, where the parties understand one another ideally and share feelings without the interposition and mediation of language. This is not a marriage of merging, of the semiotic identicality that is figured in the notion of inability to surprise the other. This is a relation based on difference and depending on interpretation to bridge the semiotic gap (like James's novels). As she says on the evening of their last goodbye to Charlotte and Adam, "what had at last happened was that his [Amerigo's] way of looking at her on occasion seemed a perception of the presence not of one idea but of fifty, variously prepared for uses with which he somehow must reckon" (960). And this is, for Maggie, a *happy* ending. This is the fulfillment of Maggie's dearest wish: "It was more wonderful than she could have told; it was for all the world as if she was succeeding with him beyond her intention" (961).

Uniforms, sentiment, and signification

Yet, as always in James, Maggie's success comes at a price. While Maggie creates herself as an object of interpretation, and thereby gains the more intense relationship with Amerigo that she desires (as Adam puts it, the "maximum of tenderness […] the maximum of immersion in the fact of being married" of which "Maggie herself was capable" [555]), Maggie's

changes also distance her from Adam. She loses her intense, direct sentimental relation with her father, and sacrifices their easy, wordless sentimental understanding: "It was Maggie's marriage and Maggie's finer happiness—happy as he had supposed her before—that had made the difference" (545). In fact, she must eventually sacrifice Adam's presence altogether. To protect her father, not knowing how much he knows, she must deceive him, must manipulate him into leaving, taking Charlotte away to American City.

The relation between Adam and Maggie had been perfectly sentimental: they were a pair in such perfect sympathy that their communication instead communion, a directly-communicated wordless understanding: "So much mute communication was doubtless all this time marvellous" (560). Adam's sentimental semiotic relation with Maggie is figured in Adam's lack of "appearance"; he seems to not seem, but be. There is, apparently, no "appearance" for Adam; his dress can be seen as tangential, as unimportant. He wears what is essentially a uniform: "every day, whatever the occasion," he wore a suit "of the fashion of his younger time." He wears "the same little black 'cut away' coat, […] the same cool-looking trousers, chequered in black and white" and "a sprigged blue satin necktie," along with, "quaintly indifferent to climates a seasons, a white duck waistcoat" (571).[223] All his representational and aesthetic interest seems to

[223] Adam's dress, which reflects his younger years, seems to be based on men's fashions from the 1880s or earlier. An 1881 etiquette manual offers a similar template for correct male dress: "The morning dress for gentlemen is a black frock coat, or a black cut-away, white or black vest, gray or colored pants, a high silk (stove-pipe) hat, and a black necktie. A black frock coat with black pants is not considered a good combination, nor is a dress coat and colored or light pants. The morning dress is suitable for garden calls and receptions. It is not good taste for a gentleman to wear a dress coat, and white tie in day time" (Young 317). Chenoune asserts that by the 1890s, the frock coat is obsolete: "the 'lounge suit' was replacing the morning coat that had itself been replacing the frock coat. The frock coat had gone into irreversible decline despite a certain continuing fashionableness in high society, at the race track, or at five o'clock tea…It went from being ordinary visiting dress to highly formal dress" (Chenoune 112). He continues, "The architect Adolf Loos considered the frock coat to be 'dead' in 1898, since the English wore it only 'in audiences accorded by the queen, during the opening of Parliament, and at weddings'" (122).

be poured into his collecting: The narrator argues early in Book II that "there was henceforth only one ground in all the world, he felt, on which the question of appearance would ever really again count for him" (553-54), and this is the aesthetic ground of his collector's passion, not his own appearance. Adam seems to *have* no appearance; he is, Amerigo says, "the man in the world least equipped with different appearances for different hours. He was simple, he was a revelation of simplicity, and that was the end of him so far as he consisted of an appearance at all" (673). For Amerigo, then, what Adam's uniform expresses is his essential simplicity of character; Adam's constancy of appearance seems, in Amerigo's eyes, to show Adam's "real self," and not to count as an appearance—a self-representation—at all: "so far as he consisted of an appearance at all." Adam seems not to need to represent himself, to project sartorial signs into the world to be interpreted by others. After all, Maggie understands him, and that's all that matters.

But Adam's "simplicity" of appearance is by the end of the novel no longer to be read as a *lack* of appearance. Instead, his remorseless uniform becomes something more like a mirror; it is decidedly no longer a sentimental expression of his interior simplicity. As Maggie begins to play with her self-representations, and as the novel itself increasingly valorizes the semiotic distance of the representation, Adam's dress emerges as a *resistance* to being read, as a sort of impenetrable armor that, far from expressing his interior, makes him impossible to read. His sartorial surface—what Maggie calls "the polished old ivory of her father's inattackable surface" (935) —is inviolable, giving no purchase for interpretation. His dress, in its sameness, gives away nothing. As the semiotic distance between him and Maggie grows, Adam's dress in increasingly described, not as simple or transparent, but as occlusive, as blocking or hiding access to his self: even Maggie describes him as having an "unfathomable heart folded in the

constant flawless freshness of the white waistcoat" (939). She is no longer sentimentally identified with her father. She sees him instead as from a great distance, and, as if to exemplify the loss of their "mute communication," she can no longer tell even whether he sleeps or feigns (she looked "long enough to wonder if her father really slept or if, aware of her, he only kept consciously quiet. Did his eyes truly fix her between lids partly open […]?" (939)). Adam has become for Maggie what he has always been for others: an unreadable text.

Adam's dress, which harks back to the post-War period of the 1870s or 1880s ("the fashion of his younger time"), is both historically and thematically accurate in its sartorial impenetrability, for it protects its wearer by its very uniformity, its perfect correctness, which also supplies its resistance to interpretation. The control of self-representation through sartorial and bodily management, as Kasson reminds us, repels over-eager readers and makes the self indecipherable. Perfect correctness is an absence of telling sartorial detail, an absence of the "next-to-nothing" that conveys difference and thereby meaning, and is therefore a kind of disguise. Adam's dress also figures the literary changes of the last quarter of the century; after midcentury, literary texts began to shift from closed to open texts, and required increasing readerly effort to transactionally create the text's meaning. Like James's late novels, Adam is emphatically an open text.

James's late work, like Adam's infinitely flexible sartorial sign, puts intense pressure on the reader. Both invite the reader to "read in" meaning, yet both elide the referent, the authorial explanation, against which the reader might test her interpretation pragmatically. As we saw the governess do in *The Turn of the Screw*, both Adam and James remove the external framework of confirmation and ask the reader to create the meaning superstructure herself. The reader no

longer must fill in a reasonably-sized gap, Greenwood's "ellipsis"; instead, she must create the entire picture. Both Adam and James's late work thus implicitly invoke Barthes's paradox of the reader, in which the act of reading shades into over-reading, and ends, not with the uncovering of the text's meaning, but with the readerly production of that meaning. Barthes calls this "overcoding"; as Barthes describes it, overcoding happens when the author "remov[es] the safety catch of meaning," and the reader is drawn into an endless precession of unanchored signs: "finally, he does not decode, he *overcodes*; he does not decipher, he produces" (Barthes, "The Rustle of Language" 42). This passage could have been written to describe the readings of the governess from *Turn*, or of the incautious reader of James.

They are equally applicable to readings of Adam's character. Like a sartorial version of Poe's Man of the Crowd, he resists being read: as Poe phrased it, "'*er lasst sich nicht lesen*'- it cannot be read." Adam's unchanging sartorial self-representation materializes a different semiotic structure than we have so far considered, for in the second book of the novel, his dress embodies neither the symbol nor the index. Adam's dress is instead an ultimately flexible sign, a sign that contains multiple (all possible) referents, a sign that never changes no matter to what referent it points. It thus seems to disarticulate sign from referent. Adam's dress becomes a simulacrum.

Adam's uniform is pure form, as the word itself might imply (uni-, or one, form), pure representation. Adam's sartorial signs refer only to themselves, not to any external meaning. Adam's uniform, like fashion itself, and like Baudrillard's "spectacle of the code," refers to signification itself, to the code itself: to the structure by which we make meaning from signs. According to Baudrillard, the simulacrum is the sign under the condition of hyperreality: a sign

that refers, not to a real referent, but only to the system of signs. The sign-system is emptied of reference, of the real, by the action of capitalism; by positioning everything in terms of exchangeability, it produces an endless set of exchanges. The simulacrum might be imagined as the Peircean symbol, but with its inherent semiotic distance infinitely expanded; the distance that allows interpretation becomes negation or erasure of the real. The simulacrum thus *exposes* the absence of the referent, the absence of the real: the void at the center.

This central void is what Wharton, Woolf, and H.G. Wells, and others saw in *The Golden Bowl*. The central absence is precisely what Wells lampooned so viciously in *Boon* in the image of the kitten, the eggshell, and the string reverently placed on the high altar: what Wells seems to have disliked in James's late work is precisely the overriding sense of a meaning that is heavily elaborated and insisted upon, but whose referent is finally unlocatable. Even Henry's own brother, William, wrote plaintively to him on October 22, 1905, after the publication of *The Golden Bowl*, to complain of "the method of narration by interminable elaboration of suggestive reference (I don't know what to call it, but you know what I mean)." It is almost as though James wanted to fulfill in *The Golden Bowl* Barthes's encapsulation of fashion's operation: "Fashion thus proposes this precious paradox of a *semantic system whose only goal is to disappoint the meaning it luxuriantly elaborates*" (Barthes, *The Fashion System* 288).

Adam's uniform, then, presents us with a new significatory relation, one with which James was experimenting in his late work, and one which encapsulates the postmodern logic of fashion (somewhat paradoxically, since we arrive at this logic of fashion precisely through the refusal of

fashion, the anti-fashion of the uniform).[224] Fashion, like Baudrillard's self-referential code, offers a kind of enclosed, hermetic, closed system of reference: "Fashion can be defined only by itself" (Barthes, *The Fashion System* 287). Fashion too, like the simulacrum and like Adam's uniform, is a significatory tautology: "from signifiers to signified, a purely reflexive process is established, in the course of which the signified is emptied, as it were, of all content, without, however losing anything of its power to designate" (Barthes *The Fashion System* 287-88). Fashion, and Adam's uniform, both signify without designating: signify signification without referent, the act of signification itself.

But what these finally designate is humanness itself, the act of making meaning. The signifier becomes a mirror reflecting back to the reader her own acts of interpretation. Barthes draws out this function of both fashion and something like Baudrillard's spectacular signifier:

> Like logic, Fashion is defined by the infinite variation of a single tautology; like logic, Fashion seeks equivalences, validities, not truths; and like logic, Fashion is stripped of content, but not of meaning. A kind of machine for maintaining meaning without ever fixing it, it is forever a disappointed meaning, but it is nevertheless a meaning: without content, it then becomes the spectacle human beings grant themselves of their power to make the insignificant signify; Fashion then appears as an exemplary form of the general act of signification, thus rejoining the very being of literature, which is to offer to read not the meaning of things but their signification: hence it becomes the sign of the "properly human." (Barthes, *The Fashion System* 288).

This, then, is the work of fashion. And we might replace "fashion" with "literature" in this passage and find it equally true. This making of meaning, "the sign of the 'properly human,'" *makes* us human; we make meaning, and whether or not that meaning is true in a

[224] See Joseph; Nathan; Craik, "The Cultural Politics of the Uniform"; and Craik, *Uniforms Exposed* for more information on how uniforms function. For previous work on the concept of anti-fashion, and the related concept of subcultural fashion, see Davis, "Antifashion: The Vicissitudes of Negation" and Hebdige.

transcendentally-guaranteed fashion, in and of itself, it is the act of meaning-making that matters: "forever a disappointed meaning, but it is nevertheless a meaning." James, as we have seen, did not erase *all* the fringes that make us human in his late work; even his late novels retain enough traces of dress (and other things we trail behind us through life) to serve as waypoints for the astute reader: from these traces we can make meaning, and by so doing create both James's characters and ourselves as human.

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