

Subjective Obstructions

Henry James, Queer Theory, and
Psychoanalysis

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Abstract

This thesis uses Kleinian psychoanalysis to illuminate the psychological predicaments that are manifested in the novels of Henry James and in contemporary queer theory. It argues that both queer theory and Henry James Studies have failed to draw upon non-Lacanian schools of psychoanalytic thought, and that, as a result, the accounts they offer of sexuality and of James's work are severely partial. This thesis aims to expand both fields by describing in detail some of the less well-analysed subjective dramas contained in James's novels. At the same time, it seeks by engaging in close readings of queer theory to show how that field's constitutive aversion to psychoanalytic inquiry has rendered it peculiarly blind to the psychic structures that covertly determine the shapes its own discourse may take. In the introduction, I identify and interpret a critical disposition that prevails in Henry James Studies and queer theory alike, which I call 'ambivalent psychology': the self-defeating assumption that fictional persons do not possess variegated and comprehensible psychic profiles. Chapter one seeks to understand the motivations and effects of queer theory's attraction to melancholy as a rhetorical style, and locates in James's novel *Roderick Hudson* an implicit critique of this field's investment in the figure of the depressive. In chapter two, I engage the subject of sexuality and vision in feminist and queer theory through an unorthodox reading of *The Bostonians*, which I see as a surprisingly sympathetic portrait of its acutely unlikeable protagonist, Basil Ransom. Chapter three argues that contemporary trans theory shares with *The Golden Bowl*'s Maggie Verver a persuasive, gratifying, but delusory belief that knowledge and violence are necessarily linked. Together, these explorations of James's texts and of queer theory offer revisionary accounts of both fields by reacquainting them with the maligned conceptual armature of psychoanalysis.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References. A version of the epilogue has been published under the title “One Remembers Eugenio”: Polyglot James’ in *The Henry James Review*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2020, pp. 289–294.

Introduction: Legible Characters

Gertrude, however, had to struggle with a great accumulation of obstructions, both of the subjective, as the metaphysicians say, and of the objective, order; and indeed it is no small part of the purpose of this little history to set forth her struggle.

—Henry James, *The Europeans* (41)

‘A narrow grave-yard in the heart of a bustling, indifferent city, seen from the windows of a gloomy-looking inn, is at no time an object of enlivening suggestion; and the spectacle is not at its best when the mouldy tombstones and funereal umbrage have received the ineffectual refreshment of a dull, moist snowfall.’ (James, *Europeans* 1) Thus begins Henry James’s cheerfullest novel. Like the ‘bustling’ pedestrians caught out in the sleet, a reader who has come to this little book expecting to enjoy the springlike glow of James’s comedy may well at this moment regret that she did not put on something warmer before she ventured into *The Europeans*. For though ‘the calendar . . . indicate[s] that the blessed vernal season is already six weeks old’, ‘the air is thickened by . . . frosty drizzle’ (1): ‘no depressing influence is absent from the scene’ (1). An inauspicious beginning, the shivering reader may think, to the pastoral reverie that the novel’s reputation has promised.¹ As the opening of the novel continues, however, it becomes clear that despite its dourly objective tone the text’s vision of the city as a place of untimely and hostile coldness is not an impartial one. It is the vision of one person in particular: ‘a lady who stood looking out of one of the windows’ (1). This lady, whose morose outlook we are not compelled to share, becomes over the course of the opening paragraph a magnetic object of interest and sympathy. ‘The lady at the window’ (2) is evidently unhappy: she moves around her room ‘with a restless step’ (1), brushes her hair ‘with a movement half caressing, half corrective’ (2); ‘her face . . . proclaim[s] that she [is] a very ill-pleased woman.’ (2) But the source of the lady’s frustration is left unstated; we are given only her reflections on the scene outside her window. ‘[T]he head-stones in the grave-yard . . . seemed to be holding themselves askance to keep [the sleet] out of their faces’ (2); ‘the people in front of the grave-yard . . . projected themselves upon [an omnibus] in a compact body—a movement suggesting the scramble for places in a life-boat at sea’ (2); ‘a tall wooden church-spire, painted white, rose high into the vagueness of the snow-flakes.’ (2) Later in the novel, we will be shown some obstacles to this lady’s happiness, such as her dependence upon her dubiously legitimate husband and her unfamiliar relatives for financial security. Yet the opening of the novel invites us to wonder as

¹ Andrew Taylor, for instance, suggests in his introduction to *The Europeans* that ‘there is . . . something magically enclosed and protected about the world of the book’ (xxi).

well about the role in this woman's inner life of forces and pressures that are less easily specified. The 'tall wooden church-spire' is the novel's first emblem of these obscurely disquieting psychic formations: 'for reasons of her own she thought it the ugliest thing she had ever seen. She hated it, she despised it; it threw her into a state of irritation that was quite out of proportion to any sensible motive. She had never known herself to care so much about church-spires.' (2–3)

Queer theory would seem at first glance to provide a climate hospitable to speculations about the psychic origins of the lady at the window's unhappiness; it could be imagined as a well-heated hotel room overlooking the frozen graveyard of her self. For the preoccupations of this lady—this particular lady's name is Eugenia, and she is the Baroness Münster—are plainly apprehensible in terms of gender and sexuality. Eugenia's frustration is, most obviously, inseparable from her disciplinary and palliative staging of her self as feminine spectacle: she punctuates the circulation of her 'much-trimmed skirts' about her room by repeatedly looking in 'a mirror suspended above the toilet-table' (1). 'Here she paused a moment, gave a pinch to her waist with her two hands, or raised these members—they were very plump and pretty—to the multifold braids of her hair[.] . . . An attentive observer might have fancied that during these periods of desultory self-inspection her face forgot its melancholy' (1–2). The juxtaposition of Eugenia's coldly comforting femininity with a warmer experience of masculine creativity is not subtle: 'In the chimney-place was a red-hot fire which emitted a small blue flame; and in front of the fire . . . sat a young man who was busily plying a pencil.' (1) Later in the novel, when she engages in her mass seduction of the Wentworths, Eugenia exhibits a disregard for sexual difference that resonates with queer theory's principled aversion to heteronormative frameworks. The father of that clan is the first to succumb to Eugenia's 'beautiful smile' when she and Felix arrive at the house of their American cousins (31): 'He had a feeling that it was his duty, so long as the Baroness looked at him that way, to meet her glance with his own scrupulously adjusted, consciously frigid organs of vision; but on this occasion he failed to perform his duty to the last. He looked away toward his daughters.' (32) These daughters, Charlotte and Gertrude, are even less capable than their father of keeping their organs frigid in the face of Eugenia's flagrantly sexual appeal:

'My cousins are very pretty,' said the Baroness, turning her eyes from one to the other. 'Your daughters are very handsome, sir.'

Charlotte blushed quickly; she had never yet heard her personal appearance alluded to in a loud, expressive voice. Gertrude looked away—not at Felix; she was extremely pleased.
(32)

With every member of the Wentworth crowd, by the end of her charm offensive, aurally and visually glued to the Baroness, the meeting of the Americans and the Europeans consummates its resemblance to a terribly exciting if somewhat stilted sex show whose principal attraction is the bold foreign woman.

‘They were all standing round his sister,’ Felix thinks, ‘as if they were expecting her to acquit herself of the exhibition of some peculiar faculty, some brilliant talent. Their attitude seemed to imply that she was a kind of conversational mountebank, attired, intellectually, in gauze and spangles.’ (37) Dualistic models of sexual orientation are unlikely to do justice to Eugenia’s erotically charged relationships with Mr Wentworth, Gertrude, Charlotte, Clifford, Robert Acton, Lizzie Acton, Mr Brand, and her brother Felix. Nor are they well-equipped to explain the ‘sudden emotion[.]’ that, ‘unexpectedly, she felt . . . rising in her heart’ as ‘[s]he kept looking round the circle’ (38). Fleeting spurts of affect, desires unbound from heterosexual schemata, dissonant experiences of gendered embodiment: these are objects whose elucidation we are accustomed to seek amid the well-stocked shelves labelled ‘queer theory’.

It is surprising, then, that Eugenia’s distinctive psychic life should have received since the advent of queer theory almost no critical attention.² Such neglect can in part be explained by the low profile that *The Europeans* keeps among Jamesians; this lapidary novel appears to have flummoxed scholars more familiar with the cathedral-like structures of James’s late texts. Yet the dearth of new ideas about Eugenia specifically is related as well to the formidable position within James Studies of one quite old and very influential interpretation of her. That interpretation is Leo Bersani’s in *A Future for Astyanax*, a text whose masterful application of deconstruction and psychoanalysis to the topic of ‘character and desire in literature’ would prove exemplary for the generation of queer theorists who followed Bersani.³ In a chapter entitled ‘The Jamesian Lie’, Bersani developed an account of Eugenia so sophisticated and alluring that no other description of the Baroness as a person has seemed necessary. Eugenia, Bersani writes there,

lives the novelistically dangerous life of a character whose reality depends on the willingness of other characters to expand their own natures by inventing one for her. . . . [Robert Acton]

² Anna Despotopoulou’s brief remarks on Eugenia in her article “‘No natural place anywhere’: Women’s Precarious Mobility and Cosmopolitanism in James’s Novels’ constitute perhaps the only interpretation of the Baroness Münster’s distinctive psychological predicament in modern scholarship. Despotopoulou notices that ‘while . . . freedom from specific cultural and national identification constitutes the utopic ideal of cosmopolitanism, it creates a financial and ethnic insecurity in Eugenia[,] who . . . tries to negotiate a desire for rootedness with a past of displacement.’ (146) Also noteworthy is Chamika Kalupahana’s postcolonial reading of *The Europeans*, which contains some evocative ideas about Eugenia, such as the claim that the Baroness ‘subconsciously identifies’ (129) with the Wentworths’ Black cook, Azarina.

³ Bersani’s relationship to queer theory is complicated. His writing sometimes betrays a thinly veiled disdain for the brand of scholarship on sexuality and gender that became fashionable in the 1990s. ‘To what extent’, he mulls, for instance, in *Homos*, ‘does queer theory do more than add new categories, and occasionally new discursive styles, to classical leftist analysis?’ (72) The question is evidently rhetorical. Still, Bersani’s texts are generally regarded as indispensable if not central to the queer theory canon. As Mikko Tuhkanen puts it in his introduction to a volume appositely entitled *Leo Bersani: Queer Theory and Beyond*, ‘Bersani’s work constitutes an archive whose potentiality has not been exhausted for queer thought.’ (22)

finally settles for the vulgar view that Eugenia 'is a woman who will lie'; the other view would be that she is a woman incessantly open to interpretation. . . . With Eugenia, James dramatizes the possibility of an intentionality unsupported by motive, that is, of a desiring self so responsive and so indefinite that it is created entirely (but never limited) by the responses to its performances. (136–37)

For Bersani, Eugenia represents an attractively paradoxical form of being, 'the freedom *not* to be' (130): 'in Jamesian terminology,' writes Bersani, 'we could say that, ideally, character would be equivalent to the elaboration of an interested version of character. Society would then be an exciting opportunity for self-inventive behaviour.' (129) If Bersani's seductive interpretation is correct, then any substantive account of Eugenia's mental life would traduce the utopian flight from psychic determinism that her quicksilver sociability performs. It is in this idea that I wish to identify a logical flaw which recurs throughout James scholarship, and which it is the intention of this thesis to address. Bersani's reading of Eugenia, it seems to me, belongs fundamentally to the same category of definitive interpretation that it summarily dismisses as 'vulgar'. Bersani cherishes 'self-inventive behaviour', yet he cannot help but produce a description of the 'nature' of one specific 'desiring self': Eugenia's. In this thesis, I am calling this confused position, which may be observed in Henry James Studies and queer theory alike, 'ambivalence towards psychology' or 'ambivalent psychology', because it involves both an explicit rejection of the conceptual armature of psychology and a tacit adoption of its basic assumptions. More specifically, ambivalent psychologists claim to believe that the mental lives of fictional characters are absent or inaccessible to us while they develop psychologically grounded descriptions of them regardless. The ambivalent psychologists thus undermine their conviction that James's characters are not amenable to psychological interpretation, that they do not have pre-existing inner selves that are legible to readers.

The influence that 'The Jamesian Lie' has exercised upon subsequent James scholarship is best measured with reference not to the many pieces of criticism that explicitly present themselves as its descendants,⁴ but to one that reproduces without citation its distinctive argument. 'Eugenia's is an indeterminate, fluxional identity that occupies a number of positions simultaneously,' Andrew Taylor writes (xxiii); for Taylor, Eugenia's 'role-playing' involves 'a view of the self as heterogenous, de-centred and implicated with other subjects, rather than unified and autonomous'. (xxvi) That Taylor should consider his reading of Eugenia uncontroversial enough not to require an indication of its ancestry demonstrates, I think, that Bersani's interpretation of *The Europeans* has achieved the status of

⁴ See for instance the essays contained in *The Henry James Review's* special issue on Bersani and James, especially Caserio, Jafri, and Savoy 'Casse'.

common sense among Jamesians. Taylor's description of Eugenia also makes clear that the enduring appeal of ambivalent psychology rests, despite its denigration of the 'autonomous' self, upon the more or less openly incoherent fantasy of liberation that was expressed in Bersani's work through the idea of 'the freedom *not* to be.' 'One reaction to the performative style of Eugenia' within *The Europeans*, Taylor suggests, 'is the retrenchment of sincerity as a normative, proscribed aspect of behaviour; an alternative is the emancipation of behaviour into possibilities of feeling and attachment triggered by such liberating theatricality.' ([sic] xxii) Taylor's typo—given the contrastive structure of the sentence, 'proscribed' must be an error for 'prescribed'—unwittingly illuminates the authoritarian imaginary that sustains the ambivalent psychologists' pursuit of freedom. For while sincerity may or may not be proscribed by certain inhabitants of James's texts, it is always vigorously proscribed by the freedom-loving Jamesian, who cannot allow it to contaminate any character in whom he seeks a hero.

Powerful as his example has been, Bersani is not the only person responsible for the suspicion with which many Jamesians today view 'naively' psychological interpretations of James's characters; nor is he for my purposes the most important. This thesis contends that the ambivalence towards psychology manifested within some quarters of James Studies reflects the influence of queer theory writ large: that widespread hostility to styles of reading which display an investment in basic psychoanalytic method is a problematic legacy of that field. It is problematic because, despite the frequency with which that method is characterized within the field as retrograde, fanciful, credulous, or dull, it offers not only a vital resource for the kinds of inquiry which queer theory sets out to pursue, but because it can cogently explain as well some of queer theory's own discursive routines. Bersani developed some of those routines, but he is not the writer whose queer credentials bear most visibly the stamp of their Jamesian origins, nor the one whose influence upon either field has been most decisive. In the next part of this introduction, I will show how this other writer formulated and bequeathed both to queer theory and to James Studies a distinctive resistance to the idea that fictional persons possess variegated and comprehensible psychic profiles; to the idea, in short, that they are legible characters.

Without a Subjectivity: Queer Theory and 'the freedom not to be'

Like Bersani, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is a writer whose relationship to psychoanalysis cannot be described as casual. Her writing is consistently sensitive to the structural complexity of inner life; she repeatedly engaged in explicit critique of psychoanalytic discourse;⁵ and, in her memoir *A Dialogue on*

⁵ 'Is the Rectum Straight?: Identification and Identity in *The Wings of the Dove*' is one example; another is 'How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay: The War on Effeminate Boys.'

Love, she recounted at length her own experience of psychotherapy. Yet despite the breadth, depth, and endurance of Sedgwick's interest in psychoanalysis, she remains (like Bersani again) a figure whose most influential ideas have been for Jamesians those which resist the impulse to see in James's texts the elaboration of coherent subjectivities. 'Is the Rectum Straight?: Identification and Identity in *The Wings of the Dove*', Sedgwick's only extensive analysis of a novel by James, is a good example of her characteristic mode because it contains both a highly visible attentiveness to psychic life in general and a veiled reluctance to accord to James's fictional selves any more than an ideological or ephemeral status. It is importantly as an engagement with psychoanalysis that 'Is the Rectum Straight?' is framed: 'Psychoanalytic thought, damaged at its origins,' Sedgwick writes in her introduction, 'remains virtually the only heuristic available to Western interpreters for unfolding sexual meanings' (74). Following this principle, much of 'Is the Rectum Straight?' describes subjectivity and desire in James's fiction using a recognizably if loosely psychoanalytic lexicon. 'Kate Croy's construction as a woman, her sexing and gendering,' Sedgwick writes, for instance, 'have her father's homosexual disgrace installed at their very core.' (77) 'Milly's "self"', similarly, 'is consolidated as female' (86) by her triangular involvement with Kate and Densher. 'Masculinity as Densher inhabits it', meanwhile, 'is a roller-coaster drama of sadism and masochism' (92). Sedgwick's construal of the novel's inhabitants as psychoanalytically discussable beings is, however, violently suspended in the face of the one that she is most interested in. 'The character in *The Wings of the Dove* whom it would be safest to call a homosexual,' Sedgwick begins her close reading of the novel, 'is presented shorn of any of James's celebrated subjectivity effects; he may indeed represent a man without a subjectivity.' (75) This exception is a crucial one because for Sedgwick this man, Lionel Croy, 'is at the very source of the novel's energies.' (77) It is his 'homosexual disgrace' that is responsible for 'Kate's way of being sexed and gendered', which is, in turn, 'what propagates gender and sexuality across the rest of the novel and across its characters' (78). In Sedgwick's eyes, *The Wings of the Dove* cannot tell us anything at all about Lionel Croy's psychic life; his formative influence upon his daughter is for Sedgwick crucially that of an identity, not a subject. 'The shaping pressure he brings to bear on his world', as she puts it, 'does not transform it in the image of his specific queer desire but rather in the image of his specific queer stigmatization—"the force of his particular type."' (79) 'Indeed,' Sedgwick goes so far as to say, 'it is *only* the world's word that constitutes his homosexuality and himself; he lacks not only the dignity of a subjectivity, but even the dignity of any actual desires.' (79)

Sedgwick's other reading of James's fiction, 'The Beast in the Closet', provides a fuller picture of her suspicion regarding what she sarcastically calls James's 'celebrated subjectivity effects'. In this piece, as in 'Rectum', Sedgwick sets out to make visible the occluded, structuring force within a text by James of homosexual identity. She also again in connection with her project insists that some of James's

characters are incomplete. Sedgwick argues here that the availability of 'The Beast in the Jungle' to her interpretation rests upon the story's severely restrained depiction of May Bartram; that her account of the text, indeed, contains information about this character that James does not divulge. 'The Beast in the Closet' is rightly famous for its elegance and brio; in order to highlight the flaws that are hidden by its dazzling lucidity, I will have to execute upon it a fairly laborious close reading.

In 'The Beast in the Closet: James and the Writing of Homosexual Panic', the penultimate chapter and 'genetically . . . inaugurating investigation' (183) of her book *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick develops a thorough and genuinely revisionary interpretation of James's story 'The Beast in the Jungle.' The tale, which narrates an anxious bachelor's persistent, furtive obsession with a mysterious fate to which he, John Marcher, feels destined, and his decades-long friendship with a single woman, May Bartram, whose death he experiences as the manifestation of that fate, had before Sedgwick's essay been understood as the story of an insufficiently proactive gentleman's correct if tragically belated realization that his friendship ought to have been a marriage. '[V]irtually all the James criticism', as Sedgwick puts it, 'assume[s] without any space for doubt that the moral point of the story is not only that May Bartram desired John Marcher but that John Marcher *should have desired* May Bartram.' (198) Sedgwick argues instead that the tale is an instructive if only partially self-conscious dramatization of 'male homosexual panic', which, as she had argued in *Between Men* and repeats more than once in *Epistemology*, is 'the most private, psychologized form in which many . . . western men experience their vulnerability to the social pressure of homophobic blackmail' (qtd. in *Epistemology* 185, ellipsis in text). 'For John Marcher, let us hypothesize,' Sedgwick writes, 'the future secret—the secret of his hidden fate—importantly includes, though it is not necessarily limited to, the possibility of something homosexual. . . . Whatever (Marcher feels) may be to be discovered along those lines, it is, in the view of his panic, *one* thing, and the worst thing, "the superstition of the Beast".' (205) Thus what Marcher experiences, at the end of the story, as the realization that he ought to have desired May only concludes for Sedgwick the successful installation within him of his culture's prohibition against homosexuality. 'John Marcher', she writes, 'becomes . . . not the finally self-knowing man who is capable of heterosexual love, but the irredeemably self-ignorant man who embodies and enforces heterosexual compulsion.' (210)

Sedgwick's reading of 'The Beast in the Jungle' is for the most part rigorous and assured; her frequent quotations from the text are always accompanied by vivid interpretations. 'What May Bartram sees and Marcher does not', Sedgwick writes, for instance, 'is that the process of incorporating—of embodying—the Law of masculine self-ignorance is the one that has the least in the world to do with feeling. . . . May Bartram answers Marcher's question, ["how can the thing I've never felt at all be the thing I was marked out to feel?"] "You take your 'feelings' for granted. You were to suffer your fate.

That was not necessarily to know it”.’ (208–209) This style of interpretation, which ‘The Beast in the Closet’ is full of, implies that James’s text contains coded information about the kinds of people that John Marcher and May Bartram are; that, in this instance, May has an infinitely clearer understanding of John’s imprisonment by homosexual panic than he himself does. Yet Sedgwick sometimes very firmly claims that such information is not in fact provided by James. ‘The first (in some ways the only) thing we learn about John Marcher,’ Sedgwick writes, for example, ‘is that he has a “secret”.’ (201) Sedgwick’s cryptic (tantalizingly bracketed) suggestion that we know virtually nothing about a character in ‘The Beast in the Jungle’ is elaborated more fully in a passage concerning May Bartram that precedes her close reading of the text, and that is again energized by the mystique of the parenthesis. ‘Whoever May Bartram is and whatever she wants,’ Sedgwick writes,

clearly at least the story has the Jamesian negative virtue of not pretending to present her rounded and whole. She is an imposing character, but—and—a bracketed one. . . . Of May Bartram’s history, of her emotional determinants, of her erotic structures the reader learns very little; we are permitted, if we pay attention at all, to *know* that we have learned very little. . . . ‘The Beast in the Jungle’ seems to give the reader permission to imagine some female needs and desires and gratifications that are not structured exactly in the image of Marcher’s or of the story’s own laws. (199)

This passage, emphasizing the severe restrictions to our knowledge of May Bartram, is not compatible with the reading of ‘The Beast in the Jungle’ that follows it. For Sedgwick goes on to demonstrate forcefully that, despite May’s ‘bracketed’ appearance, we can in fact learn a great deal about her sexuality and inner motivations from James’s subtle but not parsimonious representation of her. Take, for contrast, this passage from the end of the chapter: ‘the care and the creativity of [May’s] investment in [John], the imaginative reach of her fostering his homosexual potential as a route back to his truer perception of herself, are forms of gender-political resilience in her as well as of love. They are forms of excitement, too, of real though insufficient power, and of pleasure.’ (210) There is a stark and theoretically problematic contrast between the assertiveness of this description of May Bartram and the ‘humility’ that Sedgwick conjures us to observe at the beginning of her essay.

Sedgwick’s shifting attitude to her interpretation’s epistemological status could be ascribed to critical politesse; she may be attempting merely to soothe our battered pride with the idea that what has caused us to overlook the meaning of ‘The Beast in the Jungle’ is the tale’s artful suppression of detail rather than our own Marcher-like obtuseness. There is certainly in her renunciation of knowingness a tacit reproach to the overconfident reader, the one who does not ‘pay attention at all’. Yet I think there are reasons to believe that Sedgwick’s incomplete disavowal of her understanding of the text, and in particular of the psychic lives of its characters, is more closely related to the structure of her argument.

Specifically, I think that it is a concealed defence against a subjective position that she sees as a principal vehicle of homophobia. To perceive the connection between these superficially disparate elements of Sedgwick's argument, we will have to return to the opening section of 'The Beast in the Closet,' where she reprises the understanding of male homosocial bonds that she had developed in *Between Men*:

until about the time of the Restoration, homophobia in England, while intense, was for the most part highly theologized[.] . . . Before the end of the eighteenth century, however, . . . a much sharper-eyed and acutely psychologized secular homophobia was current. (183–84)

[A] newly active concept, a secular, psychologized homophobia[.] . . . seemed to offer a new proscriptive or descriptive purchase on the whole continuum of male homosocial bonds . . . (184)

Thus, at least since the eighteenth century in England and America, the continuum of male homosocial bonds has been brutally structured by a secularized and psychologized homophobia . . . (185)

In these remarks, Sedgwick adumbrates a link between the terrorizing vigilantism of modern homophobia and its newly 'psychologized' form. Her comments on the place of Gothic fiction in that development speak further of homosexual panic's distinctively psychological expression: 'homophobia found its most apt and ramified embodiment', Sedgwick writes, '[in] Romantic novels in which a male hero is in a close, usually murderous relation to another male figure, in some respects his "double," to whom he seems to be mentally transparent.' (186) 'The transmutability of the intrapsychic with the intersubjective in these plots where one man's mind could be read by that of the feared and desired other', among other things, for Sedgwick, 'signified, at the very moment of crystallization of the modern, capitalism-marked oedipal family, the inextricability from that formation of a strangling double bind in male homosocial constitution.' (187)

It is in the light of Sedgwick's view of the 'paranoid Gothic' (203) that I think we may best understand her puzzling reluctance to acknowledge that her interpretation of 'The Beast in the Jungle' is an exploration of the psychic lives of its characters. Because if her account of Gothic fiction is correct, then something that looks very similar to that kind of exploration is one of homophobia's most durable and cruel mechanisms. There thus seems to be for Sedgwick an unwholesome resemblance between the exemplary psychoanalytic reader and the ghostly doubles who haunt the heroes of the paranoid Gothic; to apply the analyst's penetrating gaze to the minds of James's characters would be in this scenario to subject them to precisely the dreadful telepathy that victims of homosexual panic fear. It is to avoid an abject identification with homophobic fantasy's vengeful spectre, therefore, that Sedgwick repudiates violently if ineffectively her insight into the minds of John Marcher and May Bartram.

To trace the subsequent development within James Studies of Bersani's and Sedgwick's ambivalence towards psychology, I wish now to turn to the work of two Jamesians who have hewn closely to their examples. In the writing of Christopher Lane and Kevin Ohi, James's fiction is presented as a body of work whose resistance to norms of sexual identity involves a radical opposition to the notion of subjective legibility itself. And yet, like Sedgwick, both of these writers make discoveries about James's texts that are not compatible with their explicit denigrations of the idea that James's fiction contains intelligible representations of selves.⁶

'If James stopped representing his characters' innermost being, rendering their conflicts and difficulties a surface phenomenon,' Christopher Lane announces in 'Jamesian Inscrutability', 'this is . . . because his notion of character—ultimately freed from a conventional idea of depth—confronted a dimension of being that has no content.' (244–45) For Lane, who following Bersani styles his suspicion of identity as impeccably psychoanalytic, 'James's aesthetic principle rules out authenticity and disclosure' (248).⁷ 'According to Freud and James,' Lane writes, 'sexuality is not the kernel of our being (nothingness and trauma are), which means that sexuality results in shock and damage, not meaning and fructification. Sexuality leads not to knowledge, they both tell us, but to profound heuristic difficulties.' (247) While 'Jamesian Inscrutability' does not engage substantially with any of James's texts, the fragility of its argument is nonetheless intimated by its ill-managed ambivalence towards the biographical discourse that it sets out to contest. 'James's inscrutability might reasonably lead to caution among his recent biographers and critics', Lane writes; 'it might preempt the zeal with which we sort through James's prose and letters, hoping to unearth a conclusive answer to the "riddle" of his art and life' (244). Notwithstanding his stern recommendation to hyperactive biographers, Lane concludes his essay with an exercise in precisely the kind of biographical fantasy that the body of his essay castigates. 'We end up, then,' Lane muses, returning to the anecdote with which he began the article, 'with James on a boat in the middle of the Venetian lagoon, trying—and failing—to sink [Constance Fenimore] Woolson's dresses. Further evidence, as it were, that what was traumatic resists depth, lying instead on the surface' (252). Biography, too, appears in Lane's article to be uncannily buoyant; for all his deprecatory prodding, he cannot stop it from rising to the surface of his text.⁸

Ambivalence towards psychology is more fully expressed in Lane's article 'Framing Fears, Reading Designs: The Homosexual Art of Painting in James, Wilde, and Beerbohm.' 'The meaning that

⁶ Another important ambivalent psychologist within James Studies is Eric Savoy. See especially his article 'The Queer Subject of "The Jolly Corner"', which describes 'the unbinding of the coherent subject' (3) in that story.

⁷ Lane is clearly inspired by Bersani, whom he cites often and approvingly.

⁸ See also in this regard Lane's identification of Freudian theory with Freud's life: 'If we read James from the "Freudian" perspective that emerged after Freud's death, in 1939, we affirm claims that Freud and James rendered implausible'. (247)

circulates between and among [James's] characters', Lane declares at the start of this essay, 'cannot answer or resolve their enigma, or render their truth stable and legible.' (923) Yet Lane goes on to demonstrate in his close reading of James's tale 'The Liar' that a legible truth is contained in every outlandish fib that the story's titular character tells. Each swashbuckling anecdote with which Colonel Clement Capadose regales James's narrator, Oliver Lyon, in the tale's first section 'elaborates', as Lane notices, 'a fantasy of contact, intimacy, and allegiance with another man.' (931) Correctly, I think, Lane at this point in his essay sees these anecdotes as distorted but quite revealing articulations of the Colonel's desire. Of the Colonel's claim that he once rescued a friend who had been accidentally buried alive, for instance, Lane writes that 'although the fantasy is empirically spurious, it is not in any simple sense *untrue*. In other words, . . . the story sustains a truth for him because it has already occurred as an imaginary scenario.' (931) The quite supple understanding of truth that Lane displays in this kind of statement does not seem to be a product of the unwavering skepticism that he champions in his introduction, where he writes that

the lie is precisely inside, not behind or outside, the structure of the representation. This proximity between representation and deceit makes interpreting the lie all the more difficult because it subverts any certainty that the listener or reader can recover, beneath the various layers of falsehood, an untainted ontological truth . . . (927)

At the end of his reading of 'The Liar', as if retroactively to cancel the insights that he has been developing, Lane returns to the theme of the unknowable. Restating his preoccupation with 'the unsaid and the oversaid elements of the colonel's desire and the impossibility of its accurate representation,' (932) Lane argues here that the story's dénouement, in which Colonel Capadose destroys Lyon's portrait of him, is a climactic flourish of Jamesian ambiguity. '[T]he text never declares the real . . . reason for his violence', Lane suggests; 'it substitutes this mystery for another version of truth[: the revelation of Mrs Capadose's complicity with her husband's deceit]' (935). If we follow the interpretative method that Lane has exploited for the majority of his reading, however, we can perceive very clearly the motive behind the Colonel's auto-iconoclastic gesture. The Colonel stabs his image 'exactly as if he were stabbing a human victim' ('Liar' 954): evidently, the person he wishes to kill is himself. In the light of this moment, it becomes clear (if we permit ourselves to see) that many of the Colonel's lies are expressions of that desire. When he tells Lyon that he was once taken for dead after being 'pitched out of a dogcart' and lay 'completely insensible . . . for three whole months' (919–20), or wonders aloud whether a woman whom he evocatively names Harriet Pearson will 'throw vitriol' on him (949), he is exhibiting his fantasies about being violently damaged. Clearly, there is some resistance in the Colonel to the lure of suicide: this is presumably why he chooses to disinter his prematurely entombed 'friend'. But it is also clear, more disturbingly, that the Colonel actually experiences his lies

as miniature acts of self-destruction. This is apparent from Lyon's suspicion that Mrs Capadose covers for her husband: she 'repair[s] the Colonel's ravages', he perceptively thinks (938). Well may the artist see the Colonel's destruction of his portrait as 'a sort of figurative suicide' (954); for the Liar, it seems, the only appropriate self-image is a mutilated one.⁹

Today, the type of queerly inflected James criticism that I am tracking is most fluently practised by Kevin Ohi. His book *Henry James and the Queerness of Style* 'seeks', as Ohi writes in its first paragraph, to find in James's style a queerness that, not circumscribed by whatever sexualities or identities might be represented by the texts, makes for what is most challenging about recent queer accounts of culture: a radical antisociality that seeks to unyoke sexuality from the communities—gay or straight—that would tame it, a disruption that thwarts efforts to determine political goals according to a model of representation, the corrosive effect of queerness, in short, on received forms of meaning, representation, and identity. (1)

For Ohi, the 'redoubtable complexity' of James's late style manifests its resistance to the idea of objective description, and in particular to the objective description of mental life: 'this eminently "psychological" writer', Ohi suggests, 'imagines consciousness in curiously nonpsychological terms and formulates a "realism" that does something other than represent reality' (2).

The grounding assumption of Ohi's account of late James is that the ornate style of James's texts constitutes an insuperable barrier to realist representation. It is as if, for Ohi, the thematic contents of James's late novels are positioned on the other side of a beautiful stained-glass window, decorated with abstract figures, through which it is impossible to see in any detail: James's style. In his introduction, Ohi casts James's reader as a rather pathetic figure, hopelessly baffled by this 'surface of such redoubtable complexity' (2). 'Henry James's writing continually throws the reader off balance', Ohi writes,

with disorienting mixings of register and sudden shifts of tone, with unexpected syntactical inversions and equivocal reifications that hover at indeterminate levels of abstraction, with pronouns that divide their allegiances between any number of more or less distant antecedents, with symbolic and figural language that spurns subservience, determining plots and becoming visible on depicted landscapes, and with coercively authoritative voices that unexpectedly cede their perspective or suddenly give way to ironic deflation . . . (1–2)

⁹ I think that my interpretation of 'The Liar' complements rather than challenges Lane's suggestion that the Colonel's lies are disguised homosexual fantasies. It seems likely to me that the Colonel's suicidal thoughts and his sexuality should be closely linked; that, indeed, the thing that he wishes to destroy in himself should be a form of desire that he understands to be prohibited. I take it that what strikes Lyon as the 'odd[]' absence of 'military exploits' from the Colonel's 'swagger' indicates his commitment to martial discipline. (937)

The readerly space that Ohi conjures here is nightmarish: strange objects float in the gloom, foreground and background are eerily collapsed, inhuman figures swarm the featureless terrain. The silence is broken only by stern commands issuing from disembodied mouths and eruptions of maniacal laughter. This is a compelling analogy for the respective places of style and subject in James's work, but it is not, thankfully, the only one available. A different account of the relationship between 'a surface of . . . redoubtable complexity' and the substance behind or beneath it is provided by Lambert Strether of *The Ambassadors*, in a speech that Ohi—with unwitting irony—describes as 'an impossible lesson' (154). 'The affair', Strether says, 'could n't, no doubt, have been different for me; for it's at the best a tin mould, either fluted and embossed, with ornamental excrescences, or else smooth and dreadfully plain, into which, a helpless jelly, one's consciousness is poured—so that one "takes" the form, as the great cook says, and is more or less compactly held by it: one lives in fine as one can'. (215) Strether is describing his life with these words, but he is also adumbrating a theory of aesthetic form; the 'great cook' is evidently a kind of artist.¹⁰ Strether suggests that the medium alters, sometimes dramatically, the shape of its contents, but that it does not change those contents' intrinsic properties, nor render them (except temporarily, during the process of composition) inaccessible. When finished, the translucent jelly's congealed interior as well as its sculpted surface will be perceptible to the eye; when we consume it, its surface will seem less important. It is especially instructive that Strether's metaphor should treat 'one's consciousness' as a substance that is both plastic and transmissible, since the mental lives of individuals seem for Ohi to be the last thing that James's fluted prose is designed to communicate. 'Sentences no less than characters' psyches are turned inside-out' in *The Wings of the Dove*, Ohi asserts (92), the upturned jelly-mould seemingly lodged in his unconscious; 'the uncertain topographies of identification . . . force one to question a sentence's capacities to "contain" meaning.' (92) Strether's metaphor, on the contrary, implies that inversion could be a condition of meaning rather than an obstacle to it.

Instructive as well about Strether's culinary image is the phantasmatic relationship to the idea of freedom that it expresses. The jelly-mould is an emblem of the limits to self-determination: the

¹⁰ Of the many occasions on which James explicitly links writing with food, the most relevant here is his playful identification in 'The Art of Fiction' of 'a comfortable, good-humoured feeling abroad that a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding, and that our only business with it could be to swallow it.' (44) 'To enjoin upon the novel a moralized reticence about certain topics,' Ohi glosses this passage, 'is also to understand the form in terms of the "subjects" it "contains," a reifying logic where, implicitly, a "novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding."' (*Queerness* 8) Ohi appears to me to assume here that James imagines a pudding as a substance whose container may be ignored without a second thought, but I doubt this is the case. Many kinds of pudding are structured as a syrupy pool enclosed within an edible sponge; it would be foolish, as well as impractical, to discard the sponge. It seems to me that the aim of James's comparison is not 'the disruption of a comfortable model of reading as consumption' (Ohi, *Queerness* 7), but rather to remind us that we may derive pleasure from talking about puddings as well as from eating them.

structure of the tin dictates the form that the jelly will 'take'. 'Still,' Strether nonetheless concedes, 'one has the illusion of freedom' (215). It is this freedom, I wish to suggest, that queer theory's and James Studies' ambivalent psychology is designed to preserve. In different ways, each of the writers that I have discussed in this section presents his argument against the coherent subject as a liberation from it. Bersani's 'freedom *not* to be' is mirrored in Lane's idea that James's 'notion of character' is 'freed from a conventional idea of depth.' Sedgwick's rhetoric is more sophisticated, but it remains in thrall to the illusion of freedom. 'The Beast in the Closet' discreetly casts James as the benign strongman of totalitarian fantasy, a sovereign whose heroic self-restraint paradoxically guarantees the freedom of the governed: he '*gives the reader permission* to imagine some female needs and desires and gratifications that are not structured exactly in the image of Marcher's or of the story's own *laws*' (emphases added). The textual despotism that Ohi evokes belongs to another political imaginary. With a seemingly absolute power to frustrate any reader's desire for meaning, James's style nonetheless for Ohi serves the permanent revolution that 'challeng[es]', 'unyoke[s]', 'disrupt[s]', 'thwarts', and 'corro[des]' 'received forms of meaning, representation, and identity'.

So far, I have shown that queer theory and James Studies harbour an aversion to the idea of the legible character, and that they express this aversion through heroic narratives of liberation from personality that are implicitly and paradoxically authoritarian. In order to get closer to the psychic structure of this distinctive and problematic attitude, as well as to outline a method of reading that might better do justice to James's imagination of selfhood, I wish now to turn to the work of a psychoanalyst who produced valuable interpretations of ways of thinking that are reminiscent of queer theory's ambivalent psychology. Melanie Klein has not been neglected by queer theorists; both Sedgwick and Bersani¹¹ have used her work to support their own arguments. In chapter one of this thesis, I will argue that Sedgwick's understanding of Kleinian theory in particular is not correct. For now, I want to consider some of Klein's insights about the structure of the self and the desire for knowledge, because I think that they can help us to understand the unconscious motivations of queer theory's conflicted attitude towards subjectivity. I am going to suggest that they may assist us to understand as well the arresting psychological predicaments with which James furnishes all of his characters, of whom Eugenia will prove exemplary.

The Breast in the Jungle

¹¹ In *The Culture of Redemption*, Bersani finds in Klein's work a 'theor[y] of the restitutive or redemptive power of cultural forms' that 'gives us extraordinarily diminished views of both our sexuality and our cultural imagination.' (22) This thesis argues on the contrary that Kleinian theory may expand our understandings of sexuality and of imagination.

Unlike queer theorists, Melanie Klein would have us believe that the dissolution of the self is neither desirable nor inevitable. For Klein, on the contrary, an integrated ego is a vital developmental achievement, and a fragmented one typically indicates either immaturity or mental illness. This principle can best be illustrated by a rehearsal of Klein's theory of the mental lives of very young children. Klein believes that 'phantasy-building', as she puts it in a paper called 'Weaning' (1936), 'is the most primitive mental activity[,] and that phantasies are in the mind of the infant almost from birth.' (290) 'It would seem that every stimulus the child receives is immediately responded to by phantasies,' Klein suggests; 'the unpleasant stimuli, including mere frustration, by phantasies of an aggressive kind, the gratifying stimuli by those focusing on pleasure.' (290) 'The first gratification which the child derives from the external world is the satisfaction experienced in being fed', and so 'the object of all these phantasies is, to begin with, the breast of the mother . . . [,] which gives gratification or denies it' (290–91). Now, because 'the child has an extremely undeveloped capacity for perception,' (290) he does not at this point realize, Klein thinks, that the breast that feeds him and the breast that frustrates him are the same. Rather, at this crucial stage of development he imagines that there is a 'good' breast and a 'bad' breast: 'what one might call the "good" breasts become the prototype of what is felt throughout life to be good and beneficent, while the "bad" breasts stand for everything evil and persecuting.' (291) The infant does not merely hate the bad breast, moreover. In Klein's view, at the same time as he entertains aggressive fantasies towards it, 'he attributes to the breast itself all his own active hatred against it—a process which is termed *projection*.' (291) Meanwhile, 'another process of great importance [is] going on': '*introjection*' (291). 'By this is meant the mental activity in the child by which, in his phantasy, he takes into himself everything which he perceives in the outside world. . . . In phantasy the child sucks the breast into himself, chews it up and swallows it; thus he feels that he has actually got it there, that he possesses the mother's breast within himself, in both its good and in its bad aspects.' (291) Ideally, the split between the good breast and the bad breast is lessened over time as the infant realizes that they belong to the same person: mother. Klein writes: 'he begins to see his mother and others about him as "whole people", his realistic perception of her (and them) coming gradually as he connects her face looking down at him with the hands that caress him and with the breast that satisfies him' (291).

Further significant components of Klein's theory of subjective integration are contained in her paper 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms' (1946). In babies, Klein suggests here, 'the . . . ego largely lacks cohesion, and a tendency towards integration alternates with a tendency towards disintegration, a falling into bits.' (4) Disintegration occurs for two reasons. It is, firstly, a pre-emptive defence against anxiety, which 'is felt as fear of annihilation (death) and takes the form of a fear of

persecution.’ (4) ‘It seems to me in keeping with the lack of cohesiveness’, Klein writes, ‘that under the pressure of this threat the ego tends to fall to pieces.’ (5) The second reason that the child’s ego may disintegrate is that ‘the frustrating breast’—which, as Klein pointed out in ‘Weaning’, is subject to introjection as well as projection—‘is felt to be in fragments’ (5). ‘In states of frustration and anxiety’, Klein writes, ‘the infant feels that he has taken in the nipple and the breast *in bits*.’ (5) Integration can occur, on the other hand, when the infant feels that he has introjected mother’s good breast rather than her bad one. ‘The first internal good object’, Klein writes, referring to the good breast, ‘acts as a focal point in the ego. It . . . makes for cohesiveness and integration, and is instrumental in building up the ego.’ (6) For Klein, as her metaphor of structural development suggests, the ‘building up’ of the ego is a wholly positive process, associated with ‘adaptation to reality’ and ‘the mother’s love and care’ (6n1). The tendency towards disintegration is, correspondingly, a threat to healthy development. ‘The infant’s feeling of having inside a good and complete breast’, Klein writes, ‘may . . . be shaken by frustration and anxiety’: ‘the divorce between the good and bad breast may be difficult to maintain, and the infant may feel that the good breast too is in pieces.’ (6) Equally, the infant may attempt to reinforce the separation of the good breast from the bad in order to assuage his anxiety that the perfection of the good breast could be compromised. ‘Idealization is bound up with the splitting of the object,’ Klein writes, ‘for the good aspects of the breast are exaggerated as a safeguard against the fear of the persecuting breast. . . . [T]he bad object is . . . kept apart from the good one’ (7). The infant’s experiences of ego-fragmentation, Klein believes, may provide a foundation for mental illness later on. ‘In adult patients,’ she writes, ‘states of depersonalization and of schizophrenic dissociation seem to be a regression to these infantile states of disintegration.’ (10)

I think that Klein’s account of ego development may illuminate the unresolved ambivalence towards the idea of the self that I have found in queer theory. As I have already indicated in some detail, many critics associated with queer theory seem to believe that the self as it is revealed in James’s texts is essentially unstructured, hollow, or absent. Sedgwick’s ‘man without a subjectivity’ and Lane’s ‘dimension of being that has no content’ both appear to me to be figures for a state of disintegration that Klein would associate with schizophrenia. However, rather than attempt to acknowledge or redress this state, which Klein identifies as a dangerous one, queer theory’s ambivalent psychologists see it as inevitable, or even as attractive. With either ecstatic jubilation or world-weary acceptance, they identify with the image of the fragmented self; to use Klein’s terms, they both *introject* and *project* it. Leo Bersani does this in a celebratory way: what he sees as Eugenia’s ‘psychological originality (her emptiness)’ (*Future* 137) models for him an ideal and tantalizingly attainable subject position: ‘the *possibility* of an intentionality unsupported by motive’ (emphasis added). ‘Is the Rectum Straight?’, meanwhile, offers a good instance of critical identification with a fragmented self in a less triumphant mode. Utilizing to

great effect her signature tone of enlightened resignation, Sedgwick here both projects self-destroying forces into *The Wings of the Dove* and introjects those forces as her argument's purposefully fragmented structure. Though the essay begins with references to solid-seeming things like 'Kate Croy's construction as a woman' and the 'very core' of her sexual identity, as it progresses it deploys images of psychic brittleness with increasing frequency and enthusiasm. The idea of the core turns out, in this essay, to be useful mostly insofar as it may serve as the object of rather chaotic 'penetrations' (82): 'the very superficial, surfacial structure of Lionel's indifference,' Sedgwick writes, for example, in a disorientingly mixed metaphor, 'undermines the boundaries between self and other as piercingly as could desire itself' (82). It is the destructiveness embodied in Lionel Croy that Sedgwick's argument has introjected, and not only at the level of conceptual logic. For though, as she observes in her opening paragraph, 'models for the mutual interimplication of "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" remain fragmentary' (73), Sedgwick champions a remarkable openness to such intellectual fragmentation. 'Perhaps,' she continues somewhat cryptically to speculate, 'the fragmentary is their necessary or their most becoming form. They may not be fragmentary *enough*.' (73)

Kleinian theory can also help to explain the curious disavowals of knowledge that the ambivalent psychologists frequently perform. I have already pointed out the ways in which Sedgwick and Lane appear to wish to limit their explorations of James's texts, and this is a desire that Kevin Ohi, too, displays in *Henry James and the Queerness of Style*. One of Ohi's most distinctive and frustrating habits, which is especially pronounced in his chapter on *The Wings of the Dove*, is to allude to the possibility of a psychoanalytic reading only in order theatrically to reject it:

When Densher's . . . thoughts about Milly are rendered . . . the seeming callousness is striking less for anything it reveals about the characters than for what it makes visible about narrative's power to shape effects of sympathy . . . (61)

It is not a matter, in short, of determining whether Susan is 'really' acute—or Kate brutal—or of determining what Milly 'knows.' (62)

Kate seems to 'feel' outside of herself—that is, not to feel alienated . . . but rather to experience feeling in an externalized mode. (65–66)

[T]hat particular predicament asks to be read less in psychological terms . . . than as a realization of a form of desire that is at the same time a reflection on the novel's mode of narration. (103)

It ought to be read, therefore, not in the (implicitly psychological) register of regret for opportunities left unrealized but in the (in my sense, stylistic) register of recovered potentiality. (105)

Such moments ask to be read less for the pathos of a particular relation between characters than for the intimation that the psychological predicaments follow from narrative structures. (106)

How, to use a favourite locution of Ohi's, do these moments in *Henry James and the Queerness of Style* ask to be read? Firstly, I think, as expressions of the splitting of the good object from the bad one that Klein identifies as a basic defence against anxiety. It seems as if the psychological plane of James's text is, for Ohi, the bad object, associated with 'callousness', 'regret', 'alienat[ion]', the 'acute' and the 'brutal'. Style or narrative, on the other hand, seems to be the good one: it possesses the 'power to shape effects of sympathy', and harbours 'recovered potentiality'. Secondly, these moments reflect again the ambivalent psychologists' conflicted desire to articulate their project as a liberatory one. Armed with 'the . . . register of recovered potentiality' and rejecting the need to 'determine' what characters know, style is endowed for Ohi with freedom's nimbus. Nonetheless, his concept of style depends for its halo of liberty upon his prohibition of certain forms of interpretation. As the list of quotations above suggests, 'ask to be read' is in Ohi's writing a polite euphemism for 'ought to be read', a phrase whose disciplinary bent *Henry James and the Queerness of Style* declines to make explicit.

What remains to be explained is why the split between the good object and the bad one should be accompanied in Ohi's book, as in other writings by the ambivalent psychologists, by a ban on the investigation of 'psychological' aspects of James's texts. This is a phenomenon that I would like to describe, following Klein, as intellectual inhibition. In 'A Contribution to the Theory of Intellectual Inhibition' (1931), Klein argues that 'the inside of the mother's body is the first object of [the desire for knowledge]; in phantasy it is explored and investigated, as well as attacked with all the sadistic armoury' (240). The fact that 'penetrating and exploring are to a great extent synonymous in the unconscious' (240) can hinder the intellectual development of children, Klein suggests, because they may worry that by learning they will damage their good object. Following James Strachey, Klein observes that 'reading has the unconscious significance of taking knowledge out of the mother's body, and that the fear of robbing her is an important factor for inhibitions in reading.' (241) In consequence, the child's knowledge of himself as well as of the outside world may become disturbed, because 'the destruction imagined to have been wrought in the mother's body is also anticipated and imagined as having occurred in his own body' (242). To illustrate these ideas, Klein presents the case of a boy named John who 'complained . . . that he could not distinguish certain French words from one another'; the words are '*poulet*, chicken; *poisson*, fish; *glace*, ice' (236). By analysing John's play, dreams, and associations, Klein discovered that he unconsciously knew the meanings of the French words, but that he was unable to access this knowledge because of his fears about his aggression. When Klein asked him to say 'what *poulet* made him think of', he 'thought of a fox breaking into a chicken-house' (237), and 'realized that

he was himself the fox' (237). 'He answered about *poisson* that fried fish was very nice' (236), but the next day recounted a 'bad dream' of the intervening night in which '[t]he fish was a crab', and then many crabs, which '[h]e was supposed to kill.' (237) When asked about *glace*, he thought about ice melting in the sun, and showed 'a good deal of anxiety' (239); '[t]he word "sun", Klein indicates, 'stood for himself, the "son"' (240). John 'could not distinguish between these things', Klein suggests, 'because all were dead; he killed all the crabs, but the chicken, representing [the mother's] babies, and the ice[,] . . . representing the mother, were all dirtied and injured, or killed too.' (240) John thus unconsciously repudiated his knowledge of French in a quite complex and thorough way. Comprehension of the French words was barred from his consciousness firstly because it conflicted with his belief that learning would damage his mother's body, which he imagined to be the container of knowledge. Simultaneously, John's destructive fantasies—further products of the phantasmatic link between discovery and penetration—rendered the words indistinguishable to him, because they were all imbued with the same feeling of deadness.

A passage from another of Ohi's texts neatly illustrates the kind of repudiation of knowledge that Klein identifies, because it reproduces—that is, it both cites and repeats—a scene of inhibited learning in James. It is an interpretation of the ending of *What Maisie Knew*, wherein Maisie, who has been ordered to decide whether she wishes to remain in Boulogne with her glamorous step-parents or return to England with her dowdy but dependable governess, achieves an insight into her stepmother's alternately distant and possessive behaviour. Ohi quotes this passage from the novel: 'Mrs Beale had fairly bounded. "Come away from *me*, Maisie?" It was a wail of dismay and reproach, in which her stepdaughter was astonished to read that she had had no hostile consciousness and that if she had been so actively grand it was not from suspicion, but from strange entanglements of modesty' (qtd. in Ohi, 'Children' 115). 'This arresting moment in *What Maisie Knew*', Ohi suggests, 'makes us realize that we, like Maisie, have failed to consider Mrs Beale's perspective: it offers a moving illustration of all the many worlds that we not only do not, but cannot, consider as we go about our lives, if only because our perspective is not infinite.' (115) 'In this novel of (ostensible) development,' he concludes, 'here is a realization that is neither the culmination of a narrative nor the beginning of future insight: a crucial epiphany—and a strangely unassimilable hiatus.' (115) I think that Ohi's interpretation of the ending of *What Maisie Knew* encapsulates the confused logic that prevails among the ambivalent psychologists. For it claims first that James's text imparts a forceful lesson to readers—'it makes us realize that we, like Maisie, have failed to consider Mrs Beale's perspective'—and then that Maisie's understanding is accessible neither to us nor, apparently, to herself: it is 'a strangely unassimilable hiatus.' (115) There is furthermore a circular quality to his blithe assertion that there are 'many worlds that we not only do not, but cannot, consider'; such a claim requires first of all the foreclosure of any perspective that sees

interpersonal comprehension as an ordinary feature of social life. In the process of making this claim, finally, Ohi employs a universalizing first person plural that is incompatible with the idea that perspectives are inassimilable.

Still, I do not think that Ohi's reading of *What Maisie Knew* is entirely misguided. For there is indeed an enigmatic quality to Maisie's moment of understanding; but it is a quality that may be elucidated with recourse to precisely the kind of developmental narrative that Ohi consistently regards as merely 'ostensible' or superficial. Although Maisie displays precocious intelligence in her realization about her stepmother's twisted sense of pride, she goes on immediately to betray a severely inhibited relationship to another potentially knowable object. The scene from the novel continues with the governess, Mrs Wix, countering Mrs Beale's emotional blackmail by directing at Maisie some insidiously coercive questions of her own:

'Do you mean to say you *have* lost what we found together with so much difficulty two days ago?' . . .

Maisie dimly remembered. 'My moral sense?'

'Your moral sense. *Haven't* I, after all, brought it out?' She spoke as she had never spoken even in the schoolroom and with the book in her hand.

It brought back to the child's recollection how sometimes she couldn't repeat on Friday the sentence that had been glib on Wednesday[.] . . . Sir Claude and Mrs. Beale stood there like visitors at an 'exam'. She had indeed an instant a whiff of the faint flower that Mrs. Wix pretended to have plucked and now with such a peremptory hand thrust at her nose. Then it left her, and, as if she were sinking with a slip from a foothold, her arms made a short jerk. What this jerk represented was the spasm within her of something still deeper than a moral sense. She looked at her examiner; she looked at the visitors; she felt the rising of the tears she had kept down at the station. They had nothing—no, distinctly nothing—to do with her moral sense. The only thing was the old flat shameful schoolroom pleas. 'I don't know—I don't know.' (260)

Maisie struggles to answer Mrs Wix, I think, because she has not been able successfully to introject a primary good object. My interpretation is based upon Maisie's response in this passage to the idea of her 'moral sense', which she seems to perceive as an ineffective substitute for something much more valuable that she should have had the opportunity to introject. The 'moral sense' is presented by Mrs Wix to Maisie as something that is buried deep within her—'found . . . with so much difficulty'—and so central to her being, according to Mrs Wix's performance of disbelief, that to lose it would be catastrophic (as well as reckless). Mrs Wix desperately wants Maisie to confirm that she possesses this good object, and that it is thanks to the governess that its existence can be recognized. There is, in Mrs

Wix's arrogant claim to have 'brought it out', a sense that she has done so in order that the good object's presence may be verified by observers. (We may speculate that Mrs Wix is so invested in this project because she sees herself as a fit surrogate for Maisie's mother, and thus identifies the 'moral sense'—a term that embodies the governess's blunt ethics—with herself, introjected as a good object.) Yet Maisie is not convinced by her governess's claim. For Maisie, the moral sense is only a *faint* flower that Mrs. Wix *pretended* to have plucked.' By contrast with this vapid and fake object, Maisie feels that there is 'within her . . . something still deeper'. Unfortunately, however, this 'spasm[ing]' thing is not very comfortably installed within her psyche either. That it is an unevenly introjected maternal object can be intuited from the supplicatory gesture that it elicits from Maisie: 'jerk[ing]' her arms like someone 'sinking with a slip from a foothold', she seems to be reaching out for something to hold on to. Her experience of looking for an unknown object inside her, and of not knowing how to answer Mrs Wix's absurd question, is modelled on that of an infant falling from its mother's breast.¹²

Maisie's knowledge appears to be inhibited differently from that of the boy in Klein's paper. Whereas John fears that to attain knowledge would deprive his mother of the goodness that he imagines to be inside her, in Maisie the link to a primary good object is so underdeveloped that she cannot even *find* the knowledge that she is being commanded to produce. Nonetheless, the basis of Maisie's intellectual inhibition is the same as that which Klein identifies in her patient, and which I have found in the ambivalent psychologists: insufficient confidence in the good object's availability and robustness, combined with an overly harsh super-ego. For as Klein explains in her analysis of John, intellectual inhibition stemming from concerns about the good object is related to the development of a disciplinary agency within the self. This is because, surprisingly, Klein identifies the infant's aggression not just with the still relatively unconstrained forces of his id or libido, but also with the super-ego that he has already begun to construct. Klein writes in her analysis of John's case that

early anxiety-situations . . . arise in both sexes from the oral-sadistic impulse to devour the contents of the mother's body, and especially the penises imagined to be in it. The father's penis . . . is thus incorporated and in the boy's phantasy very rapidly transforms itself, in consequence of his sadistic attacks against it, into a terrifying internal aggressor and becomes

¹² 'The figurative patterns in this passage', Ohi remarks in another article on *What Maisie Knew*, 'suggest that Maisie's lack of knowledge is less a matter of specific content than it is a generalizable linguistic predicament that Maisie is made, at this moment, to embody.' ('Narrating' 89) I am arguing, on the contrary, that 'specific content' is crucial to Maisie's experience of intellectual inhibition: it is the absence of one very particular object that prevents her from assuming authority over her inner world. Her predicament is generalizable only in the psychological rather than linguistic sense that object relations are everybody's problem.

equated with dangerous, murderous animals or weapons. In my view it is the introjected father's penis which forms the kernel of the paternal super-ego. (241–42)

It is 'his threatening super-ego' (243), Klein suggests, which causes the infant to fear for the wellbeing of his own and his mother's insides, and which prevents him from exploring and penetrating into certain objects, most importantly his self. 'If the child's fear of his super-ego and id is too powerful,' writes Klein, 'he will . . . be unable to know about the contents of his body and his mental processes.' (244) The predominance of Maisie's super-ego transforms her mind into a 'shameful schoolroom', where knowledge of her self is at once demanded and made impossible by the obscure demands of a relentless 'examiner' and the silent judgement of 'visitors at an "exam"'. In the work of the ambivalent psychologists, meanwhile, the super-ego's ascendancy is expressed in covert, jubilant, or disavowed refusals to explore the minds of James's characters. It is in the light of this formation that I think we may best understand the confused rhetoric of liberation that frequently emerges in queer theory. What this kind of writing wishes to free itself from, I think, is its own overbearing super-ego, which it misrecognizes as the authority of psychological discourse.

In order to indicate how a critical disposition more open to the idea of psychic legibility, and less enthralled by the super-ego's equation of knowledge and aggression, might better do justice to James's imagination of selfhood, I wish now to return to the lady at the window. Eugenia is a particularly good test case for my approach because she does indeed, as many critics since Bersani have discovered, exhibit a remarkable subjective vacancy. The value of a Kleinian reading of *The Europeans*, however, depends upon its capacity to establish that vacancy as Eugenia's distinctive psychic predicament, rather than as the embodiment of a utopian form of freedom that readers would be wise to aspire to. Eugenia, I hope to show, is like Maisie vacant of something quite specific and important: a successfully introjected maternal object. My reading of her situation will seek its force in the fluency with which it can demonstrate my intuition that James's depiction of psychic life anticipates quite thoroughly Klein's belief that introjection and projection are the basic mechanisms by which selves are constructed.

The first sign that *The Europeans* is a novel about introjection comes from its opening passage's pronounced attention to ideas about interiors, and about containment. 'A narrow grave-yard *in* the heart of a bustling, indifferent city', 'the best hotel *in* the ancient city of Boston', 'a species of groove *in* the pavement' (1–2, emphases added): the superficially unremarkable preposition that these phrases share betokens a privileged spatial imagination *in* this text. '*In* the chimney-place was a red-hot fire': the warmth within that symbolizes Felix's self contrasts with the vacuum that reflects Eugenia's: '*in* what met her eyes there was little to be pleased with' (2). The novel's first paragraph evokes a series of nested spaces: in Boston, there is a hotel; in the hotel, there is a room; in the room, there is a lady. And

the internal dimensions of these spaces are emphasized, significantly, by Eugenia herself: she does not merely pace her room, but ‘measure[s] its length with a restless step’ (1). This distinctly three-dimensional geometry is inviting us, I think, to wonder what it is like inside the Baroness. It seems to me to be a somewhat disorganized space; it exhibits quite clearly the alternation between integration and disintegration that Klein sees as typical of the undeveloped ego. When Eugenia ‘gave a pinch to her waist with her two hands, or raised these members . . . to the multifold braids of her hair, with a movement half caressing, half corrective’ (1–2), she appears to be attempting to enforce cohesion on a bodily space that she fears may fall apart. The ‘multifold braids of her hair’ are particularly suggestive of Eugenia’s energetic and alienating labour of self-discipline: ‘she had a great abundance of crisp dark hair,’ James writes on the next page, ‘finely frizzled, which was always braided in a manner that suggested some Southern or Eastern, some remotely foreign, woman.’ (3) Eugenia’s hairstyle expresses her wish to transform herself into another person, to be recognized as ‘some remotely foreign[] woman’. The tension she feels between order and looseness is signified as well by the at once expansive and rigorously ornamented state of her attire: ‘her much-trimmed skirts were voluminous’ (1). James’s description of the climate indicates that Eugenia’s problem is specifically one of regression: ‘while the air is thickened by . . . frosty drizzle, the blessed vernal season is already six weeks old’ (1). It ought to be spring within Eugenia, the reflective spatial logic of this novel suggests, but her self remains stuck in the bleak mid-winter.

When the rain stops, the outlines of Eugenia’s psychological predicament become clearer. At the Wentworths’, where ‘abundant light and warmth’ tend to prevail (14), Eugenia betrays a profound envy of her cousins’ seemingly idyllic existence. Mr Wentworth’s ‘dry[]’ but ‘delica[te]’ proposition, ‘you ought to settle down with us’ (38), elicits in Eugenia an overwhelming feeling of nostalgia:

She looked at him, and for an instant, in his cold, still face, she seemed to see a far-away likeness to the vaguely remembered image of her mother. Eugenia was a woman of sudden emotions, and now, unexpectedly, she felt one rising in her heart. She kept looking round the circle; she knew that there was admiration in all the eyes that were fixed upon her. She smiled at them all.

‘I came to look—to try—to ask,’ she said. ‘It seems to me I have done well. I am very tired; I want to rest.’ There were tears in her eyes. The luminous interior, the gentle, tranquil people, the simple, serious life—the sense of these things pressed upon her with an overmastering force, and she felt herself yielding to one of the most genuine emotions she had ever known. ‘I should like to stay here,’ she said. ‘Pray take me in.’ (38–39)

‘The luminous interior’ is the central trope of this passage, whose pathos derives from its presentation of a series of profoundly attractive internal spaces. There is Mr Wentworth’s ‘cold, still face’, in which

Eugenia finds an image of her mother; Eugenia's heart, where her emotion rises; the eyes of the members of the Wentworth circle, which contain their admiration, and those of Eugenia, which contain tears ('there were', moreover, 'tears in her voice as well as in her eyes' [39]); and finally, there is the Wentworth home, which Eugenia wishes to be taken into. This scene makes very clear that what appears elsewhere to be Eugenia's constitutive theatricality is something of a pose, a defensive stance by which she protects herself from the kind of emotion that 'overmaster[s]' her here. She wishes not just, as Mr Wentworth invites her to, 'to settle down' with her cousins, but to be incorporated into their family: 'Pray take me in', she pleads. Charlotte's response insightfully detects a need to be physically held behind Eugenia's startlingly vulnerable request: she 'put out her arms and drew the Baroness toward her' (39). What Eugenia wants most at this moment, I think, is to live again in the presence of her mother, 'a far-away likeness' to whose 'vaguely remembered image' she has discovered inside Mr Wentworth.

It's apparent from the other references to Eugenia's mother in the novel that her death severely affected the Baroness and her brother. 'She married and she died' is Felix's violently blunt account of that woman's life to Gertrude (22): considered alongside Eugenia's 'vaguely remembered image', this statement suggests that while Eugenia was old enough to have developed a relationship with her mother when she died, the younger Felix was much less conscious of her attention. Her death nonetheless (or because of this) seems to have been fairly catastrophic for Felix, since it has damaged his capacity to think of himself and his sister as real people: disturbingly, he has deleted the events of his and Eugenia's births from his résumé of Mrs Young's life. When the siblings mention their mother between themselves, they betray lingering resentment towards a parent who they unconsciously believe abandoned them by dying. 'I don't remember', Eugenia muses, as she contemplates the dismal Massachusetts weather, 'that mamma ever told me it was like this.' (6) 'Mamma never told you anything disagreeable', Felix tartly responds (6). This exchange nicely juxtaposes the different ways in which Eugenia and Felix have been hurt by their mother's death. Recalling Klein's patient John, Eugenia feels that her mother was the ultimate source of knowledge; her failure to describe the North American climate to her daughter in sufficient detail is imagined by Eugenia to have been a serious dereliction of duty. This impression, as her brother's caustic riposte makes explicit, is based on an absurd idealization of mother, one that Felix, at the same time as he mocks it, begrudges not having had the opportunity to develop. 'Mamma never told you anything disagreeable' is a way for Felix to remind Eugenia, 'mamma never told me *anything*'.

By focussing on the incompletely mourned primary object that Felix and Eugenia share, I think that we may better understand some aspects of their characters which I have already introduced. Eugenia's 'half caressing, half corrective' gestures in chapter one, for example, may be understood as

attempts to deny the loss of her mother by embodying her. Giving herself at once comforting and disciplinary attention, she tells herself that she does not need her mother, because she *is* her mother. The things that Eugenia sees from her hotel window, in addition, reflect her preoccupation with her mother's absence. That absence is represented most directly by 'the head-stones in the grave-yard', which 'seemed to be holding themselves askance to keep [the sleet] out of their faces.' (2) The personified gravestones are, I think, symbols of Eugenia's mother, whose death the Baroness disavows by endowing the gravestones with an uncanny vitality, and by imagining them as objects that seek to defend themselves from their inhospitable environment. Eugenia, indeed, seems to feel quite strongly that her dead mother needs to be shielded from something: 'a tall iron railing protected [the head-stones] from the street' (2). The other hallucination-like scene that Eugenia observes from the window represents what she imagines to be one solution to the death of a parent:

on the other side of the railing an assemblage of Bostonians were trampling about in the liquid snow. Many of them were looking up and down; they appeared to be waiting for something. From time to time a strange vehicle drew near[.] . . . When it reached a certain point the people in front of the grave-yard, of whom much the greater number were women, carrying satchels and parcels, projected themselves upon it in a compact body—a movement suggesting the scramble for places in a life-boat at sea—and were engulfed in its large interior. Then the life-boat . . . went bumping and jingling away upon its invisible wheels, with the helmsman (the man at the wheel) guiding its course incongruously from the prow. (2)

There is a surprisingly lucid and bleak narrative of sexual development contained in Eugenia's bizarre vision. The women have suffered a serious loss: this is represented firstly by the graveyard, and secondly by the idea of a maritime disaster, which is evocative in particular of the death of mother, who once was a sort of ship in which the unborn individual travelled.¹³ Bereaved of their primary object, the women seek a new home in the 'life-boat' with a 'man at the wheel': they seek, that is, to get married. With their bridal craft 'bumping and jingling' along—if the boat's a rockin', don't come a knockin'—the women would seem to have found an adequate compensation for the death of mother. But to Eugenia, their solution is ridiculous. For one thing, she thinks, there are not enough sea-worthy vessels to go around: 'the scramble for places' is bound to leave some women adrift. What's more, the 'helmsman . . . guiding [the life-boat's] course incongruously from the prow' is as a substitute for mother simply

¹³ If this is true, then Felix seems in this chapter to be thinking about (and wanting to talk to Eugenia about) his mother's death as well. He shows his sister 'a bold, expressive sketch of a group of miserable people on the deck of a steamer, clinging together and clutching at each other, while the vessel lurched downward, at a terrific angle, into the hollow of a wave.' (7)

absurd. His inappropriately advanced position on the vehicle leaves him unable to supervise his passengers in the way that a conscientious parent watches over her children.

It is worth clarifying, finally, the forms of the introjections and projections that I understand to have taken place between Eugenia, Felix, and Mrs Young. I think that Eugenia experiences her relationship to her primary good object as an interrupted introjection, one that she is seeking to complete through her New England adventure. There is something of Mrs Young inside Eugenia, but it is only a 'vaguely remembered image', or a sort of animated gravestone; among the many ways to conceptualize this relationship, the most worrying would be that Eugenia's introjected mother is dead in addition to her real one. As a result, Eugenia feels that her inner world is a desert or tundra where nothing can survive; thus she obscurely hopes that the introjected mother may be protected, like the gravestones are, from its barren surroundings. Interiors that seem secure and hospitable, like the Wentworths', are for this reason a source of acute envy for Eugenia: it is exactly such a space in which she would like to house her good object. To an extent, Felix shares Eugenia's desire for a magically lively inner world. 'What a pleasant house!' he exclaims to Gertrude on first stepping into the Wentworths' abode; 'It's lighter inside than it is out.' (22) But Felix's solution to his mother's absence depends more substantially upon a projective technique. Felix, it seems, has been completely unable to establish a place for his mother inside himself, and has instead chosen to project her into someone else: Eugenia. 'Be very gracious', Felix says to her, as he 'ushered his sister' through the gate to the Wentworths' garden;

But he saw the admonition was superfluous. Eugenia was prepared to be gracious as only Eugenia could be. Felix knew no keener pleasure than to be able to admire his sister unrestrictedly[.] . . . When she desired to please she was to him, as to every one else, the most charming woman in the world. Then he forgot that she was ever anything else; that she was sometimes hard and perverse; that he was occasionally afraid of her. Now, as she took his arm to pass into the garden, he felt that she desired, that she proposed, to please, and this situation made him very happy. Eugenia would please. (30–31)

Felix has not only nominated Eugenia as an acceptable, even idealized substitute for his dead mother, one who is never 'hard and perverse' or frightening; with the 'keene[st] pleasure' he has ever felt, he projects himself into her as she plays that maternal role. The instruction he gives to his sister may be unnecessary from a literal point of view, but it has a crucial function in the operation of Felix's projection: by putting his words into Eugenia's ear, he symbolically puts himself into her. It is as if, when Eugenia 'took his arm to pass into the garden', and 'he felt that she desired, that she proposed, to please,' the minds and bodies of the siblings have merged into one. Thus Felix preserves his good

object: not, like his sister, within himself, but by putting it into another person who he believes is capable of containing it, and whose mind he feels able to enter freely.

Critical Contexts

This thesis utilizes a specifically psychoanalytic understanding of selfhood much more explicitly and consistently than do most contributions to Henry James Studies. Nonetheless, it is indebted to the wealth of texts about identity in James's fiction that have emerged in the wake of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's paradigm-shifting work. John Carlos Rowe's *The Other Henry James* (1998), one of the first monographs to situate James in the context of queer theory, is a particularly important template for this thesis. 'Interpreting Henry James as a critical social theorist and thus a forerunner of cultural criticism and queer theories', as Rowe describes his own method (7), equally characterizes the basic orientation of this thesis; I follow Rowe in 'ask[ing] the question, "What kind of critical theorist was Henry James?"' (3). Also exemplary for my own approach is Rowe's principled turn to some of the novelist's less well-read texts. Rowe explains that '[his] title . . . refers . . . to those "other" writings that have remained neglected by, or simply baffling to, several generations of interested readers' (3); in these 'less familiar works', Rowe suggests, 'the internal conflicts in James's own mind over just the problems of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity otherwise resolved in the major works' remain unsettled (5). *The Golden Bowl*, which I analyse in my third chapter, is obviously not a minor work; nor could *The Bostonians*, a touchstone for almost all feminist and queer readings of James and the subject of chapter two, be described as neglected. Yet the attention I expend on these texts is aimed specifically at those areas of them that their many readers have most visibly failed to assimilate: the inner life of Basil Ransom, in the latter, and those of Maggie Verver and her husband in the former. My selection of the perennially underappreciated *Roderick Hudson* as the subject of chapter one requires less justification, though I might add that here too I focus on an element of the text—the relationship between Rowland Mallet and Christina Light—that the novel's few readers generally ignore.

Another vital critical context for this thesis lies in the range of books that focus on masculinity and sexuality in James's fiction. An odd pattern characterizes the history of this region of James Studies: a bold and thrillingly deconstructive volume tends to be published at almost exactly the same time as a scrupulous and robustly historicist one. Hugh Stevens' *Henry James and Sexuality* (1998) opened proceedings with a soaring flight through the James canon that brought the sensibility and flair of a Roland Barthes to our author's coy prose. 'One needs', Stevens argued, 'to insist on the importance of "the sexual" in James's writing, even as one acknowledges its frequent evanescent, fleeting quality, the way it shimmers, teasingly appears and disappears in the folds of a vocabulary which is as ambiguous and

idiosyncratic as it is erotic.’ (11) Not every Jamesian agrees, as I do, with Stevens’ assertion of both the urgency and complexity of James’s interest in sexual life. In his introduction to the anthology *Henry James and Homo-Erotic Desire* (1999), the biographer Sheldon Novick offered a very different but no less compelling description of the place of sexuality in James’s work. ‘With so much intense interpretation of absences going on,’ Novick argued, in a bitter allusion to the poststructuralist bent of much of the era’s James criticism, ‘the element in James’s writing that has been neglected is the positive element of feeling that the evidence powerfully suggests, the warm colours in James’s relations to men.’ (8) ‘The James that I would like you to bear in mind’, Novick counselled, with refreshing earnestness, ‘is the one whose feelings are amply on display in his work.’ (10)¹⁴ There may seem to be an insurmountable gulf between Stevens’ approach, which conjures a mysterious realm of unspeakable desires and hidden pleasures, and Novick’s somewhat headmasterly voice, which speaks of a zone of clarity and simpleness no less attractive in its own way. Yet I hope in this thesis to exploit the techniques of both schools. For there is indeed, I hope to show, like Stevens, a great deal of confusion and violence in James’s representations of psychic life. But that confusion, I will also insist, à la Novick, is always ultimately susceptible to intellectual resolution. Even the most troubling or enigmatic expression of desire in James’s writing, I will argue, betrays a clear and coherent meaning to the reader who is committed to deciphering it.

That the rapprochement I am endeavouring to bring about may be a fruitful one is indicated by the distinctive lapses of rigour to which both the deconstructive and the historicist factions of James Studies are prone. Those lapses are well illustrated by the second pair of fortuitously contemporaneous and theoretically opposed texts that I wish to draw attention to here: Leland Person’s *Henry James and the Suspense of Masculinity* (2003) and Eric Haralson’s *Henry James and Queer Modernity* (2003). Each of these books deploys with sophistication and brio its scholarly apparatus. Taking his cue from high queer theory, Person argues that ‘James demonstrates the instability of gender identities’ (7). ‘James’s explorations of what it means to be masculine “in the plural term”,’ Person argues, ‘result . . . in a state of suspense in which male identity, configured in terms of gender and sexuality, remains fluid.’ (34–35) Person’s insistence that James is ‘playful and experimental’ as a ‘writer’ of ‘gender and sexual identification’ is valuable, and orients as well my own investigation (7), but his approach has the frustrating side-effect of pre-emptively reducing every subjectivity imagined in James’s novels to the same amorphous goo. ‘James delights in positioning his male characters in such ways that their gender and sexual orientations are reversed, ambiguous, and even multiple’, Person writes (14); despite their

¹⁴ Contributors to the volume echoed Novick’s formulation; John Bradley, for instance, drew upon James’s stories and letters alike to argue that ‘James’s response to homosexuality was more than the objective and aloof observation of it in others.’ (46)

engagingly shameless eroticism, generalizations like these are objectionable in that they leave no room for the articulation of specific subjective positions that a book like *Person's* might reasonably be expected to undertake. By contrast with *Person's* emphasis on the ludic dissolution of masculinity, and drawing more upon the historicist proclivities of gay and lesbian studies, Eric Haralson looks in James's texts for certifiable representatives of queer identity. Some of James's characters, Haralson argues, 'can be meaningfully thought of as "queer" (or "gay") in an anticipatory sense inasmuch as the very attributes, affective qualities, and final dispositions James assigns them . . . correspond powerfully with developments in a discursive and regulatory regime that was incrementally composing the figure (or Foucauldian "species") of the modern male homosexual' (23–24). At first glance, Haralson's work would seem immune to the charge of disregard for specificity that I have levelled at *Henry James and the Suspense of Masculinity*; Haralson's interpretations of James's novels are always based on thoughtful treatment of the 'discursive and regulatory regime[s]' from which they spring. Haralson's reading of *The Tragic Muse*, for example, considers at length and very instructively the queer connotations of Aestheticism in late Victorian England (54–78). The unsatisfying corollary of this historical acumen, however, is a tiresome urge to expatiate upon the homosexual 'types' that James's characters are presumed to reflect. Rather than telling us about the individuals who populate James's texts, that is, Haralson is constantly adverting to the cultural icons which he imagines them to embody. No word more reliably accomplishes this interest-evacuating manoeuvre in *Henry James and Queer Modernity* than 'figure': there is 'the figure of the handsome soldier' (20–21); 'the languishing male figure and its subtext of sexual decadence' (42); 'a figure that would only proliferate . . . in James's imagination: the gay aesthete' (47); 'the Oscar Wilde figure' (55); 'the figure of the dandy' (70); 'the bohemian/gentleman figure' (71); the 'reconfigured figure of the bachelor' (132); 'a figure of female seduction' (187); and finally, of course, 'the figure of Henry James' (194). Haralson's writing consistently creates the impression that James's characters are like labels that have been crudely superimposed upon cultural personae that are no less two-dimensional; 'Not far behind the figure of [Gabriel] Nash stood Wilde' (152) is an exemplary locution. If *Person* seems unwilling to show how James's men differ from one another, Haralson appears equally reluctant to distinguish them from their putative 'real-world' models.

It is not my intention to disparage the achievements of historicist scholarship on James's fiction. Though the explicit engagement of this thesis with historical contexts for James's work is sparing, it is influenced throughout by recent research on the meanings that gender and sexuality held for James and his milieu. In particular, my work builds upon the range of detailed and historically informed accounts of James's relation to women and to femininity that have emerged over the past quarter-century. *Henry James's Thwarted Love* (1999), by Wendy Graham, is the earliest of these. 'For men of James's day',

Graham argues, ‘effeminacy was not aberrant *or* affirmative, as is usually assumed, but aberrant *and* affirmative’ (3); ‘James transgressed the safe borders of gender identity’, Graham asserts, ‘and he did so, more than occasionally, with ease and pleasure.’ (3) I share Graham’s sense that, in James’s work, cross-gender identification is an experience of enjoyment as well as of danger; for Rowland Mallet, Basil Ransom, and Prince Amerigo, I aim to show, femininity names as much a tantalizingly available *position* as it is does an *object* of desire. Some scholars have painted a bleaker picture than Graham of femininity’s place in James’s fiction, but the novelist’s fundamentally empathic attitude to the bearers of that quality remains, rightly, a critical standard. In *Portraying the Lady* (2001), Donatella Izzo argues that ‘the center and the object of representation in [James’s] short stories . . . are the ideology of gender, in a specific and crucial historical instantiation.’ ([sic] 25) For Izzo, James is an astute critic of that ideology: ‘The logic that these stories question’, she writes, ‘is the inner logic of patriarchal society, its gender arrangements, and the historical categories of feminine identity that are derived from them.’ (25) Tessa Hadley arrives at a similar conclusion in *Henry James and the Imagination of Pleasure* (2002). ‘The power, the plight, the particular history of women have a fundamental importance in [James’s] work,’ Hadley writes (13); ‘His novels and stories . . . describe a system of gender differentiation inequitable in its very foundations, and forms and ideals of femaleness which deliver individual women over into the grip of painful contradictions and into powerlessness.’ (14) Victoria Coulson’s *Henry James, Women and Realism* (2007), finally, remains the authoritative account of ‘James’s imaginative affiliation with women’ (Coulson 44): there, Coulson demolishes the stubborn propensity among a certain kind of Jamesian to imagine the novelist’s relation to femininity as a fundamentally hostile one. ‘James[’s] . . . deep involvement with feminine subjects’, she argues, ‘is best understood as expressing a sympathetic investment in feminine subjectivity. [His] . . . women are not . . . “externalisations” of (homosexual) masculine ambivalence, but, rather, figures of *affinity* and *affiliation*: sisters, not substitutes. It is a question of intense participation, rather than the essentially aggressive stance of identificatory incorporation.’ (46–47) This thesis considers a range of cross-gender identifications in James’s work: some may be described as sympathetic, but few come without a smoking trail of envy, anxiety, and need. Still, I continue firmly to agree with Coulson’s characterization of James’s attitude to women as an entirely wholesome one. For the unhappy relations with their gendered selves that James endows on so many of his characters need not express their author’s psychic state. The novelist’s lucid understanding of certain men’s conflicted relation to their femininity, on the contrary, may well be a felicitous by-product of James’s own exceptionally untroubled feminine identification.

One text deserves special mention here for its solitary position in contemporary James Studies, and for its distinctively ambivalent—both peculiarly close and utterly foreign—relation to my thesis. Sigi Jöttkandt’s *Acting Beautifully: Henry James and the Ethical Aesthetic* (2005) is the only explicitly

psychoanalytic, book-length account of Henry James's fiction; as such, it is in a sense the closest relative of this thesis within James Studies. *Acting Beautifully* argues that James's work dramatizes the structure of ethics as it is described by Jacques Lacan. 'Ethics, for Lacan,' Jöttkandt explains, 'revolves around how we manage to remain faithful to [the] representational impossibility that lies at the heart of our experience' (xii). 'The main intent of this work', Jöttkandt writes in her preface, 'is to allow Henry James to *symptomize* . . . Lacanian ethics' (xii); thus *Acting Beautifully* 'presents three acts by three heroines in James that [Jöttkandt] determines to be ethical in the Lacanian senses' (xii). 'Each of the three acts I outline', writes Jöttkandt, 'has this one thing in common: they separately represent a singular expression of fidelity to the impossibility encountered in the realm of experience that fundamentally transforms not only the characters' own subjective constitutions but also that of the world in which they live.' (xii–xiii) Perhaps surprisingly, given the rare commitment to psychoanalytic theory that we share, I am not going to rehearse in any more detail Jöttkandt's distinctive, powerful and challenging argument. This is because, despite our superficial intellectual allegiance, my predominantly Kleinian attention to psychic life in James's texts has almost nothing in common with Jöttkandt's Lacanian approach to the place of the Real in them. Whereas my interpretations of James's texts focus on quotidian experiences of sadness, yearning, and fear, Jöttkandt's are keyed to the immeasurably more grandiose issues of transcendent meaning and universal truth.¹⁵ Insofar as we share a disciplinary orientation, indeed, it is manifested less in the very different post-Freudian positions we adopt than in the fact that we both seek to launch from them a critique of a certain academic orthodoxy. Where Jöttkandt uses her Lacanian reading of James's texts to challenge deconstruction—'the deconstructive project', she argues, '[is] a hysterical discourse, designed to maintain a certain sustaining distance from what Lacan calls the Real' (xvi)—I aim through my Kleinian one to make visible a constitutive blindness within queer theory. In a useful formulation, Jöttkandt writes that 'there is [an ethics of deconstruction], but . . . this ethic is not where deconstruction imagines it to be.' (xvi) I wish to show, similarly, that queer theory has a psychic life, but that it is not where it imagines it to be.

It is in the context of this critical intent that I should clarify the difference between the relation of this thesis to Henry James Studies and its relation to queer theory. However diverse Henry James Studies may be, prospective contributors to the field need in principle display just one quite straightforward quality to earn membership therein: they must articulate some novel and interesting ideas about Henry James. As such, this thesis clearly asks to be considered a product of that domain. Queer theory is different. To become recognizable as works of queer theory, texts must demonstrate not only a thematic orientation towards the issues of identity, sexuality, gender, as well as experiences

¹⁵ See especially the labyrinthine third chapter of *Acting Beautifully*, 'Lighting a Candle to Infinity'.

of strangeness and stigma, that the word 'queer' connotes, but also an allegiance to at least some of the beliefs that constitute it as a 'theory'. There is and can be no authoritative list of these beliefs; as any scholar tasked with producing a synopsis of the field is quick to note, one of the defining features of queer theory is that it cannot be defined. 'For part of queer's semantic clout, part of its political efficacy,' as Annamarie Jagose puts it, 'depends on its resistance to definition' (*Queer* 1); 'To attempt an overview of queer theory and to identify it as a significant school of thought . . . is to risk domesticating it, and fixing it in ways that queer theory resists fixing itself.' (1–2)¹⁶ Nonetheless, there remain a number of distinctive attitudes and inclinations—of tendencies, to use one of Sedgwick's titles—that make critical texts identifiable as artefacts of queer theory. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's 1995 *PMLA* column on queer theory—a concise, unfussy piece that presents itself as a sort of primer for the uninitiated—still contains the best summary of these tendencies. 'Much queer commentary', Berlant and Warner write,

has been on the political environments of sexuality; it sees intimate sex practices and affects as related not just to family, romance, or friendship but also to the public world governing both policy and everyday life. While to many these spheres are separate, in queer thinking they are one subject. Queer commentary has tried to challenge some major conditions of privacy, so that shame and the closet would be understood no longer as isolation chambers but as the architecture of common culture, so that vernacular performances would no longer stammer with the ineloquence of tacit codes, barely self-acknowledged, and so that questions of propriety and explicitness would no longer be burdened by the invisible normativity of heterosexual culture. Amalgamating politics and feeling in a way that requires constant syncretic gestures and movements, queer commentary has tried to drive into visibility both the cultural production of sexuality and the social context of feeling. (347)

Two features of what Berlant and Warner call 'queer commentary' stand out. Queer commentary is, firstly, according to this description, a 'political' and specifically anti-normative enterprise: it positions itself in opposition to 'the invisible normativity of heterosexual culture'. And it aims to challenge the hegemonic ideology of the straight world, secondly, by bringing to light the social factors that structure what we experience as our innermost selves: it 'trie[s] to drive into visibility both the cultural production of sexuality and the social context of feeling.' Judged by these two criteria for inclusion within the field of queer theory, this thesis will be found wanting. For the system of belief that this

¹⁶ See also Turner: 'queer theory . . . entails a thoroughgoing questioning of existing categories, and even of the very process of categorization' (4).

thesis contests is not that of heterosexuality, but that of queer theory itself; and it aims to do so by exposing the hidden efficacy not of social forces, but of psychic ones.

The conflict between queer theory and this thesis plays itself out most dramatically in relation to my subtitle's third term; since its inception, queer theory has been profoundly suspicious of psychoanalysis. In the middle section of *Gender Trouble* (1990), 'Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix', Judith Butler mounted a strong critique of psychoanalysis through deconstructive readings of Freud, Lacan, and Joan Riviere. Peppered throughout with barbed put-downs of its targets—Riviere '[i]nvok[es] [Ernest] Jones' typology', Butler quips, 'as if it were a phallic shield' (70), while 'Lacanian theory', we learn, 'must be understood as a kind of "slave morality"' (77)—this section of *Gender Trouble* argues that psychoanalysis falsely naturalizes sexual orientation, which ought to be understood as a product of discourse. 'Within psychoanalysis,' writes Butler, 'bisexuality and homosexuality are taken to be primary libidinal dispositions, and heterosexuality is the laborious construction based upon their gradual repression. While this doctrine seems to have a subversive possibility to it, the discursive construction of both bisexuality and homosexuality within the psychoanalytic literature effectively refutes the claim to its precultural status.' (105) If, as Berlant and Warner suggest, the aim of queer theory is 'to drive into visibility . . . the cultural production of sexuality', then *Gender Trouble* implicitly nominates psychoanalysis as a principal antagonist of the queer project, since it tries 'to locate and describe a sexuality "before the law"' (100). In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler again took up arms against psychoanalysis, arguing that 'Lacan . . . preserv[es] the heterosexism of culture through relegating homosexuality to the unrealizable life of passing fantasy.' (73) Sedgwick, too, repeatedly trained her guns on Freud and his disciples. 'Psychoanalytic theory', Sedgwick writes, in her much-loved complaint in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) about 'how few respectable conceptual tools we have for dealing with [the] self-evident fact' that '[p]eople are different from each other',

seemed to promise to introduce a certain becoming amplitude into discussions of what different people are like—only to turn, in its streamlined trajectory across so many institutional boundaries, into the sveltest of metatheoretical disciplines, sleeked down to such elegant operational entities as *the mother*, *the father*, *the preoedipal*, *the oedipal*, *the other* or *Other*. Within the less theorized institutional confines of intrapsychanalytic discourse, meanwhile, a narrowly and severely normative, difference-eradicating ethical program has long sheltered under developmental narratives and a metaphoric of health and pathology. (22–24)

In *Tendencies* (1994), Sedgwick continues her assault. 'If the so far undiminished reliance of psychoanalytic thought on the inversion topos were not enough to insure its heterosexist bias,' she writes in 'Tales of the Avunculate', 'its heterosexist circumscription would nonetheless be guaranteed,

if it is not already caused, by the fact that the closed system of “the family,” within which all formative identification and desire are seen to take place, is limited by tendentious prior definition to parents—to adults already defined as procreative within a heterosexual bond.’ (63–64) ‘Is the Rectum Straight?’ builds on this position, ‘argu[ing], contra Freud, that the foundational presence of “a man” in a woman’s coming-to-identity, or of “a woman” in a man’s, need have no predetermined relation to heterosexist teleologies’ (74–75). Butler’s and Sedgwick’s repeated critiques of Freudian thought in their enormously influential early works established the tone of queer theory’s attitude towards psychoanalysis. That school of thought, they suggested, is only an especially sophisticated expression of the reactionary, heteronormative culture that every queer theorist must wish to overthrow. By locating the roots of desire in the ‘Oedipal’ family, they argued, it mystifies the ideological construction and policing of sexuality, while its insistence on the power of symbolic law obscures the conditions under which revolutionary cultural change might be possible.

It must be noted that not every queer theorist shares the hostility towards psychoanalysis modelled by Butler’s and Sedgwick’s early works. In *Beyond Sexuality* (2000), Tim Dean asserts that ‘psychoanalysis is a queer theory’ (215); evidently dismayed by Lacan’s unpopularity among queer theorists, Dean argues that ‘the vagaries of Lacan’s Anglophone reception, together with the American mental health establishment’s tradition of sexual conservatism, have forestalled queer theory’s recognition of what Lacanian psychoanalysis has to offer a radically antinormative critique of sexuality.’ (19) Dean’s exhortation did not fall on deaf ears. Soon after, Lee Edelman catapulted himself into the pantheon of queer theorists with his controversial jeremiad *No Future* (2004), an argument for the inherent negativity of ‘queerness’ that drew heavily upon Lacanian theory. ‘Queerness’, Edelman writes there,

is never a matter of being or becoming but, rather, of *embodying* the remainder of the Real internal to the Symbolic order. One name for this unnameable remainder, as Lacan describes it, is *jouissance* . . . : a movement beyond the pleasure principle, beyond the distinctions of pleasure and pain, a violent passage beyond the bounds of identity, meaning, and law. . . . [T]o the extent that [jouissance] tears the fabric of Symbolic reality as we know it, unraveling the solidity of *every* object, including the object as which the subject necessarily takes itself, *jouissance* evokes the death drive that always insists as the void in and of the subject, beyond its fantasy of self-realization, beyond the pleasure principle. (25)

Edelman and Dean demonstrate that, despite psychoanalysis’s discreditable associations with heteronormative frameworks, certain strains of psychoanalytic thought harbour a suspicion of subjective coherence and an outspoken distaste for social norms that overlap perfectly with queer theory’s characteristic attitudes. ‘It is not simply that the symbolic updates our vocabulary for discussing human

sexuality as a cultural rather than a natural phenomenon', as Dean writes, 'but, more interestingly, that Lacan's theory of the symbolic shows how human sexuality involves persons only contingently.' (18) The Symbolic, moreover, appears in Edelman's work to be a useful placeholder for 'the architecture of common culture' against which Berlant and Warner positioned queer commentary, and 'jouissance', likewise, as a figure for the anti-normative disruption which it cannot do without.

Despite their best efforts, Edelman and Dean appear not to have inspired an exciting new wave of psychoanalytic queer theorists. One would not know as much, however, from the response of their most vocal opponent, Lynne Huffer, who appears to believe that a veritable army of queer Freudians has invaded the academy. 'Queer theory's pervasive investment in a timeless psyche', Huffer writes, in *Mad for Foucault* (2010), 'betrays the ahistoricism of performative conceptions of subjectivity.' (129) 'Specifically,' she goes on, 'much of queer theory attaches itself to the concept of the unconscious as a disruptive force within the psyche that exceeds consciousness and subjectivity itself' (129). To support this bold claim, Huffer points to a single volume, an anthology of critical writings entitled *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*. Tim Dean and Christopher Lane, the collection's editors—we have encountered the latter earlier in this introduction, among James's ambivalent psychologists—get a strict telling-off. 'In a typically Freudo-Foucauldian argument', writes Huffer, 'their introduction to homosexuality's relation to psychoanalysis misreads Foucault, dehistoricizes the psyche, and disconnects knowledge from power, *savoir* from *pouvoir*.' (131) Further evidence of the psychoanalytic conspiracy comes a few pages later, when Huffer announces that the 'theoretical frameworks' of Sedgwick's *Between Men* and *Epistemology of the Closet* 'include both Freud and Foucault', and that *Gender Trouble* 'ingeniously combine[s], among other elements, Freud, Lacan, and Foucault.' (136) Huffer does not support her argument about the place of psychoanalysis in these texts with quotations from them, so the nature of their imputed Freudian proclivities remains obscure. We get more detail on the psychoanalytic affiliations of Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power*, but the revelation of Huffer's sources does not speak highly of her objectivity: she quotes Butler's description of her argument as 'moving toward a psychoanalytic criticism of Foucault' as if the muzzle were still smoking (qtd. in Huffer 165), but neglects to mention that Butler looks forward in the same paragraph to 'a critical rethinking of psychoanalysis.' (*Psychic* 87)

Dean's and Edelman's pairing of queer theory with Lacan, and Huffer's ill-judged denunciation of the 'Freudo-Foucauldian' heresy, demonstrate two peculiar qualities of queer theory's relationship to psychoanalysis that will determine the field's relation to this thesis. The first, illustrated by Huffer, is that psychoanalytic thought retains the frightening character of a hegemonic 'master' discourse for a certain kind of queer theorist even in its near-total absence from the field. Butler's and Sedgwick's early works were produced at a time when Lacanian feminism remained a prestigious mode of theoretical writing, but Huffer can, for good reason, identify no comparably substantial target for her own critique

of psychoanalytic thought's pernicious influence more recently. Far from revealing, as she intends to, the insidious reach of Freudian thought over contemporary queer theory, Huffer in fact betrays mainstream queer theory's violent aversion to even the smallest injection of psychoanalytic material. Dean's and Edelman's contributions, meanwhile, suggest that insofar as queer theory is held to be compatible with psychoanalysis, it is seen as compatible specifically with the peculiar interpretation of it that goes by the name of Lacanian theory. I cannot overstate the centrality of Lacan to these two thinkers' conceptions of psychoanalysis: for them, indeed, psychoanalysis simply *is* Lacanian theory, and its most pertinent quality is for both the suspicion of subjective coherence that I have already identified in queer theory and Henry James Studies alike. Dean writes,

when I refer to psychoanalysis I mean a specific tradition of speculative thought that begins with Freud and is developed by Lacan, Jean Laplanche, and others. This Continental psychoanalytic tradition remains quite distinct from—and is often antithetical to—the various American traditions of psychoanalytic empiricism, which historically have harnessed Freudianism to an ideological project of boosting individualism rather than questioning it. (2)

Edelman, meanwhile, whose warm regard for 'the void . . . of the subject' I have already quoted, evinces sheer disdain for non-Lacanian brands of psychoanalysis. Butler's "radical sexual politics", he snipes, 'seems all too familiarly liberal and her engagement with psychoanalysis all too "American," as Lacan might say.' (103–104) It is because they reproduce queer theory's animus against the notion of stable identity, and because they share its strenuous aversion to the 'ideological project' that they call 'Symbolic order', I think, that Dean's and Edelman's work, however unwelcome to some its explicit psychoanalytic affiliation, remains legible *as* queer theory.

My own recourse to psychoanalysis will not appeal for queer credibility to the ideal of the empty self; Klein's thought, as I have begun to show, is profoundly invested in the idea of subjective integration. It remains to be seen whether this departure from academic consensus will be regarded as equivalent to a radical break with the field. If it is not, that will be not only due to the precedent of Sedgwick's late and, as I show in chapter one, seriously incomplete turn to Kleinian theory, but thanks to the ambitious and still largely unassimilated challenge to queer theory's prevailing attitude to the self posed by Michael Snediker's *Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions* (2009). Snediker's work represents the closest precursor to this thesis that exists in queer theory today: it offers the only substantial critique of what I am calling its ambivalent psychology, which Snediker calls its 'suspicious relation to persons'—a relation that is itself, he wryly notes, 'suspiciously routinized' (4). '*Queer Optimism*' Snediker writes,

insists on thinking about personhood—as opposed to subjectivity—in terms of a durability neither immediately nor proleptically subject to structuralist or poststructuralist scrutiny. *Queer*

Optimism concerns persons, rather than subjects or even selves. . . . My theoretical preference for persons over subjects extends from questions of how personhood . . . might be characterized, removed from the columbarium of subjectivity. (3)

I share Snediker's sense that the influence of certain prestigious theoretical approaches has impoverished our ability to think creatively about personhood, but I will not be following his wholesale repudiation of 'subjects or . . . selves.' I take it that Snediker uses these terms as shorthand for psychoanalysis in general, which he goes on to cast as a principal caretaker of queer theory's 'columbarium of subjectivity.' At the end of one chapter he resents 'having to choose between being an incoherent (psychoanalytic) subject or a coherent one' (124); at the start of the next, he declares that his 'understanding of positive personhood . . . does not seek to reinstate the sorts of persons that queer theory, deconstruction, or psychoanalysis has aimed and aims to dismantle.' (127) Notwithstanding his repeated and approving references to the work of D. W. Winnicott, whose thoughts on love he pointedly contrasts with 'Freudian mandates of idealization' (186), Snediker does not seem to envision *Queer Optimism* as compatible with any one school of psychoanalytic thought. My thesis, on the contrary, argues that the form of psychoanalysis developed by Melanie Klein in particular constitutes an invaluable resource for thinking about the self as an ideally unified structure.

The Structure of this Thesis

Chapter one seeks to understand the motivations and effects of queer theory's attraction to melancholy as a discursive mode, and locates in James's novel *Roderick Hudson* an implicit critique of this field's investment in the figure of the depressive. It begins by excavating the structuring link in Eve Sedgwick's thought between identification and sadness; the distinctively charismatic appeal of Sedgwick's writing, I contend, is tied to her Byronic performance of depression. This appeal is most explicit in Sedgwick's accounts of the disorienting and community-forming function of memorial writing, a function she both analyses and reproduces in her discussions of that form. In the second part of this chapter, I show how James's novel *Roderick Hudson* dramatizes the power of the depressive rhetoric that I identify in Sedgwick's work. At the heart of my reading of this novel is the relationship between Rowland Mallet, the story's lonely protagonist, and Christina Light, its gloomy and compelling heroine. Like Sedgwick, I suggest here, Christina finds in her depression a rhetorical position that is endlessly fascinating to people, like Rowland, who have been unable to endow their sadness with comparable semiotic grandeur. The third and final part of this chapter considers in a more critical light the stance of glamorous misery that both Christina and Sedgwick exploit. The theoretical rationale that Sedgwick gives for her performance of sadness, I demonstrate in this section, is based on a misunderstanding of

Klein's concept of the depressive position, and in particular of the place of aggression in Klein's theory of reparation. That misunderstanding, I will show, is reflected both in recent responses to Sedgwick's work, which tend to disavow their ambivalence towards Sedgwick, and in *Roderick Hudson*, where Rowland Mallet betrays the same self-defeating ignorance of his violent urges as Sedgwick does in her later writing. Like contemporary queer theorists' attraction to Sedgwick, I wish to argue, Rowland's attraction to Christina is not an effective response to his own profound melancholy; on the contrary, it only distracts him from a psychological predicament whose solution lies—if he would only look—altogether within his reach.

In chapter two, I engage the subject of sexuality and vision in critical theory through an unorthodox reading of *The Bostonians*, which I see as a surprisingly sympathetic portrait of its acutely unlikeable protagonist, Basil Ransom. This chapter has five parts. The first is a history and critique of the theory of the male gaze, a theory that, as I demonstrate, continues to flourish discreetly across gender and literary studies despite and alongside its frequent classification as outmoded or deficient, and whose influence can be felt even in an area of critical discourse to which it might seem at first totally foreign: the theory of drag performance. In the second part of the chapter, I indicate some ways in which Basil's characterization troubles the conventional theoretical description of the male gaze's subject, drawing attention in particular to the foundational role of deprivation in Basil's early experience and adult imagination. I then flesh out this element of Basil's personality, in part three, as it is expressed in the novel through a series of disturbed encounters with food. Verena Tarrant, Basil's love interest, first enters my analysis as a figure able phantasmatically to resolve Basil's problems in this area; her blissfully unconstrained relationship to nutrition promises a surrogate gratification for her impossibly hungry suitor. This mechanism of displacement, I show in the chapter's fourth section, is characteristic as well of Basil's violently inhibited desire to be looked at. In the fifth and final section, I demonstrate that Verena's performance style may be appropriately understood as a form of drag, and Basil's fascination with her, accordingly, as a displaced desire to embody the spectacularly feminine self she portrays. In this section, I return to the theory of drag developed by Judith Butler, arguing that it elides some crucial features of drag performance as they are described in Esther Newton's classic account of the subject.

Chapter three argues that contemporary trans theory shares with *The Golden Bowl*'s Maggie Verver a persuasive, gratifying, but delusory belief that knowledge and violence are necessarily linked. In *The Golden Bowl*, that link is most often expressed in the idea that finding things out and concealing them inevitably cause pain for someone. In the most detailed account of sex reassignment surgery (SRS) that trans theory has produced, the emphasis differs: there, the link tends to be manifested in the idea that surgery reveals the truth of the body. As it cuts, exposes, and rearranges the body, surgery appears

in this discourse to provide not only physical but also intellectual access to the body. Contemporary trans theory thus inverts the imaginary relation between violence and knowledge perceived by Maggie in *The Golden Bowl*. Whereas for Maggie experiences of knowledge invariably feel like experiences of violence, in trans theory experiences of violence tend to be understood as experiences of knowledge. The two fields of discourse that I analyse in this chapter—the theory of SRS and *The Golden Bowl*—are united, moreover, by a structuring interest in somewhat vacuous icons of masculine authority. That interest may be considered a generic feature of writing that is produced under the auspices of modern patriarchal cultures. But it is distinguished in these texts by a peculiarly visible technique of projective identification: the male characters that predominate in the imaginary spaces of these texts embody the relation to violence that their observers want for themselves. The texts' investments in the epistemological affordances of uncomfortable positions are thus safeguarded by the imposing, hollow, and enviable figures of the Husband (that is, the Prince) and the Surgeon.

In an epilogue, I briefly respond to one long-standing and increasingly popular idea about James's late novels: that all of the characters in them share the same distinctive linguistic style, and share that style as well with the narrative voice. My resistance to this idea expresses a range of impulses that run throughout this thesis, and that determine its primary goals. This thesis aims to do justice to the extraordinary precision and breadth of James's imagination of selfhood; to make visible a more diverse field of subjective possibilities than is conventionally assumed within queer theory; and to restore to critical utility the intellectual resources of Kleinian thought. Together, my explorations of James's texts and queer theory thus seek to offer revisionary accounts of both fields by reacquainting them with the maligned conceptual armature of psychoanalysis.

Chapter 1

Styles of Sadness in James and Sedgwick

GLQ's twenty-fifth birthday was not an entirely happy one. The pre-eminent journal of queer theory marked that anniversary with a special issue in which scholars were invited to reflect upon the afterlives of its most influential articles. Naturally, some congratulations were in order: in their introduction, the editors praised the journal's disciplinary promiscuity, affirming that 'it charted perverse intellectual paths' (Brody and Ochoa 1). Yet their overture quickly took on a more sombre tone. 'Although we have faced marginalization as a field and institutionalization in the "academic-industrial complex,"' they wrote, 'things here are not settled: we seem always to be vacillating between possibility and precarity.' (1) Existing 'without fidelity to any discipline' had seemed like an empowering prospect in the introduction's first sentences (1), but by its third paragraph queer theory appears to be in a deeply uncomfortable position, threatened at once by exclusion from the realm of knowledge production ('marginalization as a field') and complicity with its conservative structure ('institutionalization in the "academic-industrial complex"'). That 'things here are not settled' sounds like a hopeful caveat, but 'always . . . vacillating between possibility and precarity' is not an enviable state of being. The editors go on to suggest, moreover, that queer theory's flagship publication has its own disturbing tendency to assimilate. 'The constitutive "outside"—once signified by trans studies, disability studies, and queer of color critique—has been incorporated into the journal's pages.' (1) Having been captured by the university, this narrative implies, queer theory now recapitulates towards its smaller neighbours the same violent drive to consolidate. It is a drive that, in the editors' eyes, will never achieve satisfaction: 'there's always a hot new thing hanging outside the club.' (2)

Some birthday party. As the evening wore on, the editors' frustration was echoed by many of their guests. David Halperin, one of the journal's founders, suggested that 'the *GLQ* we created was unable to realize all its ambitions.' (9) 'It may be that some of them were impossible, or misplaced, or unwise', he admitted; 'in retrospect, some of the aspirations . . . may look old-fashioned, out of date, or incomplete.' (9–10) At this point, what appears to be a perfectly measured conclusion breaks out in a mixture of resignation and defiance: 'But I have not given them up. I'm aware that my time has passed: *GLQ* has moved on, as it should and as it must. Still, if I were to find myself leading the editorial team of *GLQ* today, I would do everything I could to realize the values and ideals I nurtured'. (10) Halperin's belated mutiny signals a dissatisfaction with the ship's course at odds with his apparent contrition. Other attendees spoke more plainly. Chase Gregory offered a grim take on 'the bonds that structure this field', 'bonds that bind us to the names with whom we have studied, or under whom we

have worked.’ (103) ‘As young scholars,’ Gregory wrote, ‘we are encouraged to commit some light parricide, but not too much. . . . Though it may make us chafe to admit it, these academic pedigrees often feel like family bonds—and not “queer” family bonds, either; just regular, boring oedipal ones.’ (103) Gregory’s point may account for some of the conflicted tone of Halperin’s piece. Queer theory, Gregory suggests, is a field that incoherently both demands and forbids expressions of dissent: ‘light parricide, but not too much’. His point is consonant, as well, with Cathy Cohen’s ‘reservations about queer as the basis for collective struggle on the left’ (143). ‘[A]s more individuals take on the identity of queer’, Cohen lamented in her contribution, ‘queer becomes less effective—if it ever was effective—as a unifying framework for solidarity work across domains of struggles and across identities.’ (143) For Halperin, Gregory, and Cohen alike queer theory is a rather gloomy place. Its compromised and possibly shrinking capacity to accomplish its revolutionary goals is a source of discomfort, ambivalence, and boredom.

The complaints of *GLQ*’s anniversary contributors reflect a belief, one shared among scholars in this field, that queer theory is an inherently melancholy enterprise. The classic statement of this view is Heather Love’s *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. There, Love argues that what distinguishes queer theory from earlier work in gay and lesbian studies is its greater attentiveness to ‘violence and stigmatization’ (2). ‘The emphasis on injury in queer studies’, she suggests, ‘has made critics in this field more willing to investigate the darker aspects of queer representation and experience’. (2) And whereas a ‘critical compulsion’ ‘to resist damage and to affirm queer existence’ has led some scholars to ‘minimize[] or disavow’ ‘the painful and traumatic dimensions of . . . texts’ (3–4), Love ‘trie[s] to resist the affirmative turn in queer studies in order to dwell at length on the “dark side” of modern queer representation.’ (4) More recent accounts of the field’s affective make-up share Love’s sense that its power comes from its ‘dark side’. An article by Kadji Amin argues that queer theory is ‘Haunted by the 1990s’: unconsciously seeking to revive the faded radicalism of the field’s inaugural moment, it is ‘imb[ued] with an intensified utopianism that draws its energy from the pangs of nostalgia and loss.’ (183) For Astrid Lac, too, queer theory belongs to a critical movement that manifests a negative orientation of whose nature it is unaware. ‘[T]heory as a libidinal field’, she suggests, ‘has obtained the structure of melancholic incorporation’ (3): ‘theoretical preoccupation with melancholia has ended only to the extent that it left its trace as a “feeling” intrinsic to, if misconstrued by, the entire field of criticism steeped in affect.’ (5)

Melancholia, Lac’s essay suggests, has become the characteristic mood and structure of contemporary academic writing on affect, including queer theory. To emphasize the force of this claim, I would like to apply it to the one text that would seem most effectively to resist it, and whose refreshing opposition to disciplinary norms I have already introduced: Michael Snediker’s *Queer*

Optimism. Like the critics I considered above, Snediker sees a pervasive glumness in canonical queer theory, a ‘tropaic gravitation toward negative affect and depersonation’ that he calls ‘*queer pessimism*’ (4). What is distinctive to Snediker’s intervention is his attempt to outline an alternative intellectual dispensation, ‘queer optimism’, which ‘seeks to take positive affects as serious and interesting sites of critical investigation.’ (3) Snediker persuasively critiques ‘a current of enchantment’ within queer theory ‘that has privileged “suffering” and “dereliction” . . . as sites of both ethics and understanding’ (4). Yet that current appears to provide as well the force of Snediker’s own analysis. His treatment of Judith Butler’s work, in particular, is underpinned by autobiographical details concerning his personal experience of suffering and dereliction. The problem with Butler’s account of gender melancholia, Snediker argues, is its discordance with the actual feeling of melancholy, something that Snediker discovered after reading Butler’s work during a ‘sustained encounter with depression’ (5). ‘My experience of feeling ontologically incoherent,’ Snediker writes, ‘had none of the thrill of reading about being incoherent[.] . . . Stronger than the excitement of radical new possibilities of self-losing, of the vigorous embrace of factitiousness, was the grief of self-loss and consuming repulsion of feeling fictive.’ (6) Snediker’s compelling and paradoxical use of melancholy as a rhetorical trope demonstrates the indispensable utility of this mood across queer theory’s factional disputes. Sadness, it seems, offers an epistemological vantage too precious to be relinquished willingly.

In order to understand the origin and force of the melancholy style in queer theory, I am going in the following section of this chapter to explore its deployment and thematization in the work of one of the field’s founders, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Bad feelings are the subject of almost all of Sedgwick’s writing, and her later work in particular—especially *Tendencies*, *A Dialogue on Love*, and *Touching Feeling*—is characterized by a sustained interest in experiences such as mourning, depression, and shame. One way in which the lasting influence of that focus can be felt is in the plangent tone of the responses to her work that are contained in the *GLQ* anniversary issue. Allen Durgin, who was taught by Sedgwick, recalled that he ‘struggled to complete [his] dissertation’ after she died; he ‘felt ashamed’ that he had ‘run from [his] failed acting career into her arms’ (14). ‘On Enduring Eve Sedgwick’ was the foreboding title of Rachel Walerstein’s piece, which reiterated some of Durgin’s unhappiness: the three affects that Walerstein recalls experiencing while reading *Shame and Its Sisters* as a student are ‘interest’, ‘shame’, and ‘despair’ (17). In a less confessional mode, Mary Zaboriskis argued that the ‘anxiety’ about younger scholars expressed by Sedgwick in ‘Queer Performativity’ ‘set[] the stage for generational divides that have come to characterize the field.’ (29) And Heather Love, finally, suggested in her contribution that Sedgwick’s perspective may not have been bleak *enough*, her ‘assertion of the political value of negative affect’ something Love ‘struggled to reconcile . . . with more pedestrian accounts of gay, lesbian, and transgender identity.’ (‘Beginning’ 34)

Taken together, these pieces indicate that Sedgwick's work provides an important outlet for queer theory's conflicted feelings. Contemporary readers of Sedgwick highlight the intense, painful emotions produced by her writing and mentorship, and are drawn to what they see as the flaws and damaging repercussions of her most provocative interventions. Of course, this is not to say that Sedgwick is a reviled figure in queer theory today; on the contrary, it is precisely through their anxiety that critics identify what they see as powerful in her writing. For these critics, her work has the character of an ordeal: as Walerstein puts it, 'Sedgwick . . . inspired and contented while asking the reader to endure the terrifying until their fear response was "burned out."' (17) Sedgwick's influence thus becomes perceptible within these pieces through the functioning of a mimetic impulse. By scrutinizing the affective charges of their reactions to her work, and by seeking to articulate the limits of her theoretical projects, modern readers of Sedgwick reproduce in the face of her writing the critical dispositions that she herself modelled. Walerstein's description of the emotive power of Sedgwick's writing, for instance, is explicitly based on that which Sedgwick gives of Silvan Tomkins' ('his writing excited and calmed, inspired and contented' [Sedgwick and Frank 498]), while Zaborskis's and Love's critiques recall the ambitious confrontation with field-defining paradigms staged by 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading'. The mimetic impulse is most overt in Durgin's piece, which takes Sedgwick's "visceral near-identification with the writing [she] cared for . . ."—namely, that of Henry James' (11–12) as the model for its author's own 'near-identification with her work' (15). And Durgin's identification with Sedgwick manifests primarily as a narrative and stylistic interest in depression; repeated keywords demonstrate that his imagination of loss is derived from Sedgwick's. 'I *abandoned* my *first love*, acting, . . . to study . . . with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick', Durgin's essay begins; he '[a]rriv[ed] on Sedgwick's doorstep a *howling* beast'. (11, emphases added) Sedgwick, Durgin later writes, 'found herself nearly *howled* out of grad school', and '*abandoned*' the long poem she had been working on; in an interview quoted by Durgin, she describes poetry as her '*first love*' (12–13, emphases added). Durgin's 'near-identification' with Sedgwick, this sequence of allusions indicates, is an identification specifically with a depressed Sedgwick.

In what follows, the first section of this chapter, I am going to excavate the structuring link in Sedgwick's thought between identification and sadness; the distinctively charismatic appeal of Sedgwick's writing, I will contend, is tied to her Byronic performance of depression. This appeal is most explicit in Sedgwick's accounts of the disorienting and community-forming function of memorial writing, a function she both analyses and reproduces in her discussions of that form. In the second part of this chapter, I will show how James's novel *Roderick Hudson* dramatizes the power of the depressive rhetoric that I have identified in Sedgwick's work. At the heart of my reading of this novel is the relationship between Rowland Mallet, the story's lonely protagonist, and Christina Light, its gloomy

and compelling heroine. Like Sedgwick, I wish to suggest, Christina finds in her depression a rhetorical position that is endlessly fascinating to people, like Rowland, who have been unable to endow their sadness with comparable semiotic grandeur. The third and final part of this chapter will consider in a more critical light the stance of glamorous misery that both Christina and Sedgwick exploit. The theoretical rationale that Sedgwick gives for her performance of sadness, I aim to demonstrate in this section, is based on a misunderstanding of Klein's concept of the depressive position, and in particular of the place of aggression in Klein's theory of reparation. That misunderstanding, I hope to show, is reflected both in recent responses to Sedgwick's work, which tend to disavow their ambivalence towards Sedgwick, and in *Roderick Hudson*, where Rowland Mallet betrays the same self-defeating ignorance of his violent urges as Sedgwick does in her later writing. Like contemporary queer theorists' attraction to Sedgwick, I wish to argue, Rowland's attraction to Christina is not an effective response to his own profound melancholy; on the contrary, it only distracts him from a psychological predicament whose solution lies—if he would only look—altogether within his reach.

The Obituary Relation: Mourning with Sedgwick

Towards the end of 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', Sedgwick suggests that people more likely to die early will experience intergenerational relationships in a special way. Her model for this type of experience is her friendship with three other academics, one of whom has HIV, and one who, like her, has advanced cancer. 'On this scene,' Sedgwick writes,

an older person doesn't love a younger as someone who will someday be where she is now, or vice versa. No one is, so to speak, passing on the family name; there's a sense in which our life narratives will barely overlap. There's another sense in which they slide up more intimately alongside one another than can any lives that are moving forward according to the regular schedule of the generations. It is one another immediately, one another as the present fullness of a becoming whose arc may extend no further, whom we each must learn best to apprehend, fulfill, and bear company. (149)

An awareness of the likelihood of premature death seems to Sedgwick to produce a liberating and vital closeness among people who share it. In contrast to what she has called the 'lockstep' of 'Oedipal regularity and repetitiveness' (147), the kind of association it enables is defined by a radical indeterminacy—'a becoming whose arc may extend no further'—and an ethical demand to which 'we each must' respond. This is an imposing structure, but it is also a rewarding one. It offers cyclical renewals of satisfaction—we 'fulfill' one another's 'fullness'—and a kind of enlightenment in the knowledge we may 'learn'. And it is an image of a community united by injuries. The conditions that

may establish it are wounds, threats, and dispossessions. They are present ‘for people subject to racist violence, and for people deprived of health care, and for people in dangerous industries’ (148); her friend’s cancer was ‘caused by a massive environmental trauma’ (149).¹⁷ In the midst of her discussion of friendship and mortality, Sedgwick quotes an epiphany from Proust: ‘I began to understand too what death meant and love and the joys of the spiritual life, the usefulness of suffering, a vocation, etc.’ (148) For Sedgwick, elaborating on Proust, suffering is useful not just for its illuminating quality, but as a solvent: it leads to the formation of uniquely intimate bonds.

‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading’ wants to endow that kind of bond with a certain theoretical gravity. When Sedgwick describes her friendships with other ill people as ‘very queer’ (148), she is defining them less in terms of a shared sexual identity than in those of their literally *strange* temporality. Queer theory, according to this essay, is a way of talking about relationships structured by suffering. What is less explicit in the text, though no less crucial to its power, is Sedgwick’s own role in personifying that suffering. Through her thematization of her friendships and their inhospitable circumstances, Sedgwick models the attitude that she associates with Klein’s depressive position: ‘the often very fragile concern to provide the self with pleasure and nourishment in an environment that is perceived as not particularly offering them’ (137). At the same time as she exemplifies this notion of the depressive position, moreover, she encourages readers to apply their ‘reparative’ impulses to her text, and to the image of herself contained within it. She becomes, like the objects of the depressive position as she describes them, ‘available both to be identified with and to offer one nourishment and comfort in turn’ (128). The affiliations that her text enables may be understood as alternatives to those formed by the normative technologies of kinship that it repudiates. Rather than ‘passing on the family name’, Sedgwick passes *around* the figure of her self: she invites readers to join the community of suffering she articulates by projecting themselves into the ‘depressive’ subject she performs.

The relational function of depressiveness for Sedgwick emerges most clearly in the memorial writing that is contained in *Tendencies*. Theory and obituary are shown there to be closely related activities for Sedgwick: the book places essays in literary and cultural criticism alongside texts that narrate, enact, and reflect upon mourning. The first of these texts is ‘Memorial for Craig Owens’, a short piece in which Sedgwick describes her relationship with a highly-valued colleague who has died, and which links the critical work of *Tendencies* with that of its mourning. Sedgwick explains that the ‘writerly motive’ of the book’s second chapter, ‘Tales of the Avunculate’, ‘came *entirely* from the fun of imagining sending it to [Owens] if I could ever finish it’ (104). For the reader, the disclosure that

¹⁷ Sedgwick’s description of her friend’s cancer is one of this text’s identificatory gestures, since, as Jason Edwards has noticed, the proximity of Sedgwick’s childhood home to ‘a major toxic incinerator . . . was almost certainly a contributing factor to her diagnosis with breast cancer in the early 1990s.’ (7)

Owens' death took away 'the only pleasure of the thing' retroactively imbues 'Tales of the Avunculate' with a sense of the loss that occurred during its creation (104). This affective saturation is rendered more powerful by Sedgwick's elimination of the gap between the time and space of her text and that of the earlier, collective mourning that took place just after Owens' death. A headnote to the text reads: 'Craig Owens died of AIDS-related illnesses in Chicago on 4 July, 1990, at the age of thirty-nine. A memorial was held later that month at The Artists' Space in New York.' (103) Remarkably, the note does not explicitly indicate that Sedgwick's piece was written for and performed upon that occasion. The absence of such historicizing detail endows Sedgwick's writing with an uncanny immediacy; the 'Memorial for Craig Owens' of her title names at once the text contained in *Tendencies* and the communal event to which the headnote refers. Like 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', this text is made effective by the belief that Sedgwick's first person may express other people's mourning as well as voicing her own.

We can learn more about this imagined rhetorical structure from the other piece of memorial writing in *Tendencies*, 'White Glasses'. This text is a proleptic obituary for Sedgwick's friend Michael Lynch, who was very ill at its time of writing and died soon after it was first presented. As in 'Memorial for Craig Owens', there is a productive confusion between the times of composition, performance, and publication in 'White Glasses': Sedgwick says within the text that she 'thought it was going to be an obituary', then that 'someday it will be' (248), and a terse endnote states that 'Michael Lynch died of AIDS on 9 July 1991.' (260) There is also a series of reflections on the mechanics of memorial writing, and on what Sedgwick, herself ill, experiences as their unique power:

I tell myself sometimes that being sick has made me read obituaries differently, but really I have always been fascinated by them in the same 'morbid' way, I have always propelled myself into all the positions around every obituary I saw with the whole force of this particular imagination. My own real dread has never been about dying young but about losing the people who make me want to live. For many other people things arrange themselves differently; but all are wrung, whirlpooled, turned inside out in the obituary relation. The most compelling thing about obituaries is how openly they rupture the conventional relations of person and of address. From a tombstone, from the tiny print in the *New York Times*, from the panels on panels of the Names Project quilt, whose voice speaks impossibly to whom? From where is this rhetorical power borrowed, and how and to whom is it to be repaid? We miss you. Remember me. She hated to say goodbye. Participating in these speech acts, we hardly know whether to be interpellated as survivors, bereft; as witnesses or even judges; or as the very dead. (258)

It is clear that Sedgwick wants to reproduce some of the effects of obituaries as she describes them here: eliding the quotation marks around phrases like 'We miss you', for instance, causes them to merge with her own authorial voice. Yet the 'rupture' in 'conventional relations of person and of address' she

describes and mimics appears also to organize her writing in a less clearly signposted way: for instance, in her volatile transition between the categories of personal and collective. The passage begins by raising the idea that its author's investment in memorial writing may be an effect of her illness: 'being sick has made me read obituaries differently'. This idea is reminiscent of Sedgwick's remarks on mortality and intimacy in 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', but it is one that she has raised here only to repudiate: 'really', she continues, 'I have always been fascinated by them in the same "morbid" way'. Her fascination with obituaries, Sedgwick now declares, is an essential rather than contingent aspect of her 'particular imagination', and it is related to her 'dread . . . about losing the people who make me want to live.' This dread, Sedgwick says very clearly, is something specific to her—'For many other people things arrange themselves differently'—yet she immediately declares that the receptiveness to memorial writing with which she associates it is nonetheless universal: 'all are wrung, whirlpooled, turned inside out in the obituary relation.' What was first presented as something quite personal to Sedgwick now appears to be ubiquitous: she speaks of '[t]he most compelling thing about obituaries', the thing to which 'we hardly know' how to respond.

It is as if the confusion of subject-positions effective in memorial writing has been incorporated into Sedgwick's account of it. Describing as both highly personal and totally generic the appeal of a discourse that unsettles boundaries between self and other, Sedgwick reproduces in her critical stance the structure of the form that she is examining. Her work doesn't just attend to obituary writing: it reflects it, it models itself upon it. It is in the act of reflection, indeed, that Sedgwick shows the pathos of memorial to inhere. The anecdote that follows her remarks on obituary, and which she presents as an illustration of the idea that 'no one can really claim or own the relations of mourning' (258), locates the power of memorial writing in its ability to mirror the feelings of a mourner:

This winter in North Carolina an ACT UP friend and I went to do some fence-mending with the local Names Project committee[.] . . . At what we thought, with relief, was the breakup of a long meeting, the unctuous guy who was chairing the committee announced that to remind ourselves what the committee was all about . . . he and some other people were going to unfold, in the lobby of the building, the latest of the big quilt panels that had passed through their hands—for us to view. I had to do it, but I didn't want to. The quilt wrings me out, as it does any viewer, in a way I don't always want to be available to be wrung out; . . . and just then I was very angry with the project, with its nostalgic ideology and no politics[.] . . . Truculently and furiously I perused, as it unfolded, the random patchwork of other people's mourning, daring it to make me cry[.] . . . As it turned out, the square I had no way of dealing with was the one appliquéd with SILENCE=DEATH and ACT UP T-shirts: not because of

them, but because of the unplaceable, unassuageable voice of its lettering, which said starkly:

‘HE HATED THE QUILT.’ (259)

Sedgwick presents this moment as an inexplicably moving one: ‘I don’t know’, she writes, ‘whether my tears and bile were finally those of rage, surrender, envious exultation, or absolute hopelessness’ (259). Yet there is a clear logic of identification in the story’s cathartic and funny ending. The reason the ACT UP patch is so powerful is that it speaks Sedgwick’s own feelings back to her: her visceral hostility to the Names Project, with its oily chairman and conservative approach, is reflected and magnified in the patch’s more forthright declaration of hatred. And like the man who hated the quilt, Sedgwick seems to have been subjected to it, even to have been transformed into it. Standing before it, she feels like a piece of tear-soaked fabric: like something ‘available to be wrung out’. The power of memorial writing is thus figured in this scene, as throughout Sedgwick’s writing, as a power to share and to make perceptible the negative affect that its reader brings to it. This is an attractive and potentially transformative power, but it is not without its dangers. Attaching too keenly to another’s performance of sadness, in particular, may make it easier to ignore the roots of one’s own. This is a predicament whose perils Henry James’s first successful novel may help us to understand.

Roderick Hudson: *Depression’s Mask*

Roderick Hudson is James’s most melancholy novel. Its characters are all, in different ways, unhappy: there is brooding, disappointed Rowland; manic, impatient Roderick and his lachrymose mother; grave Mary Garland; and bored, angry Christina. The novel narrates the failure and tragic end of a young man’s talent; the repeated, smothering frustration of the ideals and desires of his older friend; and a woman’s increasingly painful alienation from herself at the hands of her mercenary parents. It moves from the dusty torpor of Northampton, Mass.; lingers amid Rome’s mouldering grandeur; and ends between lonely Alpine crags. The world of *Roderick Hudson* is unremittingly bleak. Even a Felix Young would struggle to derive pleasure from the contemplation of its desolate landscapes.

This section of the chapter argues that the place of sadness in *Roderick Hudson* is essentially linked to another of the text’s foremost concerns: the power of representation. This power is most obviously thematised in the story of Roderick’s artistic development, but it is also central to James’s understanding of the differently visible melancholic dispositions that the novel contains. For my purposes, the relationship is best articulated through the drama of Rowland Mallet’s confused attraction to Christina Light, which I believe is based upon a profound and desire-inducing gulf between the capacities for representation with which each character’s depression is associated. By presenting Christina’s gloomy and impressive theatricality from Rowland’s excited and limited perspective, James

demonstrates the uncanny power that a performance of sadness may have for anyone in its audience who lacks an equivalent ability to communicate their suffering.

My argument thus participates in a substantial area of scholarship on *Roderick Hudson*: what Elizabeth Duquette has called ‘the critical debate about models in the text’ (157). ‘Scholars seem to agree that . . . *Roderick Hudson* is concerned with models’, Duquette notes; ‘on the question, however, of precisely who is modeling what to whom,’ she adds, ‘there is far less unanimity.’ (157) Duquette suggests that ‘nothing even resembling consensus has been reached’ (158), but I think on the contrary that one important belief is shared by participants in this debate: that Christina does not and cannot serve as a model for Rowland. The two relate to one another, most readers of this novel have concluded, merely as rivals for Roderick’s affection. One would not know from Robert Martin’s influential reading of *Roderick Hudson*, for instance, that Rowland and Christina ever have so much as a conversation. ‘The bower of bliss is destroyed by the entrance of the woman’ (104), Martin writes, apparently siding with Rowland in his darker moments; there is perceptible relief in his insistence that ‘the last two chapters of the novel are devoted entirely to Roderick and Rowland. Christina . . . has disappeared from the plot.’ (105) Recently, this way of reading the novel has been vitalized by the ascent of feminist and queer theory, which has enabled critics to present their indifference to Christina and Rowland’s relationship as an enlightened awareness of patriarchy’s insidious reach. ‘If my discussion of male artistic agon seems to bracket Christina,’ Paul Saint-Amour, for instance, writes, ‘it is because she vexes the very discourse of male artistry’ (23). Sedgwick’s thoughts about homosocial triangles have been particularly stimulating for this brand of criticism.¹⁸ In Naomi Sofer’s eyes, *Roderick Hudson* is ‘structured around . . . such triangles—Roderick-Rowland-Mary, Rowland-Roderick-Christina . . . ; male-male-female triangles in which homosocial relationships are privileged while the possibility of heterosexual relationships is viewed with varying degrees of suspicion and pessimism.’ (186) Natasha Sajé concurs: ‘While male friendship . . . is validated in *Roderick Hudson*,’ she writes, ‘neither Christina nor Mary has female friends.’ (168) Sedgwick’s important theory of homosocial bonding seems to have made unavailable the idea that Rowland may relate to Christina as anything other than a competitor; and that Christina, even if she has no female friends, could potentially have a male one.¹⁹ That possibility

¹⁸ Of course, it remains possible to ignore Christina and Roderick’s friendship without recourse to this device. See for instance Born: ‘the tension of the novel is not triangular; it is bilateral, between Rowland and Roderick’ (207)

¹⁹ Christina does not feature prominently in almost any of the gay and queer readings of *Roderick Hudson* published since Martin’s pioneering work. See for instance Stevens 61–89, Ellman 27–31, Bradley 56–66, Woods, and Haralson 27–46. Leland Person’s account of the novel (39–64) is an exception, but I do not share his belief that Rowland ‘maintains’ a ‘critical distance’ from Christina (59). More instructive for my own reading have been Jonathan Freedman’s discussion of Rowland’s ‘neurasthenic personality’ (138) and Wendy Graham’s of his ‘lifetime of self-deception and inhibition’ (104).

may emerge more clearly, I think, if we look closely at the structure of Rowland's feelings, and at the precise nature of his envy of Christina.

The keynote of Rowland's emotional life is wistful unhappiness. It sounds most clearly at moments that should be happy ones. He is, for instance, lounging with Roderick on the bank of the Connecticut river, 'the far-spreading view . . . melting for them both into such vast continuities and possibilities of possession' (25),²⁰ when 'suddenly a strange feeling of prospective regret [takes] possession of him' (25–26): 'Something seemed to tell him that later, in a foreign land, he should be haunted by it, should remember it all with longing and regret.' (26). Then, while Roderick is 'radiant with good-humour' (52) as the two prepare to embark for Europe, Rowland feels 'restless and a trifle melancholy' (52): 'It seemed to him that he was turning his back on a chance of happiness' in leaving his interesting new acquaintance, Mary Garland (53). Rome in winter turns out to be the perfect setting for Rowland's habitual stance of ardent disappointment. 'He grew intimately, passionately fond of all Roman sights and sensations, and to breathe the air that formed their medium and assured them their quality seemed to him the only condition on which life could be long worth living. . . . [I]n spite of the charm which Rome flings over one's mood, there ran through Rowland's meditations an undertone of melancholy' (127). Rowland's feelings of enjoyment are inevitably subsumed by a gloomy realization of their littleness and transience, a movement that is reflected in the exquisite decay of picturesque Italy: 'in an atmosphere so heavily weighted with echoes and memories one grows to believe that there is nothing in one's consciousness not predetermined to moulder and crumble' (127). As with his 'strange feeling of prospective regret' in Massachusetts, Rowland has the slim compensation of having foreseen his 'acute attacks of depression' (127) abroad: 'if Roman life doesn't do something substantial to make you happier,' he had speculated to his cousin Cecilia before his departure, 'it must contribute rather to unhinge and upset you.' (7)

Rowland prides himself on the idea that he can conceal and subdue his misery; he extracts a kind of moral satisfaction from thinking that he is doing so. 'With his blooming complexion and his quiet grey eyes he felt the friction of existence more than was suspected; but he asked no allowance on grounds of temper, he assumed that fate had treated him inordinately well and that he had no excuse for taking an ill-natured view of life' (14). For Rowland, the correct way to manage frustration is to repudiate it by sheer force of will. After learning of Mary's engagement to Roderick 'he had taken . . . the simple resolution to forget her. And every day since, like a famous philosopher who wished to

²⁰ References to *Roderick Hudson* are to the New York Edition text (1908) unless otherwise indicated. I quote from the 1875 and 1878 editions where James's wording better illustrates my argument. Differences between texts are subtle, but occasionally evocative; only in the first edition of the text, for instance, does Roderick use a mallet to destroy one of his creations; from 1878 onwards, his weapon is a hammer.

abbreviate his mourning for a faithful servant, he had said to himself in substance: “Remember to forget Mary Garland.” (82–83) Rowland’s commitment to strict emotional discipline, however, actually multiplies his opportunities for suffering. ‘When he caught himself fidgeting it vexed him, and he rebuked himself for taking the case unduly hard.’ (128) His belated recognition of the absence of a similar discipline in Roderick, whom he thinks of as ‘unpractised in stoicism’ when the sculptor gets into debt in Baden, leaves him ‘acutely disappointed’ (100), and his recourse to an ethical logic is totally ineffective: ‘He had no right to be, he assured himself; but so it was.’ (100)

As the novel progresses, Rowland’s penchant for suppression gradually loses its veneer of the wholesome. An exchange with Mary ‘among the ruins of the Palatine’ indicates the severity of Rowland’s self-estrangement: ‘Are you very happy?’ Mary asks;

‘Don’t I look so?’

‘So it seems to me. But’—and she hesitated a moment—‘I imagine you look happy whether you’re so or not.’

‘I’m like that ancient comic mask that we saw just now in yonder excavated fresco; I’m made to grin.’ (259)

Though the idea of a mask usually implies something that is intermittently adopted, in Rowland’s striking simile it is something that he actually is; it is as if he has been ‘made’ without the ability to alter his characteristic expression, one that is imperturbably but quite superficially jolly. And, as a mask, Rowland’s performance is a complete failure: Mary tells him frankly that his grin is not convincing. From the more sophisticated, it elicits mockery. Christina informs him, ‘You’re not in the least satisfied’, and when Rowland asks how she can tell, she simply replies: ‘Oh, I’m an observer!’ (208) The joke, it seems, is that no special insight is required to identify Rowland’s depression: it is visible to anyone who bothers to look.

James draws a very clear and detailed connection between Rowland’s incompletely suppressed melancholia and his early family life. His Puritan father, ‘a man of an icy smile and a stony frown’ (9) modelled to Rowland a dismally restrained emotional bearing: ‘his shrewdness and his silence increased with his years, and at the close of his life he was an extremely well-dressed, well-brushed gentleman with a frigid grey eye, who said little to anybody’. (10–11) Jonas Mallet’s ascetic principles were responsible as well for the artificial impoverishment of Rowland’s upbringing:

Rowland had . . . received the education of a poor man’s son. His fare was plain, his temper familiar with the discipline of patched trousers and his habits marked by an exaggerated simplicity which was kept up really at great expense. . . . Rowland passed for a child of ordinary parts, and certainly, during his younger years, was an excellent imitation of the boy—most usual of boys—who has inherited nothing whatever that is to make his presence on earth

shine from afar. He was passive, pliable, frank, extremely slow at his books and inordinately fond of trout-fishing. (11)

Not only was Rowland's childhood uncomfortably severe; it was also, more damagingly, an enforced simulation. With his patched trousers and exaggerated habits, the young Rowland was tasked with representing the Mallets' spiritual humility to the world by becoming an imitation of a poor boy. And this project could only be pursued through an embitteringly hypocritical luxury of attention and expenditure. The unease apparent at 'the measurement of his middle, when he was about ten years old, [being] quite alarmingly large' (11) does not signal a concern for Rowland's wellbeing; rather, it registers Mr Mallet's fear that his son's ample girth might compromise his performance of poverty.

That something of Rowland's self survived this ordeal is hinted by James's specification of 'his younger years' as the period in which Rowland effectively simulated material deprivation: a change during his adolescence in his relationship with his mother, the passage goes on to indicate, gave Rowland a margin of freedom from his father's tyrannical organization of his ego. While recovering from a life-threatening illness, Mrs Mallet 'removed the mask that she had worn for years by her husband's order' (12): Rowland learns that 'his mother had been for fifteen long years a woman heavily depressed, and her marriage an irredeemable error which she had spent her life in trying to look in the face. She had found nothing to oppose to her husband's rigid and consistent will but the appearance of absolute compliance.' (12) Rowland comes to understand that his mother's existence, like his own, had been a hollow masquerade directed by his father. 'But at last,' James goes on to say, 'as her child emerged from babyhood, she had begun to find a certain charm in patience[.] . . . She had cultivated from this time forward a little plot of independent feeling, and it was of this private precinct that before her death she had given her son the key.' (12) The image of Mrs. Mallet's patch of sentiment clarifies in some detail the inhibited structure of Rowland's affective life. It is a field that may, like his mother's, produce nourishing feelings, but it requires close supervision and total isolation in order to do so. (This is why the 'far-spreading view' over the Connecticut so thrills and disturbs Rowland: it provides an image of unbounded possession.) There is as well a gloomy suggestion that Rowland does not really own the terrain whose emotional fruits he tends; his mother has given him only the key to her walled garden, and he may be merely its custodian. At any rate, the area is not open to visitors; Rowland has no way to communicate its contents to others. In an image that suggestively turns on a similar portal motif, he tells Cecilia: 'I sometimes think I'm a man of genius half-finished[.] The genius has been left out, the faculty of expression is wanting; but the need for expression remains, and I spend my days groping for the latch of a closed door.' (8) It seems that the key is not the only thing that Rowland requires to move freely between the emotional space his mother has allotted to him and the outside world. Darkness has fallen, and he is trapped inside himself.

Like Rowland, Christina Light is unhappy. Rowland tends to seem frustrated or disappointed at the course of his life; Christina appears to have lost all interest in hers. It is as if she has sunk beyond disappointment, has ceased to believe that things could ever go well for her. 'There was nothing bold in her look; it expressed but the reserve of systematic indifference.' (112) Where Rowland's sadness is regulated by a drive to smother it, Christina's seems to find its only outlet in expression; typically, in expressions of fatigue. 'She said she was weary of life' (146); 'I'm tired to death of myself' (155); 'I feel weary' (156); 'I'm tired of nasty novels' (156); 'I've too many doubts myself about everything in this weary world' (195); 'I'm weary and dreary' (230). Christina's speech, like her self, is sapped: she lacks the energy to describe her sadness as anything but exhaustion. At the same time, the sheer volume of Christina's allusions to her weariness indicates their relation to a certain manic productivity. 'Sometimes she walks in and takes her place without a word[.] . . . On other days she laughs and chatters and asks endless questions and pours out the most irresistible nonsense' (139). And although she is always tired, she is never at rest. 'What delicious oblivion!' she exclaims, as Roderick naps beneath 'the parasol of [a] great pine' (174); "I should have liked to lie down on the grass and go to sleep," Christina added. "But it would have been quite unheard of." (174) Elsewhere, Christina's longing for 'oblivion' takes on a bleaker significance: she has told Madame Grandoni that '[s]ometimes she thought of taking poison' (146), and later she wails, 'I wish I were dead!' (230). Madame Grandoni describes the first exchange to Rowland with characteristic cynicism: 'She had taken it into her head to believe she was very unhappy . . . She cried profusely—she cries as naturally as possible' (146). Yet there is no doubt of the reality of Christina's grief when Rowland sees her break down: 'The tears rose to her eyes, she struggled with them an instant and buried her face in her muff; but at last she burst into uncontrollable sobs, flinging herself on Madame Grandoni's neck.' (230)

Like Rowland's unhappiness, furthermore, Christina's is shown to be a direct result of her abnormal upbringing, and, in particular, of the attitude to representation that it implanted in her. This attitude is brought to light in a long, rambling, and embarrassingly revealing speech in which Mrs Light explains to Rowland how she has made Christina the way she is. 'For I assure you, sir,' as she declares at the outset of her narrative, 'I deserve some of the credit of the creation' (184). Her story's centrepiece is a harrowing scene of delayed recognition. One day, while Mrs Light was sitting on a bench on the Pincio,

a child came wandering along the path—a little girl of four or five, very fantastically dressed, in all the colours of the rainbow. She stopped in front of me and stared at me, and I stared at her queer little dress, which was a cheap imitation of the costume of one of these *contadine*. At last I looked up at her face and said to myself: "Bless me, what a beautiful child! . . . If my poor little Christina were only like that!" The child turned away slowly, but looking back with its eyes

fixed on me. All of a sudden I gave a cry, pounced on it, pressed it in my arms, and covered it with kisses. It *was* Christina, my own precious child, so disguised by the ridiculous dress which the nurse had amused herself in making for her that her own mother hadn't recognised her!

(186)

Mrs Light had thought her daughter 'ugly' (186), but after this incident she became convinced that her daughter 'was to be a beauty of beauties, a priceless treasure!' (186–87) Accordingly, as she has told Madame Grandoni elsewhere, 'she [gave] her child the education of a princess' (121); Christina 'never raised a finger for herself, she breathed nothing but perfumes, she walked, she slept upon flowers.' (187) One thing that this soporific education seems to have done is to install in Christina her trademark lethargy. Another is to split her real identity from the appearance she must present to the world: in a precisely inverted reproduction of Rowland's situation, Christina was brought up to simulate a social status far above her own. The episode of the *contadina* dress discloses a bitter and ironic commentary on this style of parenting: when Mrs Light 'wrapped [Christina] up in velvet and ermine' (186) and 'ma[de] her wear a veil like a woman of twenty' (187), she re-enacted in an opulent but joyless way the kind of dressing-up game that first made Christina unrecognisable to her mother. Differently from Rowland, who was required to perform at all times the same counterfeit drudgery, Christina's theatrical repertoire was expanded rather than attenuated by her parent's demands: she appeared to be, at various moments of her childhood, 'an angel', 'an empress', 'a little prodigy', 'a pianist', 'a *princesse de théâtre*', and 'a little queen' (187–188).

It is this prodigious representational ability that makes Christina so interesting to Rowland. Unable himself to communicate to others the meaning of his grief, he views with ill-managed envy the exhibitions of depression that Christina produces. The one that takes place when he bumps into her in a church in Trastevere is emblematic. 'She was sitting in a listless manner, her hands in her lap; her attitude spoke of weariness' (205). As usual, Christina is candid about what she calls her 'dismal spirits': 'I get horribly restless; I must move; I must do something and see something. Mamma suggests a cup of tea. Meanwhile I put on an old dress and half a dozen veils, I take Assunta under my arm and we start on a pedestrian tour.' (205) 'He was not in love with her', James writes of Rowland at this point; 'he disapproved of her; he distrusted her; and yet he felt it a rare and expensive privilege to watch her, and he found her presence in every way important and momentous. The background of her nature had a sort of landscape largeness and was mysterious withal, emitting strange, fantastic gleams and flashes. Waiting for these was better sport than some kinds of fishing.' (205) When Christina displays her melancholy, when she talks about her sadness and its relation to her family life, Rowland feels as if he is in the presence of something sublime: a stormy, Gothic spectacle lit up by the bolts of Christina's tired rage. There is a recollection here of Rowland's disturbingly boundless view over the Connecticut river,

and of the maternal enclosure that serves as its foil. Rowland's awe and terror before Christina are linked as well to the distinctive relationships to wealth and enjoyment he developed in his early life. Watching Christina is an '*expensive privilege*', the kind that young Rowland would never have been permitted. No wonder it's 'better sport' than the trout-fishing of which he was once compelled to be 'inordinately fond'.

Where Rowland's sadness can only be perceived through the cracks in his bland exterior, finally, Christina is able not only to show her own, but to indicate as well its source and structure. Her first appearance has an exemplary semiotic richness: symbolically divulging the nature of her predicament, her parade with her family through the Ludovisi gardens produces for Rowland 'an effect that remained oddly distinct in spite of the many revolving seasons' (113).

Suddenly there was a noise on the gravel, and the young men, looking up, saw three persons advancing. One was a woman of middle age[.] . . . Beside her walked a little elderly man[.] . . . At a considerable distance behind this couple strolled a young girl, apparently of about twenty. She was tall and slender and dressed with extreme elegance; she led by a cord a large poodle of the most fantastic aspect. He was combed and decked like a ram for sacrifice; his trunk and haunches were of the most transparent pink, his fleecy head and shoulders as white as jeweller's cotton, his tail and ears ornamented with long blue ribbons. He stepped along stiffly and solemnly beside his mistress, with an air of conscious elegance. (70)

The procession is well-suited to display Christina's melancholy—she walks with 'the step and carriage of a tired princess' (70)—and Christina has planted within it as well an allegory that explains her unhappy situation. This is the poodle, Stenterello, whose elaborate grooming and imperious gait reproduce Christina's stately glamour. By presenting Stenterello as a figure for herself, Christina gives her audience a bleak commentary on her superficial majesty; with his 'transparent' flesh, the poodle is a sort of window onto her inner world. Like the poodle's, Christina announces, her splendid appearance is the work of others, who have made her the way she is to serve their own ends. Marrying a wealthy prince, she suggests, will be like being killed as a 'sacrifice' to satisfy her mother's obsession. Rowland correctly notices something 'absurd in the sight of a young lady gravely appended to an animal of these incongruous attributes' (70), but it is not so much the simple connection between the two creatures as its signification that Christina wants us to find grotesque. Her performance of sovereignty is nonsense, she tells us, because she is in fact almost totally powerless; she gets as much authority from her imperial posture as the poodle does from its ribbons. Her only freedom, in fact, lies in her melancholy; it is her glamorous nihilism through which she lays claim to an enviable power of representation.

A diligent reader of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work might be inclined to see in Rowland Mallet an exemplary subject of the depressive position. Sedgwick first refers to this concept, which along with that of the paranoid position is a central element of Kleinian theory,²¹ in 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading.' There, Sedgwick describes the depressive position as 'an anxiety-mitigating achievement' (128). For Sedgwick, 'the paranoid position . . . is a position of terrible alertness to the dangers posed by the hateful and envious part-objects that one defensively projects into, carves out of, and ingests from the world around one', whereas 'the depressive position is . . . the position from which it is possible in turn to use one's own resources to assemble or "repair" the murderous part-objects into something like a whole' (128). 'The desire of a reparative impulse', Sedgwick writes, 'is additive and accretive. Its fear, a realistic one, is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self.' (149) If Rowland does occupy the depressive position, then this would be, for Sedgwick, a wholly good thing. Because Sedgwick believes not only that '[the depressive] position inaugurates ethical possibility—in the form of a guilty, empathetic view of the other as at once good, damaged, integral, and requiring and eliciting love and care,'—but also that '[s]uch ethical possibility . . . is founded on and coextensive with the subject's movement toward what Foucault calls "care of the self," the often very fragile concern to provide the self with pleasure and nourishment in an environment that is perceived as not particularly offering them.' (137) In Sedgwick's eyes, 'it . . . represents an actual achievement—a distinct, often risky positional shift—for an infant or adult to move toward a sustained *seeking of pleasure* (through the reparative strategies of the depressive position), rather than continue to pursue the self-reinforcing because self-defeating strategies for *forestalling pain* offered by the paranoid/schizoid position.' (137) Sedgwick's account of the depressive position would thus encourage us to see behind Rowland's reparative gestures a fruitful and indeed moral subjective stance. His attraction to stoicism as a way of life would signify in this light his escape from the vicious

²¹ Every account of Klein's work includes substantial discussion of the paranoid and depressive positions. See Anderson 34–58, Bronstein 32–76, Hinshelwood 138–66, Likierman 100–155, H. Segal 54–102, and J. Segal 33–44. In 'Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes', which was first published ten years after 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', Sedgwick indicates that her understanding of Kleinian theory is derived in particular from Hinshelwood's dictionary and, 'more recently', from Likierman's monograph (626). 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', however, does not benefit from the insights of Likierman's book, which was published in 2001. Likierman argues that the depressive position is often misrepresented by Klein's followers as a 'a purely positive phenomenon' (115): 'the concept', she writes, has been 'tilt[ed] . . . from a definition in terms of anxiety and suffering to a definition which accentuates moral achievement.' (116) In 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', Sedgwick shares the mainstream view of Klein's theory that Likierman would later argue against: she describes the depressive position more as an achievement than as, in Likierman's words, 'a dangerous crisis point which sets in motion ambivalence, a catastrophic sense of loss and also, psychotic anxieties and defences, all of which need to be overcome.' ([sic] 115)

circle of defensive paranoia, while his susceptibility to aesthetic pleasure—‘He was extremely fond of all the arts and had an almost passionate enjoyment of pictures’ (6)—would constitute an ethically fundamental technique of self-care.

I believe, however, that this interpretation would profoundly misconstrue Rowland’s depressiveness, which I wish instead to recognize in this chapter as a defence against anxiety that has ruinous consequences for himself and others. Before doing so, I am going first to critique Sedgwick’s account of the depressive position by comparing it with Melanie Klein’s writing on the same subject. This writing belongs to what Hanna Segal has called ‘[t]he second phase’ of Klein’s thought, which ‘led to the formulation of the concept of the depressive position and the manic defence mechanisms, described mainly in her paper “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic Depressive States” (1934) and “Mourning and its Relation to Manic Depressive States” (1940).’ ([sic] 1)²² It is these two papers, accordingly, which I will consider here alongside ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading’. My critique will enable me not only to emphasize by contrast with Sedgwick’s work the authentically Kleinian character of my view of Rowland’s depression, but also to explain more fully the idealization of Sedgwick’s melancholy by queer theory that I began describing in this chapter’s introduction. Queer theory, I will suggest at the end of this chapter, has incorporated both Sedgwick’s melancholy and her confused attitude to it, and now perseverates in the face of her legacy the same unanalysed depression.

To begin with, let’s consider Sedgwick’s incorrect claim that the depressive position is ‘an anxiety-mitigating achievement’. For Klein, on the contrary, the depressive position actually involves *more* anxiety than does the paranoid position that it succeeds. ‘In the baby,’ Klein explains in ‘Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States’, ‘processes of introjection and projection, since they are dominated by aggression and anxieties which reinforce each other, lead to fears of persecution by terrifying objects. To such fears are added those of losing his loved objects; that is to say, the depressive position has arisen.’ (348) Here, Klein states very clearly that the depressive position introduces the infant to new anxieties. She goes on to indicate, moreover, that paranoid anxieties remain active in the depressive position; that, indeed, the depressive position simply is the sum of an individual’s paranoid and depressive anxieties. Klein writes that ‘the introjection of the loved whole object gives rise to concern and sorrow lest that object should be destroyed (by the “bad” objects and the id), and . . . these distressed feelings and fears, *in addition to* the paranoid set of fears and defences, constitute the depressive position’ (348, emphasis added). There is no ambiguity in Klein’s perhaps surprising statement that the depressive position is made up of both paranoid and depressive anxieties. ‘In short’, she concludes the paragraph which I have been quoting, ‘persecution (by “bad” objects) and

²² Meira Likierman, likewise, calls these papers ‘the two depressive position texts’ (101).

the characteristic defences against it, on the one hand, and pining for the loved (“good”) object, on the other, constitute the depressive position.’ (348)

If I have belaboured this straightforward point, it is because I wish to emphasize the resolutely unidealized character of Klein’s concept of the depressive position. Sedgwick calls the depressive position an ‘achievement’, and then ‘an actual achievement’, as if it were an intrinsically laudable enterprise. But for Klein, the depressive position may be understood as an achievement only in the very limited sense that it entails a more accurate perception of reality than does the paranoid position, and therefore constitutes an essential stage if the infant is to progress to psychic maturity and mental health. ‘As the ego becomes more fully organized,’ Klein explains in ‘a Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States’, ‘the internalized imagos’—that is, the at first hyperbolically good and bad part-objects in the infant’s mind—‘will approximate more closely to reality’ (264). ‘Hand in hand with this development goes a change of the highest importance’, she continues; ‘namely, from a partial object relation to the relation to a complete object. Through this step the ego arrives at a new position, which forms the foundation of the situation called the loss of the loved object. Not until the object is loved *as a whole* can its loss be felt as a whole’ (264). The depressive position is thus an achievement not, as Sedgwick implies, in the infant’s struggle to overcome his anxiety, but in his progress towards a fuller awareness of reality, where objects exist as wholes as well as in parts.

Sedgwick’s incorrect understanding of the depressive position is linked to another problem in her reading of Klein: her romanticized and incomplete presentation of Klein’s concept of reparation. In her first deployment of this concept, Sedgwick writes that

the depressive position . . . is the position from which it is possible to use one’s own resources to assemble or “repair” the murderous part-objects into something like a whole—though, I would emphasize, *not necessarily like any preexisting whole*. Once assembled to one’s own specifications, the more satisfying object is available both to be identified with and to offer one nourishment and comfort in turn. (128)

Sedgwick’s account emphasizes the autonomy of the reparative subject, who uses both his ‘own resources’ and his ‘own specifications’ to construct his ‘more satisfying object.’ And she rejects in particular, and without any clear justification, the idea that repair must involve a prior model. With ‘nourishment and comfort’ being exchanged ‘in turn’ between the resourceful builder and his satisfying object, reparation appears to be a blissfully enclosed and sequestered ecosystem. Sedgwick develops this idea later in her essay, where she writes: ‘The desire of a reparative impulse . . . is additive and accretive. Its fear, a realistic one, is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self.’ (149) It is evident from this kind of description that Sedgwick really believes in the

effectiveness of the ‘reparative impulse’, and of what she goes on to call ‘reparative practices’ (150). ‘What we can best learn from such practices,’ she concludes her essay, ‘are, perhaps, the many ways selves and communities *succeed* in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them.’ (150–151, emphasis added) For Sedgwick, ‘reparative’ appears to name an in-built ability of the self to maintain and recover, even in the poorest external conditions, the integrity of its emotional world.

Klein, however, has a much more ambivalent view of reparation. For her, the drive to repair is in the first instance a phantasmatic defence against anxiety, and as such it may easily exacerbate object relations that are already problematic. This point is well illustrated by the analysis of reparative fantasies that Klein offers in ‘A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States’. In the depressive position, Klein explains there,

[t]he ego . . . finds itself confronted with the psychic reality that its loved objects are in a state of dissolution—in bits—and the despair, remorse and anxiety deriving from this recognition are at the bottom of numerous anxiety-situations. . . . The attempts to save the loved object, to repair and restore it, attempts which in the state of depression are coupled with despair, since the ego doubts its capacity to achieve this restoration, are determining factors for . . . the whole of ego-development. (270)

What had seemed in Sedgwick to be a plucky and rewarding creative journey appears in this text by Klein to be a manically optimistic and ultimately fruitless endeavour. For Klein here, reparation is more a fantasy than a process: it names the actions and thoughts by which an individual attempts to repudiate the idea that his loved objects are damaged, rather than any genuinely reconstructive activity. Such disavowal is exemplified in the cases of depressive anxiety that Klein considers in the same paragraph, which involve fantasies about ‘the bits to which the loved object has been reduced and the effort to put them together.’ (270) ‘It is a “perfect” object which is in pieces’ for people who suffer from this kind of anxiety, Klein suggests (270);

thus the effort to undo the state of disintegration to which it has been reduced presupposes the necessity to make it beautiful and ‘perfect’. The idea of perfection is, moreover, so compelling because it disproves the idea of disintegration. In some patients who had turned away from their mother in dislike or hate, or used other mechanisms to get away from her, I have found that there existed in their minds nevertheless a beautiful picture of the mother, but one which was felt to be a *picture* of her only, not her real self. The real object was felt to be unattractive—really an injured, incurable and therefore dreaded person. The beautiful picture had been dissociated from the real object but had never been given up . . . (270)

The drive to repair, Klein's comments here suggest, is a mechanism by which the ego avoids confronting the fact that its internal objects are fragmented. The patients Klein is talking about, entrenched in the depressive position, have not successfully reassembled their primary object; rather, they have constructed an ersatz and weirdly pristine substitute for an object that they unconsciously believe to be irreparable.

To be sure, 'Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States' does not represent Klein's last word on the subject, and the other key text of her 'second phase' indicates that effective reparation does play a significant role in development. Sedgwick's suggestion that 'the depressive position . . . is the position from which it is possible to use one's own resources to assemble or "repair" the murderous part-objects into something like a whole' is nonetheless still incorrect. In 'Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States', on the contrary, the realization that he can successfully repair his objects—an important but unfortunately not inevitable stage in the development of object relations—is what leads the infant *out* of the depressive position. 'The child's growing skills, gifts and arts', Klein writes in 'Mourning', 'increase his belief in the psychic reality of his constructive tendencies'; 'every step in emotional, intellectual and physical growth is used by the ego as a means of overcoming the depressive position.' (353) And even in this more optimistic paper, Klein remains alert to the threat to subjective growth that the drive to repair may pose. In particular, Klein suggests that reparation can become its own power trip. This is a risk firstly because 'omnipotence prevails in the early phantasies, both the destructive and the reparative ones' (350); it is difficult, that is, for children to accept that their ability to fix their internal objects is limited. 'Omnipotence', moreover,

is so closely bound up in the unconscious with the sadistic impulses with which it was first associated that the child feels again and again that his attempts at reparation have not succeeded, or will not succeed. His sadistic impulses, he feels, may easily get the better of him. The young child, who cannot sufficiently trust his reparative and constructive feelings . . . resorts to manic omnipotence. When the defences of a manic nature fail (defences in which dangers from various sources are in an omnipotent way denied or minimized) the ego is driven alternately or simultaneously to combat the fears of deterioration and disintegration by attempted reparations carried out in obsessional ways. (350–51)

There is a good illustration of both of these types of defence against anxiety—manic omnipotence and obsessional reparation—in Klein's earlier description of people who cherish 'a beautiful picture of the mother.' Such people, we may infer, do not believe that they are able to repair their damaged mother, and so they pretend that she is not damaged by internalizing instead a flawless image of her. At the same time, and as the curatorial aspect of Klein's metaphor implies, their preservation of that picture in its 'perfect' state can be seen as a continual act of restoration; these people may at any moment

temporarily allay concerns about the good object's condition by applying a fresh coat of varnish to their maternal icon.

I think that Klein's ideas of manic omnipotence and obsessional reparation—ideas conspicuously absent from the surface of Sedgwick's rosy account of the reparative impulse—may help us to perceive what is really going on in 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading.' For Sedgwick, as I have indicated, reparation is only possible in the depressive position. But this claim is wrong from an informed Kleinian perspective, which sees effective reparation as a sign that the depressive position is being overcome. From this perspective, what Sedgwick's essay actually demonstrates is the severely inhibiting structure of the depressive position, wherein the ego performs unproductive gestures of reparation in order to distract itself from the damaged state of its internal objects. (Thus 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading' exemplifies the depressive position as Klein rather than as Sedgwick herself understands it.) I think that what Sedgwick wants in particular to disavow is her own aggression towards her good objects. In order to clarify this point, I must introduce a new element into my critique of Sedgwick's reading of Klein. Sedgwick rightly identifies fears for the good object's wellbeing at the source of the reparative impulse, but what is entirely lacking from her account is Klein's belief that reparative instincts originate not just in the realization that one's good object is damaged, but more importantly from the guilty apprehension that one is responsible for the violence done to the object. I have already touched upon Klein's belief that it is the destructiveness specifically of his internal world that the infant fears in the depressive position: 'the introjection of the whole loved object,' as Klein puts it in 'Mourning', 'gives rise to concern and sorrow lest that object should be destroyed (by the "bad" objects and the id)'. Elsewhere, Klein is more emphatic. 'The ego feels impelled', she writes in 'Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States', 'to make restitution for all the sadistic attacks that it has launched on [the good object]. When a well-marked cleavage between good and bad objects has been attained, the subject attempts to restore the former, making good in the restoration every detail of his sadistic attacks.' (265)

Klein's remarks suggest that a complete understanding of one's reparative impulses must include a recognition of one's aggressive instincts as well. For my reparative gestures to be anything more than anxious disavowals, her theory suggests, I will have first to acknowledge that I really have injured the good object in my fantasies; I want to heal it now, but in the past I have wanted to destroy it, because when it wasn't satisfying me it was a cause of terrible frustration. My attempts to repair the good object, in short, will be ineffective so long as I fail to recognize that I am the one who damaged it. It is this recognition, I think, that is crucially absent from 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading'. There, instead, Sedgwick projects her aggression out into the world, and imagines herself by contrast as a brittle but basically placid receptacle for the good objects that she wishes to preserve. At the beginning

of the essay, Sedgwick seems aware at least that the consciousness of hostility is a matter of perspective; it is 'an environment that is *perceived* as not particularly offering [pleasure and nourishment]' which she first identifies as the depressive position's characteristic territory. Towards the end of the essay, however, Sedgwick is able to assert that the 'fear' of 'a reparative impulse'—'that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture'—is 'a realistic one'. And in her closing sentence, she confidently identifies in her own culture an 'avowed desire . . . not to sustain' certain people's good objects. From a Kleinian standpoint, we can understand these locutions as attempts by Sedgwick to repudiate her own aggression. Unconsciously horrified by her aggressive instincts towards her good objects, that is, Sedgwick tries to repudiate them by assigning them exclusively to the outside world.

It is because she remains attached to this phantasmatic defence against depressive anxiety, I think, that reparation seems to Sedgwick to be such an arduous and heroic endeavour. To use Klein's terms, Sedgwick's reparative gestures appear by turns obsessional and manically omnipotent; the overwhelming destructive power that she assigns to 'the culture' means that the acts of repair she evokes possess at once a heroic and a futile quality. This peculiar mixture is most evident in Sedgwick's paradoxical attitude to hope. 'Hope', she writes, towards the end of her essay, 'often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates.' (146) This distinctly Gothic characterization of desire is rendered somewhat confusing by the celebration of pessimism with which it coexists in Sedgwick's essay. 'In a world full of loss, pain, and oppression,' she writes in an earlier and startlingly circular passage, 'both epistemologies [paranoid and depressive] are likely to be based on a deep pessimism' (138). Hope is the thing with feathers, as Sedgwick recalls in a footnote (151n4), yet it seems unlikely that the feeling as she imagines it will take flight. When she characterizes a friend's hard-boiled outlook as 'a certain congenial, stony pessimism,' (124) I think we may justly see behind Sedgwick's figuration of repair an image of Sisyphus toiling forever upon his slope.

Killing Roderick

Roderick Hudson dramatizes in some detail the depressive malaise that I have found in Sedgwick's work. Rowland Mallet, like Sedgwick's authorial persona in 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', is burdened by a terrible consciousness of the threats that lie in wait for his cherished good objects. And, like her, he fails to recognize that among these threats are his own destructive instincts. As a result, his reparative gestures neither assuage his exaggerated and buried feelings of guilt nor mend the damage that he has inflicted in fantasy upon the people he most loves. In contrast to his friend Roderick, who significantly displays a sustained and coherent if rather messy desire to acknowledge and thereby reverse

the harm that he has done in fantasy to his good objects, Rowland manifests his aggression only in self-ignorant outbursts and one hallucinatory reverie. These moments, as well as being intrinsically unhelpful to Rowland's psychic integrity, end up consigning him to a state of permanent depression. At the end of the novel, James indicates that, because Rowland did not acknowledge his phantasmatic aggression towards Roderick while the sculptor was alive, he will never be able to repair the damage that he has unconsciously inflicted upon his best friend.

For much of the novel, Rowland expresses his aggression most blatantly through the mechanism of denial. 'I desire to harm no one', he tells Madame Grandoni, before gleefully regaling her with his ungenerous speculations about Christina's parentage ([1875] 440). When Roderick jokes that public morality might be improved by the execution of artists, Rowland replies, as if to a personal accusation, 'I've no wish whatever either to shoot you or to drown you' (166). Such distinctly unsubtle defensiveness is characteristic of Rowland, who seems compelled to deflect charges of cruelty even before they emerge, as if the mere idea of his aggression were unbearable to him. 'So, decidedly,' Christina asks Rowland, after he orders her to stop flirting with Roderick, 'I can only harm him?' ([1875] 355) 'You make me feel very brutal,' Rowland replies, playing the victim even as he punishes her ([1875] 355). The indirect sadism he demonstrates in this scene is recalled towards the end of the novel, when Rowland, who has decided to risk his life in order to obtain a remote alpine flower for Mary Garland, 'enjoyed immensely the thought of having her care, for three minutes, what became of him.' ([1875] 472) 'He was the least brutal of men', James laconically writes, 'but for a moment he was perfectly indifferent to her suffering.' ([1875] 472)

Generally, Rowland succeeds in projecting his aggression into the women around him, but he meets his match in Mrs Hudson, whose radioactive belief that the world is against her is unbearable to Rowland's comparatively stolid victim complex. During the Americans' stay at Villa Pandolfini, where the failure of Rowland's self-appointed mission to look after Roderick becomes glaringly clear,

Mrs Hudson divided her time between looking askance at her son, with her hands tightly clasped about her pocket-handkerchief, as if she were wringing it dry of the last hour's tears, and turning her eyes much more directly upon Rowland, in the mutest, the feeblest, the most intolerable reproachfulness. She never phrased her accusations, but he felt that in the unilluminated void of the poor lady's mind they loomed up like vaguely-outlined monsters. Her demeanor caused him the acutest suffering, and if, at the outset of his experiment, he had seen, how dimly soever, one of those plaintive eye-beams in the opposite scale, the brilliancy of Roderick's promises would have counted for little. These punctual messengers made their way to the softest spot in his conscience and kept it chronically aching. If Mrs Hudson had been loquacious and vulgar, he would have borne even a less valid persecution with greater fortitude.

But somehow, neat and noiseless and dismally lady-like as she sat there keeping her grievance green with her soft-dropping tears, her displeasure conveyed an overwhelming imputation of brutality. ([1878] 298)

Rowland is the perfect target for Mrs Hudson's perpetual accusing martyrdom: no-one else could be so thoroughly ravaged by her 'injured air[,] which Rowland found harrowing' (315). It is significant, however, that even at the zenith of his self-punishing moralism Rowland is unable to recognize his own aggression as the source of another's suffering. 'He felt like a restless trustee who has speculated with the widow's mite, and is haunted with the reflection of ruin that he sees in her tearful eyes' ([1878] 298): this quietly exonerating thought is the closest that Rowland can get to his destructiveness, which he imagines here as an unlucky consequence of a basically virtuous motive, the desire to increase a bereaved friend's diminished wealth. In fact, we may discern a much more serious and indeed just complaint behind Mrs Hudson's inarticulate protest in this scene: that Rowland's disciplinarian surveillance of Roderick has seriously damaged her only living child's capacity for happiness.

Roderick, indeed, is the object of a great deal of Rowland's unavowed aggression. That aggression obviously colours Rowland's endless domineering instructions to the erratic sculptor, but it emerges as well and more significantly at those moments where Rowland seems totally infatuated with Roderick. 'Looking at him as he lay stretched in the shade', for instance, during their first pastoral ramble, 'Rowland vaguely likened him to some beautiful, supple, restless, bright-eyed animal, whose motions should have no deeper warrant than the tremulous delicacy of its structure and seem graceful to many persons even when they should be least convenient.' (25) There is profound admiration in Rowland's contemplation of Roderick here, and an almost magical feeling of satisfaction that he should be permitted to exist in the presence of such an elegant creature. Yet there is as well the first blush of Rowland's disastrous possessiveness in the passage's ineffable suggestion that Roderick is the kind of animal that ought to belong to a powerful master. With the 'tremulous delicacy of [his] structure' in mind, the 'supple' and 'bright-eyed' Roderick resembles a tame deer or antelope, the kind of exquisitely beautiful creature that is typically associated in James's work with a distinctly oriental notion of imperial rule; *The Golden Bowl's* Fanny Assingham, for instance, who aspires 'to look like the Queen of Sheba', 'looked as if her most active effort might be . . . to share a sugared fruit with a pet gazelle.' (49) This idea of a regal menagerie, I think, partly underlies Rowland's perception of Roderick as a priceless and vulnerable animal: for Rowland, that is, Roderick's 'tremulous delicacy' requires to complement it a master whose power is at once refined and absolute. There is, moreover, a darker aspect to Rowland's imagination of Roderick as a deer-like creature in his possession. Whoso list to hunt: the grassy banks of the Connecticut are like a royal forest for this beast, which may be killed at the king's discretion. Later in the novel, we receive a clearer picture of Rowland's capacity for violence

towards pretty creatures. When 'Miss Light's poodle . . . set[s] up a sharp unearthly cry of sympathy with his mistress[,] Rowland vent[s] his confusion in dealing a rap with his stick at the animal's unmelodious muzzle.' (230)

What Rowland admires and wishes to destroy in Roderick, the novel indicates in the riverside scene, is his younger friend's uninhibited relation to his own destructive instincts. 'He belonged to the race of mortals,' Rowland thinks, after Roderick rejects with extravagant disgust his offer of a cigar, 'to be pitied or envied according as we view the matter, who are not held to a strict account for their aggressions.' (25) Throughout the novel, Rowland has plenty of opportunities to observe Roderick's readiness to acknowledge and express his violent urges. 'My experiment looks so base when I come into the studio that I've twenty minds to smash it on the spot' (108), the sculptor tells Rowland soon after their move to Rome; when the insufferable Mr Leavenworth orders him to finish his commission, Roderick replies, 'I would much rather smash it!' (225); and during a particularly fierce argument with Rowland, Roderick, who is working while they fight, 'flushed deeply and thrust his modelling-tool up to the handle into the clay.' (164) All of these moments recall a decisive scene of sculptural violence that occurs on the same day as Roderick and Rowland's Massachusetts ramble. The pair are visiting Roderick's studio in the Hudsons' basement, where a foretaste of Roderick's aggression is visible in 'the paper peeling off the walls'; 'the young sculptor had presumably torn it away in great scraps, in moments of aesthetic exasperation.' ([1875] 190) There, Roderick exhibits his pieces to Rowland, who is impressed and encourages him to pursue sculpture in earnest: 'You have only to work!' is his characteristically grim recommendation ([1875] 191). 'Work—work?' Roderick responds;

'ah, if I could only begin!' He glanced round the room a moment and his eye encountered on the mantel-shelf the vivid physiognomy of Mr. Barnaby Striker. His smile vanished, and he stared at it with an air of concentrated enmity. 'I want to begin,' he cried, 'and I can't make a better beginning than this! Good-by, Mr. Striker!' He strode across the room, seized a mallet that lay at hand, and before Rowland could interfere, in the interest of art if not of morals, dealt a merciless blow upon Mr. Striker's skull. The bust cracked into a dozen pieces, which toppled with a great crash upon the floor. ([1875] 191)

For Roderick, the bust of Mr Striker represents the unappealing legal career that he has until this point felt bound to, and destroying it helps him to feel excited about his future again; after smashing the bust, he 'gave a joyous kick to the shapeless fragments.' ([1875] 191) But Rowland seems to be genuinely disturbed by the violence of Roderick's action. What makes Rowland's 'displeasure' so acute, it seems, is the idea that he may be implicated in his new friend's destructive actions: it cannot escape even the most casual reader, though Rowland seems effectively to have repressed the fact, that Roderick's weapon is Rowland's surname.

Roderick's iconoclasm may seem a crudely melodramatic way to relate to one's aggression. Yet I think that James presents it as a much more productive and sustainable method than Rowland's typical attitude of frustrated denial. For Roderick is able to create sculptures as well as to destroy them; his artistic talent, indeed, is closely linked to his capacity to recognize and to make good his phantasmatic attacks on his introjected objects. It is only after he has completed a bust of his mother in Rome, for instance, that Roderick is able fully to express his hostility towards her and Mary Garland. 'They bore me!' he tells Rowland ([1878] 242), after declaring his latest work 'a masterpiece' ([1878] 241); 'Another week of it and I shall begin to hate them. I shall want to poison them.' ([1878] 242) Rowland is horrified by these statements—'Miserable boy!', he cries ([1878] 242)—but the newly-completed bust indicates that Roderick could not so openly have expressed his ambivalence towards his mother if had not also demonstrated his love for her. 'In the bust of Mrs Hudson,' James writes, 'there was something almost touching; it was an exquisite example of a ruling sense of beauty. The poor lady's small neat timorous face had certainly no great character, but Roderick had reproduced its sweetness, its mildness, its minuteness, its still maternal passion, with the most unerring art. The thing was perfectly unflattered and yet admirably tender; it was the poetry of fidelity.' ([1878] 246) In a striking contrast with the patients of Klein who constructed a 'perfect image of the mother', Roderick has managed to create a portrait of his mother that is both honest and beautiful: it is 'perfectly unflattered and yet admirably tender'. Because he does not understand that aggression and reparation are connected activities for Roderick, Rowland is bewildered by the sculptor's creative process. 'To Rowland's vision, as the weeks elapsed, the benefits to proceed from the presence of the two ladies remained shrouded in mystery. Roderick was peculiarly inscrutable. He was preoccupied with his work on his mother's portrait' ([1878] 240). An exchange with the cynical but brilliant Gloriani on the subject of Roderick's bust encapsulates Rowland's inability to link destruction and repair:

'I am told our high-flying friend has come down,' [Gloriani] said. 'He has been doing a queer little old woman.'

'A queer little old woman!' Rowland exclaimed. 'My dear sir, she is Hudson's mother.' ([1878] 245)

Though Gloriani is just as perplexed by Roderick's style as Rowland is—'I don't understand it', he confesses [1878] (246)—his rudeness indicates what is missing from Rowland's concept of creativity: it registers the avowed hostility towards his mother without which Roderick's art could not exist.

That this gap in Rowland's theory of art is a disastrous one for his psychic wellbeing becomes clear in the novel's most surreal passage, wherein Rowland, who has reached new heights of confused frustration about Roderick, goes through a kind of dissociative episode. After an argument with

Roderick about Christina, Rowland abruptly travels to Florence, where one day 'he [finds] his thoughts taking a turn which excite[s] him portentously':

If on the morrow he had committed a crime, the persons whom he had seen that day would have testified that he had talked strangely and had not seemed like himself. He felt certainly very unlike himself; long afterwards, in retrospect, he used to reflect that during those days he had for a while been literally *beside* himself. His idea persisted; it clung to him like a sturdy beggar. The sense of the matter, roughly expressed, was this: If Roderick was really going, as he himself had phrased it, to 'fizzle out,' one might help him on the way—one might smooth the *descensus Averno*. For forty-eight hours there swam before Rowland's eyes a vision of Roderick, graceful and beautiful as he passed, plunging, like a diver, from an eminence into a misty gulf. ([1875] 371)

This passage indicates again that Rowland's sense of his identity is founded on the delusory belief that he could never harm anyone; when he is wishfully contemplating Roderick's death, he becomes literally unrecognizable to himself. And remarkably, he is able to disavow his aggression even while entertaining these murderous fantasies. While his fleeting imagination of a criminal investigation does implicate him in some form of wrongdoing, other motifs in the passage seem designed pre-emptively to exonerate him of the fate that he is imagining for Rowland. He does not shove Roderick from the precipice that he has perched him on in his fantasy, but merely 'smooth[s]' the descent for a willing 'diver'. Further spurious rationalization confirms the extent of Rowland's estrangement from his sadism. 'When, of old, a man was burnt at the stake', Rowland goes on to reflect, 'it was cruel to have to be present; but if one was present it was kind to lend a hand to pile up the fuel and make the flames do their work quickly and the smoke muffle up the victim.' ([1875] 371) As if its aggressiveness were not transparent enough, Rowland's fantasy of mercy killing is rendered totally self-defeating by his selection of a notoriously painful method of execution for its representation. His idea that 'it was cruel to have to be present' at an immolation, in addition, sympathizes more with the reluctant witnesses of such an event than with its true victim.

It is in the light of the murderous fantasies which Rowland experiences in Florence that I think we should understand his self-punishing response to Roderick's death, whose brief description in the novel's final pages has generated some peculiarly incomplete and vengeful critical commentary. After Rowland and Sam Singleton find Roderick dead at the foot of a cliff, Sam goes to find men to help carry him back to their inn, leaving Rowland alone with his friend's body. 'He watched in the flesh for seven long hours,' James writes, 'but the vigil of his spirit was a thing that would never cease. The most rational of men wandered and lost himself in the dark places of passion, lashed his "conduct" with a scourge of steel, accusing it of cruelty and injustice'. (388) Roderick resembles Lucifer in his

catastrophic fall from the heavens, as Michael Snediker notices ('Stasis' 28), but Rowland is the one who seems to have been condemned by it to eternal hellish torment. That his excoriating grief for Roderick will be not merely prolonged but literally infinite is repeated on the next page. When Roderick's body is brought back to the inn, 'Mary Garland . . . flung herself . . . with a loud tremendous cry[] upon the senseless vestige of all she had cherished (389); 'That cry still lives in Rowland's ears.' (389) For many readers, Rowland's endless penitence is just deserts. 'This is the beginning of his punishment—moral, as James conceives it', is Oscar Cargill's stern judgement (37n31). Edward Engelberg concurs in his discussion of the New York Edition of the text, writing approvingly that 'James added sentences . . . to strengthen Rowland's guilty conscience as an instrument of Roderick's death.' (110) There is a sadistic quality—reminiscent, indeed, of Rowland's own ill-managed aggression—to the satisfaction that a certain kind of reader unashamedly extracts from Rowland's suffering. 'Clearly', as Sacvan Bercovitch smugly declares, 'James intends us to understand that . . . [Rowland] is a meddler and perverse': 'even here', Bercovitch writes, as if bereavement were notoriously conducive to altruism, 'he remains largely self-involved and self-protective' (221).

Such gleefully vindictive responses to the novel's conclusion are redundant insofar as they merely repeat Rowland's punishment of himself for his part in Roderick's death. 'The great gaunt wicked cliff above them [becomes] almost company to him' while Rowland keeps watch over Roderick's body, 'as the chance-saved photograph of a murderer might become for a shipwrecked castaway a link with civilisation' (388). Though this bizarre conceit seems at first to be blaming the cliff alone for Roderick's death, Rowland goes on to identify with the perilous escarpment: 'it had but done *its* part too,' he goes on to think, 'and what were they both, in their stupidity, he and it, but dumb agents of fate?' (388) A more subtle comparison in the same passage, this time between Rowland and Othello, indicates in more detail the nature of his feelings of remorse. 'His occupation was gone', the sentence that concludes Rowland's chain of thoughts over Roderick's body ([1875] 511), recalls the phrase 'Othello's occupation's gone', which Othello speaks in Shakespeare's play as he is becoming convinced of his wife's infidelity (3.3.360). As Hugh Stevens makes clear, the allusion indicates the sexual aspect of Rowland's attraction to Roderick (65), but I think that it also expresses Rowland's confused yet acute sense of guilt for Roderick's death. The salient parallel here is not Othello's jealous ranting but the murderous rage with which he famously ends that play, and Desdemona's life: Rowland, I think, recalls Othello's words as he stands over Roderick's corpse because he believes that he too has killed the person he loves.

Against the harsh judgements of Rowland and many of his readers, however, it is worth emphasizing that Rowland has not in fact killed Roderick. If, as it suits Roderick's self-appointed avengers to believe is obvious, the sculptor chose in a state of depression or madness to precipitate

himself from an alp,²³ then Rowland still bears only as much responsibility for his death as does every individual who enjoyed a close and tumultuous relationship with the deceased, whose emotional instability hardly rendered him incapable of autonomy. Only a fantasist of his own omnipotence as formidable as Rowland Mallet, indeed, could so unshakeably persuade himself that another's actions were the product of his own. It seems likely to me, moreover, that Roderick's fall really was an accident: we know from his Colosseum acrobatics—which Rowland is imitating when he decides to pluck a cliffside flower for Mary—that he was not a cautious navigator of high places, and earlier in the novel he has explicitly rejected the possibility of suicide. 'The end of my work shall be the end of my life', he ominously tells Rowland, but adds, 'I am not making vulgar threats of suicide; for destiny, I trust, won't add insult to injury by putting me to that abominable trouble.' ([1878] 164)

But Rowland, James indicates, will never arrive at a realistic assessment of his role in Roderick's death. Instead, the novel forecasts that he will spend the rest of his life constantly reliving the immediate aftermath of his friend's demise, flogging himself with the idea of his culpability while Mary's 'loud tremendous cry' reverberates in his ears. Rowland, I think, is condemned to this fate because he never acknowledged his aggression towards the sculptor while he was alive, and so perceives Roderick's death as the horrifying embodiment of his fleeting desires. In contrast to Roderick, who frequently manufactured opportunities to observe the real but uncatastrophic effects of his aggression, Rowland never had the chance to see that his violent urges could result in anything other than disaster. Roderick knew that he could attack things without permanently destroying them: it was in a studio littered with the fragments of earlier efforts that he produced his masterpieces. Rowland, on the other hand, has never tried to find out what happens when he acknowledges a violent urge. Thus he sees Roderick's corpse as traumatic proof that his desire to hurt someone will actually kill that person. It is as if, for the permanently mourning Rowland, his wishful thoughts of Roderick's death magically brought about the event: because he did not confront the fact that part of him wanted to see Roderick 'plunging . . . from an eminence into a misty gulf', his friend's tragic fall into 'the stony Alpine void' (386) cannot but strike him as the effect of his unavowed desires. As a result, his reparative gestures have the same manic and obsessional air that I have identified in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work. As he stands over Roderick's body, 'what Rowland saw on first looking at him was only a noble expression of life. The eyes were the eyes of death, but in a short time, when he had closed them, the whole face seemed to revive. The rain had washed away all blood; it was as if violence, having wrought her ravage,

²³ Cargill writes, 'it is clearly enough suicide, a consequence of Roderick's discouragement both with life and art and especially of his final talk with Rowland and perhaps an effort to square himself with his patron, or to free him in relation to Mary Garland' (37n31). It is typical of the avengers' powerful yet unreflective need for justice that the cause of Roderick's death should be as indubitable to them as its motive is obscure.

had stolen away in shame. Roderick's face might have shamed her; it was indescribably, and all so innocently, fair.' (387) The uncanny perfection of Roderick's corpse foreshadows his preservation as a sort of undead presence in Rowland's inner world. Unable to reconcile his desire to harm Roderick with his love for him, Rowland achieves a useless compromise by installing in his psyche an image of his friend that is both immaculate and lifeless.

Conclusion: The Eve of the Future

A similar process, I would like finally to suggest, has characterized the reception of Sedgwick's work by contemporary queer theory. In the introduction to this chapter, I briefly looked at the work of some critics who articulate their attachments to Sedgwick by mirroring her performance of depression. In closing, I wish to turn to a more developed product of Sedgwick-homage, a collection of essays entitled *Reading Sedgwick*, where those attachments are expressed as a melancholic desire for preservation that recalls *Roderick Hudson's* dark final act. That these two ways of responding to Sedgwick's work—imitation and preservation—are linked is suggested first in the introduction to *Reading Sedgwick*, where Lauren Berlant writes that 'many of the essays in this volume display a strong mimetic drive to be with Eve by being like Eve'. (1–2) For Berlant, the goal of *Reading Sedgwick* is to make its lost object reappear and live again: she describes the text as 'extending Eve's implication into places Eve can't be' (2). 'How can Eve live', she asks, 'for a generation of scholars who can assume queerness . . . as a theoretical field from the beginning of their careers?' (2) Berlant acknowledges, with a tinge of regret, that the volume will not be able fully to recreate the mysterious figure of 'Eve', conceding that 'always, inevitably, "she" appears in facets' (2). And in another of her text's uneasy questions, she implies that Sedgwick is an object that it is difficult to introject successfully. Berlant writes: 'how do we continue the project of coming to terms with what we can't specifically have asked for, the shocking impact of the radical reframing, stylistic challenge, theoretical elaboration, historical materialism, mode of focus and attention, and genre lability that mark what it meant, and still means, to be writing with Eve not just on, but in, our minds?' (2) For Berlant, the richness of Sedgwick's work has a traumatizing edge: the list of Sedgwick's qualities that distends her question seems less like a pool of resources to be taken in at will than like a host of violent particles that have invaded Berlant's mind.

Berlant's anxious questions exemplify one way in which contributors to *Reading Sedgwick* manage their ambivalence towards their good object. Another, more popular method is to idealize the relationship with the object: many of the volume's contributors blithely assert that their introjection of Sedgwick has been complete and untroubled. For Judith Butler, 'we read as we do only because we took her in, and breathe her in still' (70). Jonathan Goldberg's meditations on 'the universe' in

Sedgwick's thought conclude with a remarkably similar gesture: 'It [the universe] holds Eve still. She holds us still', he writes. (130) One need not be a Kleinian to see quite clearly that Sedgwick is being imagined in these essays as a hyperbolically generous and ever-present mother; her endlessly benevolent influence is consistently described in terms of physical intimacy, nourishment, and support. 'Sedgwick Inexhaustible' is the striking title of Chris Nealon's piece, which ends by evoking 'the kind of subject Sedgwick can now begin becoming, free of cancer, after queerness, in late capital, at the feet of the Buddha—that impossibly spacious, impossibly gracious subject' (176). The concerning idea that Sedgwick has been made more available to us by her death is reiterated by Karin Sellberg, who suggests that 'throughout our lives and careers, we sense her walking steadily beside us.' (200) Whether she is smiling down on us from nirvana or accompanying us like a guardian angel, Sedgwick is reduced in these essays to an icon of undying maternal presence.

Only one essay in this collection develops a persuasive allegory for its and indeed the entire book's phantasmatic attitude towards Sedgwick, and it does so with a remarkable lack of self-awareness. Michael Moon's contribution, 'On the Eve of the Future', begins by accounting for its unusual title, which is an allusion to the early science-fiction novel *The Eve of the Future*, by Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam (1886). In the novel, Moon explains, an English aristocrat has fallen in love with a woman whom he sees as 'magnificently beautiful, like a classic Greek sculpture of Venus come to life' (143). 'This fabulous-looking young woman,' however, 'has the soul of a petty bourgeois', which is 'breaking Lord Ewald's heart' (143). When the lovelorn aristocrat confides in his friend Thomas Edison, the inventor springs into action, promising that . . . he can make poor Lord Ewald a perfect female companion, an automaton, a robot that will look every bit as fabulous as Miss Clary but will also have a high-minded and poetic 'soul' programmed into her. Only three weeks later, Edison proudly presents Lord Ewald with a fully functioning simulacrum of Alicia Clary[.] . . . Lord Ewald is enchanted with his new mechanical love . . . (143)

What does this story have to do with Moon's topic, 'the meanings of Eve's [Sedgwick's] legacy and our various possible relations to it'? (144) Moon's answer to this question is not satisfying. Admitting that Sedgwick was not particularly keen on science fiction, Moon nonetheless insists that 'her emergence as a theorist of affect . . . determinately carried her work into the vicinity of science studies and systems theory; this movement, in turn, opens a path for us in thinking about the legacy of her work into the histories of science fiction and fantasy'. ([sic] 145–46) Then, he suggests that '*Between Men* . . . may certainly have had something to say about the overripe homosocial bond between Lord Ewald and Edison.' (147) And finally, he offers this banal proposition: 'that the set of questions around affect and technology, around the increasingly wide range of electronic and digital devices with which many of us in varying degrees have fallen in love over the years[,] . . . is a potentially highly fertile field for further

cultivation.’ (147) After dwelling in the first part of his essay with genuine and contagious relish on the spectacularly silly plot of *The Eve of the Future*, Moon seems unable or unwilling in the second to clarify how it may help us to understand Eve Sedgwick’s posthumous existence.

This is an especially striking omission because the parallels between *The Eve of the Future* and ‘On the Eve of the Future’ are not only obvious, but actually emphasized by Moon’s text. His punning title identifies the beautiful android of Villiers’ novel with Sedgwick’s writing, which has persisted after its author’s death; as he writes in his first sentence, ‘the legacy of her work [has] begun to take on some kind of life of its own.’ (141) ‘The Eve of the Future’ thus refers both to the flawless animatronic woman of Villiers’ novel and the version of Eve Sedgwick that is being and will continue to be manufactured and vivified by her readers. Like Roderick’s statuesque body at the end of *Roderick Hudson*, these idealized Eves have been constructed as substitutes for the real thing, which for one reason or another is not sufficiently available. And their uncanny perfection is theoretically significant because it indicates that a proper experience of mourning has not taken place: they serve as surrogates for the object whose damaged condition—damage inflicted first of all, in fantasy, by ourselves—we wish to disavow. In ‘Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States’, Klein borrows this description, from one of her patients, of the method by which he kept his feared and loved internal objects both alive and at bay: ‘the objects were killed but, since the subject was omnipotent, he supposed he could also immediately call them to life again. [He] spoke of this process as “keeping them in suspended animation”’ (278). Like Rowland, contemporary queer theory is preserving its image of its lost good object in a sort of psychic formaldehyde. Rather than confronting its ambivalence towards its maternal figure, it has replaced Sedgwick with an eerily perfect idol of her, which it continues to worship in the original’s absence.

Rowland Mallet reflects queer theory’s concealed aggression towards the good object in his anxious idolization of Christina and Roderick. Yet James’s novel also indicates that an alternative relationship to his destructive and reparative instincts was possible for Rowland. In the first chapters of *Roderick Hudson*, Rowland’s cousin Cecilia attempts both to reinforce his authentic urge to repair and to put him in touch with his smothered hostility. ‘You have a turn for doing nice things’, she tells him (5); as he cradles her daughter between his knees, she informs him that he ‘hold[s] her more gently and comfortably than any of her other admirers.’ (5) But Cecilia also tries to draw out Rowland’s nasty side. In a discussion of Northampton’s bachelorette population, for instance, she bristles at what she chooses to treat as an insinuation from Rowland that she is hiding attractive women from him. “Upon my word,” crie[s] Cecilia’, when Rowland asks if she’s ‘very, very sure’ there are no eligible maidens about, “one would suppose I wished to keep you for myself! Of course I’m very, very sure. But, as the penalty of your insinuations, I shall invite the plainest and prosiest damsel who can be found—of *them*

we have our assortment!—and leave you alone with her.” (8) This jibe is part of a recurring joke in which Cecilia, playing the flirtatious and vengeful jade, threatens to punish Rowland for scorning her. The very purpose of Rowland’s visit to Cecilia at the start of the novel, in fact, is ‘to exonerate him from the charge of neglect that was frequently preferred by this lady’ (3). Cecilia, with her ‘turn for sarcasm’ (4), attempts to model for Rowland through these gags a healthy and indeed entertaining capacity to receive and to express hostility: ‘her smile . . . was never so pretty as when her sprightly phrase had a lurking scratch in it’ (4). She is trying to show Rowland, I think, that friends are allowed to say cruel things to one another, and to mean them, and that nothing catastrophic will result. At the worst, Rowland will have to spend an afternoon with an uninteresting lady—the kind, Cecilia seems to be saying, that he might well have wound up with had the instructive example of her vivacious conversation not been available.

Unfortunately, however, Rowland misses the point of Cecilia’s jokes. The life of a single mother in rural New England appears to him to be a truly terrible one, and so Cecilia’s playful allusions to her state elicit in him depressingly earnest feelings of pity and guilt. ‘Rowland Mallet had an uncomfortably sensitive conscience’: ‘his visits to Cecilia were rare because she and her misfortunes were often uppermost in it.’ (3) ‘Mallet’s compassion was really wasted’, James explains, ‘because Cecilia was a very clever woman and a skilful counter-plotter to adversity’ (3); still, Rowland imagines their relationship with just the kind of buried aggressiveness that his cousin is trying to bring into the open. ‘He would rather have chopped off his hand’, he thinks, as if this would solve the non-existent problem of Cecilia’s bank balance, ‘than offer her a cheque, a piece of useful furniture or a black silk dress’ (3). It is presumably because she senses that Rowland cannot assimilate the knowledge of aggression that she is trying to communicate to him that she decides to introduce him to Roderick Hudson. With Roderick, that is, Cecilia may be trying to give Rowland more proof that creative urges may fruitfully be combined with destructive ones. ‘Show Mr Mallet how Mr Striker read the declaration of Independence on the 4th of July’, she asks Roderick, during Rowland’s first meeting with the sculptor, which Cecilia supervises (20). Obliging her, Roderick demonstrates his ability to produce faithful images of people by venting his hostility on them: ‘he represented with equal truth and drollery the accent and attitude of a pompous country lawyer sustaining the burden of this heavy honour of our national festival.’ (20–21) Sure enough, it is Roderick’s fiendish energy that first piques Rowland’s curiosity. Little Bessie is annoyed when Roderick arrives on Cecilia’s porch complaining of the ‘demon of unrest’ that ‘drives [him]’, because she’s enjoying playing house with Rowland, who ‘was playing that he was her baby and that she was rocking him to sleep.’ (17) But Rowland insists on breaking off their game: ‘I want to see the gentleman with the driving demon’, he tells her. (17)

In the end, Rowland proves unable to absorb the idea of creative aggression that Cecilia shows him in Roderick. Yet it is crucial to the novel's portrayal of Rowland that this idea was at least available to him; his ultimately traumatizing ignorance of his violent instincts was not, the novel shows, an inevitable outcome of the environments and relationships that moulded him. There is a moment shortly before his departure for Rome in which Rowland, feeling deeply envious of Roderick's artistic talent ("Happy man!" murmured Rowland with a sigh' [(1875) 197]), joins Cecilia on her veranda. 'She was sitting at work at a shady window,' James writes, 'and welcomed him to a low chintz-covered chair. He sat some time thoughtfully snipping tape with her scissors' ([1875] 197). It is this image, I think, that best encapsulates the promising relation to his good objects that Cecilia tries to inculcate in Rowland. When he snips the tape for his cousin, he is contributing to the creative labour of her textile work by repeatedly performing a small destructive action. It seems as if he is on the verge of an important realization: 'thoughtfully snipping', he appears almost to become aware of the nature of the process that Cecilia has undemonstratively 'welcomed' him into. Though Rowland never reaches a lucid understanding of that process, which queer theory also seems not to comprehend, this novel's readers have a better opportunity to. For the kind of person who has not been able to form meaningful relations to his own sadness and aggression, *Roderick Hudson* shows, a fascination with the figure of the glamorously depressed woman may function as a self-defeating compensation. As a result of the melancholy that he has inherited from his mother, Rowland perceives in a certain style of feminine performance an alluring resolution of psychic conflict. This is a mechanism to which James would return throughout his work, not least in the next novel which this thesis considers: *The Bostonians*.

Chapter 2

The Male Gaze in Drag: Looking for Basil Ransom

In the harsh gaslight of a crowded apartment, she appears: 'the first pretty girl he had seen in Boston.'
(James, *Bostonians* 70)

She was talking with some ladies at the other end of the room; and she had a large red fan, which she kept constantly in movement. She was not a quiet girl; she fidgeted, was restless, while she talked, and had the air of a person who, whatever she might be doing, would wish to be doing something else. If people watched her a good deal, she also returned their contemplation, and her charming eyes had several times encountered those of Basil Ransom.
(70)

Miss Birdseye's residence is only the first of a series of settings in *The Bostonians* that exist to house this unplumbable well of interest: a man looks at a woman, and she looks back at him. Olive's parlour, the Tarrants' 'wooden cottage' (131), Mrs Burrage's mansion, Central Park, the summer house at Marmion, the 'withdrawing room' of the Boston Music Hall (416): each serves as an arena in which Verena Tarrant is exposed and responds to Basil Ransom's gaze. What mainly emerges from these scenes is the riveting importance that Verena's presence has for Basil, her unparalleled ability to capture and stimulate his interest and desire. Yet there are also signs that looking at Verena is for Basil a uniquely disconcerting activity. The impatient flickering of her eyes and hands at Miss Birdseye's contains a warning to any would-be possessor: her attention is a finite and mobile thing. As 'her charming eyes' intermittently reward Basil's curiosity, so they 'return[] [the] contemplation' of her other admirers. The gulf of a 'long, loose, empty parlour' (57) separates Basil from the object of his vision. Should he succeed in displacing the ladies with whom she is currently associating, she may remain shielded behind her 'large red fan'. Given Basil's very distant relation to Verena at this moment, we may wonder why her image should become the incomparable source of fascination that it does for him. Beyond the threshold of this puzzle lies a teeming field of knowledge that is nowhere more industriously tilled than in the fertile patch of James Studies: the mass of ideas that seek to answer the question, 'Why do men look at women?'

'He seemed to look at women rather as women look at them. Women look at women as persons; men look at them as women. The quality of sex in women, which is their first and chief attraction to most men, was not their chief attraction to James.' (Nadal 94) Despite the novelist's low opinion of his acquaintance, whom he called 'the feeblest and vaguest mind' (qtd. in Edel 533), the American diplomat E. S. Nadal's words have proven axiomatic for many of James's readers: critics tend

to agree that James's fiction exposes and subverts structures of vision organized around sexual difference.²⁴ James, these critics demonstrate, is interested in how women participate in or resist their constitution as spectacle, and how they may also occupy the traditionally masculine position of the observer. As Susan Griffin argues, 'the Jamesian dance of seeing and being seen breaks with convention in that it does not inevitably partner a male spectator with a female object'; 'by displaying the female as perceiver,' Griffin contends, James 'deconstructs the gendered opposition between seer and seen' (60). James's critical attitude to the normative modelling of female spectacle has also been understood as a revision of the semiotic framework with which it is implicated. Thus Victoria Coulson, who approvingly cites Nadal's formulation (48), argues that James's superficially naïve depictions of women are in fact saturated with meaning. 'At first sight,' Coulson writes, they 'seem to have a surprising vulgarity, offering an invitation to the feminine pleasures of (self-)scrutiny: the queasy, narcissistic self-objectification that is the unattractive feminine counterpart of the unembarrassed masculine evaluation of the female commodity' (50–51). Yet 'James's detailed descriptions of his heroines' physical features are not merely ingenuous metonymical catalogues; on the contrary, almost every detail gestures towards metaphorical content.' (51) While Griffin focuses on the subjects of James's representations and Coulson on their style, each insists that James's vision is forged as against a cultural paradigm which reduces women to objects displayed for men's enjoyment.

It is no accident that *The Bostonians* appears in neither Griffin's nor Coulson's argument; there, James has generally been seen to have failed to distinguish his own perspective on women from that of the patriarchy and its diegetic stooge, Basil Ransom. Widespread disaffection with the gender politics of this novel is manifested most pointedly in critical responses that see its presentation of women as a brutal and demeaning pageantry. 'Though the novel opens with a gesture toward female self-expression and follows the story of a woman who delivers feminist speeches', as Kristin Boudreau writes, 'the woman remains a silent spectacle, the man a probing and speaking subject.' (23–24) For Boudreau, who perceives in the novel's structure a 'problematic, often violent sympathetic relationship' (21), James complies with a cruel urge to lay bare and inspect his female characters. 'In spite of pretenses in the novel to benevolent sympathy,' she suggests, 'the theatrical and pleasurable specter of sympathetic observation undermines this gentler impulse to avert the gaze.' (27) The sexualized imagination of sight at work in Boudreau's account is more openly articulated by Alfred Habegger, who sees Basil as a prurient lech indulged by James's 'supreme godlike gaze' (187). 'The Southerner's vision,' Habegger writes, 'often highlights the physical presence of Verena, whose "flat young chest" develops into

²⁴ Strangely, Nadal appears in Leon Edel's biography of James as if he is a model for Basil Ransom, 'a relaxed southerner' to his colleague Mr Hoppin's 'strenuous Yankee' (529).

“loveliness” of figure.’ (206) In Habegger’s unusually forthright reading, Basil’s chauvinistic lust neatly corresponds to James’s feelings. ‘[James’s] love for [Verena], like Basil’s,’ Habegger argues, ‘is inseparable from contempt for her intellect’ (216); James confirms ‘Basil’s cynical opinion of her . . . by using his own prerogative of omniscience to expose her inner nature to view.’ (217) Though they occur in the last chapter of his book *Henry James and the ‘Woman Business’*, Habegger’s descriptions of Basil leering at Verena seem central to his highly critical account of the novelist’s attitude to women. They return to a properly Jamesian locale the idea of voyeurism that undergirds the monograph, which, bizarrely, opens with a summary of the episode of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in which the protagonist discreetly masturbates in public while looking at a woman (1).

Whether they find in his writing a refreshing exemption from the dominant regime of gendered vision or insidious complicity with it, readers of James orient their arguments around the same economically sketched yet broadly consistent image of that regime. It is an image in which male and female are the only positions available, each entailing a radical separation from the other; in which looking, the exclusive privilege of men, is pleasurable, aggressive, and proprietary; and in which to be looked at, the unique burden of women, is to suffer an acute and degrading injury. It is an image that quickly becomes recognisable to every visitor to the field of gender studies as the theory of the male gaze, and, as the critical tradition surveyed above indicates, it provides a solid and inviting foundation to any Jamesian who wishes to build an argument upon the subject of women being looked at. One purpose of this chapter is to understand the limits of the male gaze theory in the context of its virtually unchallenged endorsement across critical discourse; another is to elaborate an alternative interpretation of male heterosexual desire through an examination of *The Bostonians*. In doing so, this chapter will suggest that a strong bias against vision per se informs the most influential critical writing on gender and sexuality. Martin Jay has demonstrated that the presence of ‘antivisual discourse . . . is a pervasive but generally ignored phenomenon of twentieth-century Western thought’ (14); it is my contention that feminist and queer theory, having neglected to take Jay’s findings into account, unreflectively persevere that discourse.²⁵ The idea of the male gaze as it is articulated in 1980s film theory is one conspicuous artefact of modern antivisual discourse: it belongs, as Jay notes, to a group of ‘[c]ritiques of specific historical manifestations of visibility [that] worked cumulatively to discredit vision per se’ (588). And its staying power can be understood in relation to the ‘antiocular’ tendencies shared among feminist theory’s favourite French thinkers. Lacan’s ‘devaluation of visual experience’ (Jay 356), ‘Foucault’s critique of the hegemony of sight’ (389), and ‘Irigaray’s outrage at the privileging of the

²⁵ Exceptions include Chow, Brown, and Rosenberg.

visual in patriarchy' (588) together constitute the intellectual bedrock upon which the theory of the male gaze has been able to thrive. The idea of the male gaze, in sum, owes much of its power to the fragmentary rhetorical formations provided by modern antivisual discourse, 'an often unsystematic, sometimes internally contradictory texture of statements, associations and metaphors that never fully cohere in a rigorous way' (Jay 16).

I have chosen to pursue my inquiry with *The Bostonians* precisely because that novel seems so nakedly to deploy the array of psychic mechanisms typically understood as weapons of the male gaze; because no one could be more reliably expected to manifest the patriarchy's unconscious logic than its most ardent champion. When he meets a 'developed and matured' Verena at her parents' house in book two (229), Basil's appreciative inspection seems mainly organized by an impression of her sexual availability. '[D]ropping upon the shabby sofa with an effect as charming as if she had been a nymph sinking on a leopard-skin,' (229) Verena appears at this paradigmatic moment to be nothing more than an object upon which Basil may exercise his desire. That feeling is galvanized by a strong tradition of scholarship which sees as historically privileged sites for the satisfaction of the male gaze the various theatrical figures to which Basil compares Verena: 'an actress before the footlights, . . . a singer spinning vocal sounds to a silver thread', an acrobat 'performing, high above his head, on the trapeze' (264–65). 'Victorian males', as Tracy Davis argues, 'interpreted theatrical performance with reference to the staple motifs of sexual fantasy, pursuit, and pleasure from illicit literature' (132); the aerial stunts of the circus, for instance, 'highlighted the whole female body in space from all possible points of view', and culminated in the performer 'land[ing] supine and proximally accessible amidst the gaping titillated throng.' (124) Susan Glenn's more sober analysis affirms that the sexual coding of performance at the end of the nineteenth century was not accidental: 'theatrical producers made a spectacle *of* women, positioning them as passive objects for audience consumption.' (3) The unshakable aura of theatricality that hangs about Verena appears in the light of this scholarship to reflect her total colonization by the visual desire of men. 'If at Miss Birdseye's, and afterwards in Charles Street, she might have been a rope-dancer, today she made a "scene" of the mean little room in Monadnoc Place, such a scene as a prima donna makes of daubed canvas and dusty boards.' (230) Verena seems to carry with her, to adapt a phrase from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a 'mobile proscenium' of male rather than marital witness (*Touching* 73): everywhere she goes, an abjectly feminine desire-inducing spectacle is constituted around her.

But there is more to Basil's perception of Verena than a predatory and compulsive eroticism. (His imagination of Verena as a circus performer is, among other things, an outstandingly precise and accurate notation of the physical discipline that she has had to develop in order to navigate the dilapidated environments of her upbringing. Outside the Tarrants' home, as we know from Olive's

visit, ‘the footway was overlaid with a strip of planks . . . and the advancing pedestrian traversed them in the attitude, and with a good deal of the suspense, of a rope-dancer.’ [131]) In contrast to the routine coupling of female performance and male sexuality rehearsed above, this chapter will argue that Basil’s desire for Verena, *especially* insofar as it manifests as a fascination with her glamorized appearance, is not best explained by the conceptual armature of the male gaze. Basil’s desire, I will instead propose, is structured by a profound and debilitating envy of the capacity to be seen that Verena seems to possess, an envy that can best be understood, surprisingly, in terms provided by the theory and practice of drag performance. This chapter’s approach is thus somewhat different to that of the other two principal components of this thesis. Whereas in chapters one and three I focus on ideas distinctive to queer theory—the rhetoric of melancholy pioneered by Eve Sedgwick in chapter one, the association of violence and knowledge in writing about sex reassignment surgery in chapter three—my analysis here begins with a concept and an intellectual orientation that are no longer fashionable. The idea of the male gaze was made possible by the meeting of Anglo-American feminism with Lacanian theory that began in the early 1970s and continued to bear fruit throughout the 1980s, and which brought renewed attention to the place of sexual difference in the organization of subjectivity and experience.²⁶ With the rise of queer theory, that project was largely abandoned; in this field, sexual difference is largely seen to fail to organize subjectivity or experience.²⁷ I aim to show in this chapter that certain elements of Lacanian feminism have nonetheless been quietly incorporated into mainstream queer theory. The concept of drag performance developed by Judith Butler, in particular, betrays a pronounced if largely negative relation to the idea of the male gaze.

This chapter has five parts. The first is a history and critique of the theory of the male gaze, a theory that, as I demonstrate, continues to flourish discreetly across gender and literary studies despite and alongside its frequent classification as outmoded or deficient, and whose influence can be felt even in an area of critical discourse to which it might seem at first totally foreign: the theory of drag performance. In the second part of the chapter, I indicate some ways in which Basil’s characterization troubles the conventional theoretical description of the male gaze’s subject, drawing attention in particular to the foundational role of deprivation in Basil’s early experience and adult imagination. I then flesh out this element of Basil’s personality, in part three, as it is expressed in the novel through a

²⁶ ‘Women’s fascination with psychoanalysis,’ as Elizabeth Grosz puts it in *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*, ‘has enabled psychoanalysis to be used to help provide an explanation . . . of women’s social and psychical positions within patriarchal cultures.’ (7) Some important Lacanian-feminist texts are Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*; Gallop, *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*; and Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*.

²⁷ Annamarie Jagose’s caustic allusion to ‘queer’s transcendent disregard for dominant systems of gender’ captures the polemical version of this idea; she also offers the more measured suggestion that ‘queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire.’ (*Queer* 3)

series of disturbed encounters with food. Verena first enters my analysis as a figure able phantasmatically to resolve Basil's problems in this area; her blissfully unconstrained relationship to nutrition promises a surrogate gratification for her impossibly hungry suitor. This mechanism of displacement, I show in the chapter's fourth section, is characteristic as well of Basil's violently inhibited desire to be looked at. In the fifth and final section, I demonstrate that Verena's performance style may be appropriately understood as a form of drag, and Basil's fascination with her, accordingly, as a displaced desire to embody the spectacularly feminine self she portrays. In this section, I return to the theory of drag developed by Judith Butler, arguing that it elides some crucial features of drag performance as they are described in Esther Newton's classic account of the subject.

My reading of *The Bostonians* suggests that Verena's attractiveness to Basil stems from her ability to stimulate and enjoy the gazes of other people; Basil would love nothing better than to possess this ability, but in its absence he converts his desire into an envious passion for Verena herself. Throughout the chapter I emphasize the abnormal and self-destructive components of Basil, aiming to apply to him the kind of attention that has typically been reserved by critics for Olive Chancellor.²⁸ Notwithstanding the exceptional clarity of James's depiction of Olive's problems, she is not, I will suggest, this novel's only severely troubled character—one word that frequently crops up around both Basil and Olive is 'melancholy'. By thinking about Basil's idiosyncratic behaviour at the level of detail that Olive has tended to inspire, I hope that we may gain a more advanced understanding of the imaginary structures that can generate the kind of dangerously oversaturated attitudes to femininity modelled by Basil Ransom.

Lovely Baubles: The Male Gaze in Theory

'Do you regard us, then, simply as lovely baubles?' (James, *Bostonians* 223) The question that Miss Birdseye poses to Basil in a Boston streetcar displays an uncanny fluency in the theory of the male gaze: it contains three linked ideas that have since *The Bostonians* become central to the interpretation of female spectacle. The first is that women offer to men a distinctly superficial visual attraction, one modelled by the twinkle of a crafted ornament. The second is that, despite this external glamour, spectacular women are essentially worthless for men: they lack a core of abiding value, and thus may be discarded or interchanged at will. The third is that this combination of sheen and emptiness enables the woman to function as a fetish, to take on meanings that are projected onto her; one older definition of

²⁸ See especially Kahane.

'bauble' applies to the 'baton or stick . . . carried by the Court Fool or jester . . . as a mock emblem of office' ('bauble, n.'). Miss Birdseye's intimation of the basic structure of the male gaze shows that this durable concept carries with it a number of ideas antecedent to its explosive articulation by modern critical theory. For this reason, and as this section of the chapter argues, the theory of the male gaze suffers from some flaws that have heretofore eluded the scrutiny of its contemporary heirs. Of particular importance for my analysis is the resounding neglect of the paradigmatic male spectator in critical responses to the concept, and the proliferation across critical discourse—particularly remarkable in the context of the theory of drag performance—of an account of vision in which objects that are coded as feminine may never actively be identified with.

In 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', the inaugural text of male gaze theory, Laura Mulvey used concepts from Lacanian theory to argue that mainstream film exploits two forms of pleasure associated with looking. The first derives from 'scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality', a 'drive[]' that is manifested in children by a 'desire to see and make sure of the private and forbidden' and 'continues to exist [in adults] as the erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as object' (8–9). The second involves 'scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect', 'a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world.' (9) The pleasure generated by this kind of looking is founded upon 'the moment when a child recognises its own image in the mirror[, which] is crucial for the constitution of the ego', and which 'is joyous in that [the child] imagines the mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than he experiences his own body.' (9) The subject of both kinds of looking in modern society, Mulvey argued, is male: 'In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female' (11). And the two kinds of looking are strictly distinct: there is a look 'of the spectator in direct scopophilic contact with the female form displayed for his enjoyment (connoting male phantasy)', and there is a look 'of the spectator fascinated with the image of his like set in an illusion of natural space, and through him gaining control and possession of the woman within the diegesis.' (13) Looking at a woman, finally, is not a wholly pleasurable experience for men, who have two strategies at their disposal to manage the fear she generates:

She also connotes something that the look continually circles around but disavows: her lack of a penis, implying a threat of castration and hence unpleasure. . . . The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object . . . ; or else complete disavowal of

castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish. (13)

By either 'sadism' or 'voyeurism' (14), Mulvey suggested, men may evade the threat of violence to themselves that haunts their enjoyment of female spectacle.

It may seem foolhardy to claim that 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' has not received enough attention. Yet substantial responses to the piece within film theory have tended to focus on only one of its contentious implications: its elision of spectators who are not relatively privileged heterosexual men. This tradition began with two important works of feminist film theory published in the 1980s, Mary Ann Doane's *The Desire to Desire* and Teresa de Lauretis's *Alice Doesn't*, which each aimed to address 'the seemingly insurmountable difficulties in conceptualizing the female gaze' (Doane 7), to 'follow[] through' on 'Mulvey's film-theoretical metaphor of woman as image and bearer of the look . . . in its implications for female spectators.' (de Lauretis 6) A special issue of *Camera Obscura* released at the end of the decade recapitulated their concerns with its focus on 'The Female Spectator' (Bergstrom and Doane); *Signs*' 'Beyond the Gaze' issue, meanwhile, proved unable to live up to the promise of its title, many of its contributors, as the issue's introduction notes, 'tak[ing] up the questions of "the gaze," transforming its earlier feminist contours in the interest of previously excluded subjects.' (McHugh and Sobchack 1206) In each case, the form of the male gaze as Mulvey describes it was assumed in order that the gazes of others could be discovered in its shadow.²⁹ This trend also characterizes history of art scholarship, where the terms laid out in 'Visual Pleasure' were taken up alongside those developed in like-minded work by John Berger and Elizabeth Cowie.³⁰ As in film theory, demurrals from the male gaze paradigm in writing about art consistently seek to describe exceptions rather than challenges to it. 'Probably the vast majority of male-engendered images of women deserve its point of view' (31), Edward Snow concedes in his critique of the male gaze, which seeks nonetheless to find 'a strong revisionary aspect' in the 'seem[ing] . . . lost cause' of Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* (32). Snow's article, with its evocation of an 'ineradicable archaic level' at which '[t]he field of vision . . . is one of pre-oedipal contentment, not phallic capture' (40), anticipates Bracha Ettinger's theory of 'the matrixial gaze', a way of seeing that involves 'a different subjectivizing stratum

²⁹ Exceptions include Bergstrom, Studlar, and Silverman. As Tania Modleski shows (9–13), these pieces minimize the role of gender identity.

³⁰ The classic texts in this tradition are Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*; Pollock, *Vision and Difference*; and Nead, *The Female Nude*. The theory of the male gaze has been influential across art history: see for instance Lippard, Barrell, Kelly, Turvey Sauron, and Koloski-Ostrow and Lyons. Marcia Pointon (33–34) and Linda Nochlin (1–9) have each described their work as corrective with regard to scholarship on the male gaze, but they maintain its focus on threat, castration, and violence (see especially Nochlin 45–46, Pointon 134). Julia Kristeva's 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini' has a different disciplinary origin, but its thematic range is similar (see especially 263).

(different from the phallic one)' (48). 'This stratum', Ettinger explains, 'can still be somehow informed by *mastery* (sadism), *gazing* (scopophilia), and *curiosity* (knowledge-seeking), but in a way that is different from the phallic one. Rather, it is mainly informed by *touching*, *hearing*, *voice*, and *moving*, . . . and it is relationally affected. It is composed by linking and relating.' (48) As Ettinger's writing demonstrates, work that seeks to describe structures of vision other than the male gaze can preserve and extend its defining features; sadism and scopophilia are in her analysis not only confirmed to be the most pertinent aspects of masculine looking, but are admitted into the terrain of feminine perception as well.

Today, an allusion to the male gaze is liable to appear in academic writing on gender and sexuality as an explanatory device whenever someone wishes to characterize a visual relationship as exploitative or dangerous to women. Thus Sarah Banet-Weiser, in her account of the links between misogyny and feminism in contemporary popular culture, affirms that 'to be objectified, as Laura Mulvey wrote long ago, is to be transfigured into a *thing* to be looked at' (63); 'An industry has emerged', she suggests, 'to regain control of the gaze'. (63) The image of a deep heteropatriarchal state in Banet-Weiser's formulation surfaces as well in the nascent field of feminist surveillance studies, whose proponents frequently see in new technologies of political control an insidious extension of the male gaze. In their introduction to *Feminist Surveillance Studies*, Rachel Dubrofsky and Shoshana Magnet suggest that 'questions about the politics of looking—about the surveillance of othered bodies', lie '[a]t the root of Mulvey's work' (10). Contributors to the volume, accordingly, detect the male gaze behind the screens of even the least sexy late-capitalist gadgets, in search of what one of the editors dubs 'surveillant scopophilia' (Dubrofsky and Magnet 12). Because they are 'positioned as authentically desirous of the gaze through the work they do to cultivate this gaze,' female celebrities who post 'images that display their bodies' (93) online 'naturalize[] white supremacist heterosexist patriarchy' (Dubrofsky and Wood 104). 'In the context of airport security', and in particular with regard to 'full-body scanners', 'performing voluntary transparency is coded as "hip" in the postfeminist spirit of agency and empowerment via preparation of the body in anticipation of the male gaze.' (Hall 136) Although these writers refer more frequently to Mulvey than to Berger, their shared interest in the male gaze as a structuring element of *female* subjectivity has more in common with the latter's distinctive concerns, as reflected in his pithy syllogism: 'Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. . . . The surveyor of woman in herself is male'. (47) The unaddressed tension between this position and Mulvey's, with its countervailing emphasis on voyeurism, indicates something of the male gaze theory's remarkable capaciousness: it can accommodate at once women who are excessively aware that they are being watched and those who are by definition unaware that they are being spied upon. In this vein, contributions to a recent special issue of *L'Esprit Créateur* on contemporary French erotic fiction dwell by turns on representations of 'women internaliz[ing] the male gaze' (Galis 86) and representations of

‘voyeuristic details . . . rais[ing] questions about the troubling implications of the male gaze’ (Henry-Tierney 80). The ‘male gaze’ is in every instance an existing structure to be subverted or displaced rather than a concept to be articulated and interrogated: ‘playful manipulations . . . undermine the male gaze’ (Henry-Tierney 80); ‘a feminine gaze . . . control[s] the narrative’ (Galis 97); ‘unlike the male gaze that Laura Mulvey so famously identified . . . , [the protagonist’s] photographic gaze eschews fragmentation and close-ups’ (Holmes 62).³¹

The most extensive treatment of the idea of the male gaze that has appeared in the wake of queer theory is contained in chapter three of Sharon Marcus’s *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*, ‘Dressing Up and Dressing Down The Feminine Plaything’.³² There, Marcus argues that the distinctive forms of desire associated with that gaze have been incorrectly identified as definitionally male, and that Victorian commodity culture indicates that normatively unexceptional women have also been attracted to images of femininity organized around sadistic erotic fantasies: ‘fashion magazines and doll literature,’ she explains, ‘portrayed rituals replete with the voyeurism, objectification, and domination that have been mistakenly declared the sole property of heterosexual men.’ (116) For Marcus, this argument is a ‘provocative’ (112) one because it seems to go against the tradition of writing about the male gaze that I have outlined above. ‘That an active pleasure in looking *at women* could be a requisite element of heterosexual femininity’, she writes, ‘has been a logical impossibility for a theory that declares active spectatorship and desire to be masculine and limits women to passive identification with the feminine image or active identification with the male gaze.’ (112) More than her siting of the gaze in nineteenth-century culture, it is this explicitly revisionist rhetoric that makes Marcus’s chapter such an exemplary object for my analysis: her work demonstrates the unassailable status of our consensual understanding of the desiring mechanisms of the male gaze even as it sets out to refute the idea that they are masculine by nature.

To expend so much attention on a concept that garners little serious critical notice today may appear exorbitant. I have done so not only because, as I have suggested, the theory of the male gaze continues to inform a great deal of writing on gender and sexuality, but also because, as I will now show, it structures as well a more novel and intellectually vibrant object: the theory of drag performance. Within queer theory, drag is generally understood to disclose the constructed, ‘unreal’ status of sexual identity. Judith Butler’s is the classic formulation of this idea. Towards the end of *Gender Trouble*, Butler suggests that ‘drag . . . effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender identity

³¹ For more recent arguments that uncritically deploy the concept of the male gaze, see Halberstam ‘Transgender’ and Musser.

³² A shorter version of the chapter entitled ‘Reflections on Victorian Fashion Plates’ appeared in *differences* in 2003.

and the notion of a true gender identity.’ (186) ‘The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed,’ Butler writes (187); whereas ‘an authentic-expressive paradigm’ holds that ‘some true self is . . . revealed simultaneously or successively in sex, gender, and desire’ (31), ‘drag . . . reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence.’ (187) Butler thus sees drag as a form of ‘gender parody’ (175): what the drag queen represents is less an actual female character than the contingency and fragility of the relations between anatomy, sex, and gender. ‘In the place of the law of heterosexual coherence’, Butler writes, ‘we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity.’ (175) Since *Gender Trouble*, drag’s associations with pastiche, subversion, and resistance have become commonplace. In *Female Masculinity*, Jack Halberstam argues that ‘the drag king’—in contrast to ‘the male impersonator’, who ‘attempts to produce a plausible performance of maleness’—‘performs masculinity (often parodically) and makes the exposure of the theatricality of masculinity into the mainstay of her act.’ (232) José Esteban Muñoz uses drag to illustrate his concept of ‘disidentification’: ‘the drag queen is disidentifying’, he writes, ‘with not only the ideal of woman but the a priori relationship of woman and femininity that is a tenet of gender-normative thinking.’ (108) Most recently, Elizabeth Freeman has described as ‘*temporal drag*’ the ‘countergenealogical practice of archiving culture’s throwaway objects, including the outmoded masculinities and femininities from which usable pasts may be extracted.’ (xxiii) All of these theories are based upon Butler’s idea that drag performance implies a constructivist and therefore antinormative concept of gender identity.³³

At first glance, the only relationship between drag performance and the male gaze as they have each been described by critical theory would seem to be one of pure opposition. The male gaze, we may recall, is the mechanism by which men and women are distinguished from one another in the field of vision; it is enjoyable to those who occupy the masculine position of the observer because it phantasmatically awards them power over women while allaying their castration anxiety, their fear that they may violently be transformed into women. To use Mulvey’s words, the subject of the male gaze ‘gain[s] control and possession of the woman within the diegesis’ while ‘escap[ing] from . . . castration anxiety’ through either ‘sadism’ or ‘voyeurism’. Drag, on the other hand, is a visual art form that

³³ For more descriptions of drag as essentially critical of sexual or other norms, see Burgess 941, Ellis 278, He 151, Schwarz 9, Serlin 173, and Wesling 116. The idea that drag is essentially antinormative is now so widespread that its purveyors don’t always bother referencing *Gender Trouble*. Butler is not cited, for example, in Karen Kraulik’s discussion of the drag performer Ryan Landry, who apparently ‘disrupts masculinity . . . by intervening in normative phallic economies’, and ‘illustrates how performers can layer, combine, and blur gender norms.’ (24–25)

troubles the distinction between men and women; it is enjoyable because it punctures the exhausting and nonsensical cultural imperative to incarnate one's assigned gender. 'The loss of the sense of "the normal"' that drag induces, Butler suggests, 'can be its own occasion for laughter, especially when "the normal," "the original" is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one *can* embody.' (*Gender* 176) Thus whereas the male gaze secures its subject's masculine identification, drag troubles its viewer's gender identity; while the male gaze conceals and repudiates the cultural origins of sexual difference, which nonetheless remain the source of its intoxicating pleasure, drag exposes and mocks them, finding pleasure in the recognition of their silliness. Having considered the relation between these two ideas about the visual experience of gender in this way, we may now be able to see them as more closely linked concepts. Drag, it appears in this light, is not merely opposed to the male gaze: it is its antidote or cure; it offers itself as a remedy to it. The subject of the male gaze gets pleasure from the sensation of masculine power that the fetishized image of the woman grants him; drag invites us through its own image of glamorous femininity to give up that pleasure for the knowledge that gender as such is fabricated. Thus drag has not simply displaced the male gaze as the field's structuring metaphor for the visual experience of gender. Rather, it continues to present itself implicitly as the solution to the problem of the male gaze; the reality that drag gleefully exposes is the same as that whose concealment makes the male gaze possible.

It would be wrong, however, to see in drag as it has been characterized by queer theory a complete inversion of the structure and attributes of the male gaze. For there is in fact one important continuity between this pair of largely opposed ideas: their elision of the possibility of a viewer's identification with the performances of femininity that they describe. The theory of the male gaze, to recap, proposes that observers see a version of themselves in representations of male heroes, an experience that is modelled upon what Lacan describes as the mirror stage. A woman, meanwhile, is according to Mulvey 'turn[ed] . . . into a fetish' by her subjection to the gaze; when the viewer watches her he is looking not at a reflection of himself but 'at another person as object'. In Butler's theory of drag performance, similarly, the classically female character that the traditionally male performer represents is not available to be identified with. For Butler, indeed, the person that drag performance represents is strictly speaking not a gendered one, for it is precisely drag's project to repudiate the gendering of the self: whereas 'gender identity' tends to 'construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self', drag 'parod[ies] the mechanism of that construction.' (*Gender* 188) Viewers are accordingly invited to identify not with the (female) persona that the (male) drag queen represents, but with the reality of gender performativity that the ostensibly absurd conjunction of the two figures illustrates. It is in the performer's skilful manipulation of gendered signifiers that Butler wants drag's spectator to see himself reflected; to imagine oneself as the feminine self represented by that

manipulation is in this account naively to succumb to the ruse of the ‘authentic-expressive paradigm’. Yet despite Butler’s disdain for that paradigm, it is not clear why a ‘man’s’ representation of himself as a woman should by its nature be any less authentic or expressive than a ‘woman’s’.

Butler’s perception of drag personae as merely ‘parodic identities’ is a symptom, I wish in closing this section to observe, of the hostility towards psychoanalytic method endemic to queer theory that I am tracking in this thesis. One of Butler’s first remarks about drag in *Gender Trouble* is that it ‘fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space’. (186) This enigmatic comment resumes a train of thought that Butler had been pursuing earlier in the chapter about the artificial quality of spatial division. “‘Inner’ and ‘outer’ make sense only with reference to a mediating boundary that strives for stability’, Butler wrote:

And this stability, this coherence, is determined in large part by cultural orders that sanction the subject and compel its differentiation from the object. Hence, ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ constitute a binary distinction that stabilizes and consolidates the coherent subject. If the ‘inner world’ no longer designates a topos, then the internal fixity of the self and, indeed, the internal locale of gender identity, become similarly suspect. The critical question is not *how* did that identity become *internalized*? as if internalization itself were a process or a mechanism that might be descriptively reconstructed. Rather, the question is: From what strategic position in public discourse and for what reasons has the trope of interiority and the disjunctive binary of inner/outer taken hold? (183)

That the establishment and enforcement of boundaries is a cultural and political project is now so widespread a belief that this piece of writing may appear unremarkable, but I think it is worth pausing over Butler’s startling claims here. For this passage asserts not simply that borders are made to be policed, but that interiority itself is a fictional construct; that ‘internalization’ is not ‘a process . . . that might be descriptively reconstructed’ (183). Tellingly, it is specifically Kleinian psychoanalysis that Butler is taking aim at here with her reference to ‘the “inner world”’. Drag, in this analysis, illustrates what Butler takes to be the factitious status of identification, its reliance as a concept upon notions of inside and out that are ‘determined in large part by cultural orders’.

Later in this chapter, I will continue to explore the underappreciated role of identification as a feature of drag performance. But first, I wish to return to *The Bostonians*, where the theory of the male gaze has more dramatically constricted the avenues of inquiry available for thinking about male heterosexuality and feminine spectacle. The quotation from Miss Birdseye which opened this section may be taken to anticipate feminist and queer discourse on vision and gender; the sparkling female ornament of her question appears to be a cheap, tacky, lifeless thing. Yet the weirdly luminescent quality of her spectacles as she asks her question—‘each of her glasses, in her aspect of reproach, had

the glitter of an enormous tear' (223)—hints that the bauble may possess a similar capacity for illumination. In contrast to the presumptive fakeness of the feminine trinket, Verena's rhetorical skill 'seems' to Miss Birdseye 'as if it were a real gift.' (224)

The Cruelty of Defeat: Basil Ransom's Lost Cause

The idea of the male gaze is useful to Jamesians because it promises to explain why Basil gets so excited when he looks at Verena, and to link his habitual way of seeing with the patriarchal model of social organization to which, as he never tires of reminding people, he is devoted. But it is a limited resource most obviously because it cannot account for the highly selective nature of Basil's desire, which, apart from a brief swerve towards Mrs Luna, is totally fixated upon Verena from the moment he sees her at Miss Birdseye's soiree. One of the defining features of 'the male gaze' is that it does not observe the individual specificity of the person it happens to take for its object; readers of *The Bostonians*, accordingly, share a conviction that Verena's attractiveness is utterly generic. There is, they concur, nothing to see here: since Verena is, in Terry Castle's suave and incorrect formulation, 'a kind of love goddess[] who . . . produces *universal* erotic perturbation' (162, emphasis added) —Mrs Luna is one vocal exception—or, in Benjamin Kahan's, 'a contentless cipher on whom the rivals can project their fantasies' (50), Basil's desire for her can indicate merely a generic sensitivity to beauty in women. A pre-emptive foreclosure of interest in the specific nature of Basil's attachment to Verena operates across writing on *The Bostonians*. In Annamarie Jagose's elegant dismissal, 'his unremarkable sexuality hardly seems his own (or, indeed, even sexual), being facilitated everywhere by the culture at large' (*Inconsequence* 67), while in Joseph Litvak's, 'what empties the Basil–Verena plot of any effective interest for the author is that, like the militantly retrograde Basil himself, it moves inexorably backward' (226). Ironically, such claims closely recall the account that Basil develops to justify his interest in Verena, an account which is immediately discredited by the text. At Miss Birdseye's, Basil tells himself that 'the necessity of [Verena's] nature was . . . to please every one who came near her, and to be happy that she pleased.' (85) 'I know not whether Ransom was aware of the bearings of this interpretation', the narrator sarcastically remarks, 'which attributed to Miss Tarrant a singular hollowness of character' (85). Agreeing that his desire is self-evidently normal, and therefore not susceptible to analysis, readers have inadvertently validated Basil's unsophisticated view of heterosexuality. And while insistence upon Verena's *ubiquitous* attractiveness is not limited to critics associated with queer theory—Merla Wolk writes that '[a]lmost without exception, everyone in *The Bostonians* wants access to this power of speech' (52); and Faye Halpern, more recently, that 'Verena exerts a fascination for everyone who stands in her presence and hears her voice' (70)—its prominence there remains noteworthy: the field's foundational

suspicion of heterosexuality's presumptively natural status appears in this context to have applied no pressure whatsoever to the idea that a good-looking woman is bound to captivate any man who falls into her orbit.

To comprehend Verena's importance for Basil specifically, we must first dispel the stark and reductive image of him that has predominated in James criticism over the past forty years, and upon which rests the expectation that his gaze at Verena will index only a controlling and sadistic desire. This image, which was central to early feminist accounts of the novel, and is reflected in critical theory's troping of the male gazer as a figure who enjoys unconstrained mastery of his perceptual world, depicts Basil as a man who unproblematically and self-consciously wields the power naturally endowed upon him by the patriarchy. 'From start to finish', as Judith Fetterley puts it, 'Ransom has the bearing and behavior of one with power' (124): 'His conviction that, despite the disadvantages under which he may labor as a result of the accidents of fortune, the world has a place for him, his ease with himself, and his sense of being at home in the world—in a word, his power—is made clear' (123). Like other aversive characterizations of James's protagonist, Fetterley's cannot account for the structure of Basil's desire: if Basil's assumption of masculine authority really is so absolute, and so absolutely valued, then his attraction to Verena becomes inexplicable. Fetterley actually concedes as much: 'With all the admirable qualities categorically assigned to the masculine character . . . and with the feminine equated with the damnable', she concludes the third part of her chapter on *The Bostonians*, 'it is difficult to understand why Ransom wishes to possess himself of any woman, especially one as feminine as Verena' (131). Queer theory, again, has offered little resistance to this limited and violently oppositional model. Peter Coviello endorses Fetterley's position when he argues that 'the "contest" between Olive and Basil is scarcely that', since the mere fact of being male gives to Basil a boundless and easily accessible advantage in 'the vastness of precedent . . . he carries about in his pocket, strictly by virtue of his capacity to offer Verena what Olive categorically cannot: marriage' (185). Even a reading as attentive to the transgressive features of Basil's desire as Leland Person's—'Possessing Verena in the way that Ransom intends', Person astutely observes, 'comes very close to wanting to be Verena' (110)—appears compelled to sacrifice its positive claims at deconstruction's altar of indecision. 'Wherever Ransom tries to position himself imaginatively,' Person concludes, 'he finds himself looking into a kind of magic mirror, subject to an unsettled and unsettling gaze of his own that reflects him to himself as if he were masculine and feminine, hetero- and homosexual, even white and black.' (110) It is conventional to observe that Basil encounters some threats to the maintenance of his phallic authority: Caroline Field Levander notes 'the challenge that [Verena's] public speech poses to his sense of male entitlement' (25), a challenge that Valerie Rohy suggests 'implies the ruin of speech as such, corrupting the transcendent authority of that privileged [masculine] discourse.' (36) Yet such threats serve only to throw into relief

what everyone sees as the inevitable triumph of Basil's 'aggressive masculinity' (Kramer 143), his 'raging heterosexual will to power' (Scheiber 236): 'Ransom', as Susan Ryan sums up, 'can be read as a son of the Lost Cause reclaiming his honor in the reestablishment of masculine dominance within a hierarchical domestic sphere.' (266)

Yet there is plenty of evidence within the novel to show that his insecure grasp on masculinity is a source of chronic rather than passing discomfort to Basil; *The Bostonians* makes clear that neither the law nor journalism, the two fields in which he hopes to make his name, has a place for him. The opening of book two proves an early and optimistic reference to 'his business (he was beginning to get a little)' (44) to have been premature: by this point 'he had lost most of the little business which was an object of complacency to him a twelve-month before', and now 'sat for hours in his office, waiting for clients who either did not come, or, if they did come, did not seem to find him encouraging' (197). Not even the redoubtable Adeline is able to expedite Basil's progress: 'she had wanted him to look after her property', but 'Mrs Luna's affairs were in the hands of trustees, who had complete care of them, and Ransom instantly perceived that his function would be simply to meddle in things that didn't concern him.' (201) Following this embarrassing mix-up, which seems to really hurt Basil—'she had exposed him to the derision of the lawful guardians of her fortune'—Basil is forced to moonlight as private tutor to his nephew in order to 'turn an honest penny' (201). That venture falls through in turn, and for much of the rest of the novel Basil simply conceals the abject failure of his legal career: when Verena complacently asks him if he isn't 'getting on quite well in this city' he has to remind himself that 'to Mrs Luna and to Olive he had put a fine face on his prospects' (324). Basil's single professional success comes with the purchase of one of his articles by the *Rational Review*, but the author's excitement about his future publication does not seem to be reflected by the journal's unhurried editor, who 'had notified him that his article would appear only in the number after the next' (361). Even Basil himself appears to understand that this moment is not as important as he wants it to be when he says to Verena, after advertising his inflated expectations to her, 'I have been building castles in the air' (360). Such unbalanced irony may be the sole recourse of a man who until this point has distinguished himself only by 'writ[ing] many things' that he 'can't get . . . printed'. (326)

Basil's professional struggles are only the most superficial expression of his difficulty assuming the role of a powerful male figure. Far more consequential in this respect are his extensive psychic troubles, which James outlines through a delicate and sustained rhetoric of loneliness, confusion, and deprivation. The first indication that Basil is an acutely unhappy man comes from Olive's meditation on his backstory, which he has communicated to her in a letter:

Basil Ransom had lived, but she knew he had lived to see bitter hours. His family was ruined; they had lost their slaves, their property, their friends and relations, their home; had tasted of

all the cruelty of defeat. He had tried for a while to carry on the plantation himself, but he had a millstone of debt round his neck, and he longed for some work which would transport him to the haunts of men. The State of Mississippi seemed to him the state of despair; so he surrendered the remnants of his patrimony to his mother and sisters, and, at nearly thirty years of age, alighted for the first time in New York, in the costume of his province, with fifty dollars in his pocket and a gnawing hunger in his heart. (43)

We may attribute some of this passage's hyperbolic grimness to its filtration through Olive's consciousness; 'bitter hours' and 'the cruelty of defeat' are particularly characteristic, as is the dramatically uneven distribution of her sympathy, which she extends to the Ransoms but withholds from the people who had been enslaved to them. The rest appears to come from Basil himself, who seems to have wanted both to express to Olive his sense of the hardship of his life and to avoid coming across as 'morbid'—the quality that he obsessively perceives in his cousin when they first meet (41). Unable to articulate his feelings of privation clearly, Basil resorts to a mixture of earnestness ('He had tried for a while to carry on the plantation himself') and drollery ('The State of Mississippi seemed to him the state of despair'); he wants both to express his self-pity and to disavow it. Ironically, this tension in his writing is totally lost on Olive, whose distinctive temperament Basil clearly did not understand before their first encounter. To her, representations of such extreme distress are never funny, and always enthralling: 'She could not defend herself against a rich admiration—a kind of tenderness of envy' towards the Basil she learns about from his letter. (43) Olive's tenderness may seem unwarranted, but she is not wrong to think that a real trauma in Basil's early life is being described in his letter, with its disclosure that he 'fought and offered his own life' in the Civil War (43). Given that *The Bostonians* is set after 'the horrible period of reconstruction' (82), Basil can have been no older than seventeen when the conflict ended.

A less tonally mixed expression of Basil's psychic disquiet comes in the following chapter, where his experience of being alone in Olive's well-appointed parlour brings into relief his curiously strenuous attitude to nice environments. After enjoying the view onto the Back Bay, Basil

turned from it back to the interior . . . as to something still more genial and interesting. The artistic sense in Basil Ransom had not been highly cultivated; neither (though he had passed his early years as the son of a rich man) was his conception of material comfort very definite; it consisted mainly of the vision of plenty of cigars and brandy and water and newspapers, and a cane-bottomed arm-chair of the right inclination, from which he could stretch his legs. . . . [H]e had never felt himself in the presence of so much organized privacy or of so many objects that spoke of habits and tastes. Most of the people he had hitherto known had no tastes; they had a few habits, but these were not of a sort that required much upholstery. . . . He had always

heard Boston was a city of culture, and now there was culture in Miss Chancellor's tables and sofas, in the books that were everywhere[.] . . . He ground his teeth a little as he thought of the contrasts of the human lot; this cushioned feminine nest made him feel unhoused and underfed. Such a mood, however, could only be momentary, for he was conscious at bottom of a bigger stomach than all the culture of Charles Street could fill. (45–47)

Olive's parlour is a deeply attractive space to Basil: it offers a belated remedy for the neglect which he suffered as a child, and for which his father, in the only reference to this figure in the novel, is held culpable. As 'the son of a rich man', the young Basil did not suffer material deprivation, but he clearly did not develop much of a capacity to imagine and seek out objects that might give him pleasure: 'his conception of material comfort [is not] very definite'. In its absence, he identifies enjoyment with a confused jumble of unremarkable objects; even the trivial collocation of 'brandy and water' is broken by his inarticulate association of these substances with 'cigars and . . . newspapers'. Olive's parlour, by contrast with these bare materials, is semantically replete: her objects 'sp[ea]k', and are filled with a 'culture' that promises to attend at last to Basil's 'not . . . highly *cultivated*' 'artistic sense'. Where Basil's ideal seat is a rather austere and isolating 'cane-bottomed arm-chair'—its 'inclination' suggests a tilt up and away from other sitters—Olive's furniture is soft and sociable: her 'sofas'—Basil is obsessed with the 'upholstery' of his cousin's 'cushioned feminine nest'—can bring together two or more intimate, relaxed friends. And yet, despite his admiration for Olive's interior, Basil's final response to it is aggressive and resentful: he hates it because it reminds him of his sensory impoverishment. That, in the last analysis, Basil knows that it is something in himself rather than in Olive's room that prevents him from simply *enjoying* the space is indicated by the paragraph's closing sentence: no parlour, Basil understands, could satisfy the demands of his exceptional appetite.

*A Hungry Young Mississippian: The Taste of Basil*³⁴

By this point, the 'underfed' Basil's fondness for alimentary metaphors, the 'gnawing hunger' and 'bigger stomach', should be quite evident. Instances of this preoccupation accumulate throughout *The Bostonians*, and they collectively suggest that Basil, who is twice described as 'lean' when he is first introduced (36), has a highly problematic relationship to food, and especially to feeding himself. In the atmosphere of Basil's New York residence, which sits above a 'Dutch grocery' (195) and is first

³⁴ Fittingly enough for critics who see Basil as a paradigmatic male authority figure, the name 'Basil' supposedly derives from the Greek word 'basileus', meaning 'king' or 'lord'. Yet Basil also shares his name with a delicious herb: one that—fittingly again—was once imagined to be an antidote to the venom of the evil-eyed basilisk ('basil, n.1.').

described at the beginning of volume two, food seems to be a peculiarly degrading substance. '[T]he near neighbourhood' of the 'considerable grocer's shop . . . was fatal to any pretensions Ransom and his fellow-lodgers might have had in regard to gentility of situation' (195); 'an open cellarway yawned beneath the feet of those who might pause to gaze too fondly on the savoury wares displayed in the window; a strong odour of smoked fish, combined with a fragrance of molasses, hung about the spot; the pavement, toward the gutters, was fringed with dirty panniers, heaped with potatoes, carrots, and onions' (195). We can infer that the food consumed within Basil's lodgings is similarly repugnant, served as it is at a 'crumpled little *table d'hôte* . . . where everything felt sticky' (196). As in his response to Olive's parlour, Basil's disgust at his New York apartment is linked to his feelings about his home in the South; the relatively impoverished lifestyle that his family now leads on the plantation seems to have made the idea of nourishing himself revolting to Basil. The 'hungry young Mississippian', discouraged by his business setbacks, 'had been on the point of giving it up and returning to the home of his ancestors, where, as he heard from his mother, there was still just a sufficient supply of hot corn-cake to support existence.' (197) With 'his female relations[] confined so constantly to a farinaceous diet' (199), Basil has become unable to enjoy food himself. This unselfish and pathetically ineffective response to the idea of other people's need is a cornerstone of Basil's subjectivity; it will later re-emerge as a decisive motive in his anxious pursuit of Verena.

James seems to have found the idea of opening new sections of *The Bostonians* with an account of Basil's appetite singularly useful; volume three also begins with an extensive depiction of that frustrated desire. Basil 'was very hungry when he arrived' at Marmion,

having not had a moment, in Boston, on his way through, to eat even the frugal morsel with which he was accustomed to sustain nature between a breakfast that consisted of a cup of coffee and a dinner that consisted of a cup of tea. He had had his cup of tea now, and very bad it was, brought him by a pale, round-backed young lady, with auburn ringlets, a fancy belt, and an expression of limited tolerance for a gentleman who could not choose quickly between fried fish, fried steak, and baked beans. (339)

Not the least of this passage's troubling intimations is the disclosure that Basil typically eats only one piece of solid food a day. His unexplained hesitation before the hotel's very straightforward menu, then, may come from a reluctance to compromise his ascetic habits as much as from a distaste for these fatty and protein-rich foods in particular, or from a just suspicion of the establishment's cooking.

Admittedly, he may not be the only guest who has trembled before the stark culinary regime enforced at this hotel, whose 'dining-room . . . was kept locked at all but sacramental hours', and whose 'haughty waitress . . . only emerged at meal-times from her mystic seclusion'. (341) Yet there does seem to be a special fascination for Basil in the arcane power of such ruthless gastronomical discipline.

His anxiety about eating gives peculiar force to the ritual of self-shaming that he observes taking place outside the hotel's prandial sanctum: 'Sometimes people went to the door of the dining-room and tried it, shaking it a little, timidly, to see if it would yield; then, finding it fast, came away, looking, if they had been observed, shy and snubbed, at their fellows.' (341–42) That Basil is at this point in the novel predisposed to see scarcity and deprivation in the foods presented to him is indicated very clearly by his deadened response to the local scenery: 'The ripeness of summer lay upon the land, and yet there was nothing in the country Basil Ransom traversed that seemed susceptible of maturity, nothing but the apples in the little tough, dense orchards, which gave a suggestion of sour fruition here and there, and the tall, bright goldenrod at the bottom of the bare stone dykes.' (339) With his ambition in tatters, Basil has lost any capacity to perceive abundance: 'There were no fields of yellow grain; only here and there a crop of brown hay.' (339)

It could be objected here that Basil's frequent perceptions of nutritional lack are in fact accurate observations of the impoverished environments in which he moves, but James provides a refutation of this idea in the Tarrants, who are not prevented by their straitened circumstances from a routine enjoyment of food. Selah Tarrant and Basil share many qualities: they are both tall and thin, with cheeks prone to wrinkles; they are both desperate to become influential through print; and they both seek to exert a mysterious control over Verena. Yet Selah and his family are totally unlike Basil in their hearty, eloquent, and generous appetites. 'If his wife asked him at dinner if the potatoes were good, he replied that they were strikingly fine . . . , and embarked on a parallel worthy of Plutarch, in which he compared them with other specimens of the same vegetable.' (120) Like Mrs Tarrant, who 'ask[s] her visitor if she would venture on an apple-fritter' when Olive reluctantly dines at Monadnoc Place (130), Mr Tarrant eagerly presses food upon guests: 'he was solemnly civil to Miss Chancellor, handed her the dishes at table over and over again, and ventured to intimate that the apple-fritters were very fine'. (130)³⁵ No surprise that, after Mrs Tarrant asks 'whether Verena hadn't better hand the cake' at the same party (136), '[t]his office was ultimately delegated to Selah, who, after a considerable absence, reappeared with a dish of dainties, which he presented successively to each member of the company.' (136) Tarrant cuisine is not extravagant, but it is homely, varied, and nourishing. James's fullest account of this household's eating habits presents them as fractious and economical but ultimately satisfying:

As I have also mentioned, [Selah] was absent for hours—long periods during which Mrs.

Tarrant, sustaining nature with a hard-boiled egg and a doughnut, wondered how in the world

³⁵ It is significant that apples (in the 'tough, dense orchards' on the way to Marmion) and potatoes ('heaped' in 'dirty panniers' outside his New York lodgings) are both specific objects of Basil's aversion.

he stayed his stomach. He never wanted anything but a piece of pie when he came in; the only thing about which he was particular was that it should be served up hot. She had a private conviction that he partook, at the houses of his lady patients, of little lunches; she applied this term to any episodic repast, at any hour of the twenty-four. (122–23)

Mrs Tarrant may justly feel aggrieved at the secrecy of her husband's snacking, but there is a kind of thoughtfulness in his opportunism: by taking advantage of his clients' hospitality rather than eating at home, Mr Tarrant lessens his drain on the family's slender means. The household, meanwhile, remains one in which individual preferences regarding qualities such as the temperature of one's food are respected.

In the light of the Tarrants' exceptional food-positivity we may begin to understand the distinctive intensity of Basil's attraction to Verena, who seems to have physically incorporated her parents' liberal attitude to eating. In Central Park with Basil, she remembers how, as a child, 'when her father and mother had drifted into summer quarters . . . she had, with a chance companion, strayed far from home, spent hours in the woods and fields, looking for raspberries and playing she was a gipsy.' (319) The Tarrants' unconventional lifestyle did not interfere with the prompt satisfaction of little Verena's needs: 'She had been nursed in darkened rooms, and suckled in the midst of manifestations' (105). Olive is shocked by this fact, but 'the girl herself didn't appear to think it queer.' (105) 'Yes, she was pretty-appearing,' the penetrating Doctor Prance observes; 'but there was a certain indication of anaemia, and Doctor Prance would be surprised if she didn't eat too much candy' (70). It is this unconstrained relationship to her hunger that inspires in the men around Verena a reciprocal desire to feed her. Thus, for instance, Selah's requisition of the 'collection of cakes' (142) at the Monadnoc Place party; were Verena to take charge of distributing the dainties, as originally proposed, it would be harder for her to get one for herself. This desire also explains the confused solicitude for Verena that Matthias Pardon expresses towards the end of the novel when he asks Mrs Luna, 'What is she going to have for supper? Or is she going to speak—a—without previous nourishment?' (409) But while Selah and Matthias show remarkable concern for Verena's appetite, the only man who treats it as a foundational element of his own desire is Basil.

The depth of Basil's investment in Verena's repletion is most evident at the Wednesday club, where the ability to feed Verena structures his idea of what it would be like to be married to her. This is the only occasion on which items of food actually appear good to Basil: 'the fresh tints of mysterious viands and jellies' in Mrs Burrage's supper-room 'looked desirable in the soft circle projected by lace-fringed lamps.' (270) Still, Basil does not want to eat, and as he lingers at the table he feels himself drawn into a drama of homosocial intimidation akin to the one that later takes place in the Marmion hotel: 'He heard the popping of corks, he felt a pressure of elbows, a thickening of the crowd,

perceived that he was glowered at, squeezed against the table, by contending gentlemen who observed that he usurped space, was neither feeding himself nor helping others to feed.’ (270) Under the pressure of this scrutiny, Basil is struck by a desire that one other in particular be helped to feed:

he found himself thinking—almost paternally—that she must be hungry after so much chatter, and he hoped some one was getting her something to eat. After a moment, just as he was edging away, for his own opportunity to sup much better than usual was not what was uppermost in his mind, this little vision was suddenly embodied—embodied by the appearance of Miss Tarrant, who faced him, in the press, attached to the arm of a young man now recognisable to him as the son of the house[.] . . . He was leading her to the table, while people made way for them, covering Verena with gratulations of word and look. Ransom could see that . . . she was the cynosure of every eye. She looked beautiful, and they were a beautiful couple. (270)

There is a devastated jealousy in Basil’s observation of this scene, which styles Henry Burrage as attentive groom to Verena’s magnetic bride. When the couple’s mock-conjugal procession ends, it is only so that Henry, under Basil’s envious eye, may convey nutriment to Verena: ‘Ransom . . . look[ed] askance at young Mr. Burrage, who had detached himself and was getting something for Verena to eat.’ (270) The ‘almost paternal[]’ character of Basil’s thought suggests that he has correctly perceived something of the Tarrant family’s nutritional generosity. Henry, who promptly returns with his own recollection of the father’s provision, seems to have perceived it too: ‘her companion . . . brought her something very *dainty* on a plate’ (271, emphasis added).

Henry’s food-based attentiveness turns out to be something of a paradigm for Basil; he desperately attempts to reproduce it when he goes out with Verena to Central Park, an encounter which is structured around a series of unsuccessful invitations to dine. ‘Basil Ransom had begun with proposing, strenuously, that she should come somewhere and have luncheon; he had brought her out half an hour before that meal was served in West Tenth Street, and he maintained that he owed her the compensation of seeing that she was properly fed’ (319) This unusual opening, in which Basil offers to make up for a deprivation that he has inflicted precisely so that he may offer compensation, fails: ‘Verena for the present declined his hospitality.’ (319) Basil tries again, and Verena refuses again: ‘when he pressed her she said she would see later, perhaps, if she should find she wanted something’ (319–320). ‘Come and dine with me, since you wouldn’t lunch’, Basil recurs some hours later, hoping that he will be able to pass off what is starting to look like a demonic urge to feed Verena as mere gallantry; ‘Are you really not faint and weak?’ (325) Verena rejects this bid coolly enough (‘I have lunched on abominations’ [325]), but by Basil’s fourth attempt (‘You won’t come and dine, then?’ [332]) she has lost patience (‘Ransom’s attachment to this idea . . . struck her as queer and infelicitous’ [332]), and

finally begins her departure. Beneath ‘chocolate-coloured houses’ (332) ‘their expedition . . . end[s] in a separation which could not be sweet’ (333). Such dogged pursuit of his scheme is indicative of the central place in Basil’s fantasy that the idea of dining with Verena has come to occupy since he saw her brought together with Henry Burrage through transferred food. ‘He knew what he intended about her sharing the noonday repast with him somehow’, he reflects; ‘it had been part of his plan that she should sit opposite him at a little table, taking her napkin out of its curious folds—sit there smiling back at him while . . . they waited till something extremely good, and a little vague, chosen out of a French *carte*, was brought them.’ (320) Basil has a slightly different imagination of conjugal eating to that performed by Henry: in Basil’s fantasy, the bringer of food is an agent separate from and subject to the groom. But it remains a fantasy of espousal, one that Verena refuses to participate in precisely because she understands the implications of such a scene: ‘She would have liked immensely to go with him to an eating-house, and yet, with this, she was afraid’. (320) Ironically, even Basil’s choice of destination is unconsciously modelled on Henry’s courtship. The ‘very quiet, luxurious French restaurant, near the top of the Fifth Avenue’ (319) that he has in mind is surely Delmonico’s, where Verena and (crucially) her chaperon, Olive, who together ‘drove up the Fifth Avenue’ to reach that establishment (291), have recently enjoyed a ‘delicate little feast’ with Mr Burrage at which ‘French waiters flitted about on deep carpets.’ (294)

The account of Basil’s appetite that I have offered here diverges significantly from the only other published interpretation of the place of food in *The Bostonians*. Lynn Wardley argues that Basil’s desires to feed and wed Verena are motivated by an urge to end her career as an orator: ‘Basil believes that marriage, like the food with which he would “almost paternally” feed Verena, will stop her mouth.’ (649) The idea that Basil wants ‘to stop [Verena’s] mouth with . . . something to eat’ appears twice in Wardley’s article (649), and it encapsulates the differences between my reading and hers. Whereas for Wardley Basil’s alimentary fixation appears to be entirely continuous with his vocal disdain for female public speech, I detect a fault between the antifeminist politics that Basil espouses and the obsession with women’s nourishment expressed in his behaviour. Far from wishing to subject Verena to ‘a life spent as “food”’ for himself (Wardley 660), Basil seems to me to be genuinely invested in Verena’s physical wellbeing. Basil does not want to feed upon Verena; rather, he has projected his own capacity to receive nourishment into her, and now derives gratification from the idea that he is the one who can give it to her.

Presenting Himself: The Sight of Basil

The significance of ideas of feeding to Basil's desire for Verena indicates its distinctive reliance on mechanics of surrogacy. By channelling his frustrated need for physical satisfaction through Verena, Basil is able to envision and momentarily experience his own bodily pleasure; when a future for them together seems most unlikely, 'an irrepressible desire urged him on to taste, for once, deeply, all that he was condemned to lose' (315). Yet Basil's charged and sustained investment in displaced eating is not, as I will now elaborate, the only or most important vehicle of his affection for Verena. In fact, his desire is primarily motivated by the warpingly inarticulate fantasy of his own spectacular exposure that consumes him. Verena is that fantasy's hologram-like ideal: a woman who possesses a seemingly effortless capacity to attract and hold the gazes of others. Basil, by contrast, is a man whose abject craving for visual attention is riven by a destabilizing set of fears concerning the potentially ruinous threats that may attend his exhibition.

The tension between these impulses in Basil is evident from the very beginning of the novel. When Mrs Luna invites him, on behalf of Olive Chancellor, to dine at Charles Street, Basil's response, and the appreciative inspection it elicits from his cousin, renders his body at once extravagantly visible and curiously elusive:

'Just as I am?' the visitor inquired, presenting himself with rather a work-a-day aspect.

Mrs Luna glanced at him from head to foot, and gave a little smiling sigh, as if he had been a long sum in addition. And, indeed, he was very long, Basil Ransom, and he even looked a little hard and discouraging, like a column of figures, in spite of the friendly face which he bent upon his hostess's deputy . . . (35)

Basil's pert question stresses the embarrassment that can be caused by inappropriate attire, yet his asking it at this moment obversely suggests that he considers his own slightly shabby appearance to be worthy of examination. '[P]resenting himself', he indicates that his nondescript air is something that he is actively staging for his cousin. The mathematical terms in which Mrs Luna thinks about Basil—'a column of figures' also evokes Basil's military past—elaborate the structure of shame and interest that the lawyer has conjured around himself. At first, the 'long sum in addition' that he embodies seems both baffling and engaging: Mrs Luna's 'smiling sigh' suggests that the sheer fun of scrutiny outweighs at this point the prospect of bewilderment. But in the following sentence, it seems as if Basil must consciously intervene in order to mitigate the challenge posed by his figure. In the contrast between his 'friendly face' and his 'hard and discouraging' body, there is a gloomy intimation of a radical discrepancy between the appearance that Basil would like to communicate and the one that ineluctably moulds itself around his frame. His rather pathetically embellished outfit may be one way in which he expresses to others his awareness of this discrepancy: 'the triangle of linen, a little crumpled, exhibited by the opening of his waistcoat, was adorned by a pin containing a small red stone.' (36) '[D]ressed

throughout in black', Basil gives the impression of someone in mourning (36); the 'exhibited' desert of unpressed cloth in which his jewellery languishes suggests that he is pining for a self whose flamboyance would be permitted to bloom.

To be looked at, the opening of the novel goes on to indicate, is not just Basil's deepest desire: it is also his highest ambition. In a passage that seems in part to be inspired by the breast-pin, the narrator describes Basil's head as having 'a character of elevation which fairly added to his stature; it was a head to be seen above the level of a crowd, on some judicial bench or political platform, or even on a bronze medal.' (36) The shadow of the little shirt-pin behind this nice big medal emphasizes that it may serve as an item of personal decoration for its wearer as well as being a token of its subject's cultural prestige. It thus outlines a connection between Basil's desire for social standing and his urge to display himself that is reflected in the passage's other images: the elite status involved in being 'above the level of a crowd' as a judge or politician is imagined here to be contingent upon the spectacular visibility that such a position literally affords. Such images suggest that we should understand Basil's political and professional ideas to be linked with his ideas about physical appearance. For Basil, beliefs and principles are things that should be literally *embodied*: after his more voluble cousin tells him that Olive is 'a female Jacobin', 'his eyes wandered over Mrs Luna, and he probably wondered what body of doctrine *she* represented' (37). Analogously, 'the platform' refers at once to the physical object and the political tenets upon which Basil would like to stand.

'Platform' is also the term which is invariably used to describe the structure from which Verena delivers her speeches, so its occurrence here provides the first clue that Basil's interest in displaying himself will find a privileged model in her. Thereafter, Verena's performances provide a template for Basil, whose articulation of rhetorical ambition reveals the influence of her style. This style's distinctive qualities are serenity and control in the face of enthralled spectators: 'the whole audience' fall 'under the charm' of her speech at Miss Birdseye's (84), but she remains unaffected, 'without a flush in her whiteness' after it ends, 'or the need of drawing a longer breath' (86). When Basil admits to Verena that he 'would like to be President of the United States . . . [a]nd breathe forth [his] views in glowing messages to a palpitating Senate' (323), his vision of rhetorical excellence seems to have been inspired by her achievement: he wants his performance at once to captivate and to appear effortless. His emphasis on luminosity betrays Verena's impact as well; his 'glowing messages' recall 'her tresses,' which 'seemed to glow with the brightness of her nature' (82), and her 'curious, radiant, liquid eyes' (82), whose 'shining softness was half the effect of her discourse' (84). Importantly, however, the way Basil expresses his goal differentiates him decisively from Verena, in whose mind the nation's foremost political chambers appear not, as they do for Basil, as dazzling arenas for self-exposure, but simply as the appropriate places in which to accomplish feminist aims. When Olive asks her, 'What do you call

success?' Verena 'answer[s], smiling, but with confidence: "Producing a pressure that shall be irresistible. Causing certain laws to be repealed by Congress and by the State legislatures, and others to be enacted.'" (159) Where Basil's political ambition is dominated by a phantasmatic investment in the theatrics of government, for Verena performance is merely an instrument of activism.

It is the stark confrontation of these two attitudes—Basil so obsessed with the idea of being looked at that he cannot enjoy it, Verena so untroubled by the same idea that she can effortlessly realize it—upon which Basil's envious desire for Verena turns. Basil pines for the kind of acclaim that Verena receives, and that he sees as central to her flourishing; when he meets her in Boston the year after her launch at Miss Birdseye's, she seems to have been physically enriched by the plaudits of her spectators.

She had appeared to him before as a creature of brightness, but now she lighted up the place, she irradiated, she made everything that surrounded her of no consequence. . . . It was not long before he perceived that this added lustre was simply success; she was young and tender still, but the sound of a great applauding audience had been in her ears; it formed an element in which she felt buoyant and floated. (229)

But the intense wishfulness of Basil's identification with Verena here—by the end of the passage, the limits of his perspective seem to have fallen away completely—cannot mitigate the bad feelings he gets when he imagines that people are looking with interest at *him*. As soon as he enters Mrs Burrage's house, Basil feels that the sociability of the Wednesday Club is characterized by aggressive, mindless scrutiny: 'The people pushed each other a little, edged about, advanced and retreated, looking at each other with differing faces—sometimes blandly, unperceivingly, sometimes with a harshness of contemplation, a kind of cruelty, Ransom thought' (252). Not long after he makes this observation, Basil feels certain that he is a privileged object of the club's unpleasant attention: 'He became aware that people looked at him, as well as at each other, rather more, indeed, than at each other, and he wondered whether it were very visible in his appearance that his being there was a kind of exception.' (252) Basil seems worried about the implications of being picked out as an anomaly, and he betrays a deeper concern as well regarding the fact that only he does not know what he looks like. The narrator's continuation of the passage gives Basil's doubt a paranoid cast by firmly indicating that, in reality, people are looking at him simply because he is handsome, and distinctively so: 'He didn't know how much his head looked over the head of others, or that his brown complexion, fuliginous eye, and straight black hair . . . gave him that relief which, in the best society, has the great advantage of suggesting a topic.' (252) Where Basil perceives in the gazes of upright Northerners only a hostile and excluding power, James indicates that those gazes are also signs of connoisseurial appreciation.

In contrast to Basil's confused and powerless defensiveness in the face of other people's inspection, Verena has no qualms about her confidently orchestrated public appearances. One way that

James delineates her comfort is through the idea of the 'oriental', whose emergence around Verena is associated with her easy mastery of representation. When Basil reflects, upon first seeing her, that he 'would have thought she looked like an Oriental, if it were not that Orientals are dark' (82), he demonstrates his total captivation by Verena's presentation of herself as a stylized image. Olive's unusual interior design ideas pay homage to Verena's artistry in exactly the same way: 'She's going to have a tree in next week', Verena blithely informs Basil; 'she says she wants to see me sitting under a tree. I believe it's some oriental idea' (119). In Basil's vicinity, by contrast, exotic frames of vision are linked only and menacingly with concealed surveillance: the balconies of the houses opposite his rooms are 'covered . . . with an elaborate iron lattice-work, which gave them a repressive, cage-like appearance, and caused them slightly to resemble the little boxes for peeping unseen into the street, which are a feature of oriental towns.' (196) This polarized distribution of self-assurance gives to many of Basil's encounters with Verena the form of a furious, wishful, baffled identification. When Verena is still relying on her father's 'grotesque manipulations' for encouragement, Basil 'resented [them] as much as if he himself had felt their touch' (83), but he is unable to recognize that his animosity is linked to his desire to occupy Verena's position; 'They made him nervous, they made him angry, and it was only afterwards that he asked himself wherein they concerned him' (83). An unavowed envy characterizes as well Basil's response to Verena's account of the Women's Convention. Little could be better calculated to inspire Basil's jealousy than the recollections of shared political zeal and alimentary pleasure that enliven Verena's description: 'There were delegates from every State and every city; we lived in a crowd of people and of ideas[.] . . . We had some tremendously earnest discussions[.] . . . Then we had some refreshment—we consumed quantities of ice-cream!' (241) Basil redescribes this scene to himself so that he may feel disgusted by it—'he seemed to see the crowded, overheated hall, which he was sure was filled with carpet-baggers' (241)—but his continuing frustration about his anger, and his insecurity about its source, indicates that he cannot seamlessly pass off his envy as repugnance: 'It made him angry, and all the more angry, that he hadn't a reason, to think of the charming creature at his side being mixed up with such elements' (241); 'He made the reflection, afterwards, that he was singularly ill-grounded in his wrath' (242).

Thus what is invariably presented within the novel as the *enigma* of Basil's feelings for Verena may be understood in relation to Basil's arduous attempts to conceal their fundamentally envious nature from himself. "My interest in you—my interest in you," he began. Then hesitating, he broke off suddenly.' (243) When Basil does not introduce the question of his predilection so that he may defer it, the narrator proves equally capable of doing the job. 'It would take some time for me to explain the contradiction to the reader; but Basil Ransom's desire to be present at one of Verena's regular performances was not diminished by the fact that he detested her views and thought the whole business

a poor perversity.’ (251) Such bland circumspection serves mainly to disguise the actual absence of a contradiction: in spite of his compulsive derision, Basil manifests a profound and almost totally unconscious susceptibility to the influence of Verena’s words. There is a moment during Verena’s Wednesday Club address at which Basil’s ‘attention . . . [is] fixed in a way it had not been yet . . . by his at last understanding her speech’ (266); the novel then reproduces a portion of Verena’s lecture (267–268). Afterwards, Basil returns to his typical dismissive attitude, thinking Verena’s speech ‘vague, thin, rambling, a tissue of generalities that glittered agreeably enough in Mrs Burrage’s veiled lamplight’ (269). But the reflections he goes on to pursue betray an uncanny affinity with Verena’s lecture. ‘Nevertheless,’ he ponders, ‘[the lecture’s] importance was high[.] . . . Its importance was that Verena was unspeakably attractive, and this was all the greater in the light of the fact . . . that he was falling in love with her. It had tapped at his heart for recognition, and before he could hesitate or challenge, the door had sprung open and the mansion was illuminated.’ (269) Basil’s metaphor for falling in love echoes very closely two images contained in Verena’s speech. In the first, Verena compared ‘systematic scoffers’ like Basil to ‘men who are starving to death while they have a cupboard at home, all full of bread and meat and wine’ (267). Verena seems to have recognized that the way to Basil’s heart is through his stomach (‘he simply felt her presence, tasted her voice’ [269]); her well-stocked and easily accessible cupboard provides one model for the mansion in Basil whose door she has abruptly opened. The other model is the kind of terrarium within which, according to Verena, women have been confined:

we require the lid to be taken off the box in which we have been kept for centuries. You say it’s a very comfortable, cosy, convenient box, with nice glass sides, so that we can see out, and that all that’s wanted is to give another quiet turn to the key. That is very easily answered. Good gentlemen, you have never been in the box, and you haven’t the least idea how it feels! (268)

By covertly transforming this elaborate metaphor into the house that Verena’s speech has unlocked, Basil reveals the wayward effectiveness of her rhetoric; he has recognized himself not in the figure of the gentleman warder, but in that of the woman on the verge of emancipation. If there is a contradiction in Basil’s thought, it lies in the bifurcated structure of this identification: Basil feels liberated by Verena’s rousing lecture, yet the glass box appeals to him precisely insofar as it remains sealed (‘comfortable, cosy, convenient’), a vessel perfectly adapted to display whoever is lucky enough to be held inside it.

What remains to be demonstrated is why Basil’s jealousy of Verena’s exceptional aptitude for self-display should ultimately move him to sabotage her political career and do everything in his power to marry her. Given Basil’s insistence that Verena should observe the strictest domestic confinement in the event of their marriage—with characteristic hunger, he jokes that ‘the dining-table itself shall be our platform’ (379)—his plan would seem to remove his capacity to gratify his exhibitionism by watching

her performances while failing to provide any equivalent compensation. The only clear gain offered by the abduction scheme is the one instant of spectacular importance it would give to Basil, whose 'vision of wresting her from the mighty multitude' is made exciting by the thought that 'it would not be too late even if she should already stand there before thousands of converging eyes'. (413) By violently ascending to Verena's platform, Basil will at least enjoy a momentary participation in her very public glory. To identify a more enduring satisfaction in the conjugal project, however, we must understand as well the distinctive function that marriage holds in Basil's fantasy.

The most extensive articulation of that function comes in relation not to Verena, but to Mrs Luna, whom Basil thinks about being married to at the beginning of volume two:

As he sat with Mrs. Luna, in her little back drawing-room, under the lamp, he felt rather more tolerant than before of the pressure she could not help putting upon him. . . . She was subdued and consolatory, she waited upon him, moved away a screen that intercepted the fire, remarked that he looked very tired, and rang for some tea. . . . The lamp-light was soft, the fire crackled pleasantly, everything that surrounded him betrayed a woman's taste and touch; the place was decorated and cushioned in perfection, delightfully private and personal, the picture of a well-appointed home. . . . At the end of an hour he felt, I will not say almost marriageable, but almost married. Images of leisure played before him, leisure in which he saw himself covering foolscap paper with his views on several subjects, and with favourable illustrations of Southern eloquence. (204–205)

This vision of marriage is structured around Mrs Luna's attentive yet unassuming hospitality. Having organized an exquisitely relaxing environment, she is attractive insofar as she recedes from Basil's unfocused vision, allowing him to entertain a daydream of his own uninterrupted creativity. But the following paragraph indicates that her presence and visibility remain foundational to Basil's ability to imagine his own domestic productiveness:

He had a moment of almost complete illusion. Mrs. Luna had taken up her bit of crochet; she was sitting opposite to him, on the other side of the fire. Her white hands moved with little jerks as she took her stitches, and her rings flashed and twinkled in the light of the hearth. Her head fell a little to one side, exhibiting the plumpness of her chin and neck, and her dropped eyes (it gave her a little modest air) rested quietly on her work. . . . He seemed to see himself, to feel himself, in that very chair, in the evenings of the future, reading some indispensable book in the still lamp-light . . . (205–206)

There is a kind of invisible mirror interposed between Basil and Adeline, who occupy symmetrical positions on either side of the hearth; by looking at her working on material in her lap, he can see himself doing the same thing. It is finally unclear whose seat, Basil's or Mrs Luna's, 'that very chair'

refers to. For Basil, marrying a woman appears to be a way of occupying her position, of displacing or becoming her.

The Adventures of Verena, Queen of Boston

In her article 'Acting "Woman" and Thinking "Man": The Ploys of Famous Female Inverts', Lillian Faderman argues that nineteenth-century feminist oratory was a kind of drag performance. Early feminist speakers, she suggests, were caught in a double bind. In order to advance women's interests, including access to public discourse, they had to be able to represent women in general when they spoke. But public speaking was coded as masculine, and so by ascending to the platform these women symbolically relinquished their femininity, and with it, their claim to be speaking on behalf of their sex. 'In brief,' Faderman writes, 'the conflict was this: the nineteenth century had constructed a clean and clear definition of "woman." She was . . . precisely the creature who did not want a voice in politics[.] . . . The nineteenth-century pioneers who were particularly successful in promoting their goals . . . believed, nevertheless, that they must present themselves to the public as "womanly" in order to be spokespersons for women's rights.' (315–16) Feminist speakers' solution to the problem, according to Faderman, was 'to masquerade as "woman" while thinking and feeling in the fashion that their society had constructed as "man"' (320): 'they wore what they perceived as necessary masquerades—"lady's drag"' . (316)

Faderman's analysis goes some way to explain Verena Tarrant's distinctive rhetorical style. There is an exaggerated femininity in Verena's performances: her speech at Miss Birdseye's, where she sports 'a yellow petticoat' and 'a large crimson sash' (82), is 'full of school-girl phrases' (84). In one of these phrases, she bluntly announces her maidenly innocence: 'I am only a girl, a simple American girl', Verena tells her audience; 'of course I haven't seen much, and there is a great deal of life that I don't know anything about.' (86) Following Faderman, we may see Verena's contrived girlishness as a ruse by which she dissimulates the basically masculine nature of her role. But the relationship between femininity and masculinity in Verena's performances is more complicated than this. Her speech at Miss Birdseye's, we may recall, begins with an occult ritual involving a series of physical exchanges with her father. First, 'Verena [takes] her father's hands [and] [holds] them for a moment' (81); then, 'her father . . . rest[s] his long, lean hands upon her head' (81); and finally, 'Verena [gets] up from her chair, with a movement which made Tarrant drop into the background as if his part were now over.' (83) One of this ceremony's effects is to emphasize Verena's virginal subservience: Verena demonstrates through it that she is quite literally in the hands of her father. Yet it also hints at a different basis for Verena's powerful allure than the garishly visible one of nubile availability. Verena and Selah's odd prelude may

in fact be, as Basil only sardonically reflects, a ‘mysterious process’ (83): it models an experience of vicarious embodiment that I think is central to the Verena show’s appeal.

Drag, I wish to argue here, offers a better template for Verena’s performance style, and Basil’s enjoyment of it, than does the theory of the male gaze that I have analysed earlier in this chapter, and that more or less explicitly organizes most responses to *The Bostonians*. In order to perceive Verena’s drag sensibility, however, we will have first to move away from the concept of drag as a form of critique that has been popularized by queer theory, and which I have described earlier in this chapter. Faderman, too, appears to have been persuaded by this image of drag: Susan B. Anthony, one of the most important of her feminist speakers in ‘lady’s drag’, was, she writes, ‘perhaps among the first to insist on what we have come to view as a radical, postmodern understanding of the constructed nature of gender and of its mutability’ (327).

Esther Newton’s classic study of the drag scenes in Chicago and Kansas City, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*, can help to clarify the affinities of Verena’s style with drag performance. Newton’s text has not been ignored by queer theory: it is briefly discussed in a crucial passage of *Gender Trouble*. Yet some important aspects of Newton’s analysis of drag have been lost in Butler’s highly partial interpretation of it.³⁶ Take, to begin with, Newton’s use of Parker Tyler’s suggestion that Greta Garbo was a kind of drag queen. ‘Garbo “got in drag”’, Tyler writes, in Newton’s quotation, ‘whenever she took some heavy glamour part, whenever she melted in or out of a man’s arms, whenever she simply let that heavenly-flexed neck . . . bear the weight of her thrown-back head. . . . How resplendent seems the art of acting! It is all *impersonation*, whether the sex underneath is true or not.’ (qtd. in Newton 108, first ellipsis original) Readers of queer theory will be familiar with this evocative passage from ‘Subversive Bodily Acts’, the final chapter of *Gender Trouble*, where it serves as an epigraph to the section entitled ‘Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions’. Butler never explains why she has chosen to preface her fullest articulation of the idea of gender performativity with this quote, but its relevance to her work seems clear: Tyler’s suggestion that ‘[i]t is all *impersonation*, whether the sex underneath is true or not’, chimes with Butler’s belief that drag queens’ ‘impersonation of women implicitly suggests that gender is a kind of impersonation that passes as the real’ (*Gender* xxxi). In Newton’s text, however, Tyler’s remarks have a more precise meaning. ‘But granted that all acting is impersonation,’ Newton asks, ‘what moved Tyler to designate Garbo’s acting specifically as “drag”?’ (108) ‘By focusing on the

³⁶ As far as I know, Sedgwick is the only person to have objected in print to Butler’s reading of *Mother Camp*. ‘When Butler draws on Newton’s work at the end of *Gender Trouble*,’ Sedgwick complains in *Touching Feeling*, ‘[Newton’s] ecological attention to space collapses in favor of a temporal emphasis on gender as “stylized repetition” and “social temporality”’. With the loss of its spatiality, however, the internally complex field of drag performance suffers a seemingly unavoidable simplification and reification.’ (9) I hope that my reading of Newton is more respectful of drag’s complexity.

outward appearance of role', she answers, 'drag implies that sex role and, by extension, role in general is something superficial. . . . The drag concept implies *distance* between the actor and the role or "act." But drag also means "costume." This theatrical referent is the key to the attitude toward role playing embodied in drag. . . . The actor should throw himself into it; he should put on a good show'. (109) Thus 'Garbo's acting was thought to be "drag" because it was considered markedly androgynous, and because she played (even overplayed) the role of femme fatale with style.' (Newton 109)

Like Greta Garbo as Newton describes her, Verena seems both utterly committed to her performance and curiously detached from it; she combines a hyperbolically feminine and theatrical presentation with a 'markedly androgynous' physical disposition. Basil, James writes, 'had never seen such an odd mixture of elements; she had the sweetest, most unworldly face, and yet, with it, an air of being on exhibition, of belonging to a troupe, of living in the gaslight, which pervaded even the details of her dress, fashioned evidently with an attempt at the histrionic.' (82) Verena seems to Basil to be both a supernatural being, untouched by mundane concerns, and an irredeemable creature of artifice. She is, to use Newton's words, 'putting on a good show while indicating distance (showing that it is a show)', which 'is the heart of drag' (109). Verena, in short, is working it: with 'a double chain of amber beads' 'falling low upon her flat young chest' (83), she does not permit her audience to mistake her dazzling incarnation of feminine presence for a certain anatomical configuration. It's what she does with her strikingly boyish frame that counts: 'though she was not tall, she appeared to spring up, and carried her head as if it reached rather high.' (82) Basil reflects that 'if she had only had a goat she would have resembled Esmeralda' (82), the gypsy whose provocative dances enliven *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. Fitting, then, that it is in her 1931 film *Mata Hari*, the tale of a spy who fascinates men with her exotic gyrations, that Newton finds Garbo's drag style 'made most explicit' (109): 'the men she seduced were her victims because she was only playing at love—only acting', Newton writes. (109) Verena's oriental posturing appears fated to some observers to produce the same results: 'Little Doctor Prance, with her hard good sense, . . . had intimated that she was a deceiver.' (82)

The deceptiveness of appearances is an important theme of Newton's writing about drag; her remarks on this subject, indeed, are the only ones that Butler actually reproduces in *Gender Trouble*. The nature of Newton's claims, however, is not well represented by Butler's interpretation of them. After suggesting that drag 'fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space', Butler quotes³⁷ the following passage from *Mother Camp*:

³⁷ Butler's quotation is not entirely accurate, but its errors are innocuous: 'At the most complex' appears as 'At its most complex' in *Gender Trouble*, and the passage's punctuation is slightly different there. (Butler, *Gender* 186)

At the most complex, it is a double inversion that says ‘appearance is an illusion.’ Drag says, ‘my “outside” appearance is feminine, but my essence “inside” [the body] is masculine.’ At the same time it symbolizes the opposite inversion: ‘my appearance “outside” [my body, my gender] is masculine but my essence “inside” [myself] is feminine. (Newton 103)

Newton’s fastidious use of parentheses makes clear that there are three distinct levels to the imagination of space that she is describing. There is, firstly, the “outside” appearance’, which is feminine. Then, there is ‘the body’, which, whether understood as ‘inside’ or ‘outside’, is masculine. Finally, there is the ‘inside’ of the self, which is feminine. Thus the two statements that Newton attributes to drag use ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ to refer to different locations: in the first statement, ‘outside’ refers to the feminine appearance and ‘inside’ to the masculine body; in the second, ‘outside’ refers to the masculine body and ‘inside’ to the feminine self. An image that naturally presents itself as a diagram of this space is that of three concentric circles: the innermost circle would be labelled ‘inside (self): feminine’, the middle one ‘inside/outside (body): masculine’, and the outer one ‘outside (appearance): feminine’. However, Newton’s careful delineation of this space is entirely lost on Butler, whose gloss on the passage is: ‘Both claims to truth contradict one another and so displace the entire enactment of gender significations from the discourse of truth and falsity.’ (186–87) In fact, the claims that Newton attributes to drag do not contradict one another at all: rather, they build up a perfectly coherent image of a space that is composed of three nested tiers: a feminine appearance surrounding a masculine body that encloses a feminine self. Far from ‘subvert[ing] the distinction between inner and outer psychic space’, Newton’s model of drag spatiality emphasizes and refines that distinction: her theory of drag requires us to imagine the body as both membrane and container, a border between inside and out that possess its own gendered qualities.

Newton’s work on drag may help us to understand as well the keen enjoyment that Basil derives from watching Verena perform. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler suggests that ‘part of the pleasure’ of drag, ‘the giddiness of the performance[,] is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary.’ (187) Newton is both more evocative and more circumspect about the sources of drag’s charm; she seems reluctant to pursue the argument that her research quite clearly implies. ‘The verbal appeal of the campy drag queen is relatively easy to analyze’, she writes, ‘but the visual aspect . . . is more elusive. I would guess that the gay audience identifies with the successful sex-role transformation.’ (64) Newton’s uncharacteristic recourse to a speculative tone here is reflected in her similarly anomalous skepticism of her interviewees’ thoughts on this subject. ‘Many impersonators say that the homosexual audience is envious of them because the queens [gay men in the audience who are not impersonating women] would all like to be wearing the drag themselves’, Newton writes. ‘This

is probably true in some cases, but the role of the female impersonator as a public homosexual accounts for all the popularity, with room to spare.’ (64) For Newton, the drag queen’s femininity is, at least to the audience, nothing more than a signifier of homosexuality: it may be translated into a performance of homosexual identity without residue. ‘Not all gay people want to wear drag’, she insists, ‘but drag symbolizes gayness.’ (64) Notwithstanding Newton’s resistance to the idea that it is the female impersonator’s femininity specifically that is attractive to spectators, *Mother Camp* contains a useful if somewhat confused articulation of the way in which drag may satisfy its audience’s unfulfilled feminine identifications. In her discussion of female impersonators’ motivations for pursuing their vocation, Newton offers this incisive précis: ‘The drag queen looks in the mirror of the audience and sees his female image reflected back approvingly.’ (37) This claim may accurately describe some impersonators’ enjoyment of drag performance, but it seems to me to be an inverted statement of the pleasure that audiences may be expected to derive from drag. For wherever the drag queen happens to be looking, the audience’s eyes can only be glued to her: she is the one who ‘approvingly’ reflects the spectator’s ‘female image’ back to him.

It is in the light of this dynamic, I think, that we may understand the more outlandish features of Verena’s performance: the bizarre choreography that opens her set at Miss Birdseye’s, in particular, can be seen as an allegory for the expression of a male self as a female one that she is inviting her audience to perform phantasmatically during her speech. When Verena submits herself to her father’s ‘grotesque manipulations’, she temporarily gives up possession of her body. With ‘her big fan’ ‘folded’ and her ‘radiant, liquid eyes’ closed—it is while they are shut that ‘their smile’ appears as ‘a sort of reflection, like the glisten of a gem’ (82–83)—Verena is for a brief period divested of her lively femininity. Her father both initiates this process, evacuating her of her female essence, and fills the empty space in Verena by symbolically putting himself into her, modelling the process that her speech will prompt viewers to undertake for themselves. ‘Doctor Tarrant looked at no one as he stroked and soothed his daughter[.] . . . “Quietly—quietly,” he murmured from time to time. “It will come, my good child, it will come. Just let it work—just let it gather. The spirit, you know; you’ve got to let the spirit come out when it will.”’ (83) Spiritualist language and gestures offer Verena and her father a fruitful set of metaphors for the experience of vicarious embodiment that Verena’s speech is intended to elicit. ‘The spirit’, it seems, is Verena herself: not the Verena who lives in a shabby hovel with her mercenary parents, but the one that occupies that girl’s body when she speaks to Miss Birdseye’s fascinated audience. For what ‘comes out’, in the end, is a spirit that bears her name: ‘*she’ll* come out all right’, Mr Tarrant insists (83–84, emphasis added), and ‘Verena did come out, after a little; she came out with a great deal of sweetness—with a very quaint and peculiar effect.’ (84) This Verena is a character that her namesake assumes in a sort of reverie; it is ‘as if she were talking in a dream’. (83)

The resemblance to a certain kind of drag performer is not coincidental: personal identity is theatrically suspended in both cases in order to achieve commitment to the role while maintaining distance from spectators. As Newton observes, some drag queens ‘often seem wrapped in a trance-like state, never looking at their audience, and simply going through their routines.’ (12)

‘Of course I only speak to women—to my own dear sisters’, this Verena’s speech begins (85). To listen to her speech, she announces, is to assume the identity of a woman. Basil responds to her call with unselfconscious enthusiasm: ‘all he could feel was that to *his* starved senses she irresistibly appealed.’ (83). With this return to Basil’s alimentary preoccupation, we may finally bring together Basil’s interest in Verena’s physical nourishment and his fixation on her spectacular drag performances. What Basil sees in Verena is a bountiful agglomeration of feminine energy, which she seems to have magically extracted from her audience: ‘whatever brightness was to be found in Miss Birdseye’s rather faded and dingy human collection had gathered itself into this attractive but ambiguous young person.’ (81) To hear and watch her speak is thus, for Basil, a way of experiencing her bodily satisfaction, which he imagines to be akin to the sensation of fullness provided by a good meal. “‘Well, they may call it what they please, it’s a pleasure to listen to it’—these genial tributes fell from the lips of a pair ruminating gentlemen’ in the aftermath of Verena’s speech (88). What these gentlemen are chewing on, it seems, is the profoundly assimilable experience of glamorous femininity that the girl with the red fan has offered them.

Conclusion: The Desire of Ransom’s Heart

In December 1887, Henry James reviewed James Elliot Cabot’s *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson* for *Macmillan’s Magazine*. One part of the memoir that he found particularly interesting was its disclosure of Emerson’s hostility to ‘the professional abolitionists or philanthropists’ (‘Review’ 225). James quotes from a letter included in Cabot’s book in which Emerson writes: ‘We talk frigidly of Reform until the walls mock us. It is that of which a man should never speak, but if he have cherished it in his bosom he should steal to it in darkness, as an Indian to his bride.’ (225) There is a surprising resonance between Emerson’s attitude here and ‘the desire of Ransom’s heart’, ‘To be quiet about the Southern land . . . , not prating in the market-place either of her troubles or her hopes, but waiting as a man should wait, for the slow process, the sensible beneficence, of time.’ (75) Like Basil, Emerson imagines political activism to be a silent ordeal modelled on the yearning of heterosexual courtship. James’s response to Emerson’s letter indicates that the affinity is not casual:

I must add that even while I transcribe these words there comes to me the recollection of the great meeting in the Boston Music Hall, on the first day of 1863, to celebrate the signing by Mr

Lincoln of the proclamation freeing the Southern slaves—of the momentousness of the occasion, the vast excited multitude, the crowded platform and the tall, spare figure of Emerson, in the midst, reading out the stanzas that were published under the name of the Boston Hymn. . . . I well remember the immense effect with which his beautiful voice pronounced the lines—

‘Pay ransom to the owner
And fill the bag to the brim.
Who is the owner? The slave is owner,
And ever was. Pay *him!*’ (225–26)

A ‘tall, spare figure’ pronounces the word ‘ransom’ to a ‘vast excited multitude’ at the Boston Music Hall: the scene represents an alternate ending for *The Bostonians*, one in which Basil himself ascends the platform to dazzle a palpitating audience. Siobhan Peiffer has suggested that James’s allusion to Emerson’s speech in this essay emphasizes a contrast between Basil and Emerson: ‘James’s Ransom’, she writes, ‘will never pay Emerson’s “ransom.”’ (99) But I think that James is in fact noticing a resemblance between the two characters. Though they espouse different causes, Emerson and Basil share in James’s images of them the same self-ignorant performative zeal: their insistence in private on a kind of rhetorical chastity thinly veils an irrepressible urge to become beautiful spectacles themselves. If Emerson seems able to assume his role without a female deputy, *The Bostonians* suggests that his capacity is nonetheless founded on a paradoxical investment in the femininity of performance, an investment that may be understood in the light of his ‘Address at the Woman’s Rights Convention’ as the conviction that women are at once ‘oracular’ (214) and ‘personal’ (222). This chapter has argued that such investments are illegible according to the hermeneutic keys provided by the feminist theory of the male gaze and the queer theory of drag performance, and that they imply a very different model of psychic organization to the one that has been bequeathed by them to academic discourse. The dangerously unstable meld of vision and femininity in Basil’s desire is intimately linked to the troubled history of his personal development: what is glancingly satisfied in his relationship with Verena is less a desire to look than a longing to be seen; not a drive to consume, but a need to be fed.³⁸

Few characters in Henry James’s fiction are as unlikeable as Basil Ransom. He is frankly obnoxious, espouses abominable views, and does very little to distance himself from the slaveholding elite to which he once belonged. The powerful repulsiveness of these traits has deterred readers from

³⁸ While the connection between feeding and looking may be unfamiliar to those schooled in the Lacanian brand of psychoanalysis more often engaged by modern criticism, it is an obvious and important one in object relations theory. See for instance D. W. Winnicott’s *Playing and Reality*, especially chapter 1 (‘Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena’) and chapter 9 (‘Mirror-role of Mother and Family in Child Development’).

exploring the complexity of Basil's motives, as if to acknowledge his rich and dynamic internal life were to grant him a dignity that he does not deserve. But when we assume that Basil's behaviour straightforwardly expresses his unabashed chauvinism, we silently validate the foundational principle of his banal and destructive worldview: that he is a competent and self-aware individual who acts according to the beliefs that he has rationally arrived at. In this chapter, I have attempted to describe a much less integrated Basil, one whose volatile behaviour may be understood in relation to the nuanced and extensive depiction of his contorted psychic life that James offers. My explanation remains committed to a logic—but its logic is no longer the one that the deluded misogynist confidently provides for himself; it is, rather, one that can be inferred from the novel's series of representations of Basil's most arresting fantasies. I hope that the account of Basil's desiring gaze that I have developed may give one template for understanding the disturbed psychologies of other similarly unappealing men. There may be many political positions that serve to conceal an inadmissible need for attention, a need that will demand as its compensatory prize the woman who is seen to be getting all of it.

My next chapter will continue to explore James's understanding of the powerful and specifically identificatory tug of feminine spectacle. There is a highly theatrical quality to Maggie Verver's images of her own abject suffering; like Basil, Maggie invests a great deal of cognitive energy in the figure of the woman on display. What *The Golden Bowl* also illuminates is the pivotal role of masculine authority—the kind that, as I hope to have shown, Basil dramatically fails to embody—in certain fantasies of female exposure. To receive attention as a woman is, for Basil, an ideal state of being. *The Golden Bowl* reveals the darker side of that vision: for Maggie, to occupy the position of the scrutinized object is to be given up to a gaze that cuts like a knife. There is a nightmarish quality to this scenario, but it does not lack, as James shows, its own lugubrious allure.

Chapter 3

Bruised Philosophy? Violence and Knowledge in *The Golden Bowl* and Trans Theory

For Maggie Verver, curiosity is a dangerous thing. The thoughts that occupy her at the start of *The Golden Bowl*'s second book, as she grows suspicious of her husband's relationship with her stepmother, are most vivid when they lead to the idea of violence: 'She had put her thought to the proof, and the proof had shown its edge; this was what was before her, that she was no longer playing with blunt and idle tools, with weapons that didn't cut. There passed across her vision ten times a day the gleam of a bare blade, and at this it was that she most shut her eyes, most knew the impulse to cheat herself with motion and sound.' (331–32) The phantom blade is a frightening reminder to Maggie of two messy solutions that are available to her as responses to her husband's infidelity: murder and suicide. But it is also a metaphor: it reflects her sense that to act in any decisive way on the basis of her new thoughts could have effects comparable to those of bloody retribution. Equipped with her new suspicions, Maggie may hurt others—an implication that is hinted at in her description of 'the situation' as for 'so long . . . practically unattackable' (327)—or get hurt herself: the situation also seems like 'a Mahometan mosque, . . . there so hung about it the vision of . . . one's paying with one's life if found there as an interloper.' (328) The dagger of Maggie's mind thus crystallizes her profoundly conflicted attitudes to knowledge and to power. There is a thrilling pleasure in her novel experience of 'playing' with sharp objects. Yet the idea that she could actually use these weapons is almost unbearable to Maggie: with a violence of its own, it makes her wince.

Contemporary theorists of gender share Maggie Verver's excited, fearful awareness of the things that can be done with bare blades. In recent writing on sex reassignment surgery (SRS), the incised body made visible in the operating room is an urgent source of anxiety, desire, and meaning. And like the Gothic chamber that Maggie's honed instrument evokes, the surgical clinic is represented there as a space both of discovery and of violence. It is, as Eric Plemons writes, 'a place whose tender intimacies and abrasive disconnections, visceral messiness, and conceptual overcrowding are belied by its veneer of routinized control and neat, quiet discipline.' (114) There are dark secrets concealed beneath the operating room's bland exterior, such remarks suggest, and they tempt the wary critic to bring them to light. This chapter argues that SRS theory shares with Maggie Verver a persuasive, gratifying, but delusory belief that knowledge and violence are necessarily linked. In *The Golden Bowl*, that link is most often expressed in the idea that finding things out and concealing them inevitably cause

pain for someone. In SRS theory, the emphasis differs: there, the link tends to be manifested in the idea that surgery reveals the truth of the body. As it cuts, exposes, and rearranges the body, surgery appears in this genre of writing to provide not only physical but also intellectual access to the body.

Contemporary trans theory thus inverts the imaginary relation between violence and knowledge perceived by Maggie in *The Golden Bowl*. Whereas for Maggie experiences of knowledge invariably feel like experiences of violence, in trans theory experiences of violence tend to be understood as experiences of knowledge.

This chapter thus builds on the claim about queer theory's conflicted relationship to knowledge that I articulated in the introduction to this thesis: namely, that queer theory symptomatizes the structure of intellectual inhibition as it is described by Melanie Klein. While the nature of the relation between trans theory and queer theory is disputed,³⁹ my work shows that the two fields are united by a distinctive anxiety about the potentially violent effects of investigation. In Sedgwick's work, that anxiety was expressed in the equation of any kind of psychological inquiry with the devastating violence of homosexual panic. In Plemons' account of SRS, it takes a rather different form: there, its existence can be inferred from the operation within his discourse of a belief in the epistemological utility of violence. This belief, it seems to me, is intended to redeem the putative oneness of scrutiny and destruction that Plemons, like Sedgwick, takes for granted, and that is dramatized in *The Golden Bowl* by Maggie's self-terrorizing fantasies of discovery. This chapter also pursues the explorations of psychic life in men and of men in psychic life that I have been undertaking throughout this thesis. The two intellectual positions that I analyse in this chapter—those adopted by Maggie Verver and by Eric Plemons—share with the theory of the male gaze that I considered in chapter two a structuring interest in somewhat vacuous icons of masculine authority. That interest may be considered a generic feature of writing that is produced under the auspices of modern patriarchal cultures. But it is distinguished in the texts I consider here by a peculiarly visible technique of projective identification. The male characters that predominate in the imaginary spaces of these texts embody the relation to violence that their observers want for themselves; the texts' investments in the epistemological affordances of uncomfortable positions are thus safeguarded by the imposing, hollow, and enviable figures of the Husband (that is, the Prince) and the Surgeon. By giving to these characters the kind of attention that I

³⁹ Susan Stryker suggests that 'transgender studies can be considered queer theory's evil twin' (212); Andrea Long Chu replies, 'Trans studies is the twin that queer studies ate in the womb.' (Chu and Harsin Drager 103) Whether or not queer theory has successfully 'incorporated', to recall Brody and Ochoa's term, trans studies, my decision to include both within this thesis is justified by the fact that the two fields, as well as manifesting some of the same psychological attitudes, tend to share their objects, canonical texts, and publication venues with one another.

have given to Basil Ransom, I hope to show again that psychic interpretation need not be an act of aggressive invasion.

A Soul in Pain

No one stimulates Maggie's morbid thoughts as powerfully as her stepmother. When Mrs Verver finally confronts Maggie on the terrace at Fawns in order to ask her what has 'perplexed or worried' her (506), Maggie responds as if to a physical assault. The passage contains the novel's most dramatic representation of Maggie's bloody mental life:

The two women at all events only hovered there, for these first minutes, face to face over their interval and exchanging no sign; the intensity of their mutual look might have pierced the night, and Maggie was at last to start with the scared sense of having thus yielded to doubt, to dread, to hesitation, for a time that, with no other proof needed, would have completely given her away. . . . If then, scared and hanging back, she had, as was so evident, sacrificed all past pretences, it would have been with the instant knowledge of an advantage gained that Charlotte finally saw her come on. Maggie came on with her heart in her hands; she came on with the definite prevision, throbbing like the tick of a watch, of a doom impossibly sharp and hard, but to which, after looking at it with her eyes wide open, she had none the less bowed her head. By the time she was at her companion's side, for that matter, by the time Charlotte had, without a motion, without a word, simply let her approach and stand there, her head was already on the block, so that the consciousness that everything had gone blurred all perception of whether or no the axe had fallen. Oh the 'advantage', it was perfectly enough, in truth, with Mrs. Verver; for what was Maggie's own sense but that of having been thrown over on her back with her neck from the first half-broken and her helpless face staring up? That position only could account for the positive grimace of weakness and pain produced there by Charlotte's dignity. (501–502)

Maggie's increasingly brutal images of her physical destruction reflect her sense that her secret knowledge of Charlotte and Amerigo's affair is something held in her body that Mrs Verver is trying to get at. So horrifying does Maggie find the idea of being asked a question by Charlotte that she initially imagines pre-empting the experience by willingly offering her heart to her. This defence, however, appears to be ineffective, for she still feels compelled to allow Charlotte to take her head off. And by the end of the paragraph, Maggie has abandoned even the minimal degree of will involved in conducting herself in a seemly manner at her own execution. Ultimately, she experiences the threat of Charlotte's inquisition as a threat of irresistible and violent annihilation. With 'her handsome head and long straight

neck testif[ying] through the dusk to their inveterate completeness and noble erectness' (503), Charlotte confronts Maggie as overpoweringly phallic: in Maggie's image of herself 'thrown over on her back with her neck from the first half-broken and her helpless face staring up' there is a stark suggestion of rape.⁴⁰

Yet Mrs Verver does not keep her 'advantage' for long. When the two women are brought together two chapters later, Charlotte is the one who seems to be dissimulating a state of unbearable suffering. Watching Charlotte conduct tourists around Adam's private collection, Maggie is at once awed and upset by the impression of smothered anguish that she receives from her stepmother:

Charlotte, half-way down the vista, held together, as if by something almost austere in the grace of her authority, the semi-scared (now that they were there!) knot of her visitors[.] . . . Her voice, high and clear and a little hard, reached her husband and her step-daughter while she thus placed beyond doubt her cheerful submission to duty. Her words, addressed to the largest publicity, rang for some minutes through the place, every one as quiet to listen as if it had been a church ablaze with tapers and she were taking her part in some hymn of praise. . . . 'You understand, don't you, that if she didn't do this there would be no knowing what she might do?' This light Mrs. Assingham richly launched while her younger friend, unresistingly moved, became uncertain again, and then, not too much to show it—or rather positively to conceal it and to conceal something more as well—turned short round to one of the windows and awkwardly, pointlessly waited. . . .

. . . Maggie meanwhile at the window knew the strangest thing to be happening: she had turned suddenly to crying, or was at least on the point of it—the lighted square before her all blurred and dim. The high voice went on; its quaver was doubtless for conscious ears only, but there were verily thirty seconds during which it sounded, for our young woman, like the shriek of a soul in pain. (537–38)

Though it is Charlotte rather than Maggie whose suffering is at issue here, this scene reproduces some of the terrace encounter's distinctive elements. Notwithstanding her performance of 'submission', Charlotte continues to exhibit the kind of self-possession that had intimidated Maggie on the terrace; the fear that Maggie perceives in Fawns' huddled pilgrims reflects her nervous reverence for 'the grace of [Charlotte's] authority'. And Maggie responds to Charlotte's veiled torment in the same way that she had experienced her own. On the terrace, 'the consciousness that everything had gone blurred all

⁴⁰ Maggie's fear that Charlotte may rape her has not been explicitly identified by critics of *The Golden Bowl*, but it is euphemistically registered in their descriptions of Charlotte's threatening masculinity. As Philip Sicker, for instance, notes: 'she exudes a male vigor and rigidity, a slim, sinuous strength that orients her toward social ritual and decisive action in the external world' (150).

perception of whether or no the axe had fallen'; in the gallery, 'the lighted square before her' grows 'all blurred and dim'. It is as if the location of pain in an exchange between two people is less important for Maggie than the fact of its appearance. Scenes of hidden agony both excite and disable Maggie, regardless of their actors. She keeps her 'conscious ears' pricked and her 'eyes wide open' to detect them wherever they may darkly unfold, but the moment of detection itself always contrives to leave her blinded.

Hence the puzzling quality of Maggie's relation to violence. Why does this person so energetically pursue the kind of thought that reliably ends up horrifying her? Criticism of *The Golden Bowl* has developed two ways in which to account for the prominence of suffering in Maggie's mind. The first may be termed the argument from sexuality. In this account, Maggie's preoccupation with violence manifests a fundamentally erotic attraction to pain and subjection. 'Maggie indulges in masochistic fantasies', as Hugh Stevens puts it (49); her 'eroticization of violence . . . signals not so much a surrender to as an ambivalence towards this violence.' (51) While Stevens sees 'a violent masculine figure' at the root of Maggie's fantasy life (50), Margery Sabin suggests that it is Charlotte who most urgently arouses Maggie's thirst for domination. 'Maggie's sadomasochistic rapture with Charlotte in the garden [at Fawns] surpasses any moment of passion with Amerigo', she contends (220); in that scene, 'Maggie . . . is . . . driven to an intimate identification with the pain she has herself provoked Charlotte to express.' (220) Both Stevens and Sabin are receptive to the two-sidedness of Maggie's investment in violence, her perception of the 'bare blade' as both a tool and a threat. But the clarity of their readings is compromised by their shared belief that the function of violence for Maggie is essentially inscrutable. Stevens curtails his reading by according to the erotic an inherently elusive quality: 'in the novel', he suggests, 'sexuality is *that which cannot be figured*' (45). Sabin, meanwhile, discourages us from further exploration of this problem with a suitably deferential assertion of James's mastery over his work. She interrupts her analysis of the garden scene with a caveat: 'I don't think James means us to understand exactly what drives Maggie here' (219).⁴¹

In contrast to the mysteriousness of the argument from sexuality, there is an austere simplicity to the second and more traditional way of understanding Maggie's sensitivity to violence. This account, developed in classic texts by Ruth Bernard Yeazell and Martha Nussbaum, treats Maggie's attachment to images of suffering as a virtue rather than a problem: it claims that through them Maggie accurately and morally registers the polite brutality of the world around her. Yeazell and Nussbaum articulate this position by continually validating Maggie's belief in the necessity of violence. 'Maggie Verver is the first Jamesian innocent who confronts painful knowledge', Yeazell writes approvingly; 'she must risk

⁴¹ Other readings that emphasize Maggie's sadism and/or masochism are Ash, Priest, and Wessel.

inflicting pain on others as well as herself to achieve her ends.’ (101) ‘To become a separate woman in her own right’ (134), Nussbaum sternly echoes, ‘this woman, it is clear, will have to give pain.’ (127)⁴² ‘The conflicting desires of *The Golden Bowl* demand that some sacrifice finally be exacted’ (Yeazell 102): like Maggie herself, these readers see the symbolic violence in which Maggie participates as an inescapable outcome of the novel’s misalliances. Informed by the argument from sexuality, however, we may well suspect that this avowedly ethical approach harbours its own sadomasochistic tendencies. Readers of this school have constructed a position in which they may vicariously enjoy both Maggie’s heroic submission to the iron law of fate and the cruelty to others that it ‘demands’ of her. Nussbaum most clearly betrays the pleasure involved in this stance:

We might describe [Maggie’s] new ideal this way: See clearly and with high intelligence. Respond with the vibrant sympathy of a vividly active imagination. If there are conflicts, face them squarely and with keen perception. . . . If love of your husband requires hurting and lying to Charlotte, then do these cruel things, making the better choice. But never cease, all the while, to be richly conscious of Charlotte’s pain and to bear, in imagination and feeling, the full burden of your guilt as the cause of that pain. (134–35)

This is in fact not description but ventriloquism: of Maggie, and of her overactive super-ego. Temporarily abandoning her favoured style, the ethical infinitive—as in, ‘To regain her husband she must damage Charlotte’ (134)—Nussbaum here indulges in an imperative mood whose commandments seem potentially endless. So intoxicating is the phantasmatic voice of moral authority that Nussbaum forgets to distinguish it from her own with the requisite quotation marks. Richly conscious, indeed.⁴³

⁴² For more variations on this theme, see Hadley: in her view, Maggie has ‘painfully to unlearn certain sentimental innocences’. (175)

⁴³ The brand of James scholarship surveyed in this paragraph resembles Austen criticism as described by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in ‘Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl’: ‘notable mostly . . . for its unrelenting exaction of the spectacle of a Girl Being Taught a Lesson—for the vengefulness it vents on the heroines it purports to love, and whom, perhaps, it does.’ (833) Negative evaluations of Maggie’s behaviour from an ‘ethical’ standpoint, such as Robert Pippin’s, manifest the same unselfconscious sadism as Nussbaum and her ilk. Pippin’s gleefully sardonic assassination of Maggie—‘there is precious little “forgiveness” in her treatment of Charlotte, the apparent satisfaction she takes in it, or the self-serving pity and crocodile-tear guilt with which she congratulates herself and enacts her power’, Pippin oozes (78)—appears not to recognize its flagrant affinity with the ruthlessness of ‘the defensive, cold, prim little nun’ (80) whom it castigates. That Pippin is able unironically to decry Maggie’s ‘*Schadenfreude*’ (78) while revelling in her ethical abjection indicates that, as far as discipline-happy moralists are concerned, it really does take one to know one. (Readers may suspect that my own energetic participation in the bloodsport of critical sniping indicates that I too belong in that category; the more astute may intuit in addition the pleasure that the imagination of such an accusation is sure to give me.) See also Joseph Kronick’s weirdly untroubled association of ethics and violence: ‘In *The Golden Bowl*, emotional violence is not confined to the adulterous relation between Amerigo and Charlotte. . . . The violence consists in the ethical demand of representational form to register the consciousness of life’. (6)

Another way in which criticism of *The Golden Bowl* has internalized Maggie’s enjoyment of the whip hand is by endlessly asserting her and James’s overwhelming aesthetic prowess. ‘Maggie Verver’s fictions have the irresistibly coercive strength of an art which uncompromisingly rejects any attempt to tamper with its forms’,

The pleasures of critical (self-)discipline may in themselves provide sufficient motive for the totalitarian bombast of the ethical reading. But they are reinforced in the case of *The Golden Bowl* by their mimetic relation to Maggie's own perception of a link between knowledge and pain. Maggie playing with her razor-like suspicion, Maggie thrilled and terrorized by Charlotte's half-glimpsed torment: these are only the most spectacular of the many passages in the second half of the novel through which James indicates the presence in his heroine of an imaginary nexus that defines every operation of discovery and concealment as a form of violence or defence against it. Thus knowledge is painful in *The Golden Bowl* not simply because, as the ethical reading implies, it shatters Maggie's 'aspiration to perfection' (Nussbaum 125). Nor is it, as the argument from sexuality would suggest, merely one expression of Maggie's compulsive attraction to scenes of mortification. On the contrary, Maggie's relation to truth is constitutively violent. And the force of this relation derives not from the inherent hardness of reality—submission to which, the ethicists imply, marks the attainment of moral understanding—but from the distinctive and inhibiting conditions of Maggie's psychic organization. As such, it gathers together some paranoid impulses that may underlie various investments in the excoriating power of the truth, whether they are manifested beneath the 'electric glare' of Eaton Square (James, *Golden* 262), ethical criticism's shimmering aureole, or the ultraviolet light of contemporary trans theory.

We can begin to trace the closeness of truth and suffering in Maggie's mind by returning to her two meetings with Charlotte, because the violent imagery that saturates these passages is linked to the interrogative and evasive manoeuvres that Maggie and Charlotte perform in them. Scrutiny, in the first scene, has a kind of environmentally lacerating force: 'the intensity of their mutual look might have pierced the night.' The source of Maggie's ordeal on the terrace, furthermore, is what Charlotte tartly calls her 'natural desire to know': it is the idea of responding to her stepmother's discreetly coercive demand for honesty that feels to Maggie like being threatened with execution. And if on the terrace Maggie feels that she must endure Mrs Verver's torturous probing of her secret, in the gallery she recognizes an equally painful struggle against exposure in Charlotte. 'Her voice, high and clear and a little hard,' aims to 'place beyond doubt her cheerful submission to duty', but Charlotte's attempt to

Leo Bersani intones; 'We accept the prestigious morality of Maggie's insisting on "not, by a hair's breadth, deflecting into the truth" because the only status given to the truth she denies is that of a compositional invitation which she has merely to withdraw.' (*Future* 147) 'To ask from what vantage characters suppose they have the power to dictate [what kinds of things are said and thought],' Sharon Cameron declares, 'is to point to the situation which James coerces us into imagining.' (86) 'The novel compels us to identify with Maggie,' Yeazell announces (103). Taken together, these statements indicate a deep-seated unwillingness among James's critics to imagine encountering his difficult texts in any spirit other than that of submission. Like Maggie's, however, their performances of compliance are self-aggrandizing in nature: the flatly declarative tone in which they affirm James's power wishfully imitates the authority that they perceive in his style.

simulate compliance sounds to Maggie ‘like the shriek of a soul in pain’. That wail is made perceptible not just by Charlotte’s duplicity, but by the more general confusion that Maggie experiences in relation to Charlotte in the gallery. She feels ‘uncertain again’ after Fanny Assingham suggests ‘that if [Charlotte] didn’t do this there would be no knowing what she might do’, a feeling that sparks an urge in Maggie (mirroring Charlotte’s) ‘to conceal it’. Amidst all this doubt and secrecy, the ‘shriek of a soul in pain’ that Maggie hears seems more like a figment of her hyper-vigilant imagination—and a reflection of her own muted hysteria—than like something that Charlotte is actually expressing.

To identify pain with dramas of doubt and revelation appears from her interactions with Charlotte to be a distinctive feature of Maggie’s character. In the opening chapter of ‘The Princess’, Maggie gets close to acknowledging this tendency by formulating her somewhat circular belief in suffering’s propensity to stimulate thought. ‘She had lived long enough to make out for herself that any deep-seated passion has its pangs as well as its joys, and that we are made by its aches and its anxieties most richly conscious of it.’ (330) Maggie’s reflection on her own experience here culminates in an axiom: she affirms as a universal law the idea that painful moments in a ‘deep-seated passion’ lead to enriched self-awareness. The sentence that follows develops and complicates her association of perceptive capacity with ‘aches and anxieties’: ‘She had never doubted of the force of the feeling that bound her to her husband; but to become aware almost suddenly that it had begun to vibrate with a violence that had some of the effect of a strain would, rightly looked at, after all but show that she was, like thousands of women, every day, acting up to the full privilege of passion.’ (330) This sentence repeats the structure of the one that preceded it: it shifts from a reflection on Maggie’s personal ‘feeling’ to embrace the ‘thousands of women’ with whom she feels an affinity. But this sentence also discloses that its shift in scale from individual to collective is itself made thinkable by Maggie’s experience of suffering. Maggie, that is, can only manufacture her knowledge of the ubiquitous effect of ‘aches and anxieties’ *because* of the ‘violence’ of ‘the force of [her] feeling’: it is her awareness of this sensation that ‘show[s]’ her that she is acting like other women. Maggie thus accords to suffering not only the power to produce self-knowledge, but the power as well to give that knowledge a universal remit.

Linked to Maggie’s experience of consciousness as a torment is her peculiarly embodied imagination of belief. For Maggie, convincing people that she is ignorant of their deceptions feels like convincing them that she is healthy. ‘There was . . . a sharpness of point’ in her invitation of ‘Lady Castledean’s “set”’ to Fawns ‘that she enjoyed; it gave an accent to the truth she wished to illustrate—the truth that the surface of her recent life, thick-sown with the flower of earnest endeavour, with every form of the unruffled and the undoubting, suffered no symptom anywhere to peep out.’ (479–80) Maggie pictures her life in the shape of a body: by cultivating a display of energetic innocence upon the

surface of that body, she feels that she hides the knowledge that afflicts it like an illness. Knowledge, for Maggie, is an uncannily sentient ailment: it seems like it might see others as well as be seen by them if it should happen to 'peep out'. Such menacing liveliness may contribute to what Maggie warmly imagines here, in her characteristic attraction to 'sharpness of point', as a painful but satisfying bodily discipline: the idea that her life's skin has been 'thick-sown with the flower of earnest endeavour' contains besides its horticultural theme a suggestion of embroidery, as if Maggie is stitching ornamental patterns into her flesh. This is an especially fruitful association because it joins up with the medical subtext: needlework resonates in the context of Maggie's 'symptom[s]' with the curative and protective affordances of injection, incision, and suture. Later in the same passage, as she reflects on Fawns' reception of less welcome guests, 'the Princess . . . had a sense not other than sympathetic for the advantage now extracted from it by Fanny Assingham's bruised philosophy.' (480) It is in contrast to the mark of damage she sees upon Fanny's way of thinking that Maggie exults in the concealing treatment she has effected upon her own: she both admires and pities the achievements of a woman who is less able than she to manage the presentation of her troubling knowledge.

Bruises provide the correlative to what Maggie imagines as the embodied experience of deception: they make visible the harm that anyone may incur who smacks too forcefully against the barrier that separates her from a truth. In a variation on her usual perception of truth itself as a harmful object, Maggie sometimes imagines that the mere pursuit of knowledge is an inherently painful enterprise. When Maggie becomes certain that Charlotte is trying to find out what she knows about her affair with the Prince, 'the conviction that Charlotte was but awaiting some chance really to test her trouble upon her lover's wife left Maggie's sense open as to the sight of gilt wires and bruised wings' (493): Maggie sees Charlotte as injured by the collision of her desire to know Maggie's thoughts with the 'deluded condition' in which her 'baffled consciousness' is caged (493). And Maggie knows exactly how this feels. When, towards the end of the novel, she wonders whether Charlotte and Amerigo are still meeting in secret, she realizes that 'Charlotte was hiding neither pride nor joy—she was hiding humiliation; and here it was that the Princess's passion, so powerless for vindictive flights, most inveterately bruised its tenderness against the hard glass of her question.' (567) For Maggie, all contact with knowledge is potentially damaging, and it is this sensitivity that enables Charlotte and Amerigo to imagine the relative discretion with which they pursue their affair as a kind of heroism. 'I can't put myself into Maggie's skin', Mrs Verver tells the Prince, '[b]ut I can feel that I'd do anything to shield it from a bruise.' (254) Charlotte demonstrates here that she has correctly understood the pre-eminent equation of knowledge and harm in Maggie's mind: she is able to assure Amerigo that the 'conscious care' (254) with which they agree that they must treat his wife need entail nothing more than their vigilant supervision of her ignorance.

Yet for all the terror that Maggie feels in the vicinity of painful revelations, her equation of knowledge and harm is a source of excitement as well:

She walked to the end and far out of the light; she returned and saw the others still where she had left them; she passed round the house and looked into the drawing-room, lighted also, but empty now, and seeming to speak the more, in its own voice, of all the possibilities she controlled. Spacious and splendid, like a stage again awaiting a drama, it was a scene she might people, by the press of her spring, either with serenities and dignities and decencies, or with terrors and shames and ruins, things as ugly as those formless fragments of her golden bowl she was trying so hard to pick up. (497–98)

In a startling return to the political imaginary of *The Princess Casamassima*, James figures Maggie here as an anarchist who has infiltrated Fawns' oblivious coterie: 'watched by her through one of the windows', the complacent aristocrats 'struck her as almost consciously and gratefully safer.' (497) Maggie's secret knowledge is like a grenade she might hurl through the window, or a bomb already planted inside the house, one that she may activate 'by the press of her spring' or whose detonation is only a matter of time. And Maggie's sense of her capacity to destroy things at this moment is entirely positive, as the passage's theatrical metaphor indicates: it 'fill[s]' her, as if she were a confident 'author', 'with the certitude of success'. (497)

The allure that this kind of violence has for Maggie indicates that her relation to pain is not only an aversive one, as some conventional readings of the novel suggest. Martha Nussbaum writes that Maggie 'wishes her life to be (unlike the bowl) a pure and perfect crystal, completely without crack or seam' (125); her 'central idea', Nussbaum suggests, 'is one of never doing a wrong, never breaking a rule, never hurting.' (126) But as the passages that I have surveyed in this section demonstrate, Maggie in fact derives a great deal of pleasure from the idea that her knowledge might cause others, particularly Charlotte, to suffer. 'Maggie . . . flushed with wonder at the sight' when Fanny destroys the golden bowl (455); her own experience of secrecy and disclosure is characterized by the same heady mixture of shame and excitement. The idea that ideas might act like knives, in sum, is not so much alarming as it is satisfying to Maggie.

In the Operating Room

Like Maggie's mind, modern academic discourse on SRS is structured around the idea of violence. The first substantial treatment of the subject, Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire*, established this structure by expressing its deeply hostile argument about transsexuality through ideas about maiming. Most obviously, for Raymond, people who undergo SRS 'are terribly alienated from their bodies, so

alienated that they think little of mutilating them' (xxiv). Raymond's pity for these people, however, who she concedes 'have suffered an enormous amount of physical and emotional pain' (xxiv), pales in comparison to her anguish over the violence that she more consistently associates with transsexuality:

Transsexually constructed lesbian-feminists attempt to function as image-makers of the lesbian-feminist. . . . Their masquerade of the lesbian filters into women's consciousness through the feminist media as 'the real thing.' The ultimate tragedy of such a parody is that the reality and self-definition of lesbian-feminist becomes mutilated in women themselves. Lesbian-feminists who accept transsexually constructed lesbian-feminists as other selves are mutilating their own reality. (119)

In *The Transsexual Empire*, SRS is mainly a figure for disfigurement, a metaphor for the destruction of authentic female personhood that Raymond identifies as the most salient effect of trans existence. For Raymond, as for Maggie, the 'real' violence is the violence of ideas; in the penetration of trans 'masquerade' into female 'consciousness' she sees a 'mutilation' of the body of feminism.⁴⁴

Though Raymond dreads the prospect of trans women infiltrating lesbian-feminist circles, her argument also relies upon a submerged identification with the lacerated body of trans surgery. In one of her many assertions of the essential masculinity of trans women, Raymond writes that 'the transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist is a man, and *not* a woman encumbered by the scars of patriarchy.' (103) As Raymond knows, post-operative trans women are in fact the ones with scars: her own book acknowledges the 'scar tissue' created by genital surgery (33) and the 'scar revision' procedures that some trans women seek (34). The displacement of those scars from trans to nontrans women belies the fundamental complaint of *The Transsexual Empire*, which is that transsexuality is a kind of theft of female essence. '[L]esbian-feminism signals a *total* giving of women's energy to women,' Raymond writes, 'and . . . it is this total woman-identified energy that the transsexual who claims to be a lesbian-feminist wants for himself.' (108) A closer look at *The Transsexual Empire* enables us to reverse that interpretation. In fact, Raymond is the thief: her vision of non-trans women 'encumbered by scars' silently appropriates a distinctly trans experience of radical surgery.

Today, theoretical writing on SRS is characterized by a more measured tone. Where Raymond's work invested heavily in the affective potency of the idea of trans surgery specifically, contemporary theorists frequently set out to question and diminish it. Cressida Heyes and J. R. Latham, for instance, argue that attempts to differentiate sex change procedures from cosmetic ones are

⁴⁴ Dean Spade repurposes this rhetorical move when he writes, in an account of his experience of SRS, 'My project would be to promote sex reassignment, gender alteration, temporary gender adventure, and the mutilation of gender categories, via surgery, hormones, clothing, political lobbying, civil disobedience, or any other means available.' (21)

misguided and harmful. 'The disanalogy with cosmetic surgery,' they write, 'typically embeds the . . . claim . . . that cosmetic surgeries are undertaken for reasons unconnected to psychosocial distress' (175). Heyes and Latham suggest that this claim, as well as being 'clearly false', 'risks a politics of resentment, in which the more that suffering comes to define the trans narrative, the greater the purchase of a political psychology that disallows transformative self-descriptions and action.' (175) To emphasize the distinctiveness of SRS, these authors contend, is inevitably to deplete the resources upon which trans politics might draw. Their concern is echoed by theorists who are wary of the normalizing role that SRS plays in popular representations of transition. 'In trans autobiographies,' Aren Aizura writes, 'GRS [gender reassignment surgery] is a principal narrative convention' (64); 'accounts of surgery tend to cement the underpinning of transsexual experience as a singular, straightforward movement from male to female or female to male through genital transformation.' (64) As Aizura all too briefly notes, it is the procedure's seductive troping of revelation that sustains SRS's utility as a ready-made parable: in texts that deploy this convention, '[t]he body serves as the site in which truths are (literally) manifested through the technologies of GRS.' (65)

There is one notable exception to the tendency towards discretion that marks contemporary SRS theory. That exception is Eric Plemons' *The Look of a Woman: Facial Feminization Surgery and the Aims of Trans- Medicine*. Plemons' book, an ethnographic account of facial feminization surgery (FFS) in the context of modern American healthcare, includes extensive and detailed descriptions of the array of interventions that make up FFS. Plemons is aware that his approach breaks with academic convention. 'There are many who object to the surgical impulse,' he notes, 'arguing that an often lurid focus on surgery has, for too long, overdetermined trans- as a medical category' (17). As Plemons' use of the word 'lurid' indicates, resistance to the description of surgery in trans theory comes not only from concerns about its reductiveness as a convention, but also from the intuition that it can only be a kind of pornography. Elsewhere, Plemons identifies this critique more clearly. 'The downplaying and decentering of surgical discourse is often intended to push thinking and conversation about trans people away from lurid and voyeuristic concerns with dissected body parts', he writes in the introduction to a special issue of *TSQ* on transgender surgery; there are, he concedes, 'good reasons to turn attention away from surgery as fascination and as fetish' (Plemons and Straayer 165). Yet *The Look of a Woman* insists that surgery remains 'so very important to so many of our lives' (17), and that it is possible to avoid the threat of producing mere titillation by sticking rigorously to the facts of surgical practice. 'Surgeons don't operate on desire or justice or fantasy or redemption or self-actualization or shame or any of the other things that surgeries might mean to trans- people', Plemons writes; 'Surgeons perform procedures on body parts.' (17)

Given contemporary trans theory's skeptical assessment of the value of explicit descriptions of SRS, *The Look of a Woman* might have been expected to encounter a degree of resistance from the field. Yet it was precisely Plemons' unflinching confrontation with the gory reality of SRS that readers of the book most often singled out for praise. 'By specifying the detail of this particular surgery and its context,' Bronwyn Wilson appreciatively wrote, 'it becomes clear that sex/gender cannot be abstract at all but are a part of daily life: constantly *present*.' (211) Cassius Adair, meanwhile, argued that Plemons successfully avoided prurience in his 'intense (and often graphic) account of the surgery', calling this element of *The Look of a Woman* 'a description which his skill as a writer transforms from a voyeur's peek behind the surgical curtain into a thoughtful meditation on embodiment.' These positive appraisals indicate that the relationship between Plemons' text and mainstream trans theory is not as adversarial as his contravention of the taboo on images of surgery would have led one to predict. Indeed, the plaudits that *The Look of a Woman* has earned are evidence that, despite its apparent divergence from principles espoused across the field, it is in fact an exemplary artifact of trans theory's predominant critical disposition. It is for this reason that I wish to look in some detail here at Plemons' representation of facial feminization surgery; I think that its breach of academic norms regarding the depiction of trans surgery is more significant than the book's friendly reception implies. Specifically, I believe that *The Look of a Woman* appeals to precisely the kind of ideology of surgical practice in which the field pretends not to believe. Its engrossing narration of FFS is premised upon a phantasmatic investment in surgery's power as a vehicle of knowledge; like Maggie, it is thrilled and energized by the idea that discovery and violence are inherently connected. The book's success as a document of mainstream trans theory thus testifies to the creativity with which it masks its mythic appeal, and to an unrecognized contradiction in the structure of academic thought on this subject.

It is in chapter 5 of *The Look of a Woman*, 'The Operating Room', that Plemons' investment in the revelatory power of surgery is most visible. The chapter has an unusual and compelling structure: the main part of the text, a discussion of materiality in gender theory, is interspersed with diaristic passages, printed in italics, that describe the first facial feminization procedure that Plemons observed. In the introduction to the chapter, Plemons suggests that his juxtaposition of these two kinds of discourse registers his sense of an intractable conflict between academic inquiry and surgical practice. 'The structure of the chapter reflects what I felt', he writes; 'a constant tension between the theoretical tools I had for thinking about sex, gender, and bodies, and the irreducibly material and visceral facts of radical facial surgery that were being used to shape them.' (114) I am going to argue that this formulation profoundly mischaracterizes the way in which 'The Operating Room' actually imagines the relationship between theory and surgery. There is, in fact, no tension at all between theory and surgery in 'The Operating Room', because Plemons consistently presents his 'theoretical tools' as wholly

inadequate to the task of conceptualising the body. Surgery, by contrast, is presented throughout the chapter as a mystically potent technique for realizing truths about materiality and selfhood. As the bodily imaginary latent in the idea of ‘tension’ hints,⁴⁵ ‘The Operating Room’ depends for its rhetorical charge upon the allegory of exposed and reassembled flesh that it stages.

In the argumentative portions of his chapter, Plemons repeatedly characterizes the body revealed in surgery as an object that is fundamentally inaccessible to theory. Plemons writes, for instance, that ‘[w]hen we foreground the materiality of the body—and the bony skull is particularly well suited to this task—the performative claim that sex is a product of discourse . . . is both useful for analysis and a solid dead end.’ (130) In this sentence, it is the sensory world of the operating room specifically that provides irrefutable access to the reality of the body: the skull exposed there provides a ‘solid’ rebuttal to theory’s airy ‘claim’. Elsewhere, Plemons communicates his disaffection with intellectual activity by opposing it to what he sees as the much more productive labour of SRS. ‘In contrast to the undeniably corporeal and material form of woman that was materialized in the operating room,’ he writes, ‘the theoretical tools I had for thinking about sex and gender had been overwhelmingly abstract. . . . They were slippery, not like bloodied cartilage is slippery but like philosophical concepts can be.’ (132) SRS is described here in language reminiscent of divine fabrication; the idea that ‘the . . . corporeal and material form of woman’ is ‘materialized’ in surgery evokes mythical creations such as the Eve of Genesis and Pygmalion’s Galatea. ‘[T]heoretical tools’, meanwhile, appear pathetically unable to traverse the gulf that surgery bridges between intention and fact, abstract and material; their ‘slipper[iness]’ compares unfavourably with the satisfying plasticity of ‘bloodied cartilage’.

The contrast between slippery ideas and tangible flesh is an expression of the structuring dichotomy of Plemons’ text, which juxtaposes theory, abstraction, discourse, and analysis with matter, bodies, the visceral, and the solid. In the pure light of the operating room, this structure consistently works to suggest, we can perceive the body as it really is; we are temporarily freed from the distorting effects of imagination and ideology. ‘I wanted to understand how trans-therapeutics . . . were being done in real time’, Plemons writes, in his most detailed exposition of this dichotomy:

It was a different project fundamentally from one about imagining, or suggesting, or hoping or willing into existence some other kind of trans-narrative. Projects of political and philosophical imagination are vital to our collective spirit; they give us something to look forward to, a future worth working for. They help us envision possibilities that have not yet existed. But the present

⁴⁵ ‘The condition, in any part of the body, of being stretched or strained; a sensation indicating or suggesting this; a feeling of tightness. (The earliest use in English.)’ (‘tension, n.’).

isn't only a moment to be surpassed. Being present with Rosalind and other FFS patients meant remaining in complexity and contradiction without looking for relief and letting the gravity of this radical surgery have its way. (133)

For Plemons, the distinctiveness of his approach lies in its stoic submission to the pull of the 'real'. The crucial difference, it appears, is its freedom from the constraints of desire: it abjures the 'hoping' and 'willing' indulged in by other critics, and where others nourish the 'spirit', Plemons responds to 'gravity'. ('*Sanguine* calls to increase tolerance and acceptance for trans- people' are a naively wishful alternative to the task of theory as Plemons conceives it: 'attending to [the] world, in all its *bloody* mess' [128–29, emphases added]). 'The Operating Room' wants us to believe that its argument taps into ideas which lie outside of the domain of 'theory': in particular, that vulnerable flesh constitutes a basic structure of the world, and that surgery can reveal it to us. But these ideas, as I will now show, are in fact ideological in nature, and as such they are saturated by desire. They belong to Plemons' imagination of meaning as a product of literal *exposition*, a process that he allegorizes through his narration of facial feminization surgery as a form of discovery.

Plemons begins his story of a woman named Rosalind's operation by establishing his character as a naïve initiate in the ways of the clinic. The second of his diaristic fragments uses a series of questions to signal the anxiety-inducing strangeness of the operating room: '*What if I faint? Or vomit? What if I have to use the bathroom?*' (115) The OR, such questions imply, is a place about which Plemons knows frighteningly little. He enters it, accordingly, in a spirit of humiliated ignorance: '*I saw the loafers on [the surgeon's] feet and felt like an idiot in my running shoes*' (115); '*He quickly folded the bottom rim of his cap upward before tying the white paper straps behind his head. I fumbled to do the same.*' (116) These sentences may be accurate reflections of Plemons' experience of observing facial feminization surgery for the first time, but they also have a clear narrative purpose: they cue the reader to a burgeoning drama of secrecy and exposure, one in which the unfussy authority of the clinic's overseers will guide Plemons to new knowledge. They belong to the genre of what James Clifford has called 'fables of rapport': the 'approved *topoi*' through which ethnographers 'narrate the attainment of full participant-observer status' in their 'portrayal of the research process' (40). 'These fables', Clifford explains, 'normally portray the ethnographer's early ignorance, misunderstanding, lack of contact—frequently a sort of childlike status within the culture.' (40) Plemons uses the fable of rapport in just this way: his awkward imitation of the surgeon's practised movements evokes the mimicry by which children learn from adults. Paternal authority is signified in his fable not only by the surgeon, whose sartorial efficiency Plemons feels silently chastised by, but also by the brusque anaesthesiologist, who in another fragment bombards Plemons with instructions while '*I stood near the wall and tried to stay out of the way*' (117).

'In the *Bildungsgeschichte* of the ethnography these states of innocence or confusion are replaced by adult, confident, disabused knowledge.' (Clifford 40) It is in his representations of the procedures employed upon Rosalind's face that Plemons most clearly codes his observation of surgery as a journey toward insight:

the operation began. Incisions started above each ear and met at the center of Rosalind's head, just behind her hairline. Her forehead skin—from hairline to orbits (eye sockets)—was folded down over her eyes like a blindfold. The raw underside of her downturned skin was spotted with the blooming red of severed blood vessels. What she called her "Neanderthal brow" was revealed now not as an effect of bone but as bone itself. So much smooth, white bone. (120)

The language of this passage implies a strong distinction between the illusory surface of the patient's body (skin) and the reality underneath it (bone). (*The tissue of skin and scalp . . . looked fake,*' Plemons observes later in Rosalind's operation, '*like a latex Halloween mask wrapped around hard bone*' [124]). In this paradigm, appearances such as that of the '*Neanderthal brow*' are construed as mediated expressions of ossuary matter: delving beneath the skin allows us to perceive the physical substance whose signs the surface only partially transmits. It is by folding back this screen that surgery enables us to connect linguistic signs with their material referents: '*What she called her "Neanderthal brow" was revealed now not as an effect of bone but as bone itself.*' The profundity of this semiotic procedure acquires from the lyrical turn of Plemons' writing an aura of the sublime: grammar itself fails before the unveiling of '*[s]o much smooth, white bone.*'

And beneath the bone, there is the brain: an object that, though much less prominent than the skull, contributes no less to the signification of reality produced by FFS in Plemons' text. Rosalind's brain, indeed, never actually becomes visible to Plemons, but its potential exposure sparks a consequential moment of tension. '*The frontal sinus was revealed. Frontal sinuses . . . are usually empty, but sometimes brain matter can protrude into them. Rosalind's had filled with blood, making it hard to see what was inside. "Is that brain or sinus?" [the surgeon] asked no one in particular. "Not sure. Let's go slow."*' (121) Plemons shifts back into theoretical discourse at this moment, leaving Rosalind's brain at the tantalizing threshold of visibility. When we return to the operation, the suspense is abruptly resolved: '*Fortunately for all there was no brain matter in Rosalind's frontal sinus.*' (122) Brief as it is, the drama of Rosalind's brain is highly meaningful, because it responds to one central question of Plemons' theoretical discussion: 'the relation of the body to the variously conceived mind, *brain*, self, or psyche' (119, emphasis added). Like that issue, Rosalind's brain is puzzling: the ghostly '*no one*' to whom the surgeon addresses his question heightens the air of mystery attaching to the exposed sinus. At the same time, the surgeon's rhetorical question stages him as a subject of knowledge: he marks himself the authority from whom all information can be expected to derive within the clinic. As elsewhere in 'The Operating Room', the

purpose of this resonant scene appears to be to provide a ‘concrete’ rejoinder to the ‘abstract’ speculations of theory. By substituting for the question of the brain’s relations to the body and self that of its relation to the frontal sinus, surgery returns the cerebral to the realm of purely empirical inquiry.

Through his meticulous descriptions of the procedures involved in FFS, Plemons presents surgery in contrast to theory as a potent method of exposition. The way that flesh is reconstructed there—‘Rosalind’s skin, bones, and cartilage would be *pushed, pulled, burred, sawed, cut, cracked, tucked, and sutured*’ (118, emphasis added)—provides a material correlate to the theoretical work that Plemons also perceives to unfold in the OR, ‘a place whose material dynamics *pushed and pulled* at conceptual frameworks of embodiment and selfhood that lay at the heart of trans- body projects.’ (114, emphasis added). *The Look of a Woman* thus employs the same narrative convention that Aizura identified in trans autobiography, where ‘[t]he body serves as the site in which truths are (literally) manifested through the technologies of GRS.’ In Plemons’ work this device is transferred from the sphere of individual life to that of theory: what ‘The Operating Room’ claims to manifest is not the truth of any particular body but the truth of embodiment itself.

The rhetorical effectiveness of that manoeuvre may be understood as a product of the ideology of perception that Michel Foucault has described as characteristic of modern medicine. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault argues that a decisive and lasting change in the way that medical discourse is structured occurred at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when ‘doctors described what for centuries had remained below the threshold of the visible and the expressible’ (xiii). The nature of this development, Foucault contends, has been completely misunderstood. ‘Clinical experience,’ he writes, ‘was soon taken as a simple, unconceptualized confrontation of a gaze and a face, or a glance and a silent body; a sort of contact prior to all discourse, free of the burdens of language’ (xvi). But modern clinical practice, as Foucault insists, depends upon its own specific and historically contingent discourse:

The clinic—constantly praised for its empiricism, the modesty of its attention, and the care with which it silently lets things surface to the observing gaze without disturbing them with discourse—owes its real importance to the fact that it is a reorganization in depth, not only of medical discourse, but of the very possibility of a discourse about disease. The *restraint* of clinical discourse (its rejection of theory, its abandonment of systems, its lack of a philosophy; all so proudly proclaimed by doctors) reflects the non-verbal conditions on the basis of which it can speak: the common structure that carves up and articulates what is seen and what is said.
(xxi)

Foucault’s critique of conventional attitudes to medicine illuminates *The Look of a Woman*’s characteristic gestures. When he laments the ‘slipper[iness]’ of philosophical concepts, or locates the source of Rosalind’s masculine appearance in her ‘*smooth, white bone*’, Plemons perceptibly aspires towards the

illusory ‘modesty’ of clinical discourse. At these moments, he wishes us to see signifier and signified united in the tissue exposed by surgery; by juxtaposing minutely detailed realist description with highly abstract theoretical discussion throughout ‘The Operating Room’, he suggests that the former somehow adheres more closely to a world beyond discourse. His notes on Rosalind’s surgery, we are to imagine, are scattered across the chapter like the ‘[b]one particles’ that ‘flew off the burr and caught in the folds of my scrubs as I leaned in’ (121): they present themselves as shards of reality lodged in theory’s hygienic mantle.⁴⁶

The Same Passive Pulp: Inside the Prince

Plemons concludes ‘The Operating Room’ by expressing his respect for the surgeon whose work he observed, Dr. Douglas Ousterhout. ‘The man was incredibly skilled at his job’, Plemons writes; ‘I’ve always been taken with skilled craftsmanship (as I peck away at my computer keyboard and dream of a life of carpentry).’ (133–34) As this moment indicates, Plemons’ investment in the revelatory power of surgery is reinforced by his envy of the surgeon. There is a note of bathos in the contrast he poses between ‘peck[ing] away’ at a keyboard, an activity that seems frivolous and virtual, and ‘carpentry’, a practice that is at once thoroughly material and semiotically productive. Like the writing I have already discussed, the passage suggests that Plemons wishes to divest his text of its merely representational status by emulating the surgeon’s technical brilliance. But it also introduces another dynamic to the imagination of violence that I analysed in the previous section. By highlighting Dr Ousterhout’s attractive qualities, it makes available to interpretation the surgeon’s role as a character in the drama of secrecy and exposure that Plemons presents as facial feminization surgery.

It is in some ways a surprise that Plemons should end ‘The Operating Room’ with a declaration of unqualified esteem for Dr Ousterhout. Plemons describes his attitude to Ousterhout before the observation as one of ‘guarded skepticism’, and *The Look of a Woman* includes plenty of reasonable expressions of hostility towards him. These expressions occur mainly in the book’s fourth chapter, in which Plemons interviews defenders and critics of Ousterhout’s practice. For the critics, as Plemons

⁴⁶ Remarkably, Plemons himself at one point states that the surgeon’s authority derives from the ideological structure that *The Birth of the Clinic* identifies. A footnote in *The Look of a Woman*’s second chapter reads: ‘Foucault has ascribed to the clinical gaze the power of creation: what is visible to the doctor is thereby made real. In Ousterhout’s telling, maleness is taken to be a pure fact of human difference, preexisting the political circumstances of trans-identities and more stable than the vicissitudes of aesthetic tastes. These other things change, but maleness does not. It is there in the bones. *And you can see it.*’ (162n8) It seems to me that Plemons’ drift into indirect speech at the end of this footnote oddly foreshadows his unironic adoption of clinical perspective in ‘The Operating Room’, where the assumption that bone is the most unimpeachably real thing is not subjected to an iota of suspicion. Plemons’ amnesia in ‘The Operating Room’ of his earlier reading of *The Birth of the Clinic* provides yet more evidence of the power to disrupt thought that the image of surgery possesses.

reports, ‘Ousterhout and other FFS surgeons were opportunists. They preyed on trans- women’s desire for social acceptance by promising a surgical fix to what they saw as the explicitly social problem of transphobia.’ (94) ‘Dr. O.? Oh, yeah. He’s great’, one of these critics scoffs; ‘Do you know what else he is? Rich!’ (94) Plemons does not dispute these interviewees’ characterizations of Ousterhout as a self-interested predator. But his conclusion to ‘The Operating Room’ presents a very different assessment of the surgeon’s motives. ‘He took great pride in doing what he thought was right for his patients,’ Plemons ends the chapter, ‘and he did it well.’ (134) At this moment of resolution in his text, Plemons identifies the surgeon as an ethically laudable figure, and recognizes his actions through the morally charged language of justice: ‘Ousterhout had delivered his promise’ (134).

Plemons’ high regard for Dr. Ousterhout tacitly affiliates him with the second group of women whom he interviews in chapter four, the grateful former patients he dubs Ousterhout’s ‘legions of fans’ (37). As that phrase suggests, there is a discreetly censorious quality to Plemons’ representation of these women, whose loyalty to the superstar surgeon—ostensibly in contrast to the ethnographer’s—seems exorbitant and irrational. ‘Many patients showered him with praise’ (37), Plemons writes, and ‘their gratitude to Ousterhout sometimes verged on adoration.’ (79). ‘When blogging about her consultation,’ Plemons reports in one instance, ‘a former patient named Kayla wrote, “Some people idolize sports heroes, I idolize Dr. O.”’ (79) The hyperbole of this statement is not registered by the ethnographer’s text, which records with equal seriousness another patient’s declaration ‘that Ousterhout was her “private god.”’ (79) Plemons seems to be troubled by what he somewhat condescendingly sees as these women’s naïve idolatry of Dr Ousterhout. Yet his own image of the powerful physician is in fact just as idealized as theirs, and if anything *less* self-conscious. The former patients’ theatrical confessions of their love for Ousterhout recognizably employ the ironic if not insincere voice of camp hero-worship. Plemons, on the other hand, appears to have been totally bewitched by Ousterhout’s performance of disinterested benevolence. For the former patients, Ousterhout is a celebrity: glamorous and distant. For the ethnographer, he is a saint who walks among us: brilliant but fallible, and dedicated to his cause. One recalls the life of another famous carpenter and healer.

Thus his observation of FFS marks a turning point in Plemons’ attitude to the surgeon. Before seeing him operate, Plemons viewed Ousterhout as a dangerously charismatic figure, one who manipulated his patients into a position of unthinking reverence. After the operation, contrariwise, Ousterhout seems to merit some kind of tribute: his creative faculties really do bear traces of the divine. This shift in Plemons’ attitude is crystallized in the understanding he develops of Ousterhout’s relation to the violence that his practice involves. Watching as the surgeon ‘ground down the undesirable bony prominences above Rosalind’s eyes’ (121)—‘the most aggressive and invasive of all procedures

involved in facial feminization surgery' (40)—an observer might be expected to intuit a sadistic impulse behind Ousterhout's bodily interventions. And this perspective does glancingly emerge earlier in the book, such as when a rival surgeon complains that '[g]uys like Ousterhout want to chop off your jaw' (62), or when Ousterhout himself declares, 'I'm more aggressive now than I was even two years ago' (35). Yet Plemons comes to understand the bloodiness of Ousterhout's practice as a sign not of aggressive instincts, but of his mastery of his craft. 'Surgeons cut, saw, press, and grind away at bones,' Plemons writes, 'using all of their stamina and sensory powers to enact a *well-controlled violence*' (132, emphasis added). With this evocative paradox, which also appears as 'the controlled brutality of reconstructive surgery' (114), Plemons manages at once to retain his gratifying emphasis on the gore of FFS while smoothing over its discreditable association with ruthless destructiveness. Assured of Ousterhout's control over his work, we may safely enjoy reading about what Plemons invites us to perceive as the surgeon's virtuous exercise of mechanical skill.⁴⁷

We can learn more about the structure of Plemons' idealization of Ousterhout by comparing it with another rapturous vision of masculine potency. Maggie Verver is most attracted to her husband when she sees him turning other women into helpless mounds of flesh: 'she never admired him so much, or so found him heart-breakingly handsome, clever, irresistible, in the very degree in which he had originally and fatally dawned upon her, as when she saw other women reduced to the same passive pulp that had then begun, once for all, to constitute *her* substance.' (146) The idea that Maggie's jealous love for Amerigo recalls the situation manifested in *The Look of a Woman* may appear fanciful; while Maggie's 'passive pulp' is clearly a metaphor for a state of quivering infatuation, the 'bloodied cartilage' of the operating room presents itself as nothing but the real thing. Yet there is in fact a considerable rapport between the two scenarios. Maggie, for her part, links Amerigo's heart-breaking handsomeness to a more violent expression of male dominance, 'going so far as to put it that, even should he some day get drunk and beat her, the spectacle of him with hated rivals would . . . bring her round.' (146) Like Ousterhout's to Plemons, Amerigo's appeal to Maggie is fuelled by the perception of a sublimated aggressiveness in him, a destructive force that he seems to have successfully converted into a much more socially acceptable form. In Plemons' text, meanwhile, the ostensibly sterile atmosphere of the surgical clinic is perfumed with an unmistakable hint of romance: '*He caressed her forearm, assuring her that everything would go well and that she would look beautiful. Deeply embarrassed by my presence in this unbearably intimate moment—the time and place of a fantasy Rosalind had nurtured for decades—I couldn't find a place to fix my eyes. I wanted neither to look at her nor to look away.*' (118) A whole chapter of *The Look of a Woman* is

⁴⁷ Readers of this chapter may well at this point recall my earlier discussion of 'ethical' criticism of *The Golden Bowl*. Like Maggie's admirers, Plemons seems to have misrecognized the messy pleasures of violent ideation as the wholesome satisfaction that is supposed to derive from the apprehension of moral excellence.

dedicated to what Plemons terms ‘restitutive intimacy’: the ‘[d]eeply affective connections—of gratitude, loyalty, vulnerability, and compassion—between patients, surgeons, and their staff [that] make it possible for FFS to do the work that it does.’ (72) Yet the ‘*unbearably intimate moment*’ that Plemons witnesses here evokes a particular form of closeness that his conceptual innovation does not address. When Ousterhout strokes Rosalind’s arm and tells her how beautiful she is, the operating room briefly glows with the warm light of the boudoir, and a latent resemblance between surgery and seduction becomes momentarily visible. Plemons, the excluded viewer of surgery’s primal scene, betrays through his embarrassment an unconscious belief that the surgeon and the patient are having sex.

The charming prince of *The Golden Bowl* and the expert physician of *The Look of a Woman* thus share the same familiar style of manly allure. Primal urges smoulder beneath their well-groomed exteriors; grateful women tremble at a touch from their powerful hands. An all but parodically iconic masculinity subtends their appearance of irresistible authority: these men, the texts say, really are men. When he explains the sexually dimorphic features of human skulls to clients in his consulting room, ‘Ousterhout’s own face stood in as the exemplar of male form’. (53) ‘In these instances’, Plemons notes, ‘Ousterhout’s face became the model by which he could establish points of common masculinity between his face and [a patient’s]’ (53).

A sobriety that might have consorted with failure sat in his handsome face, constructively regular and grave, yet at the same time oddly and, as might be, functionally almost radiant, with its dark blue eyes, its dark brown moustache and its expression no more sharply ‘foreign’ to an English view than to have caused it sometimes to be observed of him with a shallow felicity that he looked like a ‘refined’ Irishman. (James, *Golden* 28)

Not Ousterhout this time, but Amerigo, whose ‘radiant’ visage likewise serves as a beacon of ideal masculinity in the world that he occupies, remarkable precisely insofar as it fails to diverge from English norms of male facial structure. Here too, in the ‘dark’ features of what appears to be the face of ‘a “refined” Irishman’, a trace of the *galantuomo*’s primitive nature seems to be visible. And were the rugged sophistication of the Prince’s countenance insufficient proof of his alpha status, the opening of *The Golden Bowl* provides further evidence in his supremely conventional performance of the wistful fiancé. ‘Capture had crowned the pursuit’ (28): having exhausted by successfully courting her his interest in Maggie, the unhappy Prince spends his final moments of sexual liberty contemplating ‘possibilities in faces shaded, as they passed him on the pavement, by huge beribboned hats, or more delicately tinted still under the tense silk of parasols’ (27). There appears to be no doubt about the nature of these possibilities for a man like Amerigo, whose vigorous heterosexuality reliably

predominates in his bearing toward the fair sex. 'The Prince's notion of a recompense to women . . . was more or less to make love to them.' (40)

It's hard to believe that anyone actually is as exemplarily male as Ousterhout and the Prince seem to be, and the texts are not naive in this regard: they ridicule their caricatures of masculine power at the same time as they indicate their belief in them. Maggie and the Prince are joking when they talk about his rakish charm: it is 'one of those easy certitudes they could be merely gay about' (146). Perhaps the most bizarre feature of 'The Operating Room', meanwhile, is the series of morbid quips with which Ousterhout peppers Rosalind's operation. As he reshapes the bone around Rosalind's frontal sinus, 'Ousterhout jokingly told me, ". . . If the bone is not properly patched, each time you blow your nose you'd make a bubble [under the skin of the forehead]. . . . That's fun at the first cocktail party, but not the second.'" (123) "'This," Ousterhout explained,' as he detached Rosalind's scalp, 'is just like the Indians did it.' (124) And as he thought about how to reshape Rosalind's nose, Ousterhout explained to Plemons that he 'had to reduce her nose bridge. Otherwise she "would be left looking like Dick Tracy"'. (127) Like his ecstatically grateful patients, Ousterhout appears compelled to describe what he does in a facetious manner. (At the beginning of *The Look of a Woman*, Plemons recalls how Ousterhout illustrated his views on FFS with a comic strip: 'He slid the image across his desk with a wide grin on his face' [5]). It seems that the power with which Ousterhout and the Prince are imagined to be invested is so overwhelming that it requires frequent comic deflation if it is to remain attractive rather than become unbearable.

What is missing from the pictures that Maggie and Plemons present of these men are the real elements of their internal lives. Like the Prince, the Surgeon cuts a hollow figure: his authentic feelings are effectively concealed behind a mesh of butch posturing and belaboured comedy. Where Dr Ousterhout embraces the demonically masculine role that is assigned to him, however, Amerigo is more ambivalent about the part that Maggie induces him to play. 'What had happened was that . . . his fate had practically been sealed,' he reflects, as he half-heartedly cruises Bond Street, 'and . . . the moment had something of the grimness of a crunched key in the strongest lock that could be made' (28). The chamber in which the Prince feels he has been imprisoned, the first chapter of *The Golden Bowl* goes on to suggest, is his wife's quaintly Gothic and psychically empty idea of him:

'What was it else,' Maggie Verver . . . said, 'that made me originally think of you? It wasn't—as I should suppose you must have seen—what you call your unknown quantity, your particular self. It was the generations behind you, the follies and the crimes, the plunder and the waste—the wicked Pope, the monster most of all, whom so many of the volumes in your family library are all about.' (31–32)

It is as if, to vary the analogy, Maggie's disarmingly ingenuous view of the Prince as a hereditary tyrant has come to life, thrown him into a dungeon and usurped his identity. Amerigo feels that he is treated

by his wife and her father not as a man, but as the image of one: like ‘some old embossed coin, . . . he was never to be tried or tested’ (41). ‘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?’ (41) As he broods over his forthcoming role in the Verver family drama, the Prince seems to be wishing that his marriage need not entail a collective disregard among his new relations for the actual contents of his subjectivity.

Readers need not share Maggie’s studied indifference to the Prince’s psyche,⁴⁸ whose defining structures and developmental history James outlines in some detail. The novel’s first paragraph introduces that psyche as an essentially listless and insecure one. With a ‘predilection . . . sufficiently vague’ and an ‘imagination[] working at comparatively short range’, Amerigo ‘had strayed . . . into Bond Street’, where his ‘movements . . . betrayed no consistency of attention’ (28). ‘He was too restless . . . for any concentration’ (28): as the ‘unsteadied’ Prince ‘aimlessly wander[s]’ (28) the West End, his ‘undirected thought’ (27) reveals him to be the kind of person who struggles to orient himself when left to his own devices. Throughout the novel, James often returns to Amerigo’s gloomy and attractively enigmatic impatience. ‘He might at moments seem vague, seem absent, seem even bored’, as Maggie notices; ‘this when . . . he let his native gaiety go in outbreaks of song, or even of quite whimsical senseless sound, either expressive of intimate relaxation or else fantastically plaintive.’ (145) The Prince seems to get some comfort from the wild yodelling that at once bothers and entertains his wife, but there’s a sense as well that he’s using it to articulate feelings of distress that he cannot openly communicate. The frustration that those uncivilized yelps express is given a more sombre cast in one of Maggie’s last visions of her husband. The Prince has left his wife at Fawns in order, he says, to ‘arrang[e] books’ at home, but ‘[s]he saw him, in truth, less easily beguiled—saw him wander in the closed dusky rooms from place to place or else for long periods recline on deep sofas and stare before him through the smoke of ceaseless cigarettes.’ (539) I should emphasize here that the clarity and persuasiveness of Maggie’s image of the chainsmoking Prince does not reflect any real insight into his condition on her

⁴⁸ In practice, they often do. ‘The Prince is a barbarian’, Tessa Hadley, for instance, writes, ‘with all that has always implied both of essential limitation and especial sensuality and strength.’ (150) Unfavourably contrasting the Italian nobleman with James’s other continental aristocrats, whom she credits with the possession of minds, Hadley suggests that ‘[s]ensual Frenchmen in James are intellectually sensual . . . ; what the Prince has above all is personal, the charm of the person, of the body’ (152). Even readers who notice the platitudinous quality of Maggie’s idea of her husband, such as Hugh Stevens, remain able to write as if it were perfectly accurate. Stevens argues that ‘Maggie occupies with peculiar force the very clichés of femininity . . . , which she opposes to, in fact sees engendered by, a hackneyed image of masculinity [Amerigo]’ (49). Yet Stevens reproduces that hackneyed image in his focus on what he sees as the Prince’s ‘feudal machismo’ (58). See also Gabriel Pearson on ‘the solid block of inherited and assumed masculinity represented by the Prince.’ (311–12) Guy Davidson’s emphasis on the Prince’s ‘feminization’ is less conventional, but Davidson maintains the status quo in his interpretation of Amerigo as an ‘*object* of consumption’ (26, emphasis added) rather than as a subject.

part. Indeed, Maggie is nowhere more effectively bewildered by her husband's behaviour. 'He might have broken away, might easily have started to travel; he had a right—thought wonderful Maggie now—to so many more freedoms than he took!' (540) It is typical of Maggie's authoritarian habits that she should misrecognize Amerigo's ennui as a baffling disinclination to exploit prerogatives.

If his vulnerability to boredom signifies a disabling state of lack, then what is the Prince missing? One answer lies in the 'possibilities' that he looks for in 'faces shaded . . . by huge beribboned hats, or more delicately tinted still under the tense silk of parasols.' From what we know of Amerigo's early life, he didn't receive much parental and especially maternal attention. He appears to have been brought up mostly by 'the three or four ecclesiastics, his great-uncle the Cardinal above all, who had taken a hand and played a part in his education' (38). The assortment of relatives that he invites to his wedding—in opposition to his fiancée's wishes and as if to try to compensate for a historic deficit—speaks further of a family life distinguished by absent women.

He was to meet them at Charing Cross on the morrow: his younger brother, who had married before him, but whose wife, of Hebrew race, with a portion that had gilded the pill, was not in a condition to travel; his sister and her husband, the most anglicized of Milanesi, his maternal uncle, the most shelved of diplomatists, and his Roman cousin, Don Ottavio, the most *disponible* of ex-deputies and of relatives—a scant handful of the consanguineous who, in spite of Maggie's plea for hymeneal reserve, were to accompany him to the altar. (38)

The supervision of Amerigo's growth has been delegated to plenty of patriarchs—'ecclesiastics'; a 'diplomatist'; most pointedly, an 'ex-deput[y]'—but there is a dearth of female authority in the squad that has assembled to mark his passage to husbandhood. His sister, having married an 'anglicized . . . Milanes[e]', has distanced herself twice over from the Roman circle. His brother, meanwhile, has chosen to marry a woman whose heavily marked racial difference casts a shadow over the euphemism that is used to justify her failure to appear at the Prince's wedding. It's reasonable to assume, as Liesl Olson does, that the brother's wife is pregnant (671). But she may also be ill,⁴⁹ or excluded by design; it's convenient, to say the least, that a person so openly unloved by her spouse and his clan should happen not to be able to attend this intimate family event. In any case, the sister-in-law's absence repeats a motif that the Prince has been familiar with from a young age: *she* is not here.

The Prince's early experiences of separation from mother perceptibly structure his feelings about the women he is closest to as an adult. The way he talks with Maggie about American City, for example, betrays both a fear of abandonment and a countervailing thirst for female direction.

⁴⁹ The fantasy of the wealthy Jewish woman as a kind of majestic invalid is one that James openly indulges in his image of Fanny Assingham as a 'pampered Jewess'. (49) That both the Prince and his brother should choose to ally themselves with a figure of this type betrays the familial origins of the Prince's attitude to women.

‘Would it at all events be your idea,’ he had then just ruefully asked, ‘to send me there for safety?’

‘Well, we may have to come to it.’

‘I’ll go anywhere you want.’ (34)

The idea of banishment to the Midwest is unattractive to the Prince, but it is one that he wholeheartedly embraces on the condition that Maggie should do the banishing. As their talk continues, the Prince emphasizes his wish to remain close to Maggie and to be at her disposal.

‘There are things,’ she had gone on, ‘that father puts away—the bigger and more cumbrous of course, which he stores[.] . . . [T]he smaller pieces[] are the things we take out and arrange as we can, to make the hotels we stay at and the houses we hire a little less ugly.’ . . .

‘I like the class,’ he had laughed for this, ‘in which you place me! I shall be one of the little pieces that you unpack at the hotels . . .’ (35)

To be clear, the ‘class’ which Amerigo describes Maggie as placing him in is that of the Ververs’ possessions in general. It is his own insistence that associates him with the portable rather than the stored: ‘I shall be one of the little pieces’. For Amerigo, female superintendence as such is valuable, but it’s best when it keeps him close to the woman in charge. In spite of the transparency of his statements to this effect, I must emphasize again that Maggie preserves her severely limited awareness of the Prince’s desires even while he is describing them to her. When, in the same conversation, he asks Maggie whether she ‘recognize[s] that I don’t lie nor dissemble nor deceive’, ‘[t]he question made her, he remembered, stare an instant, her colour rising as if it had sounded to her still stranger than he had intended.’ (35) Maggie’s blush may mark the moment at which the Prince realizes that, though his wife is able to respond in some degree to his need for dependable female authority, she is unable to do so with the self-consciousness that would really gratify him. ‘He had perceived on the spot that any *serious* discussion of veracity, of loyalty, or rather of the want of them, practically took her unprepared, as if it were quite new to her.’ (35)

Luckily, there are other maternal surrogates to hand. ‘Youth and beauty made him scarcely turn, but the image of Mrs. Assingham made him presently stop a hansom. . . . She had *made* his marriage, quite as truly as his papal ancestor had made his family’. (39) In contrast to the troubling uncertainty surrounding his relationship with Maggie, the prospect of Fanny’s guidance is a source of relief to Amerigo: ‘to find her at home . . . would put something of a reason into his restlessness and thereby probably soothe it.’ (39) And it is precisely guidance that the Prince is looking for, as he tells Fanny:

I’m starting on the great voyage—across the unknown sea; my ship’s all rigged and appointed, the cargo’s stowed away and the company complete. But what seems the matter with me is that

I can't sail alone; my ship must be one of a pair, must have, in the waste of waters, a—what do you call it?—a consort. I don't ask you to stay on board with me, but I must keep your sail in sight for orientation. I don't in the least myself know, I assure you, the points of the compass.

But with a lead I can perfectly follow. You *must* be my lead. (44)

As with Maggie, Amerigo tries with Fanny at once to acknowledge the reality of separation from the maternal object and to resist it. He is a brave and grown-up person, he says, ready to leave home and have thrilling adventures all by himself on choppy seas. But he is also, as the boyishness of the fantasy confirms, still in need of adult supervision. Maggie's comparison of her faith in the Prince to every element of a successful voyage—'it's the best cabin and the main deck and the engine-room and the steward's pantry' (35–36) had seemed to Amerigo a piece of 'almost overdone drollery' (35). But his own nautical conceit is surprisingly earnest: with it, 'he gave his sincerity—for it *was* sincerity—fuller expression.' (44) Thus when Fanny fails, later in the novel, privately to endorse Amerigo's affair with Charlotte—putting a strain on 'that theory of their relation as attached pupil and kind instructress' (256)—the Prince sees her abstention as a kind of betrayal. 'He shrank from affixing a label to Mrs. Assingham's want of faith', but Amerigo now realizes that she does not '*really* entertain[] . . . the passion of personal loyalty' (257).

Charlotte is a more reliable instructress. The managerial nature of her appeal to Amerigo is most fully exhibited in the pair's preparations for their escape from Matcham, where they have been 'detained' by Lady Castledean after the departure of most of its guests because their hostess 'had a fancy for a quiet morning with Mr Blint, a sleek civil accomplished young man[,] . . . and the presence—which really meant the absence—of a couple of other friends, if they were happily chosen, would make everything all right.' (285) This scene opens with the Prince, as usual, at a loose end: 'he strolled on the terrace and smoked' (284). Uncharacteristically, however, Amerigo's enjoying not having anything to do: 'the half-hour . . . overflowed with the plenitude of its particular quality.' (284) It becomes clear in this scene that the Prince can be alone comfortably when he is confident that he can depend upon Charlotte's supervision: 'as he moved along the terrace . . . he looked up at all the windows that were open to the April morning and wondered which of them would represent his friend's room. It befell thus that his question was after no long time answered; he saw Charlotte appear above as if she had been called by the pausing of his feet on the flags.' (288) Amerigo experiences as a kind of magic Charlotte's ability to present herself to him exactly when he wants to see her. His somewhat contrived 'as if'—Charlotte has presumably been watching Amerigo or listening to his steps from within her room—casts as a divine manifestation Charlotte's attentiveness to his presence. She seems less to have simply moved to an aperture than to have materialized in the open air above Amerigo. As the passage continues, the Prince comes to feel like she can read his mind: 'wearing a hat and a jacket', she looks ready

not so much to join him . . . where he stood[] as to take with him some larger step altogether. The larger step had been since the evening before intensely in his own mind, though he hadn't fully thought out even yet the slightly difficult detail of it; but he had had no chance, such as he needed, to speak the definite word to her, and the face she now showed affected him thereby as a notice that she had wonderfully guessed it for herself. (288)

Charlotte is a particularly gifted telepath, one able not just to detect her lover's unspoken thought but also to solve the 'difficult detail' that mars it; 'they were conscious of the same necessity at the same moment', the Prince reflects, 'only it was she who as a general thing most clearly saw her way to it.' (288) Like the 'consort' that Amerigo seeks in Fanny, Charlotte is a kind of tutelary spirit, taking 'step[s]' with the Prince and showing him the 'way':

'Don't you see,' she asked, 'how I'm ready?'

He had taken it in, but there was always more and more of her. 'You mean you've arranged?'

'It's easy to arrange. My maid goes up with my things. You've only to speak to your man about yours, and they can go together.'

'You mean we can leave at once?'

She let him have it all. 'One of the carriages, about which I spoke, will already have come back for us. If your superstitions are on our side,' she smiled, 'so my arrangements are, and I'll back my support against yours.'

'Then you had thought,' he wondered, 'about Gloucester?'

. . . '[W]e shall be able easily to lunch there, and, with our luggage and our servants off our hands, we shall have at least three or four hours. We can wire,' she wound up, 'from there.'

. . . 'Then Lady Castledean?'

'Doesn't dream of our staying.'

. . . He could only keep his eyes on her. 'And have you made out the very train—?'

'The very one. Paddington—the 6.50 "in". That gives us oceans[.] . . .'

' . . . But the train for Gloucester?'

'A local one—11.22; with several stops, but doing it a good deal, I forget how much, within the hour. So that we've time. . . .'

He roused himself as from the mere momentary spell of her[.] . . . But he had also again questions and stops—all as for the mystery and the charm. 'You looked it up—without my having asked you?' (291–92)

The Prince adores being treated like a feckless swain by the knowing mistress he encourages Charlotte to play: he insists on performing amazed assent to every stage of the itinerary she has planned as eagerly as she dishes out her orders. For Amerigo, the overwhelming pleasure of the scene's climactic dialogue comes from one simple but delightful idea: *Charlotte has arranged*.

The Matcham scene also clarifies the difference between Maggie's attraction to the Prince's masculinity and the Prince's feelings about male authority. For Maggie, as I have indicated, Amerigo irresistibly embodies patriarchal power. But the Prince himself exhibits a more complex attitude to figures of phallic presence. At Matcham, these figures are the 'towers of three cathedrals, in different counties,' that he can see from the terrace (285): they are 'towers that distinguishably signalled.' (289) What the towers signal is the supportive but crucially marginal position of masculine authority in the Prince's psychic landscape; they recall in their number, distance, and religious association the 'three or four ecclesiastics' who educated him. As in a painting, the towers lend structure to the view from Matcham, but the grandeur that Amerigo admires in them is faded and frosty—the towers of 'the cold cathedrals' (287) 'gleam[] . . . like dim silver' (285)—and he seems particularly invested in the idea of their remoteness: 'his eyes rested, as they had already often done, on the brave darker wash of far-away water-colour that represented the most distant of the cathedral towns . . . , with its great church and its high accessibility' (289). Charlotte brings out Amerigo's appreciation for puissant yet unimposing manhood. Her suggestion that Gloucester Cathedral may house 'the tomb of some old king' thrills the Prince: 'We must see the old king', he gushes in response (290). Amerigo is fond of imperious masculinity, this scene indicates, but only when it is quaint, withdrawn, and lifeless. That he wouldn't mind assuming these conditions himself is evident from the coolness of his response when Maggie says to him, 'you shall not be buried, my dear, till you're dead. Unless indeed you call it burial to go to American City.' (35) 'Before I pronounce I should like to see my tomb' is the Prince's oddly cavalier reply (35). It seems that Amerigo can hold patriarchal structures in high regard only so long as he has a woman to show him round them. 'Any tomb would do for him', as the narrator remarks of Amerigo's unvarying enthusiasm for Charlotte's proposals (293).

Adopting the same procedure by which we have illuminated the Prince's psychic make-up, we may fruitfully agitate the veil that is disposed by Eric Plemons over Dr Ousterhout's mind. This veil's folds are most thickly bunched over the surgeon's feelings about transgender people. Despite his endlessly reiterated professional expertise, this is one area in which Dr Ousterhout's masterly intellect is seriously deficient: it often seems as if the surgeon has developed no imaginary relationship whatsoever to the idea or experience of being a trans woman. The off-colour jokes I've already quoted are one way in which Ousterhout avoids expressing a sincere attitude towards trans existence. More

explicitly, at the beginning of the book, Ousterhout insists at great length that he is essentially indifferent to trans people:

‘Before I started at Stanford,’ he explained, ‘I told them I didn’t want to work with the gender program. . . . I wasn’t interested in working with transsexual patients.’ . . .

Ousterhout’s request to avoid working with [the] GDP [Gender Dysphoria Program] patients was granted. . . . ‘I didn’t have any real reason not to like them,’ he explained of the GDP patients. ‘I think that like most people at the time, I just didn’t know anything about transsexuals, and I didn’t really want to know.’ (21–22)

Ousterhout definitely wants us to understand that his specialism in trans medicine does not reflect an interest in or affinity with trans individuals. Conveniently, in this narrative, he began practising FFS at the instigation of other people: a patient who wished to undergo the procedure, and the plastic surgeon who referred her to him. Plemons toes the line that Ousterhout has established when he narrates the momentous career change: ‘Ousterhout was intrigued by Candace’s problem and drawn to the technical challenge her case presented.’ (23) The surgeon saw nothing more in FFS, according to this account, than an opportunity to hone his practical abilities, and ‘the chance to do something new.’ (23)

Still, Ousterhout’s psychic life has not been entirely obliterated from Plemons’ text. There are three moments in particular at which the contours of his desire, cloaked as usual by avuncular swagger, become momentarily discernable. The first occurs as the surgeon describes the distinctive make-up of his clientele: ‘His FFS patients had remained overwhelmingly white and unusually resourced. They were fighter pilots, accomplished athletes, Hollywood players, and decorated military officers. Fourteen of them had been nominated for a Nobel Prize. “Find me another group of seventeen hundred people who you could say that about,” he bragged.’ (36) The professional success of his patients is clearly a source of pride to Ousterhout, but we may also detect another kind of pleasure in his contemplation of the star-studded demographic. It is as if his list of his patient’s occupations is tending towards one especially important one: his own, proficient plastic surgeons. The second revealing moment takes place as Ousterhout banters with his attractive assistant onstage at a conference on transgender medicine:

At the beginning of a presentation of his work, Ousterhout introduced Mira to the audience: ‘This is Mira. She’s been working with me for over twenty years. Can you believe it?’ To which Mira replied in what seemed like a joke they’d done a thousand times, ‘I *do* travel with a plastic surgeon.’ . . . Ousterhout added, ‘Yeah, she’s really an eighty-five-year-old guy! Doesn’t she look great?’ (83)

Plemons suggests that this exchange ‘leveraged [Mira] as a living testament of Ousterhout’s surgical ability’ (83), but I think that its effectiveness may have more to do with the way it presents the surgeon

himself. While his assistant is obviously not an older man, Ousterhout is. So when he makes the joke, it is his own body that Ousterhout is nominating to his audience as a potential object of FFS; his assistant is presented to his audience as an imaginary version of himself. (She is, as the pseudonym that Plemons has given her discloses, a mirror.) Ousterhout elaborates on this identificatory gesture in the third revealing moment, which occurs during Rosalind's operation. "Being inside someone's face is an incredibly intimate thing," Ousterhout said. "I would never let someone do that much work on my face" (118). Though it takes the form of a negation, this statement recognizably expresses a desire. There is no indication that anyone has invited Ousterhout to think about undergoing FFS; the thought appears to be completely his own. There is an inexpugnable sense of yearning in his description of the procedure as 'an incredibly intimate thing'. And there is a sign that he has compromised with—rather than wholly rejected—the desire evident in his remarks: he entertains the prospect of having some work done, just not 'that much'.

To recover Ousterhout's foreclosed desire to undergo FFS from the folds of Plemons' assiduously curated text requires a considerable amount of interpretive labour. The extent of that challenge reflects the care with which Plemons has attempted to efface every trace of the surgeon's subjectivity from his presentation in the text. When considered alongside Maggie's analogous effort to deny the Prince's psychic life any public existence, the structure of both Plemons' and Maggie's idealising projects becomes more clearly visible. In each case, a conceptually satisfying association of knowledge and violence is expressed as an envious identification with a man who seems to instantiate an archetype of virile potency. In order to preserve the availability of these men—the Surgeon and the Prince—as objects of identification, their admirers must evacuate them of their very interiority. It is as if the existence of any pre-existing desire on their part would interrupt the fantasy of violent authority that they have been conscripted to embody. This is a powerful rhetorical strategy, as Maggie's and Plemons' sympathetic treatment in the pertinent critical fields indicates. Its promise of a somatically immediate experience of truth, however, involves occlusions of its own: regarding the psychic lives not just of the men whom it idolizes, but those of the idolators as well. At the end of *The Golden Bowl's* first chapter, the Prince ruefully reflects that 'he was invested with attributes. He was taken seriously. Lost there in the white mist was the seriousness in *them* that made them so take him.' (41–42). To bring to light the authentic qualities of fictional characters and contemporary theorists alike, one may have to dispel the mists of fantasy in which they have cloaked themselves.

Conclusion: A Scene of Mixed Anxiety and Desire

This chapter has treated ideas about surgery and *The Golden Bowl*'s representation of violence as separate, mutually illuminating fields. Yet the two areas are not entirely distinct. While he waits with Charlotte for his daughter to arrive in Paris to tell them what she thinks about the idea of their marriage, Adam Verver momentarily imagines that the courtyard of their hotel belongs to a different kind of establishment:

He looked about in his small despair; he crossed the hotel court, which, overarched and glazed, muffled against loud sounds and guarded against crude sights, heated, gilded, draped, almost carpeted, with exotic trees in tubs, exotic ladies in chairs, the general exotic accent and presence suspended, as with wings folded or feebly fluttering, in the superior, the supreme, the inexorably enveloping Parisian medium, resembled some critical apartment of large capacity, some 'dental', medical, surgical waiting-room, a scene of mixed anxiety and desire, preparatory, for gathered barbarians, to the due amputation or extraction of excrescences and redundancies of barbarism. (196)

The courtyard looks like a waiting-room to Adam because he feels like he is about to undergo a gruesome but potentially beneficial operation. Many wishes and fears are condensed in his agonizingly protracted fantasy. Adam is relieved by the prospect of Maggie's arrival because it will remove the uncertainty that plagues his relationship with Charlotte: he feels 'a great gladness at the sight of the term of his ordeal; for it was the end of his seeming to agree that questions and doubts had a place.' (194) Consistent with his daughter's characteristic imagination of knowledge, Adam's idea that questions and doubts are a disturbance of space casts thought as a kind of intellectual body; questions and doubts are like tumours in that body, hideously alien to the flesh that hosts them. 'The more he had inwardly turned the matter over the more it had struck him that they had in truth only an ugliness.' (194) Adam looks forward to the excision of these outgrowths, but he is worried that Maggie's advent might lead as well to the removal of parts of himself to which he is more attached. Most obvious among these is Maggie herself, whose connection to Adam is bound to be disturbed by the marriage that she may encourage Charlotte to agree to. Surgery comes to Adam's mind when he contemplates this disturbance because he is used to thinking of his bond with his daughter as physical and organic: it is the 'single near tie' of which he is conscious, the 'one duty deepest-rooted in his life.' (117–18)

More importantly for my purposes, Adam's operation appears to have an intimate if enigmatic link to his sexual identity. Few body parts are predisposed to elicit the level of euphemistic indirection that Adam accords to his procedure, which imbues even an idea as mundane as dentistry with coded meaning. Amputation or extraction? Excrescence or redundancy? Since Adam is waiting to discover whether he will be permitted and expected to have sex with Charlotte or absolutely forbidden from doing so, one may suspect that the elusive object of Mr Verver's imaginary operation is his penis.

Buoyed by an unlooked-for awareness of his masculine charm—it is in this scene that a glance from Charlotte, ‘for what he fancied a dim shy fear in it, gave him perhaps the best moment of conviction that—as a man, so to speak—he properly pleased her’ (194)—Adam may be understood to be worrying that the crescendo of his desire for Charlotte is about to be prematurely and violently interrupted. The waiting room’s busy décor includes a garish mime of such a curtailment. First, there are the ‘exotic trees in tubs’, icons of upright and prepossessing manhood; then, an image of flaccid and fading vitality: ‘the . . . presence suspended, as with wings folded or feebly fluttering’. Echoes in the hotel courtyard of late-nineteenth-century discourse on circumcision lend further support to this penile interpretation of Adam’s fantasy. Controversy over that increasingly popular procedure in this period was animated by quasi-Darwinian arguments about the development of human societies.⁵⁰ For at least one advocate, as David Gollaher writes, ‘the foreskin was a primitive vestige of the evolutionary past’ (13); skeptics, meanwhile, described circumcision itself as ‘a relic of barbarous and semicivilized times’ (qtd. in Gollaher 17). James, paradoxically, echoes both these perspectives in his representation of Adam’s fantasy: his operation is one that is both performed among ‘gathered barbarians’ *and* relieves them of ‘redundancies of barbarism’.

Notwithstanding the considerable suggestiveness of castratory motifs in the hotel courtyard passage, I believe that the highly sexualized and gendered character of Adam’s metaphor derives mainly from its unlikely dalliance with a less intellectually prestigious theatre of surgical fantasy. That theatre, as the absence from Adam’s waiting room of men, exotic or otherwise, suggests, is the gynecologist’s clinic. Adam’s idea that ‘amputation’ and ‘extraction’ are the principal activities of an establishment apparently devoted to the treatment of women is a reflection of the sense, common in his culture, that the emergent discipline of gynecology was a profoundly and perhaps unconscionably messy business. As Ornella Moscucci shows, nineteenth-century gynecology was characterized by ‘increasing surgical interventionism’ (151), a trend that sparked explosive debates around oophorectomy in the 1890s (152–60). Like circumcision, the removal of ovaries was seen either as the pinnacle of civilization or its inversion, ‘vivisection of the noblest kind’ or an operation whose practitioners ‘touch hands with the aboriginal spayers of New Zealand’ (qtd. in Moscucci 144, 158). Unlike circumcision, however, female abdominal surgery catalysed anxious fantasies of heterosexual domination. ‘The sexual imagery which suffused gynaecological surgery took on disturbing connotations for feminists and anti-vivisectionists,’ as Moscucci writes; ‘oöphorectomists violated life and, by metaphorical association, they raped women, who were the quintessence of life.’ (159) Not all scholars have responded as coolly as Moscucci to the

⁵⁰ For an account of the rise of circumcision in America in the last third of the nineteenth century, ‘a period of dauntless surgical experimentation on the genitalia of both sexes’ (8), see Gollaher.

sensationalism of Victorian critiques of gynecological surgery. G. J. Barker-Benfield is perceptibly channelling their outrage and exhilaration when he declares that by the 1880s ‘gynecologists could apply their knives at will to the whole range of woman’s being, reduced as it was to sex.’ (111)

So much for the anxiety; the desire it is mixed with in Adam’s scene may be traced to the same theatre that James and his culture erected around women in surgery. A brief visit to *The Wings of the Dove* will be instructive here, because through the travails of its terminally and mysteriously ill heroine, who is said to have ‘folded her wonderful wings’ when she dies (473), James indicates that surgery’s many frissons partake in a consequentially gendered structure. Sir Luke Strett, Milly Theale’s ‘great surgeon’ (417), is never officially described as a gynecologist, but he does seem insistently if somewhat ineffably to be a doctor of women alone. At Milly’s party in Venice, Merton Densher looks on as ‘Kate and Mrs Lowder . . . introduced him to English ladies’ (370). Sir Luke tells Milly that his holidays are directed by his niece: ‘a young person who has quite the whip hand of me’ (308). And the mere idea that he could interact with another man seems incomprehensible to the doctor: when Milly tells him that her Venetian ‘entourage’ will include Densher, a baffled Sir Luke asks, ‘what, pray, . . . have I to do with him?’ (310) Sir Luke’s seemingly exclusive preoccupation with women indicates that he may be one of the ‘many men’ who, according to one of his nonfictional contemporaries, ‘started as gynaecologists [and] are now our most brilliant surgeons’ (Murphy 404). For there can be no doubt about the notoriety of his scalpel. ‘Ah fifty thousand knives!’ is Densher’s macabre exclamation when Kate Croy tells him that Milly ‘sees Sir Luke Strett’ (256). Milly herself perceives Sir Luke’s famous surgical expertise as at once a comfort and a danger. ‘Such kindness was wonderful with such dimness,’ she reflects, as she enjoys the ‘kind dim smile’ of his office; ‘but brightness—that even of sharp steel—was of course for the other side of the business, and it would all come in for her to one tune or another.’ (172) Like Maggie, Milly is interested in the bare blade and its gleam: she evinces both quiet excitement and faint apprehension at the prospect of its resolutive application to her body.⁵¹

More than just the ambivalent appeal of invasive surgery, what the figure of Sir Luke Strett projects most clearly into the waiting-room of Adam’s mind is the blatantly erotic subtext that may be expected to attend a relationship imagined in this culture between a woman and her doctor. And it is very much *her* doctor: demonstrating the possessiveness of a jealous lover, Milly thinks of Sir Luke as ‘her great man’ (181), ‘her smooth strong director’ (306). Her first appointment with ‘the right, the

⁵¹ In a move that will be familiar to readers of this chapter, Kate Croy in *The Wings of the Dove* identifies the elusive diagnosis of her friend’s illness with an extractable substance that is located in her body. When Milly emerges from her first consultation, during which ‘[t]hat young lady had of course awaited her in another room’, ‘[Kate] rose for her with such a face of sympathy as might have graced the vestibule of a dentist. “Is it out?” she seemed to ask as if it had been a question of a tooth.’ (165) It seems to me that some of the comedy of Kate’s dental metaphor comes from the rhyme of ‘tooth’ with ‘truth’.

special man' (161) would qualify as a meet-cute were it not for its all too nakedly sexual content. With 'but ten minutes to give her', Sir Luke arrives on the scene looking like an overcommitted yet nonetheless eager Casanova: 'He was presently to jump into his carriage, but he promptly made the point that he must see her again' (164). And Milly responds to Sir Luke's hyperactive gallantry as just the nervous ingénue that his presentation of their meeting as a dangerous liaison has invited her to be: 'perhaps what made her most stammer and pant was its thus queerly coming over her that she might find she had interested him even beyond her intention, find she was in fact launched in some current that would lose itself in the sea of science'. (164) The following sentence confirms quite unsubtly that the oceanic feeling to which Milly is cautiously looking forward is an orgasm. 'At the same time that she struggled, however, she also surrendered; there was a moment at which she almost dropped the form of stating, of explaining, and threw herself, without violence, only with a supreme pointless quaver that had turned, the next instant, to an intensity of interrogative stillness, upon his general good will.' (164) Unbearably excited by the foreplay of consultation—'much interrogation, auscultation, exploration' as James cryptically terms it later (174)—Milly feels compelled to induce the climax that she feels it is moving only too slowly towards. In her imagination of medical care, an accurate diagnosis and the intervention it demands would seem to be equivalent to an experience of sexual fulfilment.

It is something like Milly's configuration of knowledge, medical treatment, and sexuality that I think we may see reflected in Adam Verver's image of the waiting room. Picturing himself, on what he hopes will be the eve of his marriage, as a woman about to undergo a surgical procedure, Adam finds in the drama of feminine illness and cure an apt figure for his own experience of erotic anticipation. We may thus see Adam's peculiar insistence on his masculine identity in this passage—'his conviction that—as a man, so to speak—he properly pleased her'—as a compensatory disavowal of the female self that he reveals himself to be in his gynecological fantasy. (James is nowhere more cattish than when he narrates Adam's Regency playboy turn: 'Her extraordinarily fine eyes, *as it was his present theory that he had always thought them*, shone at him the more darkly' [94, emphasis added].) There seems, moreover, to be one woman in particular upon whose illness Adam's imagination of his own is modelled. That woman is Maggie's mother, who appears in *The Golden Bowl* only in connection with the honeymoon in Paris that Adam may be unconsciously restaging when he takes Charlotte to that city. The first Mrs Verver seems to have been chronically unwell, a 'frail fluttered creature' (129)—her 'wings folded or feebly fluttering'?—whose taste for haute couture Adam perceives in retrospect to have been an absurdly misplaced expression of her need for serious attention to her body. 'Her flutter—pale disconcerted ghost as she actually was, a broken white flower tied round, almost grotesquely for his present sense, with a huge satin "bow" of the Boulevard—her flutter had been mainly that of ribbons, frills and fine fabrics' (129). A satin bow could not fix his first wife's 'broken' body, Adam thinks here,

but perhaps a surgical intervention, the kind that he later imagines undergoing, could have. There is a distinctly self-accusatory tone to Adam's recollections of his wife: he seems to feel guilty for having seen to her material fancies rather than to her physical need. 'He could wince fairly still as he remembered the sense in which the poor girl's pressure had, under his fond encouragement indeed, been exerted in favour of purchase and curiosity.' (129) There is, furthermore, an intimation that the first Mrs Verver's condition, or its ersatz therapy by fashionable acquisitions—'innocent perversities' (129), 'depravities of decoration and ingenuity' (129–30)—prevented the pair from enjoying the kind of 'pressure' that a bridal tour may be expected to encourage. While he treats Charlotte in almost precisely the same way that he had treated his first wife on the earlier French adventure—buying her not a 'satin "bow"' but a 'feather boa', 'a wondrous product of Paris, purchased under his direct auspices' (199)⁵²—Adam seems in the hotel courtyard to be imagining through his own body a different fate for Maggie's mother, one in which she receives the painful but ultimately restorative operation that would have allowed her effectively to assume every responsibility appertaining to Mr Verver's spouse.

Adam Verver's barbarian operation offers an appropriate image with which to conclude this chapter because it adumbrates the origins of the two theoretical couplings of violence and knowledge that I have analysed within it: his daughter's, and that of contemporary trans theory. The image suggests that the Ververs' disavowals of the place of suffering in their mental ecologies—'both were full of the superstition of not "hurting"' (142), a wilful blindness that Adam exhibits when he feels his 'optimism [sharpened] by his surgical daydream (196)—come from the same occulted trauma: the premature death, never mentioned between them, of the first Mrs Verver. It appears that Adam, like his daughter, is able to experience in Charlotte's vicinity a dreadful foreboding of the kind of salvific evisceration that Maggie's mother decisively did not undergo. Anticipating 'amputation or extraction' while he paces the hotel courtyard in which he waits with Charlotte, Adam looks something like Maggie approaching Charlotte 'with her heart in her hands, . . . with the definite prevision, throbbing like the tick of a watch, of a doom impossibly sharp and hard'. That the first Mrs Verver appears not to have had the opportunity to suffer the useful pains that so preoccupy her survivors is a salutary reminder that the kind of fantasy that this chapter has explored may be formed in surgery's pointed absence as effectively as in its presence.

The other intellectual lineage that Adam's operation elucidates is that linking writing on SRS with the world of nineteenth-century gynecology. This link is most perceptible in the trappings of oriental mystique with which Adam furnishes his imaginary women's clinic, because the same trappings

⁵² Almost, but not quite, since the difference between a 'bow' and a 'boa' is more than just a letter: whereas the bow's binding function indicates that its wearer requires a physical aid to hold her together, the boa is merely draped over the supportive structure that its wearer by contrast embodies.

have been an important feature of some influential modern representations of SRS. As Jay Prosser explains, in many autobiographies by British and American writers who travelled to Casablanca to access SRS '[t]he East is mythicized as a place of magical transformation, even transcendence for the Western subject.' (99) Jan Morris, for instance, 'represents [Dr] Burou's clinic as a harem' (Prosser 100);⁵³ the same trope of exotic femininity 'muffled' and 'guarded' marks Adam Verver's fantasy of the waiting room. Such flagrant orientalism is rigorously censured in the contemporary academic field of trans discourse which *The Look of a Woman* represents in this chapter; yet, as I have argued, that zone continues to accommodate mythical tendencies of its own. A trace of the seraglio survives in trans theory's representation of the operating room as a place in which hidden mysteries are thrillingly revealed by powerful and darkly attractive men. Still, Adam's waiting room at least implies the possibility of other perspectives. While Mr Verver's pacing expresses considerable anxiety about the (to him) foreign space of the women's clinic, the 'exotic ladies in chairs' seem to be as untroubled by the clinic's activities as are the 'exotic trees in tubs'. Their impassive demeanours suggest comfortable familiarity with the procedures that are employed at their hotel.

⁵³ Georges Burou was a French gynecologist who performed vaginoplasties in Casablanca from the 1950s to the 1980s. Morris's visit to his 'harem' also features prominently in Sandy Stone's influential text 'The *Empire Strikes Back*: A Posttranssexual Manifesto' (151–152).

Epilogue: The Personal Quantity

In a passage of *The Golden Bowl* that I have already touched upon, Prince Amerigo and Maggie Verver exchange their views about Mr Verver's personality. Amerigo has called Maggie's father 'a *real galantuomo*' (29); Maggie's response, 'why shouldn't he be?', 'set the Prince to think' (29). 'The things, or many of them,' Amerigo reflects,

that had made Mr. Verver what he was seemed practically to bring a charge of waste against the other things that, with the other people known to the young man, had failed of such a result.

'Why his "form",' he returned, 'might have made one doubt.'

'Father's form?' She hadn't seen it. 'It strikes me he hasn't got any.'

'He hasn't got mine—he hasn't even got yours.'

'Thank you for "even"!' the girl had laughed at him.

'Oh yours, my dear, is tremendous. But your father has his own. I've made that out. So don't doubt it. It's where it has brought him out—that's the point.'

'It's his goodness that has brought him out,' our young woman had, at this, objected.

'Ah darling, goodness, I think, never brought any one out. Goodness, when it's real, precisely, rather keeps people *in*. . . . No, it's his *way*. It belongs to him.' (29–30)

The Prince's reference to Mr Verver's 'form' recalls Lambert Strether's metaphor of life's jelly-mould, in which 'one "takes" the form, as the great cook says'. Like Strether, Amerigo believes that we have each been shaped by particular circumstances—that there are 'things . . . that [have] made Mr. Verver what he [is]'—and that one's self is 'brought . . . out' or expressed by a distinctive '*way*' rather than by a generic quality like 'goodness'. Amerigo follows Strether as well in selecting a culinary image to illustrate his thoughts:

Such as I am—but you'll see for yourself. Say, however, I *am* a galantuomo—which I devoutly hope: I'm like a chicken, at best, chopped up and smothered in sauce; cooked down as a *crème de volaille*, with half the parts left out. Your father's the natural fowl running about the *bassecour*.

His feathers, his movements, his sounds—those are the parts that, with me, are left out. (30)

The meaning of Amerigo's curious simile only becomes clear later in the conversation, when he expresses to Maggie his conviction that she doesn't really know who he is:

'There are two parts of me'—yes, he had been moved to go on. 'One is made up of the history, the doings, the marriages, the crimes, the follies, the boundless *bêtises* of other people[.] . . . But there's another part, very much smaller doubtless, which, such as it is, represents my

single self, the unknown, unimportant—unimportant save to *you*—personal quantity. About this you've found out nothing.' (31)

This thesis has found in characters like Maggie and in certain queer theorists a tendency to imagine psychological inquiry as a form of aggression. The Prince expresses an alternative position: for him, it is the avoidance of information about other people that constitutes a kind of violence. For Amerigo, to have one's 'personal quantity' ignored is like being 'chopped up' and 'cooked down'. When he talks about his 'two parts', the Prince is resuming the train of thought that he had been pursuing when he compared Adam, 'the natural fowl', with the chicken soup of his own self. Mr Verver, the Prince feels, has been able to express himself completely to those around him: his 'form' has 'brought him out'. But 'half' of the Prince's own 'parts' have been 'left out' of his bride's understanding of him: his 'single self' has been discarded from the broth of his public persona.

James Baldwin once suggested that in each of his novels Henry James 'was describing a certain inability (like a frozen place somewhere) . . . to perceive the reality of others.' (Leeming 49) It is this inability, I think, that the Prince is addressing when he implores Maggie to investigate the parts of himself that she hasn't yet found out about. I have identified similarly incomplete states of knowledge in Rowland's confused idealization of Christina Light, and in many readers' responses to the incorrigible Basil Ransom. Despite its refreshing simplicity and casual profundity, however, Baldwin's remark has not been well assimilated by Henry James Studies. In an essay on Baldwin and James, Eric Savoy, one of the ambivalent psychologists I mentioned in my introduction, quotes Baldwin's 'frozen place' comment, and concludes: 'James Baldwin shares with Henry James the representational structures of the American failure to recognize otherness; and despite their diversity, they might be said to coincide in the rigour with which they insisted on the imperative of resistance and the legitimation of otherness.' ('Other(ed)' 344–45) Baldwin's remark, I wish to emphasize, is not about 'otherness': it is about *others*. 'Hyacinth, for example, in *The Princess* [*Casamassima*],' Baldwin goes on to explain, 'is never a real person to the Princess. He's an opportunity for her to discharge a certain kind of rage, a certain kind of anguish, a certain kind of bitterness about why she's become the Princess Casamassima who had been Christina Light.' (Leeming 49) Savoy's reading of Baldwin's comment, it seems to me, exemplifies precisely the kind of defensive ignorance—of intellectual inhibition, to use Klein's term—that Baldwin is identifying as the subject of James's novels. As well as, ironically, eliding the distinctions between Henry James and James Baldwin, Savoy's judgement substitutes for Baldwin's plural 'others'—compulsive ways of ignoring whose individual specificity it is the project of James's novels to observe—a homogenous mass of 'otherness'.

This thesis has tried to respond more faithfully to Baldwin's intuition: it has sought to understand the distinctive psychic structures that James's characters struggle to make visible to one

another. In so doing, it strains against a prevailing critical impulse to see in the consistency of James's style a resistance to the delineation of distinctive selves. In *The Great Tradition*, F. R. Leavis grumbled of the late novels that, 'while granting the author's right to stylize, we have to complain that his characters speak in a stylization that is too often intolerably like the author's own'. (170) Recent articulations of this idea have endowed it with more positive attributes. Most impressively, David Kurnick—a writer who has made important contributions to queer theory⁵⁴—has suggested in an article entitled 'What Does Jamesian Style Want?' that there are 'striking verbal similarities that hold across the whole cast of Jamesian characters' (215) in *The Wings of the Dove*, and that they express a 'performative universalism' (215) which works against 'the divisive structures of Jamesian plotting' (217). The intellectual politics of these two attitudes are equally clear: what for Leavis seemed like a totalitarian encroachment on individual freedoms appears to Kurnick to be a kind of aesthetic socialism. 'Jamesian style', Kurnick writes, 'harbors a radically collectivist ethical imagination only tangentially related to the differentiating moralism of his plots' (214), a 'utopian promise' that 'we might call . . . the promise of the redistribution of stylistic wealth' (219). Kurnick's essay has been widely endorsed in subsequent scholarship, with Talia Schaffer associating the 'collectivis[t], egalitarian' quality of the style he describes with 'the elements of a care community' she discerns in *The Wings of the Dove* (236), Stuart Burrows finding in *The Portrait of a Lady* the same speech patterns that Kurnick locates in the late style (207), and Elizabeth Alsop detecting a 'consensual impulse' (226) in 'the manifest and undifferentiated status of what would otherwise seem to qualify as highly idiosyncratic linguistic traits' (230) in *The Ambassadors*.

It seems to me that Kurnick's well-received argument participates in the same kind of covertly authoritarian fantasy of freedom that I described in the introduction to this thesis. The appeal of his claim derives, I think, from the idea that James, by imposing a uniform linguistic style upon his characters, has freed them from the burden of individuality; implicit in Kurnick's disdain for 'differentiating moralism' is a sense that every distinction—even the basic fact that, to recall Sedgwick, 'people are different from one another'—is an invidious one. Nonetheless, the idea that James's late novels establish a collectivism of style by erasing distinctions between characters not only depends upon an intuitively objectionable equation of sameness and community; it is also simply false. Only the Prince's speech in *The Golden Bowl* is so liberally peppered with French ('*crème de volaille*', '*bassecour*', '*bêtises*'), a language in which Maggie is not fluent. 'When I speak worse, you see, I speak French,' Amerigo has told her; Maggie 'had taken this, she let him know, as a reflexion on her own French, which she had always so dreamed of making good, of making better' (29). In *The Golden Bowl*, ideas about personal expression are closely linked to ideas about different languages. Maggie reveals her desire to remain

⁵⁴ See Kurnick 'Embarrassment', 'Erotics', 'Few', and 'Jane'.

ignorant about her husband's inner life by stating her resentment of the eloquence with which he chooses to articulate himself: 'Miss Verver had told him he spoke English too well' (29). The Prince, meanwhile, insists that 'it's when he talks American that [Adam Verver] is most alive[.] . . . He couldn't make one like him so much in any other language.' (30) I agree with Amerigo's assessment of Adam's colourful use of the vernacular: when Mr Verver says to his daughter, 'Mag, . . . I'll be blowed if I'm selfish' (516), we receive an insight into the disavowed egoism that is Adam's alone.

Amerigo's fondness for idiomatic forms reflects the spirit of my thesis, which has attempted to make visible and transformable queer theory's hostile and underdeveloped relations to psychoanalytic thought. Practices of attention such as Melanie Klein's come with their own esoteric metalanguages, to be sure. Yet, at their best, they remain alert to the meaningfulness of different styles. Klein's descriptions of people's inner lives, like James's, are never less than masterful; but they remain crucially invested, like the Prince, in allowing and indeed wanting individuals to express themselves. No one has the same dreams; it is her patient John's naturally childish voice as well as Klein's adult one that we hear when '[h]e answered about *poisson* that fried fish was very nice'. Rowland, Basil, Maggie, and the rest are not just vessels for the same familiar concepts and attitudes, though they do, as I have aimed to show in this thesis, share certain qualities that usefully reflect some of queer theory's own distinctive positions. They are fully-formed imaginary selves, with inner worlds and personal histories whose complexity, coherence, and uniqueness never need stop surprising us. In each of his novels, James presents the inability to perceive the reality of others as something for us to ponder and, as readers, to overcome. The lessons that his characters may hold for our theories of the self will only come further into the light as we cultivate our awareness of their subjective obstructions.

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