Undercover in the Underclasses: Dressing Down in Victorian Literature

Kirsten Ellinor Andersen
Cincinnati, OH

BA, Columbia University, 2008

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ABSTRACT

Undercover in the Underclasses: Dressing Down in Victorian Literature focuses on narratives in which characters embark on a perceived figurative "descent" into another class or race, through disguise or performance. Tracing the narrative device of "dressing down" back to its origins in the theater, this dissertation argues that performance shaped the Victorian understanding of racial difference and class stratification, and provided a way of bridging those divides. The chapters map the spaces in which these performances occur: moving outward from the home, to the city, and the empire.

Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, Wilkie Collins's *No Name*, and Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* are the central texts of the first chapter, which examines servant impersonation in the Victorian household. Written in the 1850s and 1860s, the decades in which the ideology of separate spheres was at its height, these novels dramatize current anxieties about shifting gender roles by portraying dangerous and even criminal women. Female servant impersonators are inherently "fallen woman" in terms of social class, but are often sexually fallen as well. Their disguised and fallen state associates servant impersonators with the duplicitous theatricality of the actress and the dangerous sexuality of the prostitute. The presence of such a deceitful figure in the fictional home was threatening, but also invited readers' sympathy for this simultaneous insider and outsider. Theatrical adaptations put such figures on the stage, further courting audience members' sympathy through the physical embodiment of the actress.

The second chapter examines texts that represent slumming in London's East End and Surrey Side: including James Greenwood's "A Night in a Workhouse," Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Man with the Twisted Lip," and Henry Mayhew's theatrical adaptations of *London Labour and the London Poor*. The Poor Law of 1834 distinguished between the "truly

deserving" poor versus the merely idle beggar; by contrast, slumming narratives present an alternate discourse in which performance promotes cross-class sympathy and facilitates interactions between different social classes. By contrast to the Poor Laws' valorization of authenticity, the slumming journalist and the "professional" beggar draw attention to the performative nature of social class, and *both* performers ask their audience to willingly suspend their disbelief, as if in the theater.

Chapter three addresses the performance of race and culture in boys' adventure fiction. Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* are preoccupied with the formation of British masculine identity. The elaborate playacting found in these novels prepares the boys to take their places as administrators of empire; however, the boys' Orientalized and feminized disguises reveal British imperial masculinity to be surprisingly flexible, creative, and playful—and open to experimenting with non-white and non-male roles.

This project contributes to the ongoing scholarly endeavor to recuperate the Victorian stage as an object of study, demonstrating that dramatic adaptations of novels can function as literary criticism in their own right. "Transmediation" is a more apt term to describe the transformation or translation between media than "adaptation," since it does not privilege one medium as original or superior. The Victorians happily consumed the same narratives in serialized, volume, or dramatic form. Characters likewise transcended their original medium. This dissertation explores the rich cross-pollination across printed, visual, and dramatic media, while unpacking the implications of transgressing the boundaries of class or race.

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INTRODUCTION: PRESTO!: CLOTHING AND CROSSINGS

The labyrinthine "depths" of the British metropolis and the far reaches of Empire shared a similar fascination for Victorian writers. In a sketch titled "A Street," Arthur Morrison describes the East End as well-known but simultaneously unknown: "The East End is a vast city, as famous in its way as any the hand of man has made. But who knows the East End?" (Keating 1). Like the blank map of Africa that fascinates Conrad's Marlow, the unknown territory of the East End called out to the intrepid middle-class explorer. One such explorer was American writer Jack London. At the outset of his slumming expedition, chronicled in *The People of the Abyss* (1903), London hops into a cab, and tells the driver, "Drive me down to the East End." The cabby, understandably confused, presses his customer for a more exact location ("Where, sir?" "But wot's the haddress, sir?"), but London responds impatiently, "To the East End, anywhere," as if it were an undifferentiated zone (London 18). For London's purposes, one part of the East End is as good as any other. Though sociologists like Charles Booth were busy mapping this urban wilderness, journalists and novelists often depicted the area in terms that evoked the exotic lands of the Empire. From William Booth's famous title *In Darkest England, and the Way Out*, which nods to Henry Stanley's imperial travelogue *In Darkest Africa*, to Marlow's well-known words in *Heart of Darkness* ("And this [London] also…has been one of the dark places of the earth"), to the Victorians' use of the epithet "street Arabs" to describe their own native-born English street urchins, the Victorians deployed metaphors drawn from the experience of Empire to articulate their anxieties about class, just as they used the Empire itself as a dumping ground for England's undesirables: convicts, orphans, single women, etc. At the same time, the entertainment industry was bringing members of other races and cultures into England as part of ethnological displays and exhibits, or other exotic spectacles. Concerned observers worried about

the future of such human "specimens"; one critic predicted glumly that the "Aztec Lilliputians," exotic performers in a London ethnological display, would "end their days" in the workhouse (Altick 286). The transplanted natives of other lands could easily become part of England's lower-classes. In fact, the "savages" of Empire and the more "home-grown" savages of the East End were often viewed as competitors for attention, charitable donations, and missionary activity. A satirical poem in *Punch* criticizes Londoners' fascination with the 1853 ethnological exhibit of Zulus at St. George's Gallery, Hyde Park Corner, contrasting it with their indifference to the plight of the "hordes of young savages" crowding "the back courts of St. Giles" (Altick 283). Charles Dickens's Mrs. Jellyby similarly neglects her own children, devoting all her energy to the savages of "Borioboola-Gha."

In their foundational work on the London "underworld," Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that the "lower" parts of the city were associated with the "lower" parts of the body, with their potential to produce both waste and pleasure, to arouse disgust or desire. The urge to visit the "lower" regions of one's city gives texts of slum exploration an erotic undercurrent. Scholars of cross-class or cross-cultural performance have used Stallybrass and White's theory to illuminate the conflicted impulses that motivate the desire to transgress the boundaries of class and race. Eric Lott, for example, famously describes the practice of blackface minstrelsy in the nineteenth century as a product of "love and theft." Minstrelsy mocks black culture, but simultaneously demonstrates a profound attraction to it. Seth Koven similarly analyzes the homoerotic attraction to lower-class male subcultures that motivates James Greenwood's sensational article "A Night in a Workhouse." These arguments are compelling; however, it is important to acknowledge that the popular upper- and middle-class practice of "slumming" had diverse practioners with varied motives. This precursor to the 20th century sociological concept

of “participant-observation” was often motivated by the pursuit of knowledge, or by the desire to experience the lives of the lower-classes first-hand—to feel their pains, wear their clothes, and eat their food—if only for a short time. Many fictional characters as well as real-life individuals were motivated by a genuine sense of philanthropy. In novels, upper-class characters frequently disguise themselves as servants as a means of gaining information as well as the ability to behave in a way that was socially unacceptable in their stratum of society. Disguise is often linked with detection; dressing down gives a character access to spaces and information which she may not be able to access in her *propria persona*.

In this dissertation, *Undercover in the Underclasses: Dressing Down in Victorian Literature*, I examine the related practices of cross-class disguise and cultural transvestism. I will discuss many of the varied motives I have outlined above, but my analysis focuses on the theatricality of this practice—its roots in the topsy-turvy role reversals of the pantomime, and its influence on Victorian theatrical culture, but also the ways in which performance was an essential part of the Victorian understanding of racial difference and class stratification. Through the chapters of this dissertation, the Victorian home, city, and empire resemble a series of stages on which scenes of sympathy for the social marginalized “other” are enacted. This sympathy is often partial, incomplete, or ultimately disavowed; however, in each instance, performing the other provides an opportunity to redefine the boundaries between self and other, and to reestablish the relationship between them, even if such opportunities are incompletely realized.

The origin of this project took shape as I was reading Victorian short stories, and noticed an intriguing pattern. In Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Man with the Twisted Lip” (1891), a man pretends to be a beggar, because he can earn more money panhandling in the streets than he can make in his respectable day job. W. S. Hayward’s “The Mysterious Countess” (1864)

features a female detective who disguises herself as a servant in order to infiltrate the household of a criminal. And in Rudyard Kipling's "Miss Youghal's Sais" (1888), a policeman in India disguises himself as a native servant in order to be near the woman he loves. In each of these stories, a character embarks upon a descent into the figurative "depths" of a class or culture imagined as lower than their own. And, crucially, each story features a detective or policeman—cross-class or cross-cultural disguise is often a central narrative device in detective fiction. I will analyze each of these short stories in more depth in the pages that follow.

In *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), Orwell employs *double entendre* when he becomes a *plongeur*—the French word means a dishwasher, but the literal meaning is a "diver, or a plunger." By becoming a *plongeur*, Orwell figuratively plunges into the depths of the working-class world. The imagery of the plunge persists in subsequent undercover journalism that explores lower-class life; journalist Barbara Ehrenreich opens her famous *Harpers* article "Nickel-and-Dimed" with the same image: "At the beginning of June 1998 I leave behind everything that normally soothes the ego and sustains the body…for a plunge into the low-wage workforce" (Ehrenreich 37). As Orwell, Ehrenreich, and others willfully venture into the lower echelons of the social hierarchy, each of them forfeits some sort of class privilege in the process. And yet this descent into a lower social position paradoxically gives each of these characters a newfound mobility, freedom, or access to a desired object—whether knowledge, money, or love.

Anne McClintock warns against conflating "different forms of mimicry such as passing and cross-dressing"; she writes that "critical distinctions are lost if these historically variant cultural practices are collapsed under the ahistorical sign of the same" (McClintock 65). While connecting the threads that tie these different cultural practices together, my dissertation is organized spatially, in order to respect the distinctions between these "different forms of

mimicry." My chapters map the spaces in which these disguises occur: moving outward from home, to metropolis, to globe. My first chapter examines servant impersonation within the domestic sphere, my second focuses on slumming in the East End of London, and my third chapter expands to cover cross-cultural masquerades in the far reaches of Empire.

At the outset, it will be useful to address two potential objections to my dissertation topic as I have formulated it above. The first is an objection to the phrase in my subtitle: dressing down. In an essay on Sir Richard Burton's adopted personae, Thomas F. McDow cautions against the idea that powerful Europeans are dressing "down" when they adopt the garb of other classes or races: "Criticism based on assumed hierarchies of passing 'up' or 'down' only reify British colonial understandings and structurally limit the initiative and agency of non-Europeans" (McDow 507). McDow makes a salutary point, and I certainly have no wish to reify British notions of class or racial superiority; however, texts written by Victorians necessarily reflect their prejudices and anxieties. The rhetoric of "descent" and "depths" is everywhere in these texts. Titles such as *Low Life Deeps*, or *People of the Abyss*, with their imagery of climbing or plunging downwards, are common during this period. In many ways, these texts are secular versions of the ancient *katabasis*[1] narrative: the descent into the underworld that occurs in *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad,* and is Christianized in Christ's "Harrowing of Hell," and Dante's *Inferno*. The texts I examine bring these ancient preoccupations into a Victorian context, while also reflecting nineteenth-century evolutionary theories about degeneration.

The second objection contests the notion that theatricality and disguise are always and necessarily subversive. McClintock argues that "Cross-dressing can…be mobilized for a variety of political purposes, not all of them subversive…that cross-dressing disrupts stable social

[1]From Ancient Greek: κατάβασις, from κατὰ "down" and βαίνω "go."

identities does not guarantee the subversion of gender, race or class power" (McClintock 67). Disguise in the texts I examine is often inflected with an excitement, even a libidinal charge, for the narrators and characters involved. I aim to reflect this excitement in my analysis, which is attentive to the ways such cross-dressing presents alternatives to Victorian notions of class hierarchy and racial superiority, but does not succumb to the tempting notion that this theatricality necessarily challenged Victorian social mores in any significant way.

One of the major topics my chapters will explore is the material and symbolic value of clothing as signifier of class or race, which was alternately depicted as bafflingly hard to read, or transparently legible. Servants' uniforms give them a threatening anonymity, while the costume of vagrants or natives in a colonial context is so specific and "realistic" to Victorian eyes that it is endowed with an almost magical ability to transform one's identity. Clothing and accessories are more significant markers of class and race in these texts than other such obvious characteristics as speech patterns, skin color, gesture, or body language. Jack London recounts in *The People of the Abyss* (1903) that he "was impressed by the difference in status effected by my clothes," when he ventured into the East End in second-hand clothing: "All servility vanished from the demeanour of the common people with whom I came in contact. Presto! in the twinkling of an eye, so to say, I had become one of them. My frayed and out-at-elbows jacket was the badge and advertisement of my class, which was their class." (London 25) Kipling uses strikingly similar language to London, in his contemporary novel *Kim* (1901): "It needs only to change his clothing, and in a twinkling he would be a low-caste Hindi boy" (*Kim* 154). This dissertation is motivated by my desire to understand what exactly happens during this sleight of hand "Presto!" moment—what is occluded and what is revealed in this moment of seemingly instantaneous transformation.

The twinkling in the reader's proverbial eye was perhaps the momentary blinking caused by the glare of the limelight, for the Victorian theater propagated the fantasy that other races were accessible through costume and a little makeup. Ethnological exhibits and shows were all the rage in mid-Victorian England, but theatrical managers often attempted short-cuts in their quest for "the real thing." For instance, when circus proprietor George Sanger sought to capitalize on the trend for exhibiting "red Indians," in 1856, he looked for exotic specimens closer to home, in the "dreadful slums" of Liverpool, "where in half an hour I engaged eight wild men and two savage women" (Sanger 195).[2] According to Sanger, it took no more than costume and makeup to transform these "savage" Liverpudlians into American Indians: "A little red ochre for skin tint, some long, snaky black hair, feathers, skins, and beads did the trick properly, and I had as savage a lot of Ojibbeways to look at as ever took a scalp" (Sanger 196). Sanger's fraud illustrates the connection between class and race in the Victorian imagination, "a resemblance that heavily informed representations of both on the theatrical stage," according to Tiziana Morosetti (Morosetti 3).

The quasi-magical transformative powers of costume can be seen in Victorian theatrical productions of *Othello*, that most famous blackface role for white actors. In the Victorian period, critics argued that Othello's otherness was best signified by costume, rather than the darkness of his skin. An article in *Once a Week* on "Othello's Costume" (Sept. 8, 1866) summarizes the debate over the Moor's garments, and begins by providing three descriptions of the costume worn by David Garrick when he played the role. Oddly, the three witnesses give completely

[2] The craze for exhibiting Indians, and Ojibwes in particular, was started by American painter George Catlin, who exhibited his paintings of Native Americans and his collection of American Indian artifacts across Europe. In 1839, he toured with a "Wild West" show of his own devising, which wowed crowds in London, Paris, and Brussels, and was exhibited to Queen Victoria in 1843. Bruce Watson explains that Catlin used both genuine Ojibwes and actors: "He hired local actors to whoop in feathers and war paint and pose in *tableaux vivants*. In time he was joined by several groups of Indians (21 Ojibwe and 14 Iowa) who were touring Europe with promoters" (Watson n.p.). Two of the Ojibwe eventually died during the tour, and the rest returned to the North American plains.

different accounts. John Forster writes that he wore "a regimental suit of King George the Second's body-guard with a flowing Ramilies wig," which his eighteenth-century audience would have recognized as the contemporary British military uniform. However, Arthur Murphy, a biographer of Garrick, recorded that he wore Venetian dress, "in order to assist his figure," and make himself appear taller. (Presumably Venetian dress involves wearing heels.) Yet a third account differs from both of these, and insists that Garrick wore a "Moorish dress," which this writer deems absurd: why would a Venetian general wear Moorish dress? These three accounts represent the three typical ways to dress Othello: contemporary dress, Venetian attire, and Moorish costume. But the debate is not merely aesthetic; it also reflects Victorian discomfort over the legibility of race and culture. How can you distinguish Othello as Othello, especially if he is played by a white man? Should you distinguish an Othello by the darkness of his skin, or by the distinctiveness of his costume?

Perhaps the author of "Othello's Costume" places such emphasis on the Moor's costume, because the questions surrounding Othello's skin color were so fraught. Until 1833, when black actor Ira Aldridge debuted in the part, Othello was exclusively played by white actors in blackface, but the precise amount and hue of the pigment varied. Blackening the Moor's face too much threatened to turn him into a comic character, rather than a tragic one, by invoking the contemporaneous figure of the blackface minstrel. Greasepaint also has the unfortunate tendency, our author reminds us, of smearing one's costume or even smudging other actors:

> The lamp-black Othellos were, therefore, not wholly without warrant for their jetty hue, in spite of its many disadvantages: particularly in coming off inconveniently and being transferrable from hand to hand; oftentimes they were seen to touch nothing they did not soil; let it be Desdemona's dress or even her

> cheek, or the handkerchief with which, in moments of forgetfulness, in the whirlwind of their passion they dabbed their brows. ("Othello's Costume" 274)

If Othello is playing his role with proper emotional force, his color will stain Desdemona. The symbolic resonance of this passage is remarkable. Othello's race is depicted as a visibly communicable stain. His blackness will leave a mark on anything it comes in contact with, especially if that surface is white—Desdemona's cheek, or the tell-tale handkerchief. The threat of interracial marriage and miscegenation is rendered uncomfortably visible.[3]

Because of these disadvantages, "paler Othellos have come into vogue" (Ibid).[4] The journalist for *Once a Week* points out that Mr. Fechter, playing a light-skinned Othello at the Princess's Theatre, "was content to make his Moor no darker than a gipsy," but he should "be commended for the artistic taste of his Eastern dress." "Indeed," the author remarks, "it is in his Eastern robes that the stage-figure of Othello is best known to us of the present day" (Ibid). For this author, sartorial markers distinguish Othello's otherness more reliably than his skin tone. Again, clothing on the stage had become a more accepted marker of difference than skin color.[5]

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[3] Another disadvantage of the dark pigment was that it made facial expression less legible to English audiences. The author of "Othello's Costume" feels that actors like David Garrick, who was "so accustomed to perform wonders by mere facial expression," are not well-suited to the part. Joyce Green MacDonald similarly points to Edmund Kean, who opted for a "tawny" instead of black Othello, because the black paint "obscured the play of the countenance" (qtd. MacDonald 242). MacDonald notes that "The physical impact of blackness was itself blamed for a kind of imperviousness to interpretation…. This mysterious and stubborn resistance of blackness to being read and fully understood by whites is a recurring trope in European discourse about Africa and Africans, from antiquity through the nineteenth century" (241-242).

[4] Brownface or blackface continued to be a tradition in productions of the opera *Otello* until well into the 21st century. The Metropolitan Opera company in New York only recently repudiated the practice, and discontinued the practice for its 2015 production of Verdi's operatic adaptation. *The New York Times* reported, "That leading opera houses have continued to use blackface into the early 21st century, long after minstrel shows and similar performances have been rejected as racist, may be more surprising to many people than that the practice is now being ended by the Met, after 124 years, for the new production of 'Otello' that will open its 2015-16 season on Monday, Sept. 21." (Cooper n.p.)

[5] Of course, there were critics who protested against the trend for "tawny" Othellos. George Henry Lewes objected to Fechter's depiction of the Moor as a "half-caste," arguing that the darkness of Othello's skin is an important

Clothes have a paradoxical function in these texts. Clothing functions as a sign of class or race that is easy to read, but the ability of clothing to alter its wearer's identity in the blink of an eye (Jack London's "Presto!" moment) makes it difficult to pinpoint someone's "true" inner identity. Othello's Moorish dresss identifies him more reliably than his skin color, but the transformative power of clothing enables frauds like George Sanger to deceive a trusting viewer, using a few feathers and beads. Because of this tension between signifier and signified, these texts are preoccupied with the distinction between deep and surface reading, even as slumming reveals the interdependence of surface and depth: the dive into the "depths" is enabled by a superficial change of clothes. While fascinated by the theatrical ability to don a mask and adopt a role, these texts also foreground the process of detection and the scene of unmasking the fraud. The magical transformation scene of the pantomime, with its attendant suspension of disbelief, coexists with a hermeneutics of suspicion, and a drive to unmask the imposter. To demonstrate the distinction between deep and surface reading, it will be useful to examine two fictional readers.

Figure 1: "Monmouth Street," J. Cooke, printmaker (1789), Lewis Walpole Library Digital Collection: Yale University

element of Shakespeare's plot: "Othello is black—the very tragedy lies there: the whole force of the contrast, the whole pathos and extenuation of his doubts of Desdemona, depend on this blackness" (Lewes 128).

The year is 1836; the place, London. Imagine that Charles Dickens's and Thomas Carlyle's famous narrators, Boz and Professor Teufelsdröckh, bump into each other in the street. Dickens's *Sketches by Boz* and Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* were published contemporaneously, and Boz and Teufelsdröckh both spend time in London's Monmouth Street, a thoroughfare known since the eighteenth century as a marketplace for second-hand clothes. In John Gay's 1716 poem "Trivia: or, the Art of Walking in London," each street offers a different kind of goods: "Thames-street gives Cheeses; Covent-garden Fruits; / Moor-fields old Books; and Monmouth-street old Suits." A 1789 cartoon depicts a salesman in Monmouth Street trying to convince a customer to buy a coat (Figure 1). Instead of "being fitted" for a coat, the man is trying to fit into a coat that is too small for him. The salesman insists that the coat "was made for a Gentleman, a man of Fashion, I assure you," and that it is better to have a coat "a little tightish" than to have it "hang like a hop-sack."

Like this salesman, Boz takes an interest in the previous owners of used clothes, and enjoys guessing what kind of person wore them. Boz views clothes, even when divorced from their previous owners, as legible signs that the astute reader can piece together into a narrative. "We love to walk among these extensive groves of the illustrious dead," says Boz, "and to indulge in the speculations to which they give rise... endeavoring, from the shape and fashion of the garment itself, to bring its former owner before our mind's eye" (*Sketches by Boz* 78). But Boz takes his "speculations" one step further, and claims that he can actually "read" these garments like a book:

> We were occupied in this manner the other day...when our eyes happened to alight on a few suits of clothes ranged outside a shop window, which it immediately struck us, must at different periods have all belonged to, and been

> worn by, the same individual...The idea seemed a fantastic one, and we looked at the clothes again with a firm determination not to be easily led away. No, we were right; the more we looked, the more we were convinced of the accuracy of our previous impression. There was the man's whole life written as legibly on those clothes, as if we had his autobiography engrossed on parchment before us. (*Sketches by Boz* 78)

Here, Dickens draws on the old analogy between text and *text*ile; like a written autobiography, these clothes are legible. Boz proceeds to construct a narrative from this set of suits of varying sizes, the story of a "town boy" who goes to a modest day school. He is raised by a single mother, gets a job as an errand boy in an office, but falls into bad company, and ultimately becomes a ne'er-do-well who turns to crime to support his family, and ends up in prison. From the material fabric of these garments, and the signs of wear and tear on them, Boz weaves together a sort of Hogarthian "Rake's Progress," or perhaps, "Bill Sykes's Progress". But instead of acknowledging that he is fabricating a fiction, Boz defends the accuracy of his speculations, claiming truth status for his narrative.

We commonly associate this kind of truth claim, and this method of "reading" the external appearance of a character with the realist novel. In the opening pages of *Adam Bede*, George Eliot describes the body and clothes of the eponymous hero, giving the reader clues about his character: Adam's "sleeve rolled up above the elbow," and his "light paper cap" indicate his occupation as a workman (*Adam Bede* 10). The reader of the realist novel rarely questions the veracity of the narrator's descriptions of characters. Only a very unsophisticated reader of Eliot would say, "Maybe Adam isn't *really* a skilled workman." The realist novel

establishes a metonymic relationship between the description of characters' exterior appearance and clothing, and their true character; clothing can therefore be considered a fairly reliable indicator of the occupation, class status, and even the moral character of the wearer.

Sherlock Holmes is probably the most famous example of a "reader" of clothing and accessories as metonymic links to their owner. Watson compares Holmes's powers of deduction to the process of reading, saying to Holmes, "I have heard you say that it is difficult for a man to have any object in daily use without leaving the impress of his individuality upon it in such a way that a trained observer might read it" (*Sign* 9). Holmes enjoys displaying his ability to extrapolate details about an owner's identity based on the marks of use on an object, as when he famously deduces the "untidy habits," squandered opportunities, and alcoholism of Watson's brother based on the traces of use he finds on his pocket watch (another Rake's Progress). Holmes is so confident in his reading abilities that he claims that "Deceit...was an impossibility in the case of one trained to observation and analysis" (*Study* 20). Disguise must also be an impossibility—in spite of the fact that Holmes frequently disguises himself and assumes that no one will suspect him. In short, Sherlock Holmes represents the metonymic mode at work in a world of total legibility, at least to a particularly astute reader, like himself. But Holmes would not be so successful in the world of *Sartor Resartus*.

Professor Teufelsdröckh, by contrast to Boz and Sherlock Holmes, is an idealist; instead of seeing discarded clothes as legible signs of their former owner's identity, Teufelsdröckh celebrates them as signs that signify everything and nothing: "That reverence which cannot act without obstruction and perversion when the Clothes are full, may have free course when they are empty. Even as, for Hindoo Worshippers, the Pagoda is not less sacred than the God; so do I too worship the hollow cloth Garment with equal fervour, as when it contained the Man; nay,

with more, for I now fear no deception, of myself or of others." (Carlyle 182) Whereas Sherlock Holmes claims that deceit is an impossibility, Teufelsdröckh knows that the relationship between character and clothing is often vexed and slippery, and that clothing frequently enables deception. Like words, clothes can be unreliable signifiers. Riffing on Samuel Johnson's maxim, Teufelsdröckh declares that "Language is called the Garment of Thought: however, it should rather be, Language is the Flesh-Garment, the Body, of Thought. I said that Imagination wove this Flesh-Garment; and does not she? Metaphors are her stuff…. Moreover, there are sham Metaphors, which overhanging that same Thought's-Body (best naked), and deceptively bedizening, or bolstering it out, may be called its false stuffings, superfluous show-cloaks (Putz-Mantel)" (Carlyle 57). Just as clothing can be used to disguise the body, language can be used to disguise thought. In *Sartor Resartus*, the relationship between character and clothes is a metaphorical association, where two dissimilar things are equated to each other, but as Carlyle points out, exterior signs always open up the possibility of a "Sham metaphor" or *Putzmantel* (Carlyle's coinage: this wonderful pseudo-Teutonic word means, "Show cloak," or disguise).[6]

Disguise occurs with higher frequency in sensation fiction (and related genres like detective fiction) than in the realist novel, because sensation fiction is more invested in the idea of secrets and mystery. Sensation fiction trains its readers to be suspicious of any information the narrative supplies about a character. Many female characters in sensation novels, like actresses,

[6] In my usage of the terms "metonymy" and "metaphor," I reverse the paradigm Elaine Freedgood outlines *in The Ideas in Things*: Freedgood refers to the "stability of metaphors" and the "unpredictability of metonyms" (Freedgood 7). In my reading of Dickens and Carlyle, metonymy is stable and metaphor is unpredictable. And yet, Freedgood writes that metonymy "tells us what we already know by habit and convention; it is not expected to generate the kind of startling, knowledge producing connections that metaphor promises" (Freedgood 12). This latter distinction is closer to what I am getting at when I use the terms, and I restrict my field of analysis to clothing, rather than the whole range of things that Freedgood analyzes. In Dickens, clothing is ultimately legible because convention and habit associate it with particular classes and types of people. For Carlyle, clothing can produce startling connections, but it can also deceive or dupe the viewer, just as a false or deceptive metaphor can narrow one's vision, foreclosing other possible significations.

are playing a role. The reader of sensation fiction is primed to be suspicious of any description of the physical appearance of a character. The astute reader of *Lady Audley's Secret* realizes that this lady might not be exactly what she appears to be, especially when Braddon's narrator informs us that "No one knew anything of her" (Braddon 47). The realist novel relies on the social legibility of character, but the sensation novel portrays the increasing anonymity of modern life and dramatizes the threat of deception, imposture, and disguise (think of Melmotte in Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*, or the Lammles in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*). Of course, sensation and realism mutually influence each other and are not completely distinct. Rosamond Vincy of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is also described as a consummate actress: "She was by nature an actress of parts that entered into her *physique*: she even acted her own character, and so well, that she did not know it to be precisely her own" (*Middlemarch* 117). Unlike Lady Audley, however, Rosamond is playing *herself*; she is an actress in a realist mode, rather than in a sensational or melodramatic mode. Here we see how the realist novel can incorporate sensational techniques, such as depicting female characters as dangerously sexualized actresses, while modifying them to fit a more realistic plot.

I have used Carlyle and Dickens to establish a contrast between two modes of reading clothing as a sign of character, but I see this relationship as a dialectic that exists in tension throughout the Victorian period, even within individual works of literature. The challenge for this project is to synthesize or hybridize the reading methods of Boz and Teufelsdröckh. Readers of slum narratives must be trained readers of the surface, who read clothing as if it were a book. But at the same time, we must be skeptical of the relationship between this surface and any perceived or apparent depths. We must suspend our disbelief during the "presto" moment of

disguise, and believe in the transformative power of clothing for "the twinkling of an eye," but also see this gesture for the elaborate con that it is.

By shuttling between prose genres in print and dramatic realizations of these texts, my project aims to create a balance between reading surface and depth. In the early stages of writing the dissertation, I frequently used the words "theatricality" and "performance" in a figurative sense, but my research led me to discover the literal foundation for those terms in the nineteenth century theater. My research for this project has given me the opportunity to explore rich and often unexplored archival materials—including theatrical promptbooks in the British Library and Houghton Library at Harvard, a typescript of a stage play in a Canadian archive, as well as the treasure trove of theatrical reviews in Victorian periodicals that are available online. These primary sources have driven my research, but my thinking has also been influenced by several recent monographs that focus on the theatricality of the novel, in particular by David Kurnick's *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel*. Many earlier studies, such as Emily Allen's *Theater Figures: The Production of the Nineteeenth-Century British Novel*, focus on "novelistic representations" of theater or "representations of individual theatrical characters" in the novel (Allen 8). By contrast, Kurnick argues that his "literalism is what sharply differentiates" his study from previous books on the theatricality of the novel; he writes about the plays that a handful of novelists wrote before they turned to novel writing, and he argues that the failure of their theatrical ventures shaped these authors' narrative innovations (Kurnick 6). Kurnick "demonstrates that the novel's interior spaces are lined with longing references to the public worlds they would seem to have left behind" (3). My methodology has been influenced by both

Allen and Kurnick;[7] I write about the representation of acting and actresses within the novel (such as Wilkie Collins's Magdalen Vanstone), as well as the ways in which prose genres incorporate techniques drawn from popular entertainments like the pantomime. But I also turn to the actual theater, examining theatrical adaptations of several of the novels I discuss. When I use the terms "theatrical" and "theatricality," I refer to the conventions of Victorian theater, and the long shadow of its influence. The idea of "performance" is also relevant to my research, but is a much more capacious term. Performance can occur on stage, but the term encompasses any action that is done with the intention to be seen or to produce an effect on an audience, or even a single spectator. James Greenwood's "A Night at the Workhouse" is theatrical when it depicts the influence of the Victorian pantomime and music hall on workhouse life; Greenwood's narrative is performative in the sense that Greenwood adopts a role that he hopes will fool his audience.

Nineteenth-century theater has long been maligned or neglected, though more recently, many scholars have been working to recuperate the study of the Victorian stage. Theatrical adaptations of Victorian novels are particularly neglected as they have the additional stigma of being derivative or unoriginal. This project aims to demonstrate that dramatic adaptations of novels can function as creative responses to the preferences of particular audiences, or as literary criticism in their own right. I prefer the term "transmediation" over "adaptation," though I use both terms. Transmediation signifies a transformation or translation between media, without privileging one medium as originary or superior. We think of ourselves as inhabiting a multimedia age because of digitization and social media; however, the Victorians were also

[7] Other monographs on the theatricality of the novel that have influenced my approach include Joseph Litvak's *Caught In the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel*, Elaine Hadley's *Melodramatic Tactics*, Neil Hultgren's *Melodramatic Imperial Writing*, and Nina Auerbach's *Private Theatricals*.

sophisticated and highly literate consumers of multiple forms of media, and could happily consume the same narrative in serialized, volume, or dramatic form. Characters, similarly, transcended their original medium; the Victorians might read James Greenwood's account of the Lambeth Workhouse pauper warden, Old Daddy, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, then go see Old Daddy perform himself at the Britannia Theatre in Hoxton, or purchase a carte-de-visite featuring his photograph. No medium existed in isolation, and there was a rich cross-pollination across printed, visual, and dramatic media. Crossing the borders of genre and medium helped these authors think through the implications of crossing the boundaries of class or race.

Because of the rich multimedia archive available to me, the chapters that follow are full of examples from multiple genres and media: photographs and illustrations, playbills, theater promptbooks and reviews, undercover journalism, sensation novels, detective fiction, and boys' adventure fiction. The idea of the "performance" of class or race connects this array of texts and objects. The chapters are organized by the spaces in which these performances occur. Moving from the smallest and most containted space to encompass a global scope: my first chapter examines servant impersonation in the Victorian home, my second chapter moves outward to look at slumming in London's East End, and my third chapter explores cross-cultural masquerades in the British Empire. Peformance highlights the resemblance between "savage" abroad, as well as the "savage" at home, but the closest savage may be the reflection in the mirror. The mask and the mirror are both flat surfaces; one hides, and one reflects. The disguise that claims to represent the other is both mirror and mask; it reveals as much as it conceals.

CHAPTER ONE: "IN CAP AND APRON": SERVANT IMPERSONATION IN VICTORIAN SENSATION FICTION AND THEATRICAL ADAPTATIONS

In his seminal study of the literary servant, Bruce Robbins laments the ahistorical sameness of the servant figure: "Much has changed between Homer and Virginia Woolf, but the literary servant has not undergone proportional changes; servants are the commonplaces of many times and places" (Robbins x). Robbins outlines the various archetypes into which literary servants typically fall: often a nondescript nonentity, sometimes a figure of comic relief. But all too often, the servant is a cipher, an empty space. Employers advertise for a "position to be filled," which can be filled by any number of similar, interchangeable characters. Visual images of servant maids similarly represent female servants as fungible commodities, rather than individuated persons. As interchangeable as the generic bars of soap they carry, a line of uniformed servant women in an 1898 advertisement (Figure 2) stretches vertiginously back to the image's vanishing point. The color of their hair or ribbons may vary, but otherwise, these women are completely identical.

But this commonness ultimately complicates Robbins's claim about the literary servant's ahistorical nature. In the 1850s and 1860s, the literary servant did undergo a change; in the novels of these decades, the servant was very often someone else in disguise. The interchangeability of servants led to the trend of servant impersonation in the literature of the mid-Victorian period. Sensation novels exploit the very "commonness" of the servant that Robbins points out, turning the servant into a threateningly anonymous and interchangeable figure who infiltrates the home and penetrates its secrets. The servant was a blank space onto which Victorian authors projected their preoccupations and anxieties. The threateningly anonymous figure of the servant allowed novelists to interrogate modes of reading, and ways

interpreting character in fiction, and allowed them to experiment with alternative ways of representing character. Rather than seeing interiority as the main goal of character description, these authors represent character as a theatrical performance designed to obfuscate or conceal the character's interiority. Novels that feature servant impersonation raise questions about character and interpretation. Is character performed or innate? How should one interpret character: whether literary character, moral character, or the character reference? Rather than give us firm answers to those questions, Victorian sensation novels imagine various possible answers and explore their ramifications.

Figure 2: Advertisement for Watson's Matchless Cleanser, 1898 (National Archives at Kew)

Servant impersonation illuminates the vexed relationship between gender and labor in the Victorian novel. Straddling the boundary that separates the public and private spheres, female servants present a challenge to the ideology of Victorian gender roles.[8] By playing the part of a servant, servant impersonators highlight the performative nature of domestic roles for women within the home. *Bleak House*, *No Name*, and *East Lynne*,

[8] The servant impersonators I examine in this chapter are all female; I have found male servant impersonation to be rare in the Victorian novel. There are several possible reasons for this discrepancy. Male servants had worn livery since the eighteenth century, whereas female servants' dress was only standardized near the beginning of the nineteenth century. Additionally, as I have stated above, female servants straddled the boundary between public and private spheres. As Karen Chase and Michael Levenson note, the lady's maid was the only servant whose rooms were in the upstairs or "family" half of the house, in Robert Kerr's model of the ideal house: "Placed

the three major texts I examine in this chapter, were written in the 1850s and 1860s, the decades in which the ideology of separate spheres was at its height. But it was also a time in which domestic roles were being hotly contested, and were beginning to change.[9] The laws regulating divorce, infant custody, and women's property were slowly, but surely, shifting in favor of women. But the 1860s also saw the peak in popularity of sensation fiction, which dramatized current anxieties about shifting gender roles by portraying dangerous and even criminal women. The servant impersonators I examine in this chapter fall outside the boundaries of conventional roles for women. Though these novels often end on a more conservative note, they nevertheless present alternate ways to organize the domestic space, and alternative modes of conceiving the relationship between character and performance. The servant is a position to be filled, but consequently raises various questions about reading, identity, and performance. These three topics—gender, genre, and character— structure my discussion of servant impersonation in *Bleak House*, *No Name*, and *East Lynne*.

But I will start with a brief example that illustrates these three major threads of my argument. Servant impersonators investigate the home, question gender roles, and reveal new ways of representing character that conform to new genres. Therefore, it is only fitting that one of the first female detectives in English literature goes undercover as a servant on her first case:

> I dressed myself one morning... and put on the simplest things I could find in my wardrobe, which was as extensive and as full of disguises as that of a costumier's

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in household limbo, Kerr's lady's maid experiences all the ambiguity of the domestic social order" (Chase and Levenson 166). The physical and emotional proximity of the lady's maid to the lady roused the jealousy and suspicion of other servants, in addition to breaching the boundary of privacy that separated household staff from the family.

[9] Mary Poovey discusses the complex and contradictory construction of gender roles at mid-century: "representations of gender constituted one of the sites on which ideological systems were simultaneously constructed and contested…representations of gender…were themselves contested images, the sites at which struggles for authority occurred, as well as the locus of assumptions used to underwrite the very authority that authorized these struggles" (Poovey 2). This unevenness of reinforcement resulted in a "genuinely oppositional voice" on gender issues (Poovey 4).

> shop. I wished to appear like a servant out of place. My idea was to present myself as a lady's-maid or under housekeeper (Hayward 23).

In 1864, more than twenty years before Sherlock Holmes made his entrance with his "wardrobe of disguises," the first female detectives appeared on the literary scene.[10] In W. S. Hayward's story "The Mysterious Countess," Mrs. Paschal, "one of the much-dreaded, but little-known people called Female Detectives," investigates a countess whose wealth is of dubious origin (Hayward 18). Mrs. Paschal decides that "the best and surest way of penetrating the veil of secrecy which surrounded the Countess of Vervaine would be to obtain a footing in her household, either as a domestic servant, or in some capacity such as would enable me to play the spy upon her actions, and watch all her movements with the greatest care and closeness" (Hayward 21). Mrs. Paschal is ostensibly examining this particular home, and this individual woman, but she uncovers the secrets of the Victorian home in general, and the performative nature of the roles for women within it.

The servant is ideally positioned to uncover those secrets. Simultaneously an insider and an outsider within the household; the servant in the nineteenth century was less frequently an intimate and trusted confidante of the family.[11] The increasing anonymity of modern life and ability to travel meant that servants left positions to find new ones with increasing frequency. According to Brian McCuskey, servants were also "much-dreaded" figures during the Victorian

[10] In his introduction to the British Library edition of Hayward's stories, Mike Ashley writes, "Within a few months of the publication of Andrew Forrester's *The Female Detective*, rival publisher, George Vickers released the anonymous *Revelations of a Lady Detective*" (Hayward 7).

[11] Mark Girouard describes how this shift in the definition of the family was reflected in the architectural construction of the nineteenth century house, which was divided into the family's living quarters and the servants' quarters, as opposed to the more capacious hall of the medieval dwelling. "Perhaps the most obvious and important change in country houses between 1400 and 1900 was that in 1400 they were designed for one community and in 1900 for two. In the Middle Ages (and indeed up till the early eighteenth century) when someone talked about his family he meant everyone living under his roof, including his servants; by the nineteenth century he meant his wife and children. The early type can be epitomized by the great hall, in which the whole household ate together with its guests, and the later by the green baize door, dividing the servants' wing from the very different world of the gentry." (Girouard 10)

period; they were often depicted as spies who conducted covert surveillance over their masters' actions: "Through servants' curiosity and gossip, the private affairs of the family become public knowledge: the master's business interests are disclosed, the mistress's confidences broadcast, the daughter's flirtations and son's debts exposed" (McCuskey 359-360). The secrets Victorian masters and mistresses were so keen to hide were usually mundane matters of sexual indiscretion or financial mismanagement. The Countess of Vervaine transgresses both sexual mores and the laws of property; Mrs. Paschal discovers that the countess cross-dresses as a man by night, and steals money from a nearby bank via subterranean tunnels.[12]

The story begins with the detective donning a disguise and assuming a role. Mrs. Paschal boasts that "I was well born and well educated, so that, like an accomplished actress, I could play my part in any drama in which I was instructed to take part," but as Mrs. Paschal discovers, the countess has experience as a professional actress: "She was on the stage when the notorious and imbecile nobleman made her his wife." (Hayward 19, 21) Mrs. Paschal plays the role of a servant in order to gain access to the countess's home, and the countess cross-dresses in order to conduct a bank robbery. The countess' male costume and "trips" to the bank parody the male role in the Victorian ideology of separate spheres, and Mrs. Paschal refers to the masked man using male pronouns even after she figures out that it is the countess in disguise—the disguise effects a change in gender.[13] The Countess plays the role of financial provider allotted to the male, just as easily as she played the feminine roles of wife and widow. She is a skilled actress

[12] This double disguise anticipates the plot of Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia" (*The Strand*, 1891), in which Sherlock Holmes disguises himself as a clergyman in order to gain access to the home of opera singer and adventuress Irene Adler, only to have her turn the tables on him and follow him home, cross-dressed as a man. In many ways, Mrs. Paschal is ahead of her time and decades ahead of her more famous late-century counterpart.

[13] As Karen Chase and Michael Levenson have shown, this ideology of separate spheres was reflected in the architecture of the mid-Victorian home. Architect Robert Kerr divided the ideal home into quadrants corresponding to divisions of gender and class: a vertical axis separated male from female halves, and a horizontal axis divided the upper-class family from its domestic staff. The Victorian house "becomes a concise geography of sexual relations" as well as "a scale model of the Victorian economy" (Chase and Levenson 163, 164).

whose disguises threaten to collapse the distinctions between gender roles. Mrs. Paschal does not mention the detail, but one wonders precisely how the Countess found the tunnel from her home to the bank vault; she must be a very canny exploiter of the permeable boundaries between public and private spheres.

According to one interpretation, the story represents the straightforward triumph of the industrious middle class over the corrupt and idle aristocracy. Mrs. Paschal and the countess are both widows, but one has experienced a fall in social class, and the other a rise. Mrs. Paschal's husband "died suddenly and left [her] badly off," whereas the countess somehow grows wealthier upon her widowhood (Hayward 18). Mrs. Paschal envies the countess's wealth and possessions, but she consoles herself with the thought of her moral uprightness and hard work: "I congratulated myself that I was not, like her, an object of suspicion and mistrust to the police, and that a female detective, like Nemesis, was not already upon my track" (Hayward 24). "The Mysterious Countess" appears to be a story about the triumph of the new professional woman—the female detective—over the more traditional sexually appealing woman who makes her money by seducing men.

The middle-class woman defeats the aristocrat, in the end, but the underlying message of the story is ultimately that New Woman are everywhere, even in the home, and that many traditional "Angels in the house" are consummate actresses performing a role. "The Mysterious Countess" is a story about progress in general, and progress for women in particular. As one of the first female detectives in English literature, Mrs. Paschal is as much a symbol of progress as the railway that helps her track down the countess. "There is to me," says Mrs. Paschal, "always something very exhilarating in the quickly rushing motion of a railway carriage. It is typical of progress, and raises my spirits in proportion to the speed at which we career along" (Hayward

45). It is fitting that the first female detective's first case should investigate a female criminal. And indeed, the scandal of the "Mysterious Countess" is that both detective and criminal are "New Women,"[14] and have much in common: both are widows, both are consummate actresses, and both are determined to make their money in some other way than by a second marriage. This servant impersonator investigates the domestic sphere, unveiling its secrets, and she finds that these secrets depend on the successful performance of women's gender roles: the wife, the mother, the widow, the mistress of the household. The performance of servitude highlights the performative nature of other subservient domestic roles for women.[15]

Like "The Mysterious Countess," the novels I examine in this chapter focus on relationships between women of different class statuses. Kirsti Bohata argues that servant impersonation can express or sublimate homoerotic desire between mistress and maid. Bohata writes that "The positions of mistress and maid bring two women together under the same roof while separating them by class, thus providing a framework for a fictional exploration for yearning, desire, unrequited love, or sometimes union" (Bohata 341).[16] This chapter, by contrast, argues that these novels pit women against each other as rivals or foils to each other (Mrs. Paschal vs. the Countess, Barbara vs. Isabel, Norah vs. Magdalen), but the contest between these pairs of women reveals not difference, but similarities. Though these pairs are framed as the

[14] I call Mrs. Paschal a "New Woman," but I should add that she is a New Woman *avant la lettre*. Sarah Grand coined the term in her article "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," (*North American Review*, March 1894) and it came into common usage in the *fin de siècle*.

[15] This portion of my argument is heavily indebted to Judith Butler's insights about the performative nature of gender in *Gender Trouble* (1990). Butler suggests that "gender is a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real," and raises the question "Is drag the imitation of gender, or does it dramatize the signifying gestures through which gender itself is established?" (Butler viii) Similarly, I argue that servant impersonation reveals the performative nature of other subservient domestic roles for women.

[16] Kirsti Bohata analyzes the sexuality of the servant figure, particularly the possibility of homosocial or homosexual relations between mistress and maid: "As a group, female servants were seen as sexually available and morally suspect and, towards the latter part of the century, prostitution, lesbianism, and domestic servants were directly linked in (and through) French literature, journalism, and European sexology" (Bohata 342). Bohata draws on Koven's argument about the erotics of slumming to argue that servant impersonation and cross-class disguise can express or sublimate homosexual desire between mistress and maid.

Angel in the House vs. the Fallen Woman, the plots ultimately reveal both stock characters to be actresses performing a role.

Servant impersonators are inherently "fallen woman" in terms of social class, but many of the servant impersonators I discuss in this chapter—Dickens's Lady Dedlock, Wood's Isabel Vane—are also fallen women in the sexual sense. Collins's Magdalen Vanstone is not a fallen woman, but her name and her chosen profession as an actress signal her transgressive femininity. These characters' socially and sexually fallen status allows them to investigate the home from an outsider's perspective, and to uncover its secrets. The servant impersonator displays the duplicitous theatricality and potentially dangerous sexuality of the actress or prostitute, creating a slippage between the three professions for women.[17] The presence of such a deceitful figure in the fictional home was threatening, but also invited readers' sympathy for this simultaneous insider and outsider. Putting such figures on the stage also courted audience sympathy through the embodiment of the actual actress.

In the novels I consider in this chapter, the main female characters are accomplished actresses. Rather than focusing on their interiority, the plots emphasize their ability to perform multiple roles. These characters were also associated with flesh-and-blood actresses thanks to wildly popular stage adaptations of *Bleak House* and *East Lynne*. When the average reader thought of Lady Dedlock, she perhaps pictured actress Francesca Janauschek. If an audience member commented on Isabel Vane's beauty, it was likely Madge Kendal or Ada Gray's features that came to mind. The literary trend of servant impersonation highlights the interdependence of novel and stage in the mid-Victorian period. Fiction and journalism also

[17]I am not suggesting that Victorian actresses were practicing prostitutes simultaneously. Instead, I follow Tracy C. Davis's suggestion that we consider actresses and prostitutes as "parallel rather than convergent professions" (T. Davis 81). They were associated in the popular imagination due to physical proximity of theater district and red-light district, as well as through the notion that actresses displayed their bodies for visual consumption.

influenced each other; sensational newspaper articles could become the inspiration for a novel's plots, and the more entertaining nature of sensation fiction forced newspaper articles to become more sensationalized. As a writer for *The London Review* put it in 1863, "We can hardly take up a *Times* without perceiving the skeleton of a sensation novel only waiting to be appropriated by Mrs. Wood or Miss Braddon, and put on the stage tricked out with the necessary amount of tawdry morality and high-flown sentiment" ("Aurora Floyd" 175). Transmediation was a typical part of nineteenth century literary culture: sensational journalism influenced the novel, which provided fresh material for a melodramatic stage culture.

Servant impersonation is symptomatic of a larger cultural crisis over questions of reading character. Three distinct but interrelated definitions of "character" are relevant to my discussion of servant impersonation: literary character, moral character, and a servant's "character" reference. The convergence of literary character and moral character can be found in the written character reference provided to servants seeking a position in a new household. Anxieties about unreliable or even counterfeited characters were prevalent since at least the eighteenth century. In 1859, Mrs. Beeton included this recommendation in her *Book of Household Management*: "In obtaining a servant's character, it is not well to be guided by a written one from some unknown quarter; but it is better to have an interview, if at all possible, with the former mistress. By this means you will be assisted in your decision of the suitableness of the servant for your place, from the appearance of the lady and the state of her house" (Beeton 6). At least according to Mrs. Beeton, it is easier to interpret character based on visual cues than on verbal representations. The notion that the written character was an unreliable index of moral character brings together the literary and moral definitions of "character" in the person of the servant.

Servant impersonation brings the crisis in reading character in all three senses to the foreground by dramatizing the tension between two prevailing models of understanding identity: the performed vs. the innate. Related to these two models are two divergent ways of conceptualizing the relationship between a person's exterior presentation of self, and their inner character: the metonymic and the metaphorical. If clothing has a metonymic relationship to identity, clothing is an extension of the person wearing it, and can therefore be considered a reliable indicator of the class status and moral character of the wearer. A metaphorical relationship between interior and exterior identity is more complex; two unequal things equate to each other in theory, but this more distant relationship leaves open the possibility for deception and imposture. The metaphorical relationship between identity and exterior is more performative, and thus connected with Victorian conceptions of theatricality and the theater. The metonymic conception, on the other hand, is more closely related to the traditional modes of characterization associated with the realist novel: based on the premise that the description of external signifiers such as dress and the body allows the reader to make deductions about the character's moral and social identity, as I outline at length in my introduction.

Both discourses existed in tension with each other in the Victorian period, and novels that feature servant impersonation as a prominent part of the plot dramatize the conflict between these two competing notions. The novels discussed in this chapter allow clothing to function as an unstable sign of character, for a time, in order to generate the mystery and possibilities that propel the plot forward. Strategic doubling of characters in texts like *Bleak House*[18] encourages

[18] I include *Bleak House* in my discussion of "sensation fiction," even though it is not normally categorized as such. Just as Dickens protested that he dwelt upon "the romantic side of familiar things," I argue that *Bleak House* is a hybrid novel in terms of genre; it borrows from and anticipates tropes from detective fiction, the gothic, and realism. The plot involving Lady Dedlock as Esther's secret mother, I would argue, anticipates the themes that would become so popular in sensation novels: disguise, secrets, adultery, murder, hidden or mistaken identity, and melodramatic revelation and death scenes.

the notion that identity is a fluid concept that can be exchanged between characters as readily as one exchanges clothes with another person. The conclusion of these novels, however, frequently shut down these more chaotic possibilities, restoring order and reestablishing clothing as a reliable sign of character. As I will demonstrate later in the chapter, theatrical adaptations of novels like *Bleak House* and *East Lynne* reanimate the transgressive possibilities of a performative conception of identity, encouraging the audience to see a looser and less straightforward relationship between the actress and the role she plays. Wildly popular theatrical adaptations of *East Lynne*, for example, removed the last vestige of didacticism by eliminating the moralizing third person narrator, allowing audiences to feel even freer about expressing their tearful sympathy for the adulterous heroine's plight. Servant impersonators such as Lady Dedlock, Magdalen Vanstone, and Isabel Vane were irresistibly sympathetic, in potentially subversive ways.

These servant impersonators were simultaneously disturbing and sympathetic to Victorian readers and audiences. The moral ambiguity of these characters is the product of the distinct but often overlapping concepts of imitation and imposture or impersonation. Imitation is depicted as a largely a positive act in Victorian conduct books. George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver turns to *Imitatio Christi* in her quest for self-improvement and self-fulfillment; a classic text in the long tradition of conduct literature, the book holds up Christ's renunciation as a model for the pupil to imitate. Samuel Smiles asserts in his conduct book *Character* (1871) that imitation is the foundation of character building: "By imitation of acts, the character becomes slowly and imperceptibly, but at length decidedly formed" (Smiles 35). If imitation is the basis on which character is formed, and at the heart of Christian ethics, why is impersonation so wrong? The distinction between imitation and impersonation is a fine one; the former aims to reproduce a

model *approximately*, whereas the latter is a form of theft that appropriates a character for oneself. But surely the final aim of imitation must be impersonation? The most perfect imitation would reproduce the model perfectly. The aim of the imitation of Christ is to be like Christ, but it is blasphemous to claim that one *is* Christ. Impersonation calls attention to the tenuous distinction between itself and imitation, which is largely a positive value. Elaine Hadley explains that "'Imposture,' a conceptual combination of imposition and deceit, was the dirty underside of theatrical performance, the term used by the audience when it no longer was willing to believe in or indulge the actor" (Hadley 85). Imposture reveals the theatrical basis of character building, which is based on repeated acts that continually get closer to approximating the model: in Smiles's words, "The several acts may seem in themselves trivial; but so are the continuous acts of daily life. Like snowflakes, they fall unperceived; each flake added to the pile produces no sensible change, and yet the accumulated snowflakes make the avalanche. So do repeated acts, one following another, at length become consolidated in habit, determine the action of the human being for good or evil, and, in a word, form the character" (Smiles 36).[19] Smiles's phrase "several acts" is evocative of theatrical language, and the several acts of a play. The idea of "repeated acts" calls to mind the notion of rehearsal, or the repetition of lines that leads to memorization. Good behavior is learned through theatrical rehearsal, repetition, and imitation.

This chapter opens with an overview of the eighteenth-century literary and social contexts that led servant impersonation to become such a widespread phenomenon in the Victorian period. After establishing this necessary background, the chapter discusses each of the three novels in detail, and concludes with a brief coda discussing the place of servant impersonation in *fin-de-siècle* investigative journalism. The American journalist Elizabeth Banks

[19] Smiles reproduces the ideology of separate spheres that shaped Victorian gender roles. The mother, according to Smiles, is the crucial model by which her children learn good or bad behavior (Smiles 36).

enters the home as a servant under false pretenses in order to uncover its secrets. Servants posed the threat of strangers entering the privacy of the home, and raised the fear that the home was under surveillance and investigation.

Costume and Character: The Servant Question in the Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth century saw both the rise of the novel and the emergence of debates surrounding "the servant problem." The first novelists often weighed in on questions regarding servants, in pamphlets and the popular press, and in their novels. These debates centered on issues of regulating servants' dress, as well as their written "characters," two concerns that are intimately related, and that ultimately led to the social and cultural environment in which servant impersonation would become such a popular literary trend. Both issues revolve around questions of reading and interpretation. How can you tell a good servant from a bad one? How can you distinguish between mistress and maid? These questions arise from the unstable systems of signs that signify authenticity and identity—the sign systems of dress and written character. Eighteenth-century novelists sought to stabilize and regulate these sartorial and narrative systems, in order to make them more transparently legible.

In his 1725 pamphlet "Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business," published under the pseudonym Andrew Moreton, Daniel Defoe argues that the dress of female servants should be regulated. As mistresses give their cast-off clothes to their maids, and maids strive to emulate the fashions worn by their mistresses, Defoe complains that "it is a hard matter to know the mistress from the maid by their dress; nay, very often the maid shall be much the finer of the two." Defoe recommends that female servants wear some sort of distinguishing dress. He asserts that requiring servants to wear uniforms would save expense for husbands, who would no longer

have to pay for their wives' increasingly extravagant and expensive clothing, which they needed in order to compete with their maids. Defoe also contends that regulating servants' dress would save these employees from the moral sins of pride, vanity, and extravagance:

> Our charity children are distinguished by their dress, why then may not our women-servants? why may they not be made frugal per force, and not suffered to put all on their backs, but obliged to save something against a rainy day? I am, therefore, entirely against servants wearing of silks, laces, and other superfluous finery; it sets them above themselves, and makes their mistresses contemptible in their eyes. I am handsomer than my mistress, says a young prinked up baggage, what pity it is I should be her servant, I go as well dressed, or better than she. (*Every-body's Business* 16)

This is a clear case of life imitating art; Defoe is ventriloquizing his own fictional characters (albeit pseudonymously), and applying the situations he constructs in fiction to real life. The words of the "young prinked up baggage" of this passage sounds suspiciously similar to something the heroine of *Moll Flanders* (1722) would say. Though born into a prison, Moll's ambition is to become a gentlewoman. Moll's downfall, in typical fashion, begins with gifts of hand-me-down clothes from well-meaning ladies: "The ladies also gave me clothes frequently of their own or their children's; some stockings, some petticoats, some gowns, some one thing, some another...At last one of the ladies took so much fancy to me that she would have me home to her house, for a month, she said, to be among her daughters" (*Moll Flanders* 16).

After this lady dies, Moll finds work as a servant, in spite of her "aversion to going to service." She is educated alongside her mistress's daughters, which leads her to make comparisons between herself and her more fortunate peers:

> [I]n some things I had the advantage of my ladies, though they were my superiors; but they were all the gifts of nature, and which all their fortunes could not furnish. First, I was apparently handsomer than any of them; secondly, I was better shaped; and, thirdly, I sang better... (*Moll Flanders* 18)

"But that which I was too vain of was my ruin, or rather my vanity was the cause of it," she admits. Moll's self-described "vanity" makes her susceptible to the sexual overtures of her mistress's son, the first step on the slippery slope to whoring and theft.

By contrast to Moll, Samuel Richardson's Pamela struggles to resist these temptations. In Richardson's novel, cast-off clothes become the instruments of sexual predation. Pamela's parents express concern when they learn that Pamela's late mistress "has always been giving you Cloaths and Linen, and every thing [sic] that a Gentlewoman need not be asham'd to appear in" (Richardson 13). Pamela's parents worry that these gifts will corrupt her, or lead to the sin of pride: "But our chief Trouble is, and indeed a very great one, for fear you should be brought to anything dishonest or wicked, by being set so above yourself" (Richardson 13). As readers of *Pamela* know, she is less in danger of becoming prideful, and more in actual physical danger from her sexually rapacious master. In the famous "country garb" scene, Pamela rejects Mr. B's gifts of fine clothing in favor of a plain country dress she has sewn herself, only to find that Mr. B is even more attracted to her in this costume. Richardson highlights the sexual vulnerability of female servants, regardless of their attire; even as he acknowledges that the clothing female servants wear is a contentious issue.

Through her sartorial choices, Pamela asserts her virtue; her clothes are an external signifier of her moral character. Character and clothes are mutually reinforcing; the clothes a person wears often reveal much about his or her character, identity, and class status. Another

reliable indicator of a woman's character is her speech, or what others say about her. Character and class can be signified through the external markers of dress, but they can also be expressed verbally, through the sign systems of verbal narrative.[20] Pamela also attempts to prove her virtue through her letters, the written record of her chaste resistance to Mr. B's advances. However, signification can easily become misrepresentation; words and clothes can both be unreliable signifiers, and both carry the possibility of deception.[21] As sociologist Nathan Joseph points out, "Clothing lends itself to manipulation and distortion as much as verbal signs" (Joseph 3). If Defoe was concerned with reading and misreading servants' clothes, Henry Fielding was equally concerned with correctly reading servants' written "characters." But, as I have attempted to demonstrate, these are two ways of formulating the same concern.

In 1750, Henry Fielding and his brother set up a registry office, or employment agency, which promised to certify that the servants it recommended were in fact trustworthy. In his capacity as a magistrate, Fielding expressed concern that servants were receiving unjust "characters" from their former masters. While twenty-first century readers likely associate the word "character" with the literary representation of a person in a novel or a play, in Fielding's day, "a 'character' was a statement in which one employer described to another employer the habits and qualities of a servant, vouching for and thus controlling such key traits as honesty, chastity, sobriety, and industriousness" (Robbins 35-36). [22] In *The Covent Garden Journal*, no.

[20] Dress is often used as a metaphor to describe language, as well, as in Samuel Johnson's famous pronouncement, "Language is the dress of thought." (*Lives of the Poets*, 1779-1781)

[21] It is impossible to escape from Samuel Johnson if one is talking about any eighteenth-century moral or social debate. Johnson also comments in the *Rambler* on the slipperiness of words: "Among those who have endeavoured to promote learning and rectify judgment, it has long been customary to complain of the abuse of words, which are often admitted to signify things so different that, instead of assisting the understanding as vehicles of knowledge, they produce error, dissension, and perplexity, because what is affirmed in one sense is received in another." (*Rambler* 202: February 22, 1752)

[22] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, both definitions of the word emerged around the same time. The first entry for "character," meaning "A testimonial, esp. one given by a previous employer" is dated 1693, and the first usage of "character," meaning "A person portrayed in a work of fiction, a drama, a film, a comic strip, etc.;

64 (September 30, 1752), Fielding outlined the pernicious consequences of writing characters that were not "true" to reality:

> But I am very sure, and that from Experience, that the Characters given by Superiors of their Inferiors, are dreadful to the last degree: what I mean is the unjust Characters given of Servants; an Order of People, who are moved out of one Station into another, and are admitted into Places of Trust according to their Recommendations.... It is very plain that false good Nature will recommend the Undeserving, and improper Resentment traduce the Worthy. (Fielding vol. 2, 103)

Whereas Defoe proposed to manage internal traits (vanity, pride, extravagance) by regulating the external sign system of servants' dress, Fielding was concerned that the legible narrative signs of a written "character" did not always accurately reflect a servant's internal character and moral worth. Both are concerned with issues of deception, authenticity, and interpretation. "And the Public may be assured," writes Fielding, "that the utmost Care will be taken to prevent any Imposition; and that none will be registered in this Office who give the least suspicious Account of themselves, and who have lived in any disreputable Places."

However, this kind of imposition was extremely difficult to prevent. In the early 1790s, several householders in London and Westminster petitioned Parliament with a list of various grievances regarding servants they had hired on the strength of false characters. One petitioner, Dr. Richard Brocklesby, claimed he had been robbed by a servant who had obtained his position using a false reference. The result of the petition was the introduction of the Servants' Character Act of 1792. According to this new law, "many false and counterfeit characters of servants have either been given personally or in writing by evil disposed persons being or pretending to be the

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(also) a part played by an actor on the stage, in a film, etc., a role" is listed as 1664, in John Dryden's *Rival Ladies*. However, the previous definition is described as "now somewhat archaic." So while both words were operative in the eighteenth century, we are chiefly familiar with the latter today (OED, "Character," web accessed 6 June 2015).

master, mistress, retainer or superintendent of such servants... contrary to truth and justice and to the peace and security of his Majesty's subjects ."[23] The writer of the law remarks that "the evil herein complained of is not only difficult to be guarded against, but is also of great magnitude and continually increasing, and no sufficient remedy has hitherto been applied." The law legislates fines for various kinds of offenses, including "personating a master," "giving a false character to a servant," and offering oneself as a servant "asserting or pretending that he or she hath served in any service in which such servant shall not actually have served, or with a false, forged or counterfeit certificate of his or her character." The justification for the new law was the threat to property, but the language of the law reflects anxieties that revolve around imposture and impersonation. Being duped is more humiliating than being robbed.

Similarly, Defoe justifies the idea of servant uniforms by appealing to economic interests: wages would stop rising if servants did not feel the need for extravagant clothing, and husbands would be spared the expense of keeping their wives in finer clothes than their maids. He also thought that servants wearing silk would be detrimental to the native English wool trade (De Marly 73). However, what really seems to rankle Defoe is the possibility that he might misread the class of a domestic servant. The social power of embarrassment is palpable in the following anecdote:

> The apparel of our women-servants should be next regulated, that we may know the mistress from the maid. I remember I was once put very much to the blush, being at a friend's house, and by him required to salute the ladies, I kissed the chamber-jade into the bargain, for she was as well dressed as the best. But I was

[23] Servants' Character Act 1792: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/apgb/Geo3/32/56/1993-11-05 The law was not repealed until 2008, when critics remarked that it had only once been used to prosecute successfully in over 200 years. (*Statute Law Repeals: Eighteenth Report: draft Statute Law (repeals) Bill*. London: Stationery Office, 2008. Print. p. 58.)

> soon undeceived by a general titter, which gave me the utmost confusion; nor can I believe myself the only person who has made such a mistake. (*Every-body's Business* 15)

Defoe's blush and confusion, as those around him titter at his social *faux pas,* have an affective energy that motivates him as much as, if not more than, the economic justifications for his proposal. This blend of social and economic anxieties reflects what Kristina Straub refers to as the "mixed contractual and affective status" of the servant in the eighteenth century (Straub 6). In the nineteenth century, the pendulum swung towards the impersonal and contractual; and Defoe's vision was posthumously realized: it became the custom to require female servants to wear uniforms or some other kind of distinguishing dress. Diana Crane writes that relationships between mistresses and servants "became less intimate and more authoritarian" in the nineteenth century, and that as a consequence, "Changes in servants' clothing occurred as middle-class women sought to create visible status boundaries between themselves and their maidservants" (Crane 91).

Social changes in an industrializing and urbanizing society meant that servants were more often anonymous strangers entering the household; rather than faithful retainers who had belonged to a single household for all of their lives, and often, for multiple generations. In 1724, John Dennis could refer to both children and servants as members of the family, "Families are the first Seminaries of Religion...The Neglect of due Preparation of our Children and Servants at Home can hardly ever be corrected afterwards" (qtd. Bannet 138). By contrast, *The Servant's Practical Guide,* published in 1880, admonished its readers that "Without the constant co-operation of well-trained servants, domestic machinery is completely thrown out of gear, and the best bred of hostesses placed at a disadvantage" (qtd. Horn 17). From being considered

subordinate members of the family, similar to children, in the early eighteenth century, servants had transformed over the course of a century into mere gears and cogs to keep the "machinery" of the household going. The pedagogical metaphor of the home as seminary had shifted to the more industrial image of the household as machine. Dennis's pedagogical, religious, and moral concerns have also morphed into the less didactic and more socially conscious concern with appearances and being "placed at a disadvantage."

This more industrial image of the home correlates to the industrialization of the fashion industry, which facilitated faster and cheaper production of clothing, allowing lower-classes to emulate the fashion choices of the rich. This democratization of fashion made it increasingly difficult to read a person's class based on external markers such as clothing, which in turn led to the institution of uniforms for servants. However, uniforms caused servants to become even more dangerously anonymous and interchangeable, meaning that anyone could impersonate a servant, if they had the proper clothes. Elaine Hadley argues that these sartorial changes led to the decreased legibility of social identity:

> Clothing... had traditionally affiliated a person with a specific region, rank, or profession, in part because of its reliance on local fabric and skills and its responsiveness to variations in climate and working conditions. Clothing thus carried the weight of 'costume,' for it provided visible signs of a person's identity... [In] a static, hierarchical culture these costumes were not allegorical signs in need of decoding, but were perceived as the tangible constituents of identity. In some sense, clothes did indeed make the man (and woman). By the early nineteenth century, urban dress had become far more uniform, at least within classes, while for those central mediators of class society, the servant

> population, clothing had, in some sense, become a disguise…. Amidst these cultural shifts, people and places became, rather than knowable entities, inscrutable sites of mystery. (Hadley 83-84)

Hadley describes the shift from a metonymic conception of identity, in which clothing provides "tangible constituents," or "visible signs of a person's identity" to a metaphorical conception of identity, in which the uniformity of clothing makes it increasingly difficult to read people, who may or may not be in disguise. In this chapter, I take literally Hadley's suggestion that the servant uniform had "become a disguise" by the nineteenth century, and suggest that servants were a particularly fraught "site of mystery" at this time.

Ironically, the uniforms that were meant to distinguish so clearly between servants and family, and to prevent servants from emulating members of the family, turned the servant into a figure who could easily be imitated, increasing the likelihood of imposture and "false characters." The sartorial and narrative systems that eighteenth-century authors sought to regulate were as unstable as ever; social legibility was on the decline. By the time we get to Dickens's *Bleak House* in 1852, the urban world of London, with its labyrinthine streets and anonymous crowds, is encroaching on the traditional aristocratic and hierarchical domain of the country estate, Chesney Wold.

"Is There Three of 'em Then?": Theatrical Energies in Bleak House

Dickens's involvement in the theater, as an actor, writer, and manager, are well documented and well known. As his biographer Peter Ackroyd writes, "his skills as an actor were matched by his authority as a stage manager and director" (*Dickens* 475). In 1845, Dickens and some friends put on an amateur production of Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*.

Dickens was to play the colorful character Captain Bobadil. Ackroyd argues that Dickens's "eagerness to play a theatrical role was at least in part a way of combating that stale and weary sense of familiarity, of adopting a new identity if only for an hour or so, of exorcising the London gloom by promoting all the colour and brightness of a play" (*Dickens* 470). Dickens's close friend John Forster was among the cast as well. In his biography of Dickens, Forster describes Dickens's attention to the minutiae of theatrical detail:

> He took everything on himself, and did the whole of it without an effort. He was stage-director, very often stage-carpenter, scene-arranger, property-man, prompter, and band-master.... He adjusted scenes, assisted carpenters, invented costumes, devised playbills, wrote out calls, and enforced as well as exhibited in his proper person everything of which he urged the necessity on others. (Forster 184)

Dickens's skills for arranging scenes, inventing costumes, and directing actors carried over into his novel writing; as Forster remarks of Dickens's choice of the career of novelist over that of the playwright, "He took to a higher calling, but it included the lower." We can see traces of the stage manager's hand in some of Dickens's narrative passages. For instance, in the following passage from *Bleak House*, one can hear Dickens directing an actress, and giving tips to the costumes mistress and props master:

> "She should be an upper servant by her attire, yet, in her air and step, though both are hurried and assumed—as far as she can assume in the muddy streets, which she treads with an unaccustomed foot—she is a lady. Her face is veiled, and still she sufficiently betrays herself to make more than one of those who pass her look round sharply." (*Bleak House* 238-239)

This passage could conceivably be a stage direction in a play.[24] The costume designer knows what is required: the attire of an upper servant, and a veil for the lady's face. The actress should look like a lady who is trying to play a part, but not playing it well enough to avoid attracting attention. Instead, the narrator uses the language of the theater to convey a sense of mystery; the language of gesture, "air," and gait convey the character's uncertainty—and the language of dress borrows from theatrical conventions of disguise. This scene dramatizes the difficulty of parsing social class based on dress, its most visible indicator. In this scene, the aristocratic Lady Dedlock disguises herself as her maid Hortense in order to navigate the streets of London incognito and explore the haunts of her deceased former lover. The confusion caused by Lady Dedlock's cross-class disguise sets off an investigation in which the proliferating identities of the characters are sorted out, and the mysteries surrounding their origins are resolved. The plot of *Bleak House* absorbs the theatrical energies of cross-class disguise, which enables a carnivalesque overturning of class hierarchies and a blurring of social boundaries, but subsequently harnesses this energy and brings it into the disciplinary framework of the detective novel. These theatrical energies are released in subsequent theatrical adaptations of the novel in which Lady Dedlock's servant impersonation becomes the central event of the plot. Reading these theatrical adaptations alongside the source text reveals the problematic nature of reading class and costume in the novel. In once popular but now little-known adaptations like *Chesney Wold* and *The Great Lady Dedlock*, playwrights and audiences draw our attention to the novel's frustrating and tantalizing silence on these issues of reading class, dress, and character. This section of the chapter builds on scholarly efforts to recuperate stage and film adaptations as

[24] It's also noteworthy that this passage is in the present tense, the typical tense used in stage directions in plays. Though, in general, it seems to hold true that Esther's chapters are retrospective and narrated in the past tense, whereas the third-person narrative is in the present tense. In this sense at least, the third person sections of the novel are more "theatrical" than Esther's chapters.

serious works of literary criticism and artworks in their own right, rather than derivative works that merely capitalize on the success of the original text. In particular, Julianne Smith analyzes early *Bleak House* adaptations that were written and performed in London's East End, even before serialization of the novel had ceased. Smith argues that such adaptations "tell us about the range of the novel's reception," "assert distinctive contemporaneous readings of *Bleak House*," and "speculat[e] on the shape of the novel's unfinished narrative" (Smith 2). By contrast, I focus on a cluster of adaptations produced in America in the years following Dickens's death, which illuminate the changing reception and interpretation of one of Dickens's most famous novels, in a Transatlantic context. My analysis of *Bleak House* adaptations confirms Raoul Granqvist's speculation that American audiences (especially in urban theatres) favored plays that "provided an opportunity for the woman actor to excel in a stellar role" (Granqvist 156). And the "stellar role" for a woman actor in *Bleak House* was not the demure and ladylike narrator Esther, but rather the fiery French maid, Hortense, and her tormented mistress, Lady Dedlock.

Bleak House is a novel structured by pairs, doubles, and duality. Aside from the famous split narration (switching back and forth between limited third-person narration and a first-person narration from Esther's perspective), the novel also contains several pairs of female characters whose similarities give them the uncanny valence of the Gothic doppelgänger. As in many Shakespearean comedies, mistaken identities and swapped places between characters drive much of the plot of the novel. For example, the clerk Guppy is struck by the uncanny resemblance between Lady Dedlock and Esther Summerson, who turns out to be Lady Dedlock's illegitimate child. Lady Dedlock also sufficiently resembles her French maid Hortense to enable her to borrow the maid's clothing when venturing into the slums of London. The crossing sweeper Jo registers the confusion caused by these proliferating sets of doubles and triads when he exclaims,

"Is there three of 'em then?" Jo's confusion about the overlapping identities of these women points to the anarchic potential of cross-class dressing.

The scene of Lady Dedlock's cross-class disguise sensationalizes a contemporary Victorian anxiety about differentiating between servants and their mistresses. As we have seen, Daniel Defoe drew attention to this problem in the early eighteenth century, and it had not abated by the Victorian period. Innovations in textile production in the nineteenth century increased the speed of production of readymade clothing and decreased the price of fashionable garments, making them more accessible to the lower classes. (See Aindow 16.) This "democracy of modern dress" resulted in a blurring of the distinctions in personal appearance that had demarcated the boundaries between social classes. Arthur A. Baumann's complaint in 1888 sounds remarkably like Daniel Defoe's lament in 1725: according to Baumann, "it requires all the skill of St. James's to tell the difference between the lady's maid or milliner, in her smart guinea jacket, faced with dyed sheep's-skin or cat's fur, and her fair mistress or customer" (qtd. Aindow 20). As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, this anxiety about distinguishing between mistress and maid, exacerbated by the upper-classes' tendency to donate their old clothes to their servants, ultimately led to the institution of uniforms for servants in the nineteenth century. (See Horn 13.)

Jo's inability to distinguish between Hortense and Lady Dedlock is symptomatic of the clash between the two conflicting attitudes about clothing and identity outlined in my introduction: either clothing is a metonymic link to the owner's identity, since clothing is an individual possession whose proximity to the wearer's body makes it a part of his or her social persona, or clothing is a fungible commodity that can easily be exchanged between persons regardless of their socially assigned identity. The metonymic and the metaphorical modes of conceptualizing character are both in play in *Bleak House*, vying for prominence in the

characters' and readers' minds. Jo demonstrates his adherence to the metonymic mode when he explains to Bucket why he misidentified Hortense as the woman who paid him a sovereign.

> ' 'Cos,' says Jo, with a perplexed stare, but without being at all shaken in his certainty, 'Cos that there's the wale, the bonnet, and the gownd. It is her and it an't her. It an't her hand, nor yet her rings, nor yet her woice. But that there's the wale, the bonnet, and the gownd, and they're wore the same way wot she wore 'em...' (*Bleak House* 336)

"It is her and it an't her." If you read clothing as a metonymic sign of character, it *is* her; it's her vale, bonnet and gown, and that's the way she wore them. The clothing is an individual possession that provides signs of its owner's identity. But if clothing has a more metaphorical, less stable relationship to character, it *isn't* her; the hand and the voice don't match up with the exterior signs. It's a false metaphor, or Carlylean *Putz-Mantel* (false cloak, or disguise) (Carlyle 57). Jo's mistake reveals the inadequacies of reading clothing as a metonymic sign.

Hablôt Knight Browne (alias "Phiz") provides visual evidence of the inadequacies of the metonymic mode in his illustrations for *Bleak House*. In the plate entitled "Consecrated Ground" (Figure 3), for chapter sixteen, Jo points through a locked gate into the burying ground where Captain Hawdon is buried. Lady Dedlock huddles next to him, but her head is turned away from the viewer, and the brim of her bonnet obscures her profile. The viewer can only see a bonnet, a shawl, and a gown. In this illustration, Lady Dedlock is reduced to her clothes; they are a metonym for her person. But since she is in disguise, this normally comforting thought—that one can identify a person by her clothes—is subverted. Clothing only functions metonymically if you are certain that the person wearing the clothes is their owner, and not in disguise.

Figure 3: "Consecrated Ground" (engraving by Phiz). Scanned image by George P. Landow (Victorian Web)

Similarly, in another illustration in which Lady Dedlock appears, we see another female figure in profile whose bonnet obscures her face—only this time, Esther's face is the one obscured. In the illustration "Lady Dedlock in the Wood" (Figure 4), for chapter 36, Lady Dedlock rushes toward the seated figure of Esther, with her arms outstretched to embrace her long-lost daughter. Lady Dedlock's face is seen in profile, but her features are visible since her bonnet and veil stream out behind her head. Esther's face, by contrast, is hidden, perhaps because of the illustrator's reluctance to depict her now deformed features. But Esther and Lady Dedlock's nearly identical clothing—plain dress, dark colored shawl, trimmed bonnet—now sets this pair up as a crucial set of doubles for the novel, making a triad between Hortense, Lady Dedlock, and Esther.

These competing sets of doubles—Esther and Lady Dedlock, Hortense and Lady Dedlock—foreground the mysteries surrounding these characters' identities: Lady Dedlock's ambiguous class status and tainted sexual history, and Esther's unknown parentage. Again, Jo voices the potential confusion caused by these proliferating doubles: when Esther visits him at the brickmaker's cottage, he feverishly mistakes Esther for the woman he guided to the burying ground. Trying to distinguish between Esther, Lady Dedlock, and Hortense, Jo asks Charley, "If

she ain't the t'other one, she ain't the forrenner. Is there *three* of 'em then?" (*Bleak House* 453) The difficulty of distinguishing between the three raises uncomfortable questions about the inability to differentiate between social and sexual categories: the fallen woman vs. the Angel in the House, the servant vs. the mistress, the English woman vs. the foreigner. The use of disguise highlights the theatricality of social roles, raising the unsettling possibility that multiple characters can inhabit any given role so long as they can "play the part."

Figure 4: "Lady Dedlock in the Wood" (engraving by Phiz). Scanned image by George P. Landow (Victorian Web)

Critics have often noted the detective plot folded into *Bleak House*, which gradually makes sense of these mysteries. The teleology of the detective novel's plot ensures that the reader will not remain as confused as Jo, trying to distinguish between various characters and their actions. The detective plot promises an antidote to Chancery: by the end, all of the untidy threads will be tied up. D. A. Miller has most famously outlined this disciplinary interpretation of the novel, which resolves ambiguities through the policing process of narrative:

> Although *Bleak House* baffles us in the first few hundred pages by featuring a profusion of characters who seem to have nothing to do with one another, a miscellany of events whose bearing on a possible plot is undecidable, and even two separate systems of narration that are unequal and unrelated, it

> simultaneously encourages us to anticipate the end of bafflement and the acquisition of various structures of coherence…. In other words, the novel dramatizes the liabilities of fragmentation and postponement within the hopeful prospect that they will eventually be overcome. (Miller 89-90)

In a novel featuring so many instances of cross-class disguise, the proliferation and conflation of characters is baffling, but as Miller notes, the novel seems to promise an end to bafflement by means of increasing narrative coherence and structure. According to Miller, narrative reduces chaos to order, assigning each character to her proper role, and clarifying ambiguous identities. But I would like to draw attention to Miller's word choice in the final sentence of the passage: "the novel *dramatizes* the liabilities of fragmentation and postponement." I would like to take the word "dramatizes" literally, and to suggest that this novel stages the ludic and anarchic possibilities of the theater, only to reduce them to order. Miller refers to this increasing narrative coherence as a "hopeful prospect," but Helena Michie draws attention to the punitive nature of such narrative ordering, especially for female characters; she writes that "women who disguise, transform, and replicate themselves, who diffuse their identities" are depicted as criminals, aligning the reader with the detective figure of the novel who must "sort through the multiple identities offered by each heroine," confining her to a single identity (Michie 59).

Part of the pleasure of reading *Bleak House* is that Dickens allows the reader to be one step ahead of the detective, Mr. Bucket. In the section of the novel that most resembles a detective novel, Inspector Bucket and Esther attempt to track Lady Dedlock after her disappearance. Their search first leads them to the brickmaker's cottage, the site of Jo's confusion upon seeing Esther, mistaking her for Lady Dedlock disguised as Hortense: "Is there *three* of 'em then?" Both Jenny, the brickmaker's wife, and Lady Dedlock are gone. According

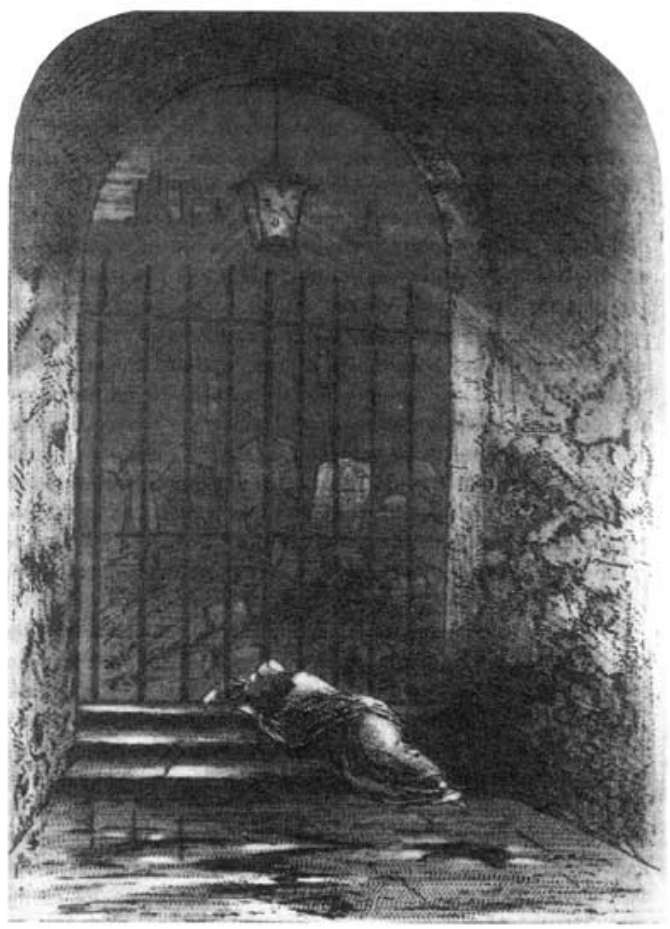


Figure 5: "The Morning," by Phiz. (from David Perdue's Charles Dickens page)

to the inhabitants of the cottage, Jenny has gone toward London, while Lady Dedlock traveled south. Obtaining a description of Lady Dedlock's dress, Bucket and Esther accordingly go south. Inspector Bucket's reports at various checkpoints along the way make clear that he is tracking Esther's mother by means of her sartorial identifiers. "There's not a doubt of *the dress* by this time, and *the dress* has been seen here," he tells Esther confidently (*Bleak House* 816, emphasis added). At a certain point, they lose the trail of the dress: "At last…he told me that he had lost the track of the dress so long that he began to be surprised" (*Bleak House* 816). In spite of his almost Panoptic vision, Inspector Bucket fails to realize that clothing and identity do not always have a direct one-to-one correlation until a very late stage of their journey, at which point he turns the coach around, in order to pursue the "other" figure to London (*Bleak House* 819). Esther takes even longer to understand their mistake; she believes, up until the last moment, that Bucket is now tracking the lower-class woman, Jenny. Esther's belated recognition of her mother occurs at the major site of Lady Dedlock's first disguise: the gate of the burying ground where Captain Hawdon is buried. The illustrations highlight the neat circularity of the plot by again depicting

Lady Dedlock as little more than a bundle of clothes, so that the clothing becomes the only means of identifying the character depicted (Figure 5). Inspector Bucket attempts to prepare Esther for this revelation, hinting at the possibility of disguise: “Miss Summerson, you'll understand me, if you think a moment. They changed clothes at the cottage.” Esther fails to grasp the significance of his words: “They changed clothes at the cottage. I could repeat the words in my mind, and I knew what they meant of themselves, but I attached no meaning to them in any other connection” (*Bleak House* 844). Esther only understands the significance of this theatrical cross-class dressing when she turns over the corpse and sees the face: “I passed on to the gate, and stooped down. I lifted the heavy head, put the long dank hair aside, and turned the face. And it was my mother, cold and dead” (*Bleak House* 847).

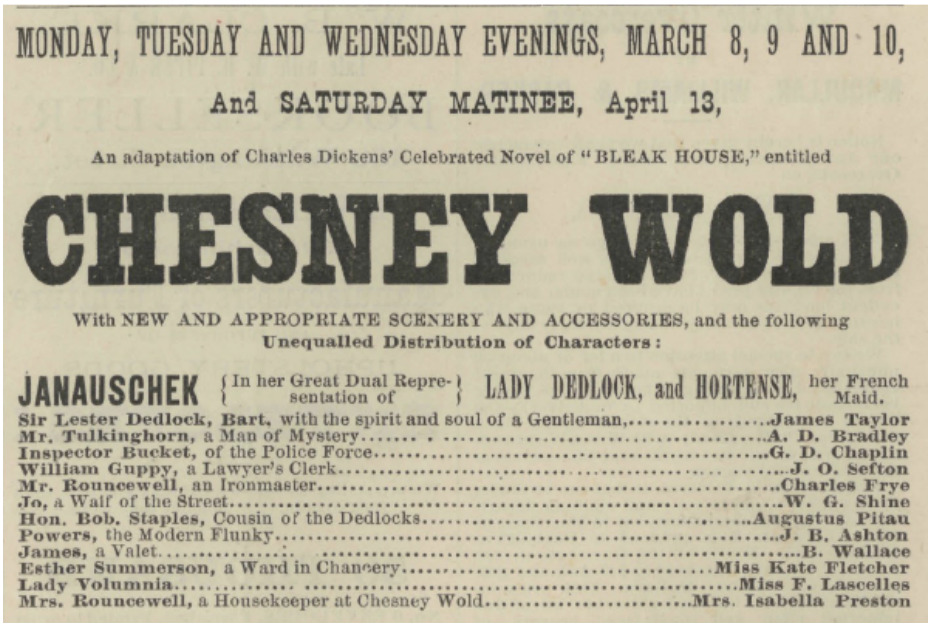
As at many other points in her narrative, Esther refuses to confront moments of strong emotion, repressing them in the name of humility and self-abnegation. At the very start of the next chapter, Esther writes “I proceed to other passages of my narrative,” as if the discovery of her mother’s disguised corpse were not an occurrence worth analyzing (*Bleak House* 847). Esther does not acknowledge her failure, or Inspector Bucket’s failure to realize, until too late, that clothing is not a stable marker of class identity. The novel suggests the unsettling possibility that there is no essential difference between social classes, that they are theatrical roles that can convincingly be played by canny actresses. The narration represses this knowledge, as Esther moves on to the reassuringly orderly conclusion of the novel, but theatrical adaptations of the novel give voice to the implications of Esther’s frustrating and tantalizing silence.

Dramatic adaptations of *Bleak House* release what had been contained in the novelistic form, blurring the boundaries and crossing the borders between classes, characters, and costumes. One dramatic adaptation entitled *Chesney Wold* made Lady Dedlock's cross-class disguise the central motif of the play.[25] Czech-American actress Francesca Janauschek (Figure 6) collaborated with H. A. Randle to adapt *Bleak House* for the stage so that Janauschek could play both roles: Lady Dedlock and Hortense. Madame Janauschek felt that a production in which she played both the tragic heroine and the villainous foreign maid would provide an opportunity to showcase her range as an actress. By all accounts, she was a great success in this production, which opened at Ford's Grand Opera House in Baltimore, on February 22, 1873.[26]

Figure 6: Engraving of Madame Janauschek, frontispiece for "The Chesney Wold Quadrille" (Johns Hopkins University Libraries, The Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection)

[25] American stage adaptations of Dickens's novels often dramatically reduced the cast of characters, and focused either on the comic and farcical elements of the novel while ignoring the pathos of the story, or on the sentimental and tragic aspects to the exclusion of the humorous. A comic one-act play adapted from *Dombey and Son* was entitled "The Capture of Captain Cuttle and Bunsby's Wedding," whereas a sentimental and melodramatic adaptation of the same novel was entitled "Edith; or, Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son." (see Granqvist, 152-153)

[26] For a complete list of the locations and dates of the US tour of *Chesney Wold*, see H. Philip Bolton, "Bleak House and the Playhouse," pp. 98-103.



MONDAY, TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY EVENINGS, MARCH 8, 9 AND 10,

And SATURDAY MATINEE, April 13,

An adaptation of Charles Dickens' Celebrated Novel of "BLEAK HOUSE," entitled

CHESNEY WOLD

With NEW AND APPROPRIATE SCENERY AND ACCESSORIES, and the following
Unequalled Distribution of Characters:

JANAUSCHEK { In her Great Dual Representation of } **LADY DEDLOCK, and HORTENSE,** her French Maid.

Sir Lester Dedlock, Bart, with the spirit and soul of a Gentleman,.....James Taylor
Mr. Tulkinghorn, a Man of Mystery.....A. D. Bradley
Inspector Bucket, of the Police Force.....G. D. Chaplin
William Guppy, a Lawyer's Clerk.....J. O. Sefton
Mr. Rouncewell, an Ironmaster.....Charles Frye
Jo, a Waif of the Street.....W. G. Shine
Hon. Bob. Staples, Cousin of the Dedlocks.....Augustus Pitau
Powers, the Modern Flunky.....J. B. Ashton
James, a Valet.....B. Wallace
Esther Summerson, a Ward in Chancery.....Miss Kate Fletcher
Lady Volumnia.....Miss F. Lascelles
Mrs. Rouncewell, a Housekeeper at Chesney Wold.....Mrs. Isabella Preston

Figure 7: From the playbill for Chesney Wold (the Globe Theatre, Boston: Marsh 8, 1875), Princeton Libraries

As Julianne Smith points out, "Since *Bleak House* is a novel that not only offers a wide range of characters but whose title does not specify a main character, theatrical adaptations attempted to answer two questions: What is this novel about? Which character(s) owns this sprawling narrative?" (Smith 3). American stage adaptations of Dickens's novels often dramatically reduced the cast of characters, focusing either on the humorous elements of the novel, or on the sentimental and tragic aspects of the story. This was done partly for practicality's sake: it would be impossible to stage every subplot of a sprawling multi-plot novel. Contemporary readers of *Great Expectations,* for example, might be shocked to know that there is a Victorian stage adaptation of the novel that leaves out Miss Havisham entirely. *Chesney Wold* likewise displaces Esther's narrative as the central interest, focusing instead on the tragic history of Lady Dedlock. The title *Chesney Wold* shifts the major scene of action from John Jarndyce's Bleak House to the more aristocratic and overtly gothic estate of Sir Leicester Dedlock. On the playbill for *Chesney Wold* (Figure 7), the *dramatis personae* is arranged in order of importance, and Esther is fairly low on the list— lower than "Powers, the Modern

Flunkey," and "James, a Valet"—which is surprising, since she narrates about half of the novel. Esther is listed below the servants, but in this adaptation, this is an appropriate placement. In *Chesney Wold*, Esther is a stand-in for Rosa; it is Esther, not Rosa who replaces Hortense as Lady Dedlock's maid, tightening the triad that exists in the novel. The play adaptation adds one more secret to a novel already full of them: "Lady Dedlock's child was here as a servant long before she knew it," Inspector Bucket reveals (Preston promptbook, p. 163).

In Madame Janauschek's promptbook, copied by Rob J. Preston, of the California Theatre, San Francisco, the great actress's lines are curtailed: only the last few words of any given line are copied for Hortense and Lady Dedlock, as cues for the other actors. Therefore, we can only reconstruct Madame Janauschek's performance from the glowing reviews and reminiscences of her performance. In 1912, journalist Edward Freiburger reminisced about Janauschek's performance: "She startled her audiences by the lightning rapidity of her changes…The two impersonations were so strikingly real and so startlingly in contrast that many uninformed playgoers insisted it was impossible for one woman thus to play both roles" (Freiburger n.p.). Theater critic Henry Mawson recalled that "the business of the play was so arranged that when Lady Deadlock [sic] made an exit on one side of the stage, Hortense immediately made an entrance from the other, and the illusion was so wonderfully complete that there were always unbelievers who declared there were surely two women and that Janauschek had an understudy." Mawson explains that Madame Janauschek was able to pull off this stunt by means of clever costume design, and a Dickensian ability to impersonate different accents and registers of voice: "Mme. Janauschek "turned" this trick by having a black gown made all in one piece to slip on over the other, a wig and a bonnet all ready in the wings, [so] that it took but a second or two to make the change from one part to the other. The change of voice was also

remarkable" (Mawson 48). Like Jo, audiences that witnessed Madame Janauschek's performance had difficulty discerning whether the two roles were played by the same person, insisting that "there were surely two women." (Echoing Jo's confused, "Is there *three* of 'em then?")

Figure 8: Photograph of Margaret Anglin in the title role of The Great Lady Dedlock (Theatre Magazine, 1929)

The Hortense/Lady Dedlock doubling clearly hit a nerve for American audiences. The two parts were revived by Canadian-American actress Margaret Anglin (Figure 8) in the 1920s, in a new adaptation titled *The Great Lady Dedlock*, written by Paul Kester. The play opened on July 16, 1923 at the Curran Theatre in San Francisco and was generally well received. However, some reviewers thought that the dual role detracted from the quality of the play. "The feat has more the nature of a stunt than of characterization," wrote one reviewer (qtd. LeVay 215). Margaret Anglin closed the production of *The Great Lady Dedlock* in August 1923, but she revived the play in early 1929. At this point, in her early 50s, Margaret Anglin was considered past her prime. Jerome Collamore, a fellow actor, reminisced uncharitably about Anglin's performance in *The Great Lady Dedlock*:

> Much as I hate to say it, M.A. was not good… she was too heavy to do the quick changes with ease, or, to give the illusion of being a different person when the change was made. When I came out I heard two young girls saying "What is this? Hasn't she enough money for a maid and she makes out she has one?" (qtd. LeVay 257)

Decidedly, the stunt had outlived its prime. From the "lightning rapidity" of Janauschek's changes, the part had descended to an actress who was not limber enough to pull it off. The "illusion of being a different person when the change was made" was shattered. Now audiences merely registered this stunt for what had originally occurred in the novel: servant impersonation. "Hasn't she enough money for a maid and she makes out she has one?" the girls titter in the foyer after the performance.

Unwittingly, these girlish audience members convey the major contribution of Kester's dramatic adaptation to the understanding of theatricality in *Bleak House*; *The Great Lady Dedlock* makes the economic underpinnings of the relationship between Lady Dedlock and Hortense explicit. Kester takes scenes from the novel that are meant to convey Hortense's passionate temper and criminal nature, and turns them into a commentary on the ill treatment of servants. In a famous scene in the novel, Hortense casts off her shoes after being dismissed by Lady Dedlock, and walks back to the house through the wet grass in her bare feet. In the dramatic adaptation, this wanton display of temper is translated into a reasonable expression of the resentment a maid might feel at having to wear her mistress's cast-off clothing. In the play, it is not Hortense who "casts off" her shoes, but Lady Dedlock who gives "cast off" shoes to Hortense. Kester's Bucket remarks on the elegance of Hortense's slippers, and she replies, "Tis a cast off shoe of her ladyship's. 'Tis too large for me" (Kester 13). Bucket finds the similarities between the two women more striking than their differences: "If that slipper was made for her ladyship it might just as well 'ave been made for you. Extremities apparently hidentical [sic]…" (Kester 14). Clearly, this line is meant to be funny, since Hortense and Lady Dedlock are played by the same actress, however, the lines also make a serious point about "dressing down." If the

aristocracy are giving their cast off clothes to the lower classes, and then disguising themselves as lower class, who is imitating whom?

Her ladyship's cast off shoes become a crucial plot point in Kester's play; much like the detective in an Agatha Christie novel, Kester's Inspector Bucket must connect a series of clues.[27] The murderess of Mr. Tulkinghorn fled to the lake in order to dispose of the pistol with which she shot him (unlike in the novel, Tulkinghorn is murdered at Chesney Wold). Hortense offers to show Inspector Bucket that the footsteps by the lake belonged to her Ladyship by placing her own slippered feet in the footprints. Since she wears cast off shoes from her Ladyship, which are all made on "the same last"[28] and therefore identical, Hortense offers to prove that the footprints were made by Lady Dedlock (Kester 114). Hortense herself claims as an alibi that she has not left the house; the dry soles of her slippers prove this. But when her slipper slips off, Bucket replaces it, noting that while the outside of the slipper is dry, the inside is damp. "So you've 'ad time to change your slipper, miss, but you ain't 'ad time to change your stockings, 'ave you?" he deduces (Kester 116). Kester's Inspector Bucket recognizes the dichotomy between interior and exterior, and unlike Dicken's Bucket, Kester's Bucket can penetrate below the outward appearance, to see the truth beneath. The identical slippers of the two characters make a convenient plot point for solving the mystery, but they also constitute a return of the knowledge repressed by the novel: the failure of clothing to prove a stable marker of social class. In the novel, Esther mistakes her mother for the lower-class woman Jenny, and the narrative quickly passes over this knowledge of the fundamental theatricality of social class. *Bleak House* temporarily gives free rein to the anarchic, carnivalesque, and inchoate energies of cross-class

[27] Christie's first detective novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), was published only a few years before *The Great Lady Dedlock*.
[28] See "last, n. 1," definition 2a. in the OED: "A model of the foot made of wood, metal, (now) plastic, etc., on which boots and shoes are shaped during making or manufacture."

disguise, and a metaphorical conception of character and identity; but the novel introduces order via the detective plot, sorting all the characters into their proper places. Theatrical adaptations like *Chesney Wold* and *The Great Lady Dedlock* allow us to reopen the chaotic and messy possibilities of the earlier portions of the narrative, and help us to recognize the latent theatricality that is always threatening to disrupt the narrative. Esther closes the chapter of her mother's death without acknowledging its implications, but theatrical adaptations reopen the chapter and its possibilities; they insist that the case is not closed. The boundaries between the novel and the theater in the Victorian period are as permeable as the boundaries between social classes. Like Lady Dedlock, the novel wants to deny and keep secret its forays into the realm of the theatrical, but the truth will out. Like the footsteps on the Ghost's Walk, the steps of these shadowy actresses echo just offstage in the "wings" of the novel, waiting for an attentive ear to hear them.

"I Could Act Every Character in the Play":The Home as Performance Space in Wilkie Collins's No Name

"If I know anything of my own faculty, it is a dramatic one," wrote Wilkie Collins in an autobiographical fragment in 1862, explaining that if he had been a Frenchman, he would have written for the stage, instead of writing novels (Parrish 5). Collins dabbled in acting and writing for the stage, but he also successfully incorporated his "dramatic faculty" into his novels. In the preface to his novel *Basil* (1852), Collins expresses his belief that drama and the novel share a family resemblance: "the Novel and the Play are twin-sisters in the family of Fiction...the one is a drama narrated, as the other is a drama acted" (*Basil* 4). In his 1862 novel *No Name*, Collins uses the characters of two sisters to illustrate the contrast between the novel and the theater, but also to demonstrate their interdependence. The novelistic heroine, Norah, may win the day in the

end, but Magdalen, the theatrical heroine, undoubtedly steals the show. Norah represents what Michael Meeuwis terms "novel thinking" (the modes of thinking about identity we commonly see in the novel; as opposed to "theater thinking"): she typifies the interiority and inwardness associated with the traditional novelistic heroine (*Everyone's Theater* 150). Collins, by contrast, shows that incident, plot, and excitement (the staples of sensation fiction) depend more on a theatrical heroine who can evacuate herself of interiority and impersonate other characters. Magdalen challenges the notion that the characters with the richest interiority are the most interesting fictional characters.

Towards the beginning of the novel, Magdalen becomes involved in amateur theatricals, and she declares, "I have the strongest internal conviction that I could act every character in the play" (*No Name* 34). Clearly, Magdalen's "internal convictions" are only important insofar as they express her ability to shape-shift and transform herself. Magdalen takes on roles based on the exigencies of the novel's plot: to recover the inheritance she and Norah have lost. By espousing a more performative view of character, Collins's sensation fiction poses a challenge to the notion of character as conceived by the conventions of the realist novel.[29] Emily Allen astutely points our attention to the intrageneric competition between various types of novels: "While there may be tension between the novel and the theater, it is much more common, and much more interesting, for novels to use theater not just as a means of defining 'themselves' in some sort of monolithic sense but of defining themselves against other kinds of novels" (Allen 6). By affording theater and performativity such a prominent place in his novel, Collins defines sensation fiction in distinction to the realist novel.

[29] Even Magdalen's appearance challenges the notion that character is physiognomically legible. Magdalen's "plastic, ever-changing face" would frustrate the efforts of the physiognomist. Her countenance is remarkable for its "strongly opposed characteristics" as well as its "extraordinary mobility," signaling both potentiality and changefulness, making it impossible to read (*No Name* 8). Like Captain Wragge's "eyes of two different colors," Magdalen's appearance signals her potential for duplicity (*No Name* 17).

The novel opens with an idyllic domestic setting, which is disturbed by an eruption of the theatrical, setting the scene for the major themes of *No Name*. Much like the domestic performance of *Lovers' Vows* in *Mansfield Park*, the amateur production of Sheridan's *The Rivals* signals the outbreak of familial conflict and erotic entanglements in *No Name*. "The bad result of the acting," predicts Magdalen's older sister Norah, "will be the familiarity it is sure to encourage between Magdalen and Francis Clare" (*No Name* 38), just as the bad result of the acting in *Mansfield Park* was to encourage intimacy between Edmund Bertram and Mary Crawford. However, Collins uses these scenes to expose an even deeper antitheatrical prejudice than the association of acting with libidinous desire. Acting is inherently dangerous in the world of *No Name*: the real reason that the theatricals are dangerous is because they reveal Magdalen's skills as an actress. Miss Garth's "worst apprehension of results in connection with the theatrical enterprise had foreboded levity of conduct with some of the gentlemen—she had not bargained for this. Magdalen, in the capacity of a thoughtless girl, was comparatively easy to deal with. Magdalen, in the character of a born actress, threatened serious future difficulties" (*No Name* 43-44). The Victorian prejudice that the actress was a dangerously seductive and sexually promiscuous figure gives way to the deeper fear that performance is subversive in and of itself.

Magdalen's performance in *The Rivals*, like Fanny Janauschek's in *Chesney Wold*, involves playing the dual role of the lady and the servant. Initially cast as the devious maid Lucy, Magdalen picks up the second part of Julia when another actress leaves the company. Magdalen's performance in these two roles highlights the differences between melodramatic and naturalistic styles of acting. As Julia, "She was dressed very plainly in dark colours, and wore her own hair; all stage adjuncts and alterations (excepting the slightest possible touch of rouge on her cheeks) having been kept in reserve, to disguise her the more effectually in her second part."

(*No Name* 47) Magdalen's costume in the role of Julia is simple and subdued—more like a normal middle-class woman's dress than a stage costume. Her costume and makeup for the part of Lucy, by contrast, are highly theatrical, and are in fact referred to as a disguise:

> Magdalen's disguised appearance at the end of the act, in the character of Lucy—with false hair and false eyebrows, with a bright-red complexion and patches on her cheeks, with the gayest colours flaunting in her dress, and the shrillest vivacity of voice and manner—fairly staggered the audience. They looked down at their programmes, in which the representative of Lucy figured under an assumed name; looked up again at the stage; penetrated the disguise; and vented their astonishment in another round of applause, louder and heartier even than the last. (*No Name* 48)

The repetition of the word "false" to describe Lucy's costume highlights the artificiality of an overtly theatrical performance, as opposed to the naturalistic and subdued performance of Julia. The gay colors and bright makeup also associate Lucy with the sexual promiscuity of the actress, by contrast with the ladylike Julia. The reference to Magdalen's second costume as a "disguise" draws attention to the theatricality—and deceptiveness—of servants. Lucy's duplicity in Sheridan's play primes the reader to distrust servants in this novel; Lucy uses her role as a go-between among various couples in the play to line her own pockets. Magdalen is also listed on the program under "an assumed name" in the character of Lucy, foreshadowing her later forays into domestic service under false names.

However, it is not Magdalen's melodramatic impersonation of a servant that shocks her family, but rather her decision to use her sister Norah as a model for the role of Julia: "Norah detected, to her own indescribable astonishment, that Magdalen had audaciously individualized

the feeble amiability of Julia's character, by seizing no less a person than herself as the model to act it by." (*No Name* 48) Michael Meeuwis argues that amateur theatricals presented Victorian audiences with models of emulable behavior and were thus pedagogical and didactic exercises. Meeuwis writes that domestic playacting was the product of a "culture premised on the theory that human organisms innately replicate successful habits that they see in public" ("Back Drawing-Room" 427). *No Name*, by contrast, flips the paradigm so that the actress on stage is imitating a person she knows from "real life." This use of the real-life person as an imitable model exposes the performative nature of social roles, even when they are not enacted onstage. According to Meeuwis, the Victorians placed a "general faith in the space of amateur performance as a laboratory for modeling emulable behavior" ("Back Drawing-Room" 433). But whereas Meeuwis depicts this theatrical modeling and imitation as a largely positive process (the Victorians place "faith" in it as a force for good), Collins's novel draws attention to the way that this theatrical modeling blurs the lines between theatricality and authenticity. If one imitates the kinds of behaviors one sees enacted onstage, are those imitations equally theatrical, and therefore, not genuine? In this case, imitation becomes a hall of mirrors; Magdalen uses her sister as a model for her theatrical performance, but Norah's behaviors have been held up to Magdalen as exemplary in the past. Though the audience remains ignorant of the model on which Magdalen's Julia is based, Norah realizes the dangers of Magdalen's imitation game, and understands that Magdalen is mocking her exemplarity. By reproducing Norah's "little formal peculiarities of manner and movement," and mimicking "the very tone of [Norah's] voice," Magdalen shows that these mannerisms are indeed emulable, but she simultaneously exposes Norah's behavior as performative in a negative sense. Magdalen transforms Norah's feminine submissiveness into "feeble amiability." Acting manuals instructed actors how to imitate real life

convincingly, just as conduct manuals directed readers how to model their behaviors on the "successful habits" of others. In other words, good behavior could be as much a duplicitous act as Magdalen's theatrical performances. Magdalen's impersonation implies that Norah's docility could be a self-conscious performance, an act of ingratiation or opportunism in a culture that values those qualities in a woman.

Magdalen's performance of respectability foreshadows the exposure of the domestic idyll of the Vanstones' family life as a charade or performance. Collins reveals the secret of the novel early on: Magdalen and Norah were born out of wedlock; their parents were only pretending to be husband and wife. After the sudden deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Vanstone, the family skeletons come out of the closet. Magdalen and Norah are illegitimate children, and cannot inherit their father's property. Norah resigns herself to her fate, but Magdalen uses her newfound skills as an actress to get close to the male relatives who have inherited the money, and gain access to the inheritance through deception and disguise. The remainder of the novel follows these impersonations and escapades, which ultimately do not succeed. A happy ending emerges out of a series of unlikely incidents: Magdalen repents of her deceptive ways, is punished with a fever, and marries a sea captain; Norah accidentally finds the legal documents Magdalen was searching for, and marries the eventual heir to her father's money, after the less honorable male heirs die off.

In his preface to the novel, Collins boils this complicated plot down to "the struggle of a human creature, under those opposing influences of Good and Evil, which we have all felt, which we have all known" (*No Name* xxvii). However, the plot of this novel is much more than a simple allegorical struggle between the powers of light and darkness. In addition to critiquing

social attitudes towards and laws governing illegitimacy,[30] Collins's novel exposes the theatricality of Victorian social roles. Respectability could easily be simulated, making it difficult to tell a fake from the genuine article. Collins uses this critique of the theatricality of social roles to push the boundaries of genre. Collins constructs this novel as a series of dramatic "scenes" loosely connected together with epistolary interludes, which he labels "between the scenes"—like a layer cake of performative scenes held together by epistolary icing. The epistolary interludes represent the interiority and explicitly written narrative form of the realist novel, whereas the scenes are like dramatic tableaux in the Victorian drama. The sensation novel is often accused of favoring plot over character, but Collins is not so much interested in plot as linear narrative, as he is in incident, drama, and excitement. Frequently improbable events move the novel from one scene to another, or else a *deus ex machina* appears to move the plot on to the next incident. (Captain Kirke is the classic *deus ex machina* who coincidentally appears at just the right moment, in order to move Magdalen into her repentant phase.) As Peter Ackroyd observes, Collins and Poe have this trait in common: both "were artists of the improbable, by which they maintain the utmost verisimilitude in order to encompass the wildest impossibilities" (*Wilkie Collins* 68). Collins claims that he adhered throughout the plot of *No Name* "to the truth as it is in Nature," but how natural is it to be rescued coincidentally by the son of the man who rescued one's father (*No Name* xxvii)? Or for all the intervening heirs to a fortune to die off

[30] As a social critique, *No Name* tackles the issue of inheritance laws for illegitimate children. Miss Garth, the girls' governess, voices the opinion that the law that disinherits Magdalen and Norah is "a cruel law in a Christian country" (*No Name* 109). The family lawyer Mr. Pendril agrees with her: "I am far from defending the law of England, as it affects illegitimate offspring. On the contrary, I think it a disgrace to the nation. It visits the sins of the parents on the children; it encourages vice by depriving father and mothers of the strongest of all motives for making the atonement of marriage; and it claims to produce these two abominable results in the names of morality and religion" (*No Name* 110). Collins had his own personal reasons to feel strongly about this issue; he would later father three illegitimate children (two of them daughters) with his mistress Martha Rudd, but clearly his ambivalence about marriage and illegitimacy was longstanding. Like the Vanstones, Collins and Rudd assumed false names in order to maintain an appearance of respectability.

conveniently? The anonymous reviewer for the *Athenaeum* wrote of *No Name*, "Few, if any other, novels could be named in which unforeseen death is so frequently appealed to as an incident necessary to carrying out the author's purpose. There are no fewer than five such catastrophes..." (3 January 1863; Norman Page 133). None of events in *No Name*'s plot is technically impossible, but they become increasingly improbable because of their accumulation.

Collins was aware that reviewers found his plots improbable. In his preface to *Basil*, Collins defends himself against such charges of improbability by appealing to the conventions of the theater:

> Believing...that all the strong and deep emotions which the Play-writer is privileged to excite, the Novel-writer is privileged to excite also, I have not thought it either politic or necessary, while adhering to realities, to adhere to every-day realities only...Those extraordinary accidents and events which happen to few men, seemed to me as legitimate materials for Fiction to work with—when there was a good object in using them—as the ordinary accidents and events which may, and do, happen to us all. (*Basil* 4)

Here, in Emily Allen's terms, Collins uses the figure of the theater to defend the type of fiction he writes—sensation fiction based on extraordinary accidents and events, which excite strong and deep emotions—from fiction based on "ordinary realities," in other words, the realist novel.

Norah is a heroine in the mode of the realist novel, who responds to the "ordinary accidents" of life in a predictable way, but after the first "scene," she retreats into the epistolary interludes—the reader only has access to her perspective through the letters she sends Miss Garth, Magdalen, and Mr. Pendril. Norah does not interest Collins, and her interiority does nothing to further the plot. By contrast, Magdalen's impersonations and disguises propel the

story forward, even though its resolution is ultimately not the result of her actions. It would be untrue to say that Magdalen has no interiority, but her interiority is not the point. Even in the scene in which Magdalen contemplates suicide (one of the most inward of deliberations), she makes her decision based on the number of ships that pass her window during a certain time (Figure 9). Rather than use this opportunity to give the reader insight into Magdalen's mind, Collins relies on dramatic accident and chance to produce suspense and sensation.

Figure 9: Frontispiece to the 1864 Samson Low one-volume edition of No Name*, engraving based on Millais*

In her willingness to transform herself in order to accomplish a single-minded goal, Magdalen is the Victorian successor of Eliza Haywood's actress heroine, Fantomina (1725). While Fantomina disguises herself as four different women in order to retain the attention of her lover, Magdalen disguises herself repeatedly as part of her quest to claim her rightful inheritance. As with *Fantomina*, the *telos* of Collins's plot calls for the heroine to transform herself, making her interiority less important than the masks she assumes. Magdalen's most frequent disguise is

that of the servant, and her two major servant impersonations have important parallels. In both situations, she has a rival in the master's "real servant": Noel Vanstone's housekeeper Mrs. Lecount and Admiral Bertram's loyal servant Old Mazey. But in both situations, Magdalen's servant impersonation exposes the disingenuous subservience of the actual servant.[31] Both Mrs. Lecount and Old Mazey enact "pious frauds" against their masters in order to gain power over them. And in both cases, the master's physical disability or debility makes this spurious performance of servitude possible. Noel Vanstone is enfeebled and effete, and therefore he is easily manipulated by the clever Mrs. Lecount. Admiral Bertram's somnambulism is a very visible manifestation of his physical weakness; to prevent his master from wandering during the night, Old Mazey sleeps across the threshold of his master's bedroom door. As with Hegel's master/servant dialectic, the physical soundness signified by the servant's labor gives him power over his master. The vacuum of power created by absent or ineffectual male figures (Magdalen's father Andrew Vanstone, her love interest Francis Clare, her cousin Noel Vanstone, and Admiral Bertram are all absent or weak) allows women to gain power over these men by a complex and convincing performance of subservience. Gender and sexuality are both central aspects of these performances, creating a slippage between various female roles—the wife, the servant, the actress, and the prostitute. At the most basic level, these are some of the few occupations by which a woman could support herself in Victorian England. (It is also no coincidence that Fantomina's disguises also include a widow, a servant maid, and a prostitute.) Magdalen uses her skills as a consummate actress to impersonate servants, and to convince her cousin to marry her. For this use of her sexuality and gender to delude men, Magdalen could be considered a fallen

[31] Again, I am indebted to Judith Butler's theory of gender and performance outlined in *Gender Trouble* (1990). She argues that the performance of gender that constitutes drag allows us to see how gender in general is a performance. Similarly, I argue that the performance of servitude highlights the fact that the other "real" servants are consciously performing a role.

woman—the heroine's name is an unsubtle indication that Collins wants to evoke this notion in his reader's mind, though the author is ultimately teasing the reader; Magdalen never becomes a fallen woman; instead, more provocatively, she "makes the general sense of propriety [her] "accomplice" (*No Name* 484).

Through her performance of these roles, Magdalen refines her acting style, moving from a melodramatic to a naturalistic performance style. Collins's depiction of the transition from melodramatic to naturalistic performance styles in this novel anticipates the shift from the early to mid-Victorian preference for melodrama to the more naturalistic acting style practiced and preferred in the late Victorian theater, and the domestic focus that accompanied it. In *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (1875), G. H. Lewes outlines the "truthfulness" and "natural feeling" of the naturalistic style of acting, which he contrasts with the "bombast," "mouthing and rant" of melodrama. But he also draws a distinction between "naturalness" and "realism." "Naturalness being truthfulness," writes Lewes, "it is obvious that a coat-and-waistcoat realism demands a manner, delivery, and gesture wholly unlike the poetic realism of tragedy and comedy; and it has been the great mistake of actors that they have too often brought with them into the drama of ordinary life the style they have been accustomed to in the drama of ideal life" (Lewes 103). In *No Name,* Magdalen makes the mistake of bringing the drama of ideal life into the drama of ordinary life. She must learn to adjust her acting style from the melodramatic to the naturalistic, and even further, she must adopt the "coat and waistcoat realism." Lewes's focus on items of clothing makes his phrase an apt one for my project; the servant impersonator must attempt to create a sense of realism precisely through the accuracy of her costume.

In the first of her disguises, impersonating her own governess Miss Garth, Magdalen finds it difficult to transition from an acting style that is appropriate to the stage, to an acting

style suited to the subtler performance of social manners in a drawing room. Magdalen is "fully alive to the vast difference between a disguise worn by gas-light for the amusement of an audience and a disguise assumed by daylight to deceive the searching eyes of two strangers," but she cannot make the shift immediately. "The art which succeeded by gas-light failed by day." (*No Name* 217) The contrast between daylight and gaslight emphasizes the artificial nature of the stage as opposed to the untheatrical authenticity of "real life."[32] To succeed in daylight, Magdalen must make her costume, manner, and makeup subtler and more naturalistic: more like Julia, less like Lucy. In this endeavor she ultimately succeeds, because she realizes that performances in daylight can be just as calculated and duplicitous as those enacted in gaslight.

In her final and most audacious imposture, Magdalen switches places with her maid Louisa, who in turn got her place using a false character. Instead of being angry with her maid for deceiving her, Magdalen is sympathetic. "In your place I should have gone into service with a false character too," Magdalen assures her (*No Name* 498). Magdalen sympathizes with Louisa because she has also played roles under false pretenses, and because Louisa is the mother of an illegitimate child whose father cannot marry her for financial reasons, just as Magdalen's parents could not get married. In exchange for the money to marry her child's father and emigrate, Louisa agrees to tutor Magdalen in a servant's duties, and help her gain a position as parlour maid in the house of Admiral Bartram. When Louisa protests that she cannot pass herself off as a lady, Magdalen responds, "Shall I tell you what a lady is? A lady is a woman who wears a silk gown, and has a sense of her own importance" (*No Name* 503). Reducing the societal role of respectable lady to the silk gown and the performance of superiority, Magdalen essentially

[32] Though, ironically, the advent of gaslight and the dimming of the lights in theaters—which encouraged a divide between audience and stage, was a relatively recent innovation. Gaslight was introduced to the two legitimate theaters in London in 1817. Previously, there would have been less distinction between audience and actors, because the lights in the theater were not dimmed and the stage was not so brightly illuminated.

claims that social roles are "skins to jump into" (to use Captain Wragge's phrase), requiring only practice or good acting skills in order to pull them off. Her belief that class cross-dressing works both ways is truly radical; Louisa can become a lady as easily as Magdalen can become a maid.

Magdalen stresses the importance of appearance in the hiring of a domestic servant, as in the choice of a wife. Sexual attractiveness is an important qualification for both positions. "My good looks are sadly gone off, I know. But I think I can still look the parlour-maid whom Admiral Bartram wants" (*No Name* 504). Though Magdalen practices the duties and skills of a parlour-maid that she learned from Louisa, clothing and good looks are the crucial prerequisites to passing oneself off as a servant. Collins implies that sexuality was part of the performance of servitude for female domestics. Magdalen's servant "costume" at St. Crux is deliberately alluring:

> In this servant's costume—in the plain gown fastening high round her neck, in the neat little white cap at the back of her head—in this simple dress, to the eyes of all men, not linen-drapers, at once the most modest and the most alluring that a woman can wear, the sad changes which mental suffering had wrought in her beauty almost disappeared from view. In the evening costume of a lady, with her bosom uncovered, with her figure armed, rather than dressed, in unpliable silk, the admiral might have passed her by without notice in his own drawing-room. In the evening costume of a servant, no admirer of beauty could have looked at her once and not have turned again to look at her for the second time. (*No Name* 511)

In this passage, the narrator suggests that the costume of a servant is more "alluring" than that of a well-dressed lady in evening clothes. The attraction seems to lie in the supposedly more

"pliable" nature of the servant's dress and the sexual availability (or vulnerability) it implies.[33] The narrative confirms that Magdalen's performance of the sexualized servant maid succeeds; both Admiral Bartram and his servant Old Mazey are captivated by her, and the other female servants instinctively dislike her. Admiral Bartram also clearly expects "Louisa" to be pliable, and to reshape her identity in order to please him, giving Magdalen/Louisa yet another new name: "What's your name, my good girl? Louisa, is it? I shall call you Lucy, if you don't mind" (*No Name* 512). This new name is also an old one: Magdalen again assumes the name of the servant character she played in the domestic theatricals, circling back to the role of Lucy. Ironically, the woman who got her position as a servant in his household under an assumed name immediately changes it for another at the whim of her master. Taking a new name and assuming a new identity is only a crime when it is the servant's choice, rather than the master's order.

This impersonation, like all of Magdalen's impostures, ultimately fails. In the end, as in *Bleak House*, the topsy-turvy world of theatricality gives way to narrative closure. The real servant triumphs over the false one; Old Mazey catches Magdalen red-handed (literally, with the Secret Trust in her hand). Magdalen is punished, as a conventional fallen women, with a severe fever. Strong male figures are restored to power; Magdalen is rescued by the rugged Captain Kirke, captain of the aptly named ship The Deliverance. Magdalen transforms from a Fantomina into a Pamela; she confesses her sins to Captain Kirke via an epistolary message (to which the reader has no access, however; her interiority is still opaque to us), and is rewarded for her penitence when the gallant captain asks her to marry him. And the novelistic heroine wins out over the theatrical heroine; Norah finds the Secret Trust by accident, and marries George Bertram, the eventual heir to her father's fortune.

[33] The trope of the servant girl whose beauty is set off by "plain" or "simple" dress, of course, goes back to Richardson's *Pamela* (1742) whose "country garb" is so alluring to Mr. B. And the sexual allure or availability of the servant is a major theme in *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), a major 18th century text about servant impersonation.

So far, so didactic. And yet, Victorian reviewers found Magdalen's punishment light in proportion to her transgressions. Why did the Victorians find Magdalen such a dangerous character? After all, she is *not* the fallen woman her name implies; sexual promiscuity is not one of her crimes. Nevertheless, reviews of *No Name* reveal a pattern of vituperation against Magdalen. An unsigned review for the *Athenaeum* complained,

> Magdalen, the perverse heroine, whose heart-wrongs and strong desire to right a cruel injustice caused by her and her sister's illegitimacy led her into crime, falsehood, imposture, to the verge of theft even, is let off with a punishment gentle in proportion to the unscrupulous selfishness of her character: a period of agonized remorse and admitted failure—an illness which brings her to death's door; but she is then dismissed to restored fortune, and marriage with a man worth ten thousand of the fickle and feeble creature on whom her affections had at first fixed fast. (3 January 1863; Norman Page 131)

Margaret Oliphant, with her finger on the pulse of Victorian respectability, similarly lamented:

> Mr. Wilkie Collins...has chosen, by way of making his heroine piquant and interesting... to throw her into a career of vulgar and aimless trickery and wickedness, with which it is impossible to have a shadow of sympathy, but from all the pollutions of which he intends us to believe that she emerges, at the cheap cost of a fever, as pure, as high-minded, and as spotless as the most dazzling white of heroines. The Magdalen of *No Name* does not go astray after the usual fashion of erring maidens in romance. Her pollution is decorous, and justified by law; and after all her endless deceptions and horrible marriage, it seems quite

> right to the author that she should be restored to society, and have a good husband and a happy home. ("Novels" 170)

I quote from these reviews at length because both reviewers use strikingly similar language to identify Magdalen's crimes, her insufficient punishment, and her undeserved reward. In these reviews, it appears that being an actress is as bad as being a fallen woman,[34] especially when the actress uses her skills to deceive a man into marrying her. Oliphant is also angered by the fact that Magdalen *isn't* a fallen woman (she is not your typical "erring maiden"), and so her pollution is "justified by law." Her sins are explicitly *not* sexual; she wants the money and societal recognition she feels she deserves. The idea of restoring such an actress to fortune and society angers both reviewers. A fallen woman can repent and be rehabilitated, but a theatrical conception of identity arouses deep anxieties in Victorian readers.

I have argued so far that Magdalen destabilizes the typical notions of character, not only by impersonating other characters, but by remaining opaque to any efforts to penetrate her interiority or analyze her psychology. Even Magdalen's repentance and rehabilitation is not sparked by her own personal decision or moral choice; she doesn't have a conversion moment or a sudden conviction of wrong doing. Her efforts merely fail to attain their end, and she "emerges" (to borrow Oliphant's phrase) from this failure a changed character. She tears up the Secret Trust and promises to part with her past life "as I have parted with those torn morsels of paper," but Magdalen has committed an unforgivable sin: she exposed the hypocrisy of Victorian respectability, and the fundamentally theatrical basis of social roles. By performing convincingly as servant, wife, and actress, Magdalen confirmed Thackeray's misogynist assertion regarding

[34] The Victorian prejudice against the actress was surprisingly persistent. In 1898, Clement Scott declared, "It is really impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession. Everything is against her. The freedom of life, speech and gesture which is the rule behind the curtain render it almost impossible for a woman to preserve the simplicity of manner which is her greatest charm. Her whole life is artificial and unnatural to the last degree. Therefore it is an unhealthy life to live." ("This Way to the Pit" 164).

Becky Sharp, the actress/heroine of *Vanity Fair*: “The best of women...are hypocrites. We don't know how much they hide from us: how watchful they are when they seem most artless and confidential: how often those frank smiles which they wear so easily, are traps to cajole or elude or disarm—I don't mean in your mere coquettes, but your domestic models, and paragons of female virtue” (Thackeray 167).

Fanny Price, of *Mansfield Park*, is one of those domestic models, as well as being a heroine according to the realist tradition; her interiority is more striking than her actions. She is a conscientious objector to amateur theatricals, and refuses to participate. In reward for her virtue and resolution, Fanny finally marries her cousin, Edmund Bertram. Magdalen, by contrast, embraces domestic theatricals wholeheartedly, and later tricks her cousin Noel into marrying her. Magdalen is no Fanny Price. In fact, she is more like the handsome rake and consummate actor Henry Crawford. Whereas Fanny declares, “I cannot act,” Henry anticipates Magdalen’s declaration that she could “act every part in the play”: “I really believe,” said he, “I could be fool enough at this moment to undertake any character that ever was written, from Shylock or Richard III down to the singing hero of a farce in his scarlet coat and cocked hat. I feel as if I could be any thing or every thing, as if I could rant and storm, or sigh, or cut capers in any tragedy or comedy in the English language” (qtd. Barish 306). Henry’s theatrical ability is a sign of his mutability and weak moral character; Magdalen’s performances reveal the theatrical underpinnings of respectability and virtue. For Collins, character is a performance, rather than the expression of interiority or inwardness. In a sensation novel like *No Name*, establishing the interiority of the characters is not the point; instead Collins creates dramatic incident and excitement, by establishing dramatic “scenes” and transforming the actress/heroine from one role

to another. Like Fanny Janauschek and Margaret Anglin, Magdalen is a quick-change artist whose "stunts" keep her audience enthralled.

"And He Never Called Me Mother": The Invisible Labor of Mothers, and Maternity as Spectacle in East Lynne

Because of the long exposure time required for early photographs, it was difficult to photograph children (at least when they were alive!) because they have trouble holding still for long periods of time. To solve this problem, photographers often had mothers pose with their children in photographs. But oddly enough, these mothers and caretakers are concealed beneath a curtain or a sheet of drapery, or disguised as a chair. Far from being anomalous, thousands of such portraits have been collected into a book by Linda Fregni Nagler: *The Hidden Mother* (Figure 10). These photographs attempt to conceal the mother and efface her labor, yet her presence as an invisible worker is obvious. These portraits are highly theatrical (like most Victorian photography), staging the swathed mother as a backdrop or prop, but also asking the viewer to suspend his disbelief and pretend that she isn't there. In effect, the photographer turns the mother into an object: as functional as a chair or curtain. By doing so, these photographs highlight the vanishing act of motherhood in the mid-nineteenth century: presumed to be the moral center of the domestic sphere, mothers were non-entities as far as legal matters were concerned, and the duties of motherhood were divided into paid and unpaid labor that was shared with domestic servants. It is unclear in these photographs if the concealed woman is the mother or a servant, and that is precisely the point.

Figure 10: Two Portraits from Linda Fregni Nagler's book, The Hidden Mother *(2013)*

The adulterous heroine of Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861-1862) is also a mother hidden in plain sight. After leaving her home with her lover, Isabel returns to tend to her children, disguised as a governess. Lady Isabel's disguise reveals the contradictions inherent in the definition of motherhood in the mid-Victorian period. Mothers were expected to be totally devoted to their children, and yet had no legal rights to custody if their husbands divorced or separated from them for any reason. Even after Caroline Norton's famous campaigns of the 1830s, only wealthier mothers could afford to petition the court to consider custody. For middle- and upper-class women, motherhood was a full-time unpaid vocation, and yet the everyday dirty-work of raising children was often consigned to working-class women such as governesses and

nursemaids, who were paid for their services. By disguising the mother as a servant or working woman, Wood reveals the inconsistencies in the ideological, social, and legal definitions of motherhood.

Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* dramatizes the anxieties of a society rocked by legislative change to definitions of marriage and the questioning of traditional domestic roles for women. The recently passed Matrimonial Causes Act (1857) made divorces easier to obtain, especially for men.[35] As with many innovations in science, technology, and law in the nineteenth century, this new law clashed with older accepted beliefs, in this case with biblical injunctions against divorce. The novel's sensational plot revolves around the heroine's departure from and return to East Lynne, her ancestral home. Both times Isabel Vane leaves and returns to East Lynne, she suffers a fall in class status. Born into the house as an aristocrat, Isabel leaves it penniless when her dissolute father dies. She returns to the house as the wife of Archibald Carlyle, the middle-class lawyer who has bought the house. She leaves her husband, her children, and the house later in the book, seduced by an aristocratic villain who convinces her that her husband is in love with a neighbor named Barbara (the ultimate "girl next door" stereotype). Archibald divorces Isabel when she commits adultery, but he still waits to get remarried until he learns of her death in a sensational train accident. That news turns out to be false; Isabel is disfigured by the accident, but not killed. Divorced and repentant, Isabel returns to the house once more, disguised as a governess, and using the pseudonym "Madame Vine," in order to be near her children again. The "cross she must bear" as punishment for her adultery, is to remain in the household incognito. Isabel cannot reveal herself to her children, or to her husband, who is now married to Barbara. In one of the novel's most dramatic scenes, Isabel tends her son as he dies of consumption, and

[35] Men only had to prove adultery on the wife's part, whereas women suing for divorce had to provide evidence of additional "aggravated cruelty" on the part of the husband.

cannot reveal to him that she is his mother. Wood's novel has all the titillation of a bigamy plot, even though bigamy was no longer a major issue at this time. When Archibald discovers the deception, he feels he has committed bigamy, according to his Christian beliefs, if not according to secular law.[36]

In addition to the anxieties surrounding the definition of marriage in the face of new divorce laws, the novel draws attention to the newly tenuous position of the mother in the Victorian home. Wood's novel raises the question: What constitutes adequate compensation—legal, monetary, societal—for the multivalent labor of motherhood—emotional, physical, psychological? Victorian readers found themselves sympathizing with Isabel in spite of their better judgment, showing that sympathies were shifting in favor of the mother, and that the ideology of separate spheres was breaking down. The image of Isabel suffering in silence at the deathbed of her child drew on the conventions of melodrama to the confusion of Victorian morality. Isabel's suffering struck a chord with Victorian readers, and her story was so popular that it was adapted numerous times for the stage, becoming one of the most famous melodramas of the Victorian period. In theatrical adaptations of *East Lynne*, audiences' sympathy for Isabel's plight (in spite of her status as an adulterous fallen woman) was even more pronounced.

Playing the role of governess to her own children, Isabel simultaneously dramatizes the plight of the mother and the predicament of the governess. Mary Poovey argues that the governess poses a threat to the ideology of separate spheres; she blurs the boundaries between

[36] However, it is important to note that New Testament teachings are divided on the subject. It depends on whether you read the gospel of Mark, where Jesus states, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her," (Mark 10:11, KJV), or the gospel of Matthew, where the corresponding statement includes an important exception clause: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery" (Matthew 19:9, KJV). The exception clauses permits divorce in cases of adultery, whereas the first statement admits of no such exceptions. Archibald Carlyle clearly adheres to the stricter commandment. The strictness of his adherence to the more restrictive of the two Biblical interpretations is even more interesting because Carlyle is a lawyer by profession.

the public sphere of work (an economic system based on the exchange of money, goods and services), and the private sphere of the home (an affective economy in which emotional and moral transactions are paramount) (See Poovey 127). The anomalous position of the governess was a rich subject for fiction, and Isabel is the direct literary descendent of Jane Eyre, among other heroines. Lady Eastlake's review of *Jane Eyre* is infamous for its condemnation of the novel as an "anti-Christian composition" whose heroine is an "unregenerate and undisciplined spirit," but in a less frequently quoted passage, Lady Eastlake provides a lengthy plea on behalf of the "cause of governesses," who were of necessity drawn from the downwardly mobile classes in order to have the necessary skills and refinement that qualified them for the position, as well as the pecuniary need for a profession: the governess "is a needy lady…[who] is left to the mercy…of the family that engages her" (Eastlake 173, 176, 179). The family that employs a governess is benefitting from the misfortunes of others. The governess was also a peculiarly isolated figure, since she was more educated and better bred than most of the servants, but was required to observe the "invisible but rigid line" separating her from her employers (Eastlake 177). While Eastlake sympathized with the privations of the governess's situation, she also argued that the employment of a governess negatively affects the mother, by leaving her nothing to do with her time:

> Women, whose husbands leave them in peace from morning till night, for counting-houses or lawyers' offices—certainly leave them with nothing better to do than to educate and attend to their children—must now, forsooth, be keeping ill-paid governesses for those duties which one would hope a peeress only unwillingly relinquishes. Women, from whom society requires nothing but that they should quietly and unremittingly do that for which their station offers them

> the happy leisure, must now treat themselves to one of those *pro-mammas* who, owing to various causes, more or less distressing, have become so plentiful that they may be had *cheap*! If more governesses find a penurious maintenance by these means, more mothers are encouraged to neglect those duties, which, one would have thought, they would have been as jealous of as of that first duty of all that infancy requires from them. (Eastlake 180, emphasis original)

Of course, this portion of Eastlake's rant is more applicable to Isabel's situation than to Jane Eyre's plight. Archibald leaves Isabel alone all day when he goes to his lawyer's office, and she has nothing productive to do with her time, since his sister Cornelia acts as a sort of governess who manages the children. According to Eastlake, such an arrangement is harmful to both governess and mother: the governess is underpaid, and the mother has no useful occupation. The neologism "pro-mamma" points to the simultaneous professionalization of motherhood that the governess represents, and the evacuation of the actual mother's duties. Lady Eastlake points out that hiring a governess is a marker of class-status; in essence, the family is buying the mother's leisure time when it pays a governess (however little). By combining the roles of biological mother with governess in the person of Lady Isabel, Wood is making a similar commentary to Lady Eastlake: the novel points to the burdens each role creates for women, while imagining a way in which the two roles might be (re)combined into one. Lady Isabel was a highly sympathetic figure for Victorian readers and audiences across the class spectrum; no matter the reader's class status, she could likely sympathize with some aspect of Lady Isabel's experience.

Elizabeth Steere interprets Isabel's downward social mobility in a largely positive light, arguing that "When she plays the role of 'Madame Vine' the governess, Isabel is paradoxically allowed more mobility within her home and is less subject to surveillance than she was as a

lady" (Steere 117). Steere claims that Isabel's disguise is part of the "bourgeois ethos of self-help" and that her fall in class status allows her to work towards the kind of role as a mother that she chooses for herself, rather than following the expectations prescribed for her. It is true that Isabel is allowed more proximity to her children as a governess, than she was as a middle-class wife; the class-based definition of motherhood dictates that upper-class women delegate the dirty work of child-rearing to lower-class women. However, it is going too far to say that Isabel "actively takes control of her own life and becomes an autonomous woman," by impersonating a governess (Steere 59). Such an optimistic reading neglects the long passages in the novel describing Isabel's physical and emotional suffering, as well as her lack of freedom to express her love for her children and Archibald openly when she is in disguise. In place of Steere's rose-colored glasses, I would like to replace the blue glasses of Madame Vine that allow Isabel to see the gendered power dynamics of the domestic sphere in a new light.[37] Isabel's disguise reveals that the ideology of separate spheres (public, economic, male vs. domestic, affective, female) breaks down because motherhood is bifurcated into paid and unpaid labor, with the mother as moral influence or angel in the house, and the governess as surrogate mother who is paid for her services.

East Lynne illustrates the contest between overlapping and sometimes conflicting legal, moral, and economic or class-based definitions of motherhood. The mother was endowed with great moral authority within the household, but granted little or no legal protection. She was the model on which character is based, according to authors of conduct books, such as Sarah Lewis and Samuel Smiles. "The moral destinies of the world," Lewis declares grandly, in *Woman's Mission*, "depend not so much upon institutions, or upon education as upon moral influence. The

[37] The glasses are variously described as blue and green in different parts of the novel, but are only one part of the elaborate disguise Isabel assumes.

most powerful of all moral influences is the maternal." (qtd. Maunder ed. 727) Samuel Smiles similarly opines,

> It is because the mother, far more than the father, influences the actions and conduct of the child, that her good example is of so much greater importance in the home. It is easy to understand how this should be so. The home is the woman's domain—her kingdom, where she exercises entire control. Her power over the little subjects she rules there is absolute. They look up to her for everything. She is the example and model constantly before their eyes, whom they unconsciously observe and imitate. (Smiles 36)

Smiles succinctly summarizes the ideology of separate spheres: "home is the woman's domain" where she exerts her influence, and exercises a measure of power and control. However, that power and control are dependent on her meeting expectations as a moral paragon, and she has no legal recourse if the husband can prove that she has not met those moral obligations. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 made divorces easier to obtain, but laws for infant custody that were favorable to women were not put in place until 1873. *East Lynne* dramatizes the anxieties surrounding this change in the laws, which created a rift between legal and traditional definitions of marriage and motherhood.

In addition to the shifting legal terrain surrounding motherhood, there was a gap between lower- and upper-class expectations for mothers. Lower class women did not have the luxury of dividing the duties of motherhood into paid and unpaid labor, though they could share their labors with other female relatives. The duties of motherhood for middle- and upper-class women were often delegated to governesses and other servants. The mother was expected to be the moral paragon that the children imitated, but the governess would do most of the dirty work of raising

and teaching the children. Isabel resents this separation when she is an upper-class mother. When she wants to take the children to the seaside with her, her husband and sister-in-law will not allow it. Ironically, when Isabel returns to East Lynne as the governess Madame Vine, she has more access to the children and more liberty to express her emotions around them. Isabel and Barbara present two alternative models of motherhood. Ironically, as a born aristocrat, Isabel desires the closer bond associated with an attachment model of parenting, whereas the middle-class Barbara aspires to a more aristocratic version of motherhood:

> "Now, what I trust I shall never give up to another, will be the *training* of my children...Let the offices, properly belonging to a nurse, be performed by the nurse—of course, taking care that she is thoroughly to be depended on. Let her have the *trouble* of the children, their noise, their romping; in short, let the nursery be her place and the children's place. But I hope I shall never fail to gather my children round me daily, at stated periods, for higher purposes, to instill into them Christian and moral duties; to strive to teach them how best to fulfil life's obligations. *This* is a mother's task—as I understand the question; let her do this work well, and the nurse can attend to the rest." (Wood 464-465, original emphasis)

Barbara perfectly articulates the ideology of separate spheres Samuel Smiles outlines, as if she is the personification of a Victorian conduct book. She argues that the mother is an important moral influence, but distinguishes between "training" and "trouble" (i.e. work). The mother should ideally not be a worker within the home, according to this logic, but rather a teacher and model

to imitate.[38] And yet Victorian reviewers disliked Barabara, even though she articulates orthodox views of motherhood, and found themselves sympathizing with Isabel in spite of themselves.

Victorian reviewers who had difficulties with Collins's Magdalen had equal trouble with Wood's "Magdalen," though for opposite reasons. The heroine of *No Name* is not a fallen woman, but reviewers thought she deserved a harsher punishment; Wood's heroine, by contrast, *is* an adulterous fallen woman, and yet Victorian readers and reviewers sympathized with her in spite of their better judgment. Margaret Oliphant, the same reviewer who said it was "impossible to have a shadow of sympathy" with Collins's actress heroine Magdalen, was begrudgingly fascinated by Lady Isabel:

> [The novel] is occupied with the story of a woman who permitted herself, in passion and folly, to be seduced from her husband. From first to last, it is she alone in whom the reader feels any interest. Her virtuous rival we should like to bundle to the door and be rid of anyhow. The Magdalen herself, who is only moderately interesting while she is good, becomes, as soon as she is a Magdalen, doubly a heroine. It is evident that nohow, except by her wickedness and sufferings, could she have gained so strong a hold upon our sympathies. This is dangerous and foolish work, as well as false, both to Art and Nature. Nothing can be more wrong and fatal than to represent the flames of vice as a purifying, fiery

[38] Questions surrounding class, labor, and motherhood continue to vex us in the 21st century, though for very different reasons. A lively debate centers around the question of whether stay-at-home motherhood is regressive from a feminist standpoint, or whether it can be reclaimed as a choice of vocation that women should be empowered to make. In an exposé of the lives of wealthy mothers on the Upper East Side in Manhattan, Wednesday Martin is horrified that some women receive "wife bonuses," or payments from their husbands in exchange for satisfactory performance of their "job." In response, Amanda Marcotte argues that if we want to think of stay-at-home motherhood as a full-time job, we shouldn't be so incensed by the idea of "wife bonuses." However, she fails to acknowledge that women with husbands wealthy enough to pay them such dividends likely also employ household help such as housekeepers, nannies, aux pairs, or cleaning ladies. (See Martin, "Poor Little Rich Women," and Marcotte, "What's Wrong with 'Wife Bonuses'?") Also relevant to the question of motherhood, economics and labor is the debate surrounding the issue of paid maternity leave.

> ordeal, through which the penitent is to come elevated and sublimed. ("Sensation Novels" 567)

Oliphant admits that Barbara, Isabel's "virtuous rival" is not sympathetic, and is in fact rather irritating. Isabel manages to wrest the story away from Barbara, as deftly as Magdalen steals the limelight from her "good" sister, Norah. *East Lynne* is ostensibly a cautionary tale, deterring wives and mothers from committing adultery, but the heroine's excessive suffering and emotion work against the didactic purpose of the text. The depiction of the character's suffering, as Oliphant notes, gains a hold upon the reader's sympathy in spite of the narrator's efforts to make her situation seem undesirable. Wood presents her moral tale in the form of a sensational story, which appeals to the sympathetic emotions aroused by bodily experience, rather than to the cognitive functions necessary to the formulation and comprehension of social orthodoxies. The character of Isabel transcended the moral context of the story, and the novel got out of Wood's control, not least because it was ultimately popularized by its adaptations for the stage.

East Lynne's melodramatic plot made it a rich source for dramatic material, and adaptations of Wood's novel were immensely popular. According to the British Library, "a staged version of *East Lynne* was performed somewhere in the English-speaking world every Saturday night for forty years."[39] Like sensation fiction, melodrama appeals primarily to the "nerves," body, and emotions, rather than to the cognitive functions. As Peter Brooks points out, melodrama relies heavily on gesture to express the emotions of its characters, and muteness is a common theme in melodrama—for both thematic and formal reasons.[40] Brooks writes that "[the

[39] See British Library website: "Learning: English Timeline, Melodrama: East Lynne by Ellen Wood" http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item126924.html (web, accessed 18 May 2015)

[40] In England, the Licensing Act of 1737 restricted the performance of "legitimate spoken drama" to two patent theaters, Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Carolyn Williams writes, "All other theatrical productions were deemed 'illegitimate,' and they could not be performed at all, unless they highlighted their difference from spoken drama. Many inventive ways were found to evade this restriction" (C. Williams 198). In the case of melodrama, a set of

inarticulate cry and gesture] mark a kind of fault or gap in the code [of language], the space that marks its inadequacies to convey a full freight of emotional meaning. In the silence of this gap, the language of presence and immediacy, the primal language, is born anew" (Brooks 67). Melodrama champions the powerless and dispossessed, and often represents this lack of agency as muteness. Isabel approximates the mute figure of melodrama in *East Lynne*; her subordinate status as servant and her position as an imposter prevent her from expressing her emotions, which she vents in gesture, tears, and inarticulate cries, as well as involuntary physiological responses such as blushing. In the famous scene of Willie's death, Isabel's grief transcends language, and must also be suppressed in the presence of her husband and the household:

> Down on her knees, her face buried in the counterpane, a corner of its stuffed into her mouth that it might help to stifle her agony, knelt Lady Isabel. The moment's excitement was well-nigh beyond her power of endurance. Her own child; his child; they alone around its death-bed, and she might not ask or receive from him a word of comfort, of consolation! (Wood 649)

Isabel is literally, enforcedly mute; she has a blanket in her mouth! "Mute gesture is an expressionistic means," writes Brooks, "to render meanings which are ineffable, but nonetheless operative within the sphere of human ethical relationships" (Brooks 72). Isabel's sufferings often exceed the capacity of speech; the narrator, by contrast, is never at a loss for words. The novel's narrator provides a verbal gloss on Isabel's mute gestures. *East Lynne* borrows these mute gestures and expressionistic emotions from melodrama, making it unsurprising that the novel was easy to adapt for the stage. Isabel's maternal emotions appealed to the sympathy of readers

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coded gestures and music supplied the expression in place of speech. Though the licensing act was repealed in 1843, the aesthetic effects and formal elements of melodrama remained popular and influential in British theater.

via the nerves of the body, whereas the narrator attempts to appeal to their sense of morality and social norms.

Ann Cvetkovich argues that sensation is a conservative force: “Rather than leading to social change, the expression of feeling can become an end in itself or an individualist solution to systemic problems” (Cvetkovich 1). However, theatrical adaptations of *East Lynne* show that sympathy can be a subversive and progressive force. Victorian readers and reviewers sympathized with Lady Isabel in spite of her departure from Victorian ideals of womanhood. Theatrical adaptations allowed audiences to sympathize even more freely with Lady Isabel than readers of the novel were able to do, because in a theatrical production, the voice of the didactic narrator is removed. Additionally, Lady Isabel’s suffering has to be openly expressed as direct address to the audience, rather than by means of free indirect discourse or indirect reporting of thoughts. And thirdly, the physical embodiment of the actress onstage enlists the audience’s sympathies in a more direct way than the fictional character comprised of words on the page. Elizabeth McClure points out that “sympathy is understood as primarily emotional and imaginative,” but she argues that “There is another strand of nineteenth-century thinking, however, that connects sympathy to more physiological processes, even going so far as to root the emotional experience of sympathy in the physiological processes of the body” (McClure 12). Conservative critics were quick to point out that sensation fiction appeals to the non-rational (and therefore dangerously amoral or even immoral) elements of bodily experience. “Sensation writing is an appeal to the nerves rather than to the heart,” opined a writer in *The Christian Remembrancer* in 1864. The visual and audible elements of a theatrical performance appealed directly to the audience’s sympathy via the physicality of the dramatic medium and the embodiment of the actress on stage.

Even the climactic scene of the narrative shifted between novel and stage adaptation. On 29 May 1862, Wood wrote a letter to her publisher about the illustrations to accompany the 6-shilling, one-volume edition of *East Lynne*. She complained about both the quality of the illustrations and the selection of scenes chosen to be illustrated; insisting, "I urged upon Mr Bentley, both to himself personally and by letter that the chief illustration ought to be the principle scene of the book which is, beyond doubt, the death scene of Lady Isabel—where she is parting with Mr Carlyle" (qtd. Maunder ed. 696-697). Wood may have considered Isabel's death scene the principle scene of the book, but audiences of theatrical adaptations were most affected by the melodramatic deathbed scene of Isabel and Carlyle's child William; this scene is often represented on promotional posters and ephemeral advertising for productions of the plays (Figure 11). It is no accident that one of the most famous and oft-quoted lines from this novel actually comes from Palmer's dramatic adaptation, and that this line expresses, not a judgment on Isabel, but Isabel's poignant grief that her child died while she was disguised as a servant: "Oh, Willie, my child dead, dead, dead! and he never knew me, never called me mother!" (Scullion 336). This line never occurs in the novel, but became engrained in the popular imagination, due to the popularity of Palmer's adaptation. Though Palmer's line might strike us as overly melodramatic and verbose, the first-person utterance is more direct and affecting than the stilted prose and indirect third-person speech in Wood's novel, where the equivalent of this line reads: "Beseeching him to come back to her that she might say farewell; to her, his mother; her darling child, her lost William." (Wood 652) Wood's line effaces Isabel as the subject of the sentence, reducing her to the pronoun "her." Palmer's line, by contrast, uses direct address; Isabel states her feelings to the audience using the first-person pronoun. This scene struck a nerve for Victorian audiences, and was the one that reviewers tended to focus on. The drama

critic for the *Nottingham Daily Guardian* reported the powerful effect the actress had on her audience, performing this scene:

> Miss Robertson as the Lady Isabel acted with pathos and power that were most impressive, thoroughly enlisting the sympathies of the audience. She was especially affecting in the scene where the Lady Isabel tends the death bed of her darling boy and may not own her child. The anguish of a mother under this cruel prohibition was touchingly delineated. (qtd. Maunder ed. 742, see Figure 11 for scene, and Figure 12 for actress)

The reviewer's choice of words is telling; "the sympathies of the audience" are enlisted on behalf of the mother, who suffers "anguish...under this cruel prohibition." Rather than moralize about Isabel's sins, and view Isabel's suffering as a just punishment, the reviewers and audience merely see a suffering mother, who because of the cruel prohibition of the laws of custody, must resort to disguise in order to be with her dying child. This shift in sympathies is a result of the adaptation of *East Lynne* from didactic novel to melodramatic play; without a narrative voice to comment on Isabel's actions, audiences are more likely to extend their sympathy to the adulterous mother. Like a more garrulous and less philosophical version of George Eliot's magisterial narrative voice,

Figure 11: "Ada Gray in the New East Lynne," promotional poster featuring the iconic scene of Willie's death, circa 1894

Wood's sententious narrator does not shy away from directly addressing the reader and telling her (the reader is almost always gendered female in *East Lynne*) how to judge the characters' actions, and apply the lessons gleaned from the plot to her own life. The tone and rhetoric of the narrator is often reminiscent of the conduct manuals for wives and mothers that were so popular during this period. Here are two representative passages in which Wood's narrator directly addresses the female reader:

> Young lady, when he, who is soon to be your lord and master, protests to you that he shall always be as ardent a lover as he is now, believe him if you like, but don't reproach him when disappointment comes. (Wood 247)
>
> Oh, reader, believe me! Lady—wife—mother! should you ever be tempted to abandon your home, so will you waken! Whatever trials may be the lot of your married life, though they may magnify themselves to your crushed spirit as beyond the endurance of woman to bear, resolve to bear them... (Wood 334)

In William's deathbed scene in the novel, the narrator likewise holds Isabel up as a negative example; don't commit adultery and leave your children if you don't want to suffer like Isabel does. Isabel recollects her worst fears for her marriage, and how her jealousy of Barbara brought these fears to fruition:

> She, dead; Barbara exalted to her place, Mr. Carlyle's wife, her child's stepmother!... But it had all come to pass. She had brought it forth. Not Mr Carlyle; not Barbara; she alone. Oh, the dreadful misery of the retrospect! (Wood 652)

Though the narrative voice utilizes free indirect discourse, Isabel crucially never says any of this out loud. But in the dramatic version of the play, the didactic voice of the narrator is removed,

Figure 12: Madge Kendal (née Robertson) and her husband William Kendal, who portrayed Isabel and Archibald Carlyle in T. A. Palmer's adaptation of East Lynne (photo circa 1878, Victoria & Albert Museum)

and the audience is left only with direct, dramatic utterance and unmediated emotion. The image of Isabel kneeling at the side of her son's deathbed, when removed from the narrative context turning it into a cautionary tale, could be considered as powerful an appeal for the rights of divorced and separated mothers to custody of their children as any penned by Caroline Norton in the 1830s. Full custody rights were granted to mothers in England in 1873, one year before the staging of Palmer's adaptation; the tide of sympathy, both legal and literary, had turned in favor of the mother.

We see a similar movement of sympathy toward erring mothers in a contemporary theatrical adaptation of Dickens's *Bleak House*. We know that Sir Leicester Dedlock would have forgiven his wife, but she dies before she can receive this forgiveness. In H. A. Randle and Fanny Janauschek's 1874 dramatic adaptation of *Bleak House*, however, Sir Leicester accompanies Bucket and Esther and finds Lady Dedlock dying, but still alive. "May Heaven forgive you dearest wife even as I forgive," Sir Leicester absolves his wife before she dies, and urges her to "Begin the world, begin the world anew." Instead of closing a chapter, as it does in the novel, this is the last scene before the final curtain of the play. In this redemptive adaptation, the fallen woman can atone for her sins through suffering, rather than simply being punished for them. Though Dickens does not explicitly advocate for any changes in the laws regarding marriage and motherhood in *Bleak House*, the

characters and institutions that personify secular and religious law in the novel— Tulkinghorn, Chancery, and Esther's Aunt—are all represented as stultifying and deadening forces. By contrast, figures who represent forgiveness and regeneration in the novel—Esther, Woodcourt, Sir Leicester, and Jarndyce—have no interest in legal matters of crime and punishment, but rather in healing and growth. However, the novel leaves it an open question whether Lady Dedlock's death is a punishment for her sins. But by 1874, when Randle's theatrical adaptation was staged, audiences were more receptive to the idea that a fallen woman could be redeemed. The husband's forgiveness of his wife's sexual indiscretions moves from an unfulfilled possibility in the novel to a tangible and fulfilled reality in the play.

"In Cap and Apron": The Rise of the New Woman and the Decline of Servanthood

Thirty years after Mrs. Paschal made her debut as one of the first "lady detectives," an American journalist named Elizabeth Banks published a book called *Campaigns of Curiosity* (1894), a firsthand account of Banks's investigations into the lives of working women in London. A "stunt journalist" in the manner of Nellie Bly, Banks was famous for her disguises, including a laundress, flower girl, crossing sweeper, but first and most famously, a housemaid for the "In Cap and Apron" series. Banks earned her living by her pen, producing sensational "copy" for the *The Weekly Sun* and other newspapers. Like Magdalen Vanstone and Isabel Vane, Banks got a job as a housemaid using a false character and a false name: Elizabeth Barrows. Banks's saucy journalistic persona aroused a heated debate about the appropriate boundaries of women's work, revealing anxieties about the increasingly artificial nature of the home as a theatrical space in which gender and class roles were acted with increasing self-consciousness.

We have seen the negative responses of reviewers to the fictional servant impersonators Magdalen Vanstone and Isabel Vane. The press reacted with equal vitriol to this real-life servant impersonator, but debates revolved not so much around the rights or wrongs of Banks's deception, but rather around the issue of her womanliness.[41] Did this female journalist depart from the rules of decorum governing her sex? Rather than training herself to become a "real" domestic servant, Banks always privileged her actual occupation of journalist, and saw her task as the collection of information, rather than the acquisition of domestic skills. Banks and one of her employers nearly came to blows over her inability to wash floors properly. Alice Meynell denounced Banks for her lack of femininity, appealing to readers of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "[does] there actually breathe a woman in whom the domestic instinct is so dead as this?"[42] The harsh disparagement of Banks's "campaign" in the press reveals the contested boundaries of legitimate forms of female employment. How could a woman appropriately earn her living in Victorian England? The critique of both the fictional character and the female journalist as "unwomanly" reveals the anxieties surrounding women's work, and the theatricality of the domestic sphere. Seth Koven astutely points out that "The rise of the female undercover reporter in the slums coincided not only with the mania for slumming in late-Victorian London but with the emergence of the New Woman both as a subject of fiction and as a way to talk about newly emerging constructions of femininity" (Koven 142).

[41] The critics of Banks's "Cap and Apron" series also triumphantly proclaimed that they had detected Banks's true nationality, through her usage of "vulgar American" phrases. Banks claimed in response that she had not intended to deceive, but merely to put the matter of nationality into the background:
'When I wrote my "In Cap and Apron" experiences for the Weekly Sun, I determined to say nothing about my nationality, and in correcting the proof I thought I divested the narrative of all obvious Americanisms. But, alas! it was the "wash bowls" and "pitchers" that betrayed me. "Does not Miss Banks know how to use proper English, that she says 'bowl' instead of basin, and 'pitcher' instead of jug?" wrote an irate matron to one of the papers, and the Editor of the Weekly Sun was severely criticised for allowing "vulgar American" to appear in its columns.' (Banks x).

[42] "The Wares of Autolycus," *Pall Mall Gazette* (November 22, 1893).

Even today, critics disparage Banks for the shallowness of her social commentary and the superficiality of her depiction of social issues. She employs humor so liberally that it is sometimes difficult to take her seriously. In response to a seamstress's claim that the domestic servant's cap and apron are "badges of slavery," Banks responds frivolously, "For my own part, I had always insisted that no Paris milliner could manufacture any headgear more becoming to the majority of women than the white ruffled cap of the domestic servant employed by members of the upper classes. A pretty maid, to my mind, was much prettier with a cap than without one, while the face of an ugly girl was also improved by it" (Banks 6).[43] Banks seems to be missing the point, and transforming an issue of labor conditions and standards of living into an issue of fashion. Similarly, it is easy to scoff at Banks when she refuses to take one situation because the potential mistress forbids her maids to wear their hair with a "fringe" (i.e. bangs). Banks's critique seems especially shallow when contrasted to with more serious investigations of domestic service coming out around the same time, such as Clementina Black's article "The Dislike to Domestic Service" (*The Nineteenth Century*, March 1893).

"ELIZABETH BARROWS," HOUSEMAID.
(*From a Photograph by the London Stereoscopic Company.*)

Figure 13: Studio Potrait of Elizabeth Banks as Elizabeth Barrows, Housemaid

But perhaps Banks's flighty and humorous persona conceals a deeper critique of the conditions of Victorian domestic service. Banks's impersonation of a domestic servant points to

[43] Once again, we see the paradoxical appeal of the maid servant's plain dress, as with Magdalen's use of the alluring maid's costume at St. Crux. Perhaps the legacy of this concept for our culture today is the "sexy maid" costume (usually of the French variety) so prevalent at Halloween and fancy dress occasions.

the theatricality of domestic service and the home as a theatrical space. Even Banks's elaborately posed studio photograph, which Seth Koven criticizes for being so overtly theatrical and fake, points to the idea of the servant as actress. In the staged photograph, we see Banks dressed in cap and apron, leaning demurely over a chair, a dusting cloth in her hand. She gazes out self-consciously at the viewer. A conservatory window, curtain and wood paneling frame the background, like the set on a stage. "They are clearly a show," Koven writes dismissively of the staged photographs in *Campaigns of Curiosity* (see Figure 13)—but perhaps, instead of thinking of the photographs as false, and domestic service as authentic, we can think of Banks's theatrical photographs as calling attention to the practice of domestic labor as a performance in itself (Koven 143).[44]

We can see domestic labor as performance in Bank's account of her time as a maid in the household of Mrs. Allison. At numerous points in her account, Banks (alias Elizabeth Barrows) suggests ideas for labor saving devices or practices to her mistress—including the use of a whisk broom instead of a short-bristled brush broom, the use of brown paper and a hot flat-iron to remove candle grease stains, and heating serving dishes in hot water rather than in the oven (to prevent cracking of the finish). Banks reasons that these improvements would not only to make labor easier for her maids, but would save money and thus benefit the employer as well. "If mistresses would devote more thought to this saving of labour," Banks reflects, "they would find they were at the same time lessening their household expenses by preventing an unnecessary

[44] Koven contrasts Banks's staged photographs of herself "playing" the roles of lower-class types with Jack London's photographic efforts to capture the reality of life in the East End in his journalistic exposé *The People of the Abyss*. Whereas Banks's portraits were staged in a studio and featured only herself as subject, London's photographs occur in the "real city streets, refuges, or workplaces" of East London, and only one of London's photographs features himself as subject, standing next to a lower-class hop picker (Koven, 142-143). However, London's photographs still call attention to the performative nature of his slumming expeditions. He claims that he can pass as a vagrant in the streets of London, without raising suspicion, but how could he manage to be totally inconspicuous and convincing as a vagrant while toting a Kodak?

outlay in servants' wages, for where work is made light, and quick methods employed, fewer servants are required" (Banks 36). Banks is puzzled by Mrs. Allison's refusal to adopt these suggestions. "The whole house seemed arranged in such a way as to make the work as hard as possible," Banks marvels (Banks 31).

Banks does not seem to realize that her mistress does not wish to reduce the number of servants because domestic staff were one of the most conspicuous forms of consumption. The more servants you can afford to pay, the wealthier you appear. In this way, the visibility of labor and the difficulty of labor are a sign of one's possessions. Critics often stress the invisibility of labor; in large houses, the servants were expected not to be seen during certain hours of the day, and to perform their labor when their employers were not using the rooms. But for *middle-class* employers of servants, this desire for invisibility was less pressing; the presence of servants was a marked display of status. This idea reverses the notion of "the theatrical performance of leisure" that Anne McClintock describes:

> Housewifery became a career in vanishing acts. A wife's vocation was not only to create a clean and productive family but also to ensure the skilled erasure of every sign of her work. Her life took shape around the contradictory imperative of laboring while rendering her labor invisible. Her success as a wife depended on her skill in the art of both working and appearing not to work. Her parlor game—the ritualized moment of appearing fresh, calm and idle before the scrutiny of husbands, fathers and visitors—was a theatrical performance of leisure, the ceremonial negation of her work. For most women from the still-disorganized middling classes, I suggest, idleness was less the absence of work than a conspicuous labor of leisure (McClintock 162).

Banks's account points to the opposite side of this coin; instead of the "conspicuous labor of leisure," Banks's exposé stresses the conspicuous consumption of labor. Banks is less interested in the "theatrical performance of leisure" and more in the theatrical performance of labor. Instead of installing a dumb waiter to carry pails of water and trays of food up and down stairs, Mrs. Allison would prefer to have her servants make the many trips, because the very visibility and arduousness of such tasks points to the difficulty of maintaining a large household.

Aside from labor-saving devices, Banks proposes several other reforms that might benefit domestic servants and their employers, including improvements to their meals ("A breakfast of bread-and-butter and coffee is not a proper one for a servant," Banks 86), the implementation of "thorough training for domestic work" (89), and the relaxation of rules against servants having "followers," or boyfriends. One of Banks's most extreme suggestions, however, is the implementation of references for employers, to tell servants whether they are good or bad to work for: "The time will come," Banks predicts, "when references will be demanded from the mistress as well as the maid. Then the Mrs. Allison type will not be so numerous" (Banks 46). Decreasing social legibility meant that Victorians experienced a crisis in reading character; there was no longer a straightforward relationship between clothing and character, or between the written character reference of the servant and his or her true character. But the crisis of reading character extended to masters and mistresses as well. It was no longer easy to tell who was rich or of high status, and who was faking it. Banks's idea that the future of domestic service will necessitate references on the part of the employer points to this crisis in the reading of character.

As every viewer of *Downton Abbey* knows, the institution of servanthood was on the way to extinction in the twentieth century. This decline happened for a number of reasons, and it is a matter of debate which was the ultimate cause. The "servant problem" had been an issue in the

press for centuries; perhaps people got tired of trying to reform the institution, and decided it had outlived its usefulness. The two world wars also democratized society by providing multiple occupations for women outside the home, which were more appealing than the "slavery" of domestic service. Lucy Lethbridge points out that the wars also dramatically reduced the number of privately owned country houses: "Country houses and their employers buckled under the weight of post-war taxation and death duties. Many of the houses had been left in ruinous states by their wartime occupants and the number of properties secured by the National Trust, including many of England's greatest country estates, was accelerated between 1939 and 1945" (Lethbridge 276-277). New labor-saving devices also made it easier for one woman to maintain a moderately sized house. But perhaps, in some small way, the literary trend of servant impersonation helped put this institution to bed, by revealing the performances of deference and labor required to prop up the institution, or the performative behavior it encouraged employers to adopt. Possibly the notion that servants donning "cap and apron" were actresses (literally, or figuratively) deterred people from inviting them into their homes.

CHAPTER TWO: PAINTED DISTRESS AND CHARITABLE ACTING: PERFORMING CLASS IN VICTORIAN SLUM NARRATIVES

The man emerges from the newsagents with his packet of cigarettes and his change in hand. Putting both into his jeans pocket, he pulls up his collar against the cold, as his eye is drawn to a figure—man, woman?—hard to tell at this distance—huddled on the sidewalk, leaning against the railings of a nearby park fence, wrapped in a dirty brown blanket. Propped against the figure, a cardboard sign appeals to passersby. The man lights a cigarette, jingles the change in his pocket, and walks forward. A familiar sight, the homeless. The man passes the figure, his eyes averted. Don't make eye contact, he thinks, glancing at the writing scrawled on the sign. "I need money for the homeless people of Amsterdam," the sign reads. The man raises his eyes, and is startled to see the painted plastic lips, the glued-on eyelashes of a department store mannequin. Just above the unblinking eyes, in the center of the waxy plastic, a slit has been cut, as in a piggy bank. The man breathes a sigh of relief. Feeling unusually altruistic, he digs the change out of his pocket, and slides the coins into the mannequin's forehead.

In the summer of 2014, the BADT (Belangenbehartiging Amsterdamse Dak-en Thuislozen, or "Advocacy for Amsterdam's Homeless"), a nonprofit organization in the Netherlands, "dressed up a number of mannequins in shabby clothing, and carved coin slots in their heads. The group then scattered them throughout the streets with signs asking for money to support the organization." (Goldberg n.p.) The organization's leaders argued that people would be more likely to give money to a simulacrum of a human being, rather than an actual homeless person. "The idea is that the mannequin eliminates the invisible barrier that seems to separate 'us' from 'them,'" writes journalist Brittany Greenquist (qtd. Goldberg n.p.). Any effort to raise money for the homeless should be praised, but what are the ethical implications of this strategy of representation? Why should this charity work so hard to eliminate the potential giver's

discomfort, rather than harnessing this discomfort to raise awareness? Is the strategy of representing homeless people as human piggy banks doing more harm than good? Are there better ways to eliminate this "invisible barrier"?

BADT's charitable campaign, and the controversy surrounding it, raise questions that are central to this chapter. Why is a fictional representation, a staged "act," more effective at arousing our sympathies than a real person? What are the theatrical or performative conventions that govern cross-class interactions on the city streets? The mannequins on Amsterdam's streets turn the homeless into a prop, and eliminate the need for human interaction, appealing to people with benevolent intentions who may not be willing to engage in what Audrey Jaffe calls a "scene of sympathy." The writers of slum narratives in the Victorian period likewise created a fictional representation of a vagrant by performing vagrancy, and recorded their experiences for the benefit of middle-class readers who did not necessarily want direct contact with the poor. Through their performance, these journalists and writers sought to gain their readers' sympathy on behalf of the genuinely impoverished people of London. Slumming paradoxically demonstrates that an upper-class person can most effectively arrive at the truth of vagrant life by playing a part, or being an imposter.

The struggle to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving poor shapes much of the discourse surrounding poor law legislation in the nineteenth century. In *The Workless, The Thriftless, and the Worthless* (1888), Francis Peek expressed the common belief that "The great end which every philanthropist and every patriot must most earnestly desire, is such a reform in the administration of the Poor Laws as shall result in the separation of the deserving destitute persons from the undeserving, and shall ensure that each class shall be dealt with according to its deserts" (qtd. Case 75). According to Peek and many other writers on the topic of vagrancy, poor

law legislators should provide relief to the genuinely destitute, while preventing the idle, thriftless, or "sturdy" vagrant from taking advantage of the system. The legal problem was also a social problem: if a beggar asks for coins on the street, or writes a letter requesting money, how is the potential giver supposed to distinguish between cases of true distress, and performances intended to deceive? Many writers at this time published pamphlets warning readers of the dangers of being too trusting, and outlining the various "lurks" or "dodges" by which false beggars might deceive the unwary. In "The Man with the Twisted Lip," Sherlock Holmes searches for a missing man, whose wife fears he was kidnapped. Holmes tracks him to his hiding place, only to discover that his daily "business" in London involves dressing himself up in rags, disfiguring himself with makeup, and earning a tidy income as a panhandler. Like a poor law official, Holmes discerns the truth, and returns the beggar to his rightful place and true identity.

But alongside this image of winnowing the wheat from the chaff—distinguishing the false beggar from the true one—exists an alternate discourse in which performance is accepted (and even encouraged) as a natural part of the interactions between social classes. Slumming narratives embrace deception and disguise, and therefore, they fly in the face of much accepted wisdom about the debates and discourses surrounding the urban poor in the Victorian period. Rather than accept authenticity as a paramount Victorian social virtue, I propose that we reconceptualize these interactions as performative scenes in which *both* parties willingly suspend their disbelief of the other, as in the theater. In "A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis" (1823), Charles Lamb exhorts his reader to "Shut not thy purse-strings always against painted distress. Act a charity sometimes" (Lamb 274). Putting the shoe on the other foot, William Blanchard Jerrold asserts, in *London: a Pilgrimage* (1872), that "It is better for all parties that we should continue to believe in the genuineness of every giver" (Jerrold 222). In

contrast to Sherlock Holmes, who eagerly unmasks the professional beggar, writers like Lamb and Jerrold willingly turn a blind eye to imposters and frauds in order to facilitate cross-class sympathy and exchange. Lyn Voskuil argues that theatricality and authenticity need not be antithetical terms; building on Voskuil's work, I argue that writers of slum narratives deliberately deceive those around them in order to gain access to, and potential intimacy with, the lowest of the low, who might otherwise shun or be shunned by a member of the journalist's class. Like "false beggars," slumming writers put on a performance in order to gain sympathy from a middle-class audience, though the object of sympathy has expanded from one person to an entire class of people.

The writings of artist Dorothy Tennant Stanley show that the Victorians' conception of class was highly performative, and that the representation of lower class life must be highly staged in order to *seem* authentic to a middle-class audience. The wife of Henry Morton Stanley, British imperialist and author of *In Darkest Africa* (1890), Dorothy was also an explorer, though she ventured into the streets of "darkest London" in search of subjects for her sketches. In her book on *London Street Arabs* (1890), she gives a brief account of her artistic methods and philosophy.[45] In Dorothy's brief introduction to her book of drawings, she writes about her longstanding attraction to ragamuffins and street urchins, and her desire to represent them faithfully. "Most of the pictures I had seen of ragged life appeared to me false and made up. They were all so deplorably piteous," she writes, expressing her determination to show "the other side," the more cheerful and robust side, of "ragged life." Stanley complains about the lack of realism in these pictures, but it soon becomes clear that her own pictures are just as "false and

[45] Like William Booth, author of *In Darkest London*, Dorothy Tennant Stanley looked upon the poorer inhabitants of her own city as savages, referring to them with the racially loaded term "street arabs," an epithet that aludes to their nomadic, vagrant lifestyle.

made up" as the images she deplores. Stanley sounds like the stage manager for a production of *Oliver!*, advising her fellow artists of low life to keep "your properties in the studio." (Stanley 7) Mrs. Stanley urges the aspiring painter of street children to keep a supply of rags and soot in her studio, in case the children are not ragged and dirty enough to suit the purpose: "A good supply of rags is essential (carefully fumigated, camphored, and peppered) and then you can dress up your too respectable ragamuffin till he looks as disreputable as you can wish" (Stanley 7). In case the artist should feel squeamish about keeping such articles in a domestic setting, Mrs. Stanley proposes an alternative:

> If you have no rags to start with, and shrink from keeping them by you, the best way is to find an average boy, win his confidence, give him sixpence, and promise him another sixpence if he will bring you a boy more ragged than himself. This second boy must be invited to do the same, and urged to bring one yet more "raggety." You can in this way get down to a very fine specimen, but the drawback is the loss of time caused by the cajoling, the difficulty of explaining what you want and why you want it, and the great probability of failure after all your expenditure of time, eloquence, and sixpences. (Stanley 7)

Stanley relates another incident in which she confides to a young urchin the difficulties she has had finding a chimney sweep. The obliging urchin tells her to give him a minute to "rest" so that he can solve her problem; he goes into the next room, stuffs himself up a chimney, and returns "as black and sweeplike as I could desire" (Stanley 10). This canny lad realizes that Stanley is actually looking for a *representation* of a chimney sweep that lives up to her imagined ideal, rather than an actual person.

Figure 14: Portraits of Street Arabs, Dorothy Stanley (1890)

Stanley's staged portraits, complete with rags for a costume and soot for makeup, demonstrate the ways in which the upper- and middle-classes thought of the lower orders in aestheticized, theatrical terms. (See Figure 14.) In 1848, writing in *Fraser's Magazine*, W. A. Guy described begging as a performance that serves as "a proof of the artistic talent which mendicancy presses into its service. In its rudest form, this talent embodies itself in the picturesque arrangement of filthy rags; the display, in cold weather, of the bare shoulder or naked foot; and, in some instances, by a studied neatness of attire" (qtd. Prizel 439). By the late Victorian period, visual and narrative representations of the poor had become familiar: it became difficult to distinguish between the 'real' and the artificial beggar. Actual beggars had to imitate the imitations of themselves. Begging was an art, but so was charity. This chapter will examine how the Victorians explored the performative potential of both acts.

"I'm Like the Paupers What Tears Up Their Clothes": Slum Journalism and the Pantomime

On a cold day in January 1866, "a sly and ruffianly figure" emerged from a carriage in Princes Road, Lambeth, and proceeded to gain admission to the Lambeth Casual Ward (Freeman and Nelson 53). This "figure" published an account of his experiences as a series of three articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, for he was none other than journalist James Greenwood, brother of the journal's editor Frederick Greenwood. The purpose of the articles was to investigate the implementation of new laws to regulate vagrancy and keep beggars off the streets of London. The Metropolitan Houseless Poor Act of 1864 stipulated that all Poor Law Guardians, who were in charge of running the union workhouses, were obligated to provide food and shelter for "destitute wayfarers, wanderers and foundlings" regardless of their employment status or place of residence (Koven 33). In order to deter paupers from relying on an easy bed and a free meal, these "casual wards" (so named for the casual laborers they aimed to assist) provided the bare necessities, required their inmates to perform hard labor in exchange for services, and only allowed paupers to spend one night per month in penalized "habitual users" of any given casual ward, in an ill-conceived attempt to keep them on the move in search for work.[46] Such a system might seem beneficial in theory, but Greenwood aimed to see it in practice, and insisted that going in disguise, under a false identity, was the only way to ensure that he saw a truthful picture of life in the workhouse. Greenwood's aim was "to learn by actual experience how casual paupers are lodged and fed" (Freeman and Nelson 54). Greenwood's sensational account of his

[46] M. A. Crowther, among other scholars, has noted that the Metropolitan Poor Laws often militated against the possibility of paupers finding steady employment. Crowther explains, "In 1871 the Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulation Act allowed guardians to detain a casual pauper until he had performed a morning's work. If a casual applied to the same workhouse more than twice in a month, he might be detailed for two nights…. The Act was inconsistent, for it was based on the assumption that vagrants ought to be seeking work; but if vagrants were not released from the workhouse until 11 a.m., they would not be able to find employment that day." (Crowther 251) This act codified a practice that had previously been enforced unofficially; a vagrant informant tells Mayhew, "I go into the country because I am known at all the casual wards in the metropolis, and they will not let a tramper in a second time if they know it." (Mayhew, vol. III., p. 399).

experiences—the horrific sights, smells, and sounds he was exposed to, and the indignities he endured or witnessed—had an electric effect on his Victorian readers. According to Seth Koven, Greenwood's articles "provoked passionate public and private responses among a range of constituencies" (Koven 47). But Greenwood did not only gain readers; he also inspired a host of imitators who took to the streets of East London incognito, attempting to recreate his experience. Greenwood inaugurated a craze that continued throughout the remaining decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, culminating most famously in George Orwell's account of his experiences of poverty and low-wage labor, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). Even today, slum tourism remains a lucrative business, and a controversial way to explore cities around the world.[47]

Seth Koven's *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (2004) focuses on the undercurrent of homosexual desire that runs through Greenwood's narrative—his lingering description of the beautiful young pauper Kay, his references to "Sodom," and his salacious hints about the presumably sexual noises he overheard during his night in the Casual Ward. Koven argues that laws regulating the homeless were inextricably linked to attempts to police homosexuality in Victorian London. Anxieties about moral and physical contagion are mutually reinforcing; Greenwood's disgust at having to share a bath with multiple paupers reinforces his disgust that naked and half-naked men are crowded indiscriminately into a shed equipped with insufficient beds.[48]

[47] From the post-Apartheid townships of Cape Town to the favelas of Rio de Janeiro and the slums of Mumbai, slum tourism has once again become a major trend at the turn of the twenty-first century, giving rise to debates about the ethics of this mode of tourism. For discussion of recent trends in slum tourism, see Fabian Frenzel, et al., *Slum Tourism: Poverty, Power and Ethics*, and Fabian Frenzel, *Slumming It: The Tourist Valorisation of Urban Poverty*.

[48] Shannon Case writes that "Nineteenth-century critics of the so-called mixed workhouse worried about the presumed physical and moral contagion of worthy resident paupers by unworthy ones; they worried also about

Though Koven remarks that Greenwood "exploit[s] fully the dramatic possibilities of serial newspaper publication," the direct influence of the Victorian popular theatre on slumming narratives such as Greenwood's has not been fully appreciated (Koven 43). Greenwood borrows a set of techniques from the theater: his use of disguise, and the sudden transformations and topsy-turvy role reversals that structure his account are influenced by the hugely popular pantomimes of the day. Additionally, he shows the impact of the popular theater on the lives of the most marginalized or vulnerable segment of the theatergoing population: paupers or the houseless poor. Our understanding of Victorian audiences is largely shaped by reviews in the press, written by middle-class journalists, or by accounts in upper-class memoirs and diaries; only rarely are we privileged to gain insight into the reception of popular forms of entertainment by the lower-classes, especially the very poor. Granted, Greenwood's own account is filtered through his middle-class perspective, but examining the pantomimes the paupers view and the music hall songs they sing will give a sense of their priorities.

Focusing on Greenwood's "theatrical paupers," this section of my chapter contributes to the growing body of research on Victorian audiences, established in the work of Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, who investigate the habits of theatergoers in Victorian London. In a 1977 essay, Michael R. Booth, called for an examination of theatre attendance with regard to social class: he laments that we know very little about "what kind of audiences went to what theatres, what their class was, what jobs they did, how much they got paid, what their non-theatrical tastes were, how often they went to the theatre, where they lived and under what conditions" ("East

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the 'contaminating' effect that tramps and casuals were thought to have on the settled poor. The New Poor Law promised to combat such contagion by weeding out the unworthy at the door, and, in a later development, by quarantining the unsettled. In 1842, the central Poor Law Board directed the Unions to build separate 'casual wards' (later also called 'tramp wards') for the maintenance of tramps and casuals, who would be admitted only at night and then detained the following morning until they had completed their task of work" (Case 34-35).

End West End"). In the years since Booth's call to arms, scholarly interest in East End and Surrey Side audiences has grown.[49] Andrew Maunder and Julianne Smith have researched adaptations of *East Lynne* and *Bleak House* that were performed in East End theatres, and which revised the original novels to suit the tastes of working-class audiences. Bethan Carney uses Charles Dickens's essay "The Amusements of the People" alongside the material history of the Old Vic's mirrored curtain to reconstruct the "representation of a working-class theatre audience" on page and stage (Carney 206). In new work by these and other scholars, the body of scholarship on working-class audiences is growing; however, we still know very little about the theatrical preferences of paupers, or the houseless poor. This section of my dissertation aims to recuperate the links between slumming and playgoing, between workhouse and theatre. Greenwood's account serves as a window into the world of lower-class theater-goers, shedding light on the habits and beliefs of pauper audience members, pauper theater critics, and pauper performers. My analysis of "A Night in a Workhouse" focuses on paupers' reception, criticism, and appropriation of forms of popular entertainment such as the pantomime and the music hall song, and on the representation of paupers on the stage. Attendance at the theater shapes the paupers' experience of the workhouse; conversely, Greenwood's sensational article provides potent material for stage adaptation.

The major plot points of Greenwood's narrative include: the "mutton broth" bath in which all the paupers bathe in the same water (a scene attended with obvious concerns about contagion and disease), the lack of clean clothes and towels, the inadequate bedding (Greenwood finds a blood stain on his "mattress": a burlap sack stuffed with straw), the vermin, the cold that forces men to huddle together in states of undress (raising anxieties about sodomy and indecent

[49] Booth notes that in 1866, the same year in which "A Night in a Workhouse" was published, "sixty-three per cent of [audience] capacity is taken up by theatres outside the West End." ("Melodrama and the Working Class," 97)

desires), the hard inedible bread and watery "skilley" (or porridge), and the backbreaking but monotonous labor required in the morning. Greenwood's narrative is also punctuated by humorous accounts of a "swearing club" and also of philological discussions among the vagrants.

Greenwood's third article, published on 15 January 1866, opens, as the third act of a play might open, with the entrance of a new character, the final addition to his *dramatis personae*. This character's entrance signals the eruption of the theater in the midst of the workhouse:

> Whether there is a rule which closes the casual wards after a certain hour I do not know; but before one o'clock our number was made up, the last comer, signalizing his appearance with a grotesque *pas seul*.[50] His rug over his shoulders, he waltzed into the shed, waving his hands, and singing in an affected voice as he sidled along—
>
> "I like to be a swell, a-roaming down Pall Mall,
>
> Or anywhere—I don't much care, so I can be a swell—"
>
> A couplet which had an intensely comical effect. This gentleman had just come from a pantomime (where he had learned his song, probably.) Too poor for a lodging, he could only muster means for a seat in the gallery of "the Vic."; where he was well entertained, judging from the flattering manner in which he spoke of the clown. The columbine was less fortunate in his opinion. "She's werry dicky!—ain't got what I call 'move' about her." However, the wretched young woman was respited now from the scourge of his criticism; for the critic

[50] "A dance or figure for one person," "pas seul, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2016.

and his listeners were fast asleep; and yet I doubt whether anyone of the company slept very soundly." (Freeman and Nelson 65-66)

Immediately following this passage, Greenwood proceeds to describe the coughing that plagues the paupers throughout the night, a much more famous passage from the "Amateur Causal" articles than the one quoted above. Like the men in the casual ward, subsequent critics of Greenwood have largely ignored the entrance of the theatrical gentleman. Amidst the percussive coughs of the paupers, readers' ears become dulled; we forget that the music hall song and the tap of dance steps are important sounds of the casual ward as well.[51] Jim Davis briefly mentions Greenwood's theatrical pauper, in an article analysing the stage melodrama *The Casual Ward*, which was loosely based on Greenwood's account. The "arrival in the Lambeth Workhouse [of a pauper] who had come straight from one of the south London theatres, where he had been watching the pantomime" leads Davis to surmise "that the prospect of the workhouse was not altogether remote" from the experience of audiences at East End and Surrey-side theatres ("A Night" 122-123). Davis argues that the production of *The Casual Ward* brought attention to the ineffectual implementation of the Poor Laws during the 1860s. My argument takes up Davis's suggestion that "[p]antomime in the Victorian era was not only an all-pervasive form of popular entertainment, but also functioned as a way of seeing, even as metaphor, in shaping perceptions of the contemporary world in just as forceful a way as has long been credited to melodrama" (*Victorian Pantomime* 2). John O'Brien similarly suggests that performances of the pantomime "referred to, reflected, or condensed in ways direct and indirect the events and conditions of their cultural moment" (O'Brien xix). In this section of the

[51] The interjection of music hall songs into the pantomime was a mid-Victorian innovation, which purists deplored. (See Richards 11.) However, the pantomime had always been a hybrid genre.

dissertation, I use the pantomime as a "way of seeing" the "contemporary world" or "cultural moment" that Greenwood depicts in "A Night in a Workhouse."

The pantomime was a popular form of entertainment: according to Booth, it "appealed to all classes of society," and is still produced in England to this day (*Theatre* 198). The pantomime was a distinctive form consisting of an opening, "in which an authoritarian guardian or father, assisted by his servant opposes the heroine's wish to marry her young man," a transformation scene, and a wordless "harlequinade" (*Theatre* 198) In the magical transformation scene, a benevolent fairy or spirit turns the father, servant, hero and heroine into stock characters drawn from the Italian *commedia dell'arte* tradition: Pantaloon, Clown, Harlequin, and Columbine. In the early days of pantomime, the characters playing these parts wore giant *papier mâché* heads or masks during the opening, in order to facilitate the transformation scene.[52] These parts were played by specialists, including the famous Clown actor Joseph Grimaldi. The "harlequinade" depicts Pantaloon and Clown chasing Harlequin and Columbine, and includes slapstick physical comedy, singing, and special effects. It culminates when the benevolent spirit intervenes on behalf of Harlequin and Columbine, who ultimately win the day. By the 1840s and 50s, the opening and the harlequinade became separate entities with distinct plots. The opening often consisted of a fairy tale plot that provided plenty of opportunities for elaborate spectacle and visually stunning scenery. Cinderella, Babes in the Wood, and Aladdin were popular story lines for the opening. Other openings burlesqued current events; a pantomime entitled "The Birth of the Steam Engine or Harlequin Locomotive" opened at the Victoria Theatre on Boxing Day in 1846, commemorating the 20th anniversary of Stockton and Darlington steam locomotive line.

[52] "Once two different companies were used to perform in the opening and the harlequinade, the heads became unnecessary and their use was discontinued after the middle of the nineteenth century." (Richards 15)

Since A. E. Wilson made the claim in 1935, it has been common to view the pantomime as "an escape from hard reality" (Wilson 24). Certainly, this kind of entertainment seems worlds away from Greenwood's gritty, dirty, and smelly workhouse, but the slum narrative is also a tale of transformations, albeit less explicitly magical ones. "A Night in a Workhouse" is a Cinderella story in reverse. Instead of a fairy godmother, his editor transforms Greenwood's respectable clothes into a pauper's rags, and turns him into a drudge who sleeps in uncomfortable quarters and slaves away at menial tasks. Once James Greenwood is done with his night (and morning of hard labor) in the workhouse, he meets his editor brother Frederick in a carriage, on the stroke of eleven, and is transformed back into his respectable non-pauper self. But if Greenwood resembles Cinderella, his theatrical pauper is more like the clown whose acting he praises. Pantomime clowns were known for their physical acrobatics as well as their practical jokes and mischievous spirit. According to the account of a "Real Casual," another pauper who spent that night in the Lambeth Workhouse, Greenwood's theatrical pauper played a trick on him: the "Real Casual" reports, "I am afraid I swore more than I ought to have done at one blackguard stealing my pillow from under my head, when he came in at one o'clock from the theatre."[53] The pauper's trick, if not worthy of Grimaldi, shares at least in the same spirit of tricks and foolery.

The harlequinade represents an overturning of power dynamics; the despotic father and his servant are ridiculed, and the young lovers ultimately win the day. Similarly, Greenwood's depiction of the pauper "gentleman" (Greenwood can only be using this honorific title ironically) returning from the pantomime turns social roles topsy-turvy. The pauper sings a song declaring his wish to be "a swell a-roaming down Pall Mall," that street so famous for its gentlemen's

[53] J. C. Parkinson advertised in the *Times*, soliciting accounts from Casual Paupers who spent the night at Lambeth Workhouse on 8th January. He published the response he received as 'A Real Casual on Casual Wards', *Temple bar: a London magazine for town and country readers*, March 1866.

clubs. Meanwhile, the journalist James Greenwood, who works for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, is dressed like a pauper. Though not quite a "swell," Greenwood is a respectable journalist, and the allusion to Pall Mall in the journal's name signals their aspiration to a readership of gentlemen.[54] The two men have partially and temporarily switched places: the journalist pretends to be a pauper; the pauper imagines himself as a swell. Whereas the harlequinade ends with a victory for the underdogs, the slum narrative ultimately reinstates the status quo; Greenwood returns to his carriage and his clothes in the morning, but the pauper goes back to the daily grind—quite literally—the next day. The pantomime consoles with a fantasy, while "A Night in a Workhouse" demands social change.

In spite of its fantastical elements and unrealistic happy ending, the pantomime can be read as political commentary on the unjust distribution of wealth and power. Reviews of the pantomime in the contemporary press depict it as a carnivalesque form of entertainment that briefly turns class hierarchies upside-down. A writer for *Chambers's Journal* associates the Christmas pantomime with Boxing Day, the day after Christmas when servants were given the day off from work and had the freedom to attend the theater: "There is a day in December upon which, although it takes place during Christmas-time, class is set against class more than on any other day in the year. The poor rejoice in it, but the rich grumble exceedingly; the kitchen is uproarious with merriment, but the drawing-room floor, and especially 'the study,' where Paterfamilias sits, are shrouded in gloom" ("Lights and Shadows" 65). According to this writer, the pantomime appeals to lower tastes; its intended audience can be found among the poor and in

[54] The *Pall Mall Gazette*, edited by James Greenwood's brother Frederick, was named after a fictional newspaper mentioned in Thackeray's novel *The History of Pendennis* (1848-1850): 'The Pall Mall Gazette is written by gentlemen for gentlemen; its conductors speak to the classes in which they live and were born. The field-preacher has his journal, the radical free-thinker has his journal: why should the Gentlemen of England be unrepresented in the Press?' (qtd. J. W. Robertson Scott 20)

the kitchen, not in the more intellectual sphere of the studious patriarch, who is likely worried that this form of "merriment" could result in social unrest. The harlequinade certainly never ends well for overbearing father figures. At least the Paterfamilias has the consolation of snobbery. As the critic for *Chambers's Journal* declares, "If you would see Boxing Day in its true colours—and they are bright even to gaudiness—you must patronise a transpontine pantomime, and not the Halls of Dazzling Delight at 'the Lane' or 'The Garden'" (Ibid). The passing of the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 eliminated such distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate theatre; nevertheless, this writer still wishes to preserve the distinctions of class and taste that set Drury Lane and Covent Garden apart from East End, and "transpontine" theaters on the other side of the River Thames, such as the Victoria Theatre. However, this critic ignores the fact that pantomime had a wide appeal across classes, and that audiences were composed of a heterogeneous mixture of social classes, due to graduated price levels and half-price time, which made theaters accessible even to a pauper. Though critics often bemoan a perceived decline in quality of Victorian drama, in fact more people were attending the theater than ever before. Michael Booth points to the "vast expansion of urban populations" that resulted in "a substantial growth in audience numbers," "the development of a railway system that brought audiences to London and actors and companies to the provinces; the growing sophistication and developing taste of a middle-class audience co-existing with a huge demand for regular entertainment from a much larger working- and lower-middle-class audience ("Comedy and Farce" 129).

Certainly, Greenwood's theatrical pauper seems to have been a regular theatergoer; he demonstrates a sophisticated awareness of the conventions of pantomime, and a critical appraisal of the production he has just witnessed. The Christmas Pantomime of the 1865-1866 season at "the Vic" (also known as the Royal Coburg or the Royal Victoria Theatre) was called *Harlequin*

Old Aesop; or, Dr. Syntax and His Animated Alphabet.[55] Co-authored by Frederick Fenton and W. R. Osman, *Harlequin Old Aesop* exhibits many of the characteristic features of the pantomime genre. The presence of Aesop as a central figure provides an excuse to punctuate the story of the opening with short re-enactments of Aesop's "fable-us" fables (Fenton and Osman 2). The libretto is full of Byronically unwieldy rhymes, to comic effect. ("Fable-us" rhymes with "enable us," naturally.[56]) Aesop's magical helpers—including a Queen Bee, a Lady Bird fairy, and a Dickensian "cricket on the hearth"—add an element of whimsy to the production. The pantomime also includes topical references to current events, including numerous unsuccessful attempts to complete an Atlantic Telegraph cable, the escape of the Irish revolutionary "Fenian Stevens" (actually, James Stephens) from prison, and cheeky allusions to Dion Boucicault's contemporary play *Arrah na Pogue* (1864), a tale of Irish rebellion. Racist or xenophobic stereotypes are standard pantomime fare; the play's cast of characters includes a "Nigger" character (presumably in blackface) and a Chinese Giant named Chang.[57] The main storyline revolves around the thwarted love of Prince Dion, son of King Croesus, and Prince Periander, son of King Cyrus, for each other's sisters, Cressida and Helena. The kings, needless to say, do not approve of the prospective nuptials. But with the aid of Aesop and his magic helpers, the

[55] George Rowell contends that 'The most suitable outlet for Fenton's skill were the pantomimes, played not only at Christmas and Easter but also in the summer. Increasingly, however, the audience's taste turned to local themes and settings: *Life in Lambeth* (1864) and *The London Arab* (1866, with scenes of Lambeth, Clapham and Wandsworth) reflect this taste. Perhaps it was to study these locales at first hand that in 1866 Fenton moved to 9 Southampton Street, Camberwell' (Rowell 46). And *perhaps* Greenwood's theatrical gentleman was also present at these performances, which reflected the world around him in all its local particularity, rather than presenting a world of magic and fantasy.

[56] Jeffrey Richards tells us that the Victorian stage, 'liberated by the 1843 Theatre Regulation Act, revelled in wordplay. The particular appeal of burlesque lay in puns, parodies both musical and literary, topical allusions and contemporary slang' (Richards 3). The burlesque and extravaganza increasingly influenced the opening of the pantomime, while the harlequinade declined in length and importance after 1843.

[57] As Jim Davis notes, the pantomime 'both endorsed and questioned the status quo' (*Victorian Pantomime* 16). The pantomime overturns hierarchies of race, and confounds those of gender. The 'principal boy' was a female actress in boy's clothing, while the 'dame' character was a cross-dressing male actor. However, the pantomime increasingly supported jingoistic notions of British national and racial supremacy.

young lovers successfully recover a treasure from the Egyptian Sphinx, thereby winning over their disapproving fathers. This opening would be followed by a brief Harlequinade, with the main characters transformed into the stock figures of the pantomime.

Harlequin Old Aesop is indeed the pantomime Greenwood references in "A Night in a Workhouse": Prince Periander sings the song favored by Greenwood's pauper, "I like to be a swell," in an ironic manner, during an arduous journey on a donkey, through the countryside near Lydia. The song was written by Gaston Murray, an actor and theater manager who came from a theatrical family (his older brother was actor Henry Leigh Murray and his wife was actress Mary Frances Murray), but the song was truly popularized by its singer, Arthur Lloyd, who began his career in Glasgow, and first appeared on the London stage in 1862. Famous for his comic songs, including such hits as "Three Acres and a Cow," and "Drink and Let's Have Another," Lloyd became known as one of the "Lion Comiques," or great music hall comedians. He was also known as a "swell" or "masher," a well-dressed or fashionable young man who is overly fond of the company of ladies. The lithographed cover for the sheet music of "I like to be a swell" features an image of

Figure 15: Sheet Music Cover for "I like to be a swell," illustrated by Alfred Concanen, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford: John Johnson Collection

Lloyd, looking quite the dandy; he sports a blue velvet coat and canary colored trousers, as well as a fashionable mustache, watch chain, and cane. (Figure 15)[58] This image is in marked contrast to Greenwood's description of himself as a 'ruffianly figure' in disguise, and of the paupers he encounters in the workhouse. Greenwood's pauper's choice of this song marks his social aspirations; the theater makes him feel, ever so briefly, like a swell, by giving him access to a world of music, fantasy, and spectacle. Bethan Carney and other critics have noted the presence of a mirrored curtain in the Old Vic from 1821 onward; it would have survived only in fragments decorating the theatre by the time Greenwood's pauper saw the pantomime in 1866, but audience members like Greenwood's pauper could still expect to see a distorted reflection of their own lives on stage, or at least a dim reflection of their aspirations.

One scene in *Harlequin Old Aesop* may have hit too close to home for Greenwood's pauper: while King Croesus is bathing, another character mischievously steals his clothes. The king emerges from the bath (presumably in some comic state of partial undress) and exclaims, "Oh manslaughter! Burglary! I'm nearly froze, / I'm like the paupers what tears up their clothes" (Fenton and Osman 10).[59] Koven explains that tearing up their clothes allowed casual paupers "to vent outrage over their treatment and forced officials to provide them with a new and valuable suit of clothes" (Koven 69). In "Told by a Tramp," an account of life in the workhouse purportedly written by another tramp who spent the night in the Lambeth Casual Ward on the same night as Greenwood, one pauper reportedly asks his fellow casuals "What workhouse in London was good for a tear-up?" ("Told by a Tramp" 372). It is clear from this account and

[58] Alfred Concanen, the lithographer of this image, was mostly known for his sheet music illustrations, but he also provided the illustrations for James Greenwood's *The Wilds of London* (1874), and *Low Life Deeps* (1876).
[59] The king's use of dialect ("what" instead of "who," "tears" instead of "tear"), makes this couplet sounds like a direct reference or quotation. However, I have been unable to trace it to a source. The king may also lapse into Cockney at this point, simply for comedic effect.

others that paupers communicated with each other about the varying conditions at different workhouses. According to Koven, "The incidence of reported cases of workhouse inmates tearing up their clothes increased dramatically in the last two weeks of January as the casual poor themselves read, heard about, and discussed 'A Night'" (Koven 69). These copycat clothing rippers could also, like Greenwood's theatrical pauper, have been among the audience at the Vic, watching King Croesus undergo this humiliation. The king's bath, with its unpleasantly cold ending, echoes Greenwood's infamous plunge into the "mutton broth" bath at the Lambeth Casual Ward. In another topsy-turvy moment, the king's emergence from the bath mimics the humiliation suffered by countless paupers as they entered the workhouse. The pantomime references the ritual sufferings endured in the casual ward; just as Greenwood's account allows the music of the pantomime to infiltrate the workhouse.

Transpontine theatres such as the Royal Victoria were associated in the popular press with lower-class audiences, composed of criminals and beggars. The eponymous hero of Charles Kingsley's 1850 novel *Alton Locke* describes "passing by the door of the Victoria Theatre; it was just half-price time—and the beggary and rascality of London were pouring in to hear their low amusement, from the neighbouring gin palaces and thieves' cellars. A herd of ragged boys, vomiting forth slang, filth and blasphemy, pushed past us, compelling us to take good care of our pockets" (qtd. Rowell 35). These ragged boys sound like the same boys Greenwood describes in "A Night in a Workhouse," with their swearing club and other rowdy games. It would not be a stretch to imagine Greenwood's beautiful young thief Kay among this "herd" of rough-talking youths. In his article "Mr. Whelks over the Water," Charles Dickens likewise associates the transpontine theaters of Lambeth with an undesirable set of audience members: "We need not go all the way to Central Africa, or the wilds of South America, to study the conditions and habits of

savages," declares Dickens, "when the New Cut, Lambeth, is within ten minutes' walk of the Houses of Parliament." He describes the "swarms of creeping, crawling, mangy-looking people who constantly throng the thoroughfare" near the Victoria Theatre, and "are suggestive rather of vermin than of human beings" ("Mr. Whelks" 589). Davis and Emeljanow acknowledge the fact that "the Victoria attracted an audience whose composition reflected the neighborhood in which the theatre was located," but they question the "dismissive or condescending commentary about working class audiences in general and the Victoria Theatre in particular" that can be found in the periodical press (Davis and Emeljanow 8, 10-11). Though writers for the popular press were dismissive or disdainful of transpontine audiences, I contend that the pauper's commentary on his experience at the pantomime is as worthy of our attention as the criticism of such literary lions as Leigh Hunt, George Augustus Sala, John Ruskin, or Charles Dickens, who all attended the pantomime.

In fact, Greenwood's theatrical pauper is a more astute critic of the pantomime than many reviewers in the periodical press. Contrast, for example, the pauper's criticism of *Harlequin Old Aesop* with a review found in Greenwood's own journal, the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Greenwood's pauper critiques the actress playing Columbine for not having "move about her," for being "dicky," a slang word meaning "of inferior quality, sorry, poor; in bad condition, unsound, shaky, queer."[60] In other words, he is attentive to movement and the visual aspects of the pantomime in performance. By contrast, a review in the *Pall Mall Gazette* from 20 January 1866 evaluates "the literary merits of some of the pantomimes which are now delighting the town," including *Harlequin Old Aesop*. However, this writer insists on examining the pantomime prompt books in the absence of performance, declaring, "we have not witnessed the performance

[60] "dicky | dickey, adj." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2016.

of any of these pieces, but we have all the little books before us, and can examine them at leisure" ("Literature of the Pantomimes" 224). In the absence of spectacle, music, and movement, the writer finds the words of the pantomime lacking in literary depth. The punning rhymes of the pantomimes disgust him, and he declares these productions "senseless rubbish" and "unmitigated trash" (Ibid). This critic bemoans the linguistic excesses of the pantomime, the result of the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843, which opened the floodgates of "spoken drama," which had hitherto been the preserve of the "legitimate theaters." This critic would agree with A. E. Wilson's assertion that the pantomime "caters more for the gourmand than the gourmet," appealing to an undiscriminating appetite rather than a discerning palate (Wilson 13). However, Greenwood's pauper is a more perceptive critic of the pantomime than the reviewer at the *Pall Mall Gazette*, for Greenwood's pauper uses the conventions of the genre as the measuring stick by which to judge any particular performance. He realises that the visual elements of performance are more important than the linguistic content of the pantomime. As John O'Brien notes, the pantomime "undercut[s] the theater's desire to define itself as a space of language"; the pantomime glories in the "theater's materiality—its use of costumes, scenery, and the bodies of performers" (O'Brien xviii). While the journalist deplores the pantomime as a threat to the primacy of language as medium of entertainment, the (possibly illiterate) pauper delights in the spectacle that the pantomime so dazzlingly provides.

Greenwood's "A Night in a Workhouse" proved so popular with readers that J. A. Cave, the manager of the Marylebone Theatre (known as "the Western home of East End melodrama"), decided to capitalize on its success, producing a play entitled *The Casual Ward* in February 1866. Cave commissioned C. H. Hazlewood to write the play, which was presented at the Marylebone Theatre, and concurrently at the Royal Pavilion, Whitechapel and the Britannia,

Hoxton—both located in the East End (see T. Williams 191). According to Seth Koven, "[t]he play itself is entirely undistinguished," "a piece of hack writing" (Koven 52). The play is indeed a simple melodrama, and its title is somewhat of a misnomer; only the second out of its three acts takes place in the casual ward. However, the details of its production and performance reveal a canny exploitation of the celebrity status that Greenwood had conferred on his pauper performers.

The plot of *The Casual Ward* revolves around a contested inheritance. The embezzling businessman Graspleigh attempts to destroy a later version of a will which disinherits him in favor of an honest man who is down on his luck, Richard Glover. In an effort to keep the will safe, Glover spends a night in a workhouse, in disguise, followed closely by the cunning villain Graspleigh. Justice prevails, thanks to an undercover detective disguised as a Beadle, and before the curtain falls, Glover declares, "And if what I have suffered in my poverty does but draw attention to the treatment the deserving poor meets with at the hands of tyrannical & ignorant workhouse guardians & officials, I shall never regret having passed a night in the Casual Ward." (Cave, folio 62) In spite of Glover's statement, the casual ward merely provides a pretext to tell this melodramatic tale of inheritance and fraud. (And as Jim Davis has demonstrated, any vaguely subversive content of the original text was excised by the Lord Chamberlain's censors.) However, as Tony Williams notes, Cave's production strove for "extreme realism in its dramatic presentation" (T. Williams 196). As Jeffrey N. Cox points out, "such claims to literary 'realism' always arouse suspicion, and of course, 'realism' in the theatre is essentially a matter of stage conventions" (Cox 170). Nevertheless, mid-Victorian audiences craved a "realism" that represented what was near and familiar. According to Thomas Purnell, writing for the *Athenaeum* in 1871, 'An audience no longer enjoys the representation of what is beyond its

reach. The present and the near now best satisfies it. In the drama, as in prose fiction, realism is wanted. Every man judges what is laid before him by his own experience" (qtd. Holder 116). Like Greenwood and sensation journalists, dramatists sought what was near and familiar, yet unknown and exotic; the East End was near geographically but infamously unknown. In order to heighten the reality effect of their production, Cave and Hazlewood hired the real pauper warden of the Lambeth Casual Ward, Old Daddy, to appear as himself in the play. Exhibiting the real Old Daddy on stage in *The Casual Ward* confounds the boundaries between theatricality and realism that Greenwood had so artfully blended in his narrative. Whereas Greenwood introduced a fictional character (his alias was Joshua Mason) into a real situation, Cave introduced a real person (Budge, nicknamed Daddy) into a theatrical performance. By exhibiting Old Daddy, Cave and Hazlewood's melodrama incorporates the hyperrealistic effects of sensation journalism within the moral universe of the melodramatic mode. Critics of melodrama are often divided between those who see melodrama as a "dream world inhabited by dream people," and those who defend melodrama's "relevance to the social realities of life."[61] *The Casual Ward* demonstrates the compatibility of these seemingly contradictory views. By exhibiting Old Daddy within the context of a melodramatic plot, Cave and Hazlewood's melodrama incorporates the hyper-realistic effects of sensation journalism within the moral universe of the melodramatic mode. Old Daddy draws on the conventions of the melodramatic stock character of the "good old man,"[62] but Cave's emphasises Old Daddy's real-life position at the workhouse in the advertising for *The Casual Ward*, revealing the influence of sensation journalism's urban realism on mid-Victorian melodrama.

[61] Michael R. Booth has provided a thorough description of both sides of the debate over melodrama's relationship to politics and everyday life. For an articulation of the argument for melodrama as "dream world," see Booth, *English Melodrama*, p. 14. And for the relevance of melodrama to the realities of working-class life, see Booth, "Melodrama and the Working Class."

[62] See Booth, *English Melodrama*, pp. 30-31.

Reviews in the contemporary press worried about the effects of introducing such extreme reality effects to the stage. A writer for *Punch* fretted that "In putting plays upon the stage, some of our Managers of late have greatly studied the realities, introducing real gas-lamps to illumine a street scene, and cascades of real water in lieu of simple paint. This mania for realities appears to be extending, and real persons are exhibited as well as real things" ("Another Drop" 117). The *Punch* reviewer and a writer for Charles Dickens's *All the Year Round* lamented the bad taste that led the Britannia Theatre to exhibit some of the survivors of the shipwreck of the *S. S. London* as the opening of their pantomime. Both reviewers compare this sensational exhibition to the extreme reality effect of having Daddy play himself at the Marylebone Theatre. *All the Year Round* exhorts "Every right-minded person" to "discourage and denounce exhibitions, the essential brutality of which is not redeemed by the slightest pretext of grace or beauty" (qtd. T. Williams 195-196). Both writers cite the precedent of exhibiting "the real gig" of a murderer on stage, and fret about where this trendmight lead. "At which theatre will the thrilling drama of The Cattle Plague, with a real infected cow engaged expressly for the purpose, be first produced?" the writer for *All the Year Round* mockingly asks ("Calamity Mongering" 188). *Punch* predicts, on the other hand, that "If the horrors of the casual ward be thought a fitting subject for dramatic exhibition, perhaps we soon may see a drama called The Union Infirmary, with a score of real paupers all lying really ill. Or a sensation scene of a surgery might prove attractive, and a real leg or arm be amputated nightly, before a crowded house ("Another Drop" 117). These writers' fears of contagion (both physical and moral) are strikingly similar to the anxieties that pervade Greenwood's account. 'Real paupers all lying really ill' and 'a real infected cow' cannot be salutary spectacles for middle or working-class audiences, just as glamorizing housebreakers and murderers could corrupt an audience's morals. Critics were

concerned that putting these real things on stage might render them less serious in actual life. An excess of spectacle could dull an audience's sense of empathy. The relationship between stage and life is represented as a parasitic one; the stage gets more out of its commerce with reality than vice versa.

These reviewers fret that the crosspollination between sensation journalism and sensation drama might cause people to become "calamity mongers" or "sensation harpies," who use others' misfortune as entertainment:

> The exquisite good taste which led a manager to hire some rescued sailors for his stage, and turn the terrors of a shipwreck to theatrical account, perhaps may set the fashion for founding a new drama on any terrible disaster that the newspapers record. Playgoers will thus become familiarised with horrors, which they read of with dismay; and to some minds calamity may fail to cause regret, on the grounds of it affording a good subject for the stage. ("Another Drop" 117)

These reviews reverse the traditional notion that an appetite for fiction could have an immoral effect on readers; instead these writers worry that an insatiable appetite for the real could have a deleterious effect on audiences' morals. The critic blamed this craze for extreme reality effects on managers who catered to the tastes of the lower classes: "To please the Cockney playgoer, real cows might be exhibited, and real cow-doctors employed to wrangle and dispute" ("Another Drop" 117). The Britannia Theatre, in East London's Hoxton neighborhood, was the epicenter of this new fashion for dramatic hyperrealism. Old Daddy appeared in *The Casual Ward* at the Britannia, and the same manager who engaged the Lambeth pauper warden also hired the "rescued sailors" from the recent shipwreck of the *S. S. London*, to appear on

stage. Like Daddy, these sailors "hired themselves out to be stared at…by an East-end [sic] theatrical audience." "They do not shrink," one critic cringed, "from treading the boards of a London theatre, in order to satisfy the craving appetite for novelty of a London mob" ("Sensation Harpies 191). These responses to Old Daddy's exhibition in the respectable middle-class press confirm Bethan Carney's argument that "considerations of 'realism' are always politically infused" (Carney 216). Concerns about tastes and aesthetics are convenient pretexts for the control of working-class audiences.

Such critiques of the "exhibition" of a pauper like Old Daddy could be read as paternalistically protecting such a vulnerable figure from exploitation and the voyeurism of sensation-mongering audiences. However, these criticisms also reflect class prejudice; writers objected to the idea that a lower-class person could achieve such celebrity. *The London Review* asserted that "People who would not touch the real 'Daddy' with a pair of tongs will now place that 'kind old man,' that 'benevolent old man,' in their carte-de-visite album of 'celebrities'" ("Sensation Harpies" 191).[63] The quotation marks gingerly placed around the word "celebrities" reveal this critic's distaste at the idea that a marginalized member of society could achieve such notoriety, through no real effort or success of his own.

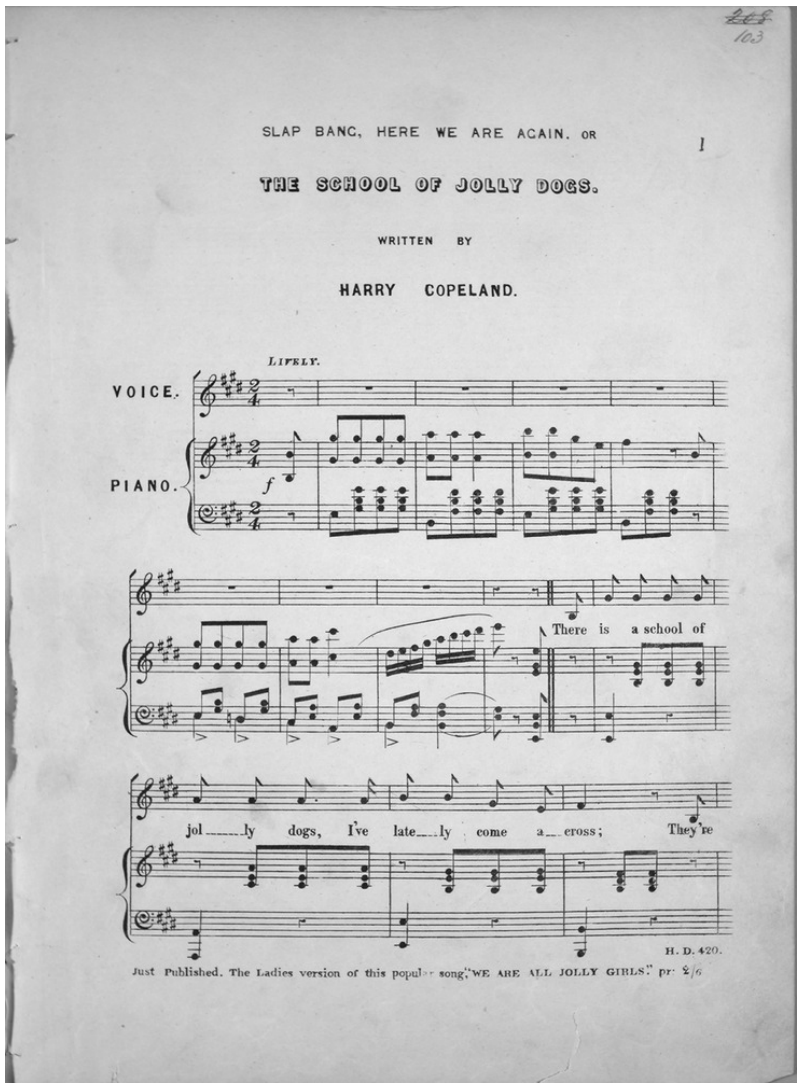
Like Madame Tussaud's "Chamber of Horrors," sensation drama could offend good taste through its lurid pursuit of realism. It is fitting, therefore, that Daddy was later commemorated as a fictional piece of waxwork. In Margaret Harkness's slum novel *In Darkest London*, Jane Hardy takes Ruth to see an exhibit of "Waxwork Cosmorama and Panorama." Included among the wax figures, Ruth sees "kind Old Daddy of the Lambeth Casual Ward, made popular by a visit from a

[63] The Stereoscopic Company had placed an advertisement for a carte-de-visite portrait of Old Daddy, in the *Athenaeum*, on 3 February 1866, asserting that "the truthful description of this wonderful narrative is confirmed in the person of this benevolent old man." The shipwrecked sailors, likewise, posed for souvenir photographs.

Lord, who, seeing the kindness of Old Daddy to the paupers, made him a present of a £5 note" (Harkness 107). Old Daddy's status as pauper celebrity—his appearance on cartes-de-visite, onstage, and as a piece of waxwork in the pages of a novel—demonstrates the transmediation of Greenwood's account from the documentary realism of a journalistic expose to the full-blown theatricality of popular entertainment.

While Old Daddy brought the "realities" of the workhouse onto the stage, we can also think of the workhouse itself as a kind of stage or theater. Greenwood himself is an actor, attempting to pass himself off as a fictional persona. Because Greenwood can view the spectacle of the workhouse without being seen for his true self, his slumming narrative and others like it are rightly considered voyeuristic, and his narrative is often read within a Foucauldian framework. In her study of theatrical performances that occurred in the Rochdale workhouse, Jenny Hughes points out that theater can function as a means of "disciplining the self" when used in conjunction with social welfare institutions such as the workhouse. But Greenwood is not the only actor in the workhouse. The paupers he describes also use performance as a way to create community, and to construct their public personae. The workhouse is a theatrical space, in which performance can function as "a world-making project that mobilises diverse figurations of the social" (Hughes 42). Koven's focus on voyeurism, contagion, and containment lends itself to illuminating analysis of Greenwood's unpleasant experience at the bath, or his lascivious description of the pauper Kay. But this reading does not account for the paupers' amusements and performances—the theatrical pauper's performance of a music hall song, the swearing club, the philological discussions, and the scene in which the paupers collectively sing music hall songs while performing their morning labor.

Hughes notes that this labor was part of a disciplinary "regime crafted to condition the able-bodied poor into habits of work and good character" (Hughes 40) Many scholars have observed that Greenwood focuses on the distinction between those who work diligently and those who shirk their labor, between the worthy and unworthy poor. But if we shift our attention to performance and the presence of theater in the workhouse, we will notice that the paupers sing *in unison* while turning the crank; deserving and undeserving paupers join together in a rousing rendition of Harry Copeland's music hall song "Slap, bang, here we are again," as well as a variant on the American Union marching tune "John Brown's Body." Crucially, these two songs were of very recent composition: Harry Copeland composed his song in 1865, and the tune of "John Brown's Body" became popular during the American Civil War. ("I like to be a swell" was also a recent hit, composed in 1865.) The recentness of these songs tells us that many of these paupers also attended the music hall or the pantomime, where they learned the


SLAP BANG, HERE WE ARE AGAIN. OR

THE SCHOOL OF JOLLY DOGS.

WRITTEN BY

HARRY COPELAND.

LIVELY.

VOICE.

PIANO.

f

There is a school of

jol ly dogs, I've late ly come a cross; They're

H. D. 420.

Just Published. The Ladies version of this popular song "WE ARE ALL JOLLY GIRLS." pr: 2/6

Figure 16: Sheet Music for "The School of Jolly Dogs," by Harry Copeland, Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University

words and music to these songs, transposing the meanings of the songs by transplanting them in the context of the workhouse. The paupers sing a version of "John Brown's Body" that contains the lyric "We'll hang up the miller on a sour apple tree," a subversive choice for paupers who are in the process of grinding grain.[64] While the latter song is overtly rebellious, the former is more subtly subversive. Copeland's song, popularized by music hall singer and comedian Alfred Vance, begins, "There is a school of jolly dogs," a playful way of reimagining the workhouse as a community of lighthearted scoundrels (Figure 16). The paupers' performance literally enacts the lyrics of Copeland's song, which include the phrase, "wherever they may be / They dance, they sing." *Even* while performing hard labor in the workhouse, the paupers dance and sing. The paupers' songs are not only or even primarily a form of subversion or resistance; their singing also functions as a way to pass the time, and to bolster each other's spirits. These musical exertions create a sense of community among the paupers regardless of such distinctions as "worthy" or "idle." Performance and song are communal bonding activities that cut across such distinctions, just as the theater brought together audiences of diverse makeup in terms of class. The civics of the audience mean that each audience member becomes part of a body in which such distinctions temporarily fade and become unimportant. Reorienting our thinking to consider the workhouse as theater prompts us to ask certain questions: Which theaters did the very poor attend? What kinds of entertainment did they enjoy? Why did certain songs appeal to them? These questions shift our focus from the binary of deserving versus undeserving poor; instead, drawing attention to the singing pauper, the dancing pauper, and the theatergoing pauper. We can think of these paupers, like Old Daddy, as actors playing themselves.

[64] The original lyrics highlight the Union soldiers' antipathy to the president of the Confederate States: "We'll hang up Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree." The tune of the song is now more commonly associated with the lyrics of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," by Julia Ward Howe (first published in 1862).

Scholars such as Davis and O'Brien encourage us to use the pantomime as "a way of seeing" or as a reflection of its "cultural moment." In making such exhortations, however, they take their cue from eminent Victorian critics of the pantomime, Charles Dickens and John Ruskin. In an essay in *Bentley's Miscellany*, Dickens declares that "A pantomime is to us a mirror of life; nay, more, we maintain that it is so to audiences generally, although they are not aware of it, and that this very circumstance is the secret cause of their amusement and delight" (*Sketches by Boz* 501). His essay goes on to enumerate the pantomimic Pantaloons and Clowns to be found in "real life." Similarly, John Ruskin recognized the necessary and potentially fruitful relationship between stage and real life. In *Fors Clavigera* Letter 39 (March 1874), Ruskin describes how his habitual attendance at the theater has connected the London stage and London street in his mental landscape:

> During the last three weeks, the greater part of my available leisure has been spent between Cinderella and Jack in the Box; with the curious result upon my mind, that the intermediate scenes of Archer Street and Prince Street, Soho, have become to me merely as one part of the drama, or pantomime, which I happen to have seen last; … I begin to ask myself, Which is the reality, and which the pantomime? Nay, it appears to me not of much moment which we choose to call Reality. Both are equally real; and the only question is whether the cheerful state of things which the spectators, especially the youngest and wisest, entirely applaud and approve at Hengler's and Drury Lane, must necessarily be interrupted always by the woeful interlude of the outside world. (qtd. Weltman, "Arcadias" 42).

Sharon Aronofsky Weltman argues that Ruskin presents the theatre as a world of ideals, which the "real world" can aspire to realize; if spectators enjoy the idealized world of the pantomime, they should strive to alleviate the poverty and ugliness outside the theater's four walls. According to Weltman, Ruskin "us[es] pantomime to imagine and create a better world" ("Arcadias" 41). Greenwood's pauper, who sings and dances his way into the Lambeth Workhouse, is an astute connoisseur of the pantomime. This pauper recognizes that song and dance, art and theater, are as necessary to his survival and mental well-being, as a place to sleep for the night. Too poor to afford a lodging, he could still buy a seat at the theater. The workhouse became to him merely a part of the drama, or pantomime, that he had just witnessed.

In the pages that follow, I explore the utopian potential of the slumming narrative, its ability to recreate its writers as new characters, and to imagine new ways of interacting with others, across class boundaries. This is not to deny the potentially exploitative or voyeuristic side of the slum narrative. As Seth Koven points out, these writers were motivated by a messy mixture of "good intentions and blinkered prejudices that informed their vision of the poor and of themselves" (Koven 3). However, the writers of slum narratives were able to recreate themselves as new kinds of characters, and to forge unconventional relationships with people of a lower class than their own. A complete survey of slum journalism is beyond the scope of my project; instead, I turn my attention to the ways in which literature takes up the call of the slum narrative. I look at Sherlock Holmes as he polices class boundaries, but simultaneously undermines them. I then turn to social explorer Henry Mayhew, as he transforms his ethnographic account of the London Poor into dramatic performance. And I end with an examination of late-Victorian slum novels featuring women who venture into the slums. The exploration of the slum is also an exploration of self, as Joseph McLaughlin has ably

demonstrated.[65] A journey into the East End allows these writers and characters to stage their selfhood in new ways, and to find new ways to perform the scene of sympathy, or cross-class interactions and relationships.

Journalists, Actors, Detectives, and Beggars:The Professional Man in Conan Doyle's "The Man with the Twisted Lip"

James Grant, editor of the *Morning Chronicle* and the *London Saturday Journal*, begins his book *Sketches in London* (1838) not with the grand buildings or great art of "the modern Babylon," but rather with a section on "Begging Imposters." Instead of showing off the attractions of his great city, Grant remarks that "London is proverbial all the world over for the number and ingenuity of the tricks that are daily practiced in it" (Grant 1). Grant aims to catalogue the various tricks that begging imposters practice on the unwary, but his catalogue has a particular focus: "The London beggars are divided into a great variety of classes," writes Grant, "but I shall confine myself to the begging impostors who ply their avocation by means of letters, and to those who by the assumption of distress which they do not actually feel, endeavour, in the open streets, to enlist the sympathies of the charitable and humane in their behalf" (Grant 1). It is striking that Grant chooses beggars whose tricks in some sense resemble his own vocation as a journalist. Like a begging letter writer, the journalist "plies his avocation by means of letters," and he may write things that he does not personally feel in order to elicit a certain response from his readers. Certainly, he writes stories that he thinks will sell copy, just as the beggar constructs his fictional persona in order to earn sympathy and coins.

[65] In *Writing the Urban Jungle*, McLaughlin writes that Jack London's exploration of London's East End, for *People of the Abyss*, was simultaneously an exploration of London, himself, and an interrogation of his own identity.

Andrew Halliday writes of the queasy blurring of the boundary between the professional writer and the aspiring writer later in the century, "Among the begging-letter fraternity there are not a few persons who affect to be literary men. They have at one time or another been able to publish a pamphlet, a poem, or a song—generally a patriotic one, and copies of these works—they always call them 'works'—they constantly carry about with them to be ready for any customer who may turn up" (Douglas-Fairhurst 391). Here, disconcertingly for the journalist, the difference between a real man of letters and one who merely "affects" to be a literary man is the consistency of his publication. A single publication does not a writer make.

The harder the journalist tries to expose the begging imposter, the more likely he is to reveal the fraud within himself. Consider the curious moment in *Sketches in London* where the writer turns from exposing the various tricks, "dodges," or "lurks" by which beggars deceive their audiences, to a discussion of begging companies or fraternities that club together for the purpose. Grant discusses these beggars in explicitly theatrical terms, mentioning the "rehearsals" they enact in order to practice and perfect their performance:

> [T]he most amusing part of the proceedings of a begging association usually takes place at the formation of the company. A sort of rehearsal, such as takes place in a theatre when a new piece is about to be produced, is then duly gone through, in which the pretensions of each member of the fraternity to the part he assumes are put to the test by the leaders of the gang, assisted by the opinions of some of "the friends." About two years since, a young man, now, I fear, dead—for he was then in a very delicate state of health, and I have heard nothing of him since—about two years ago this young man was seized with so unconquerable a desire to make himself personally acquainted with the habits, conversation, &c., of the leading

> mendicants in town, that he actually put on a suit of ragged clothes, and spent a whole night with fifteen or twenty of them in a house in St. Giles's. (Grant 38)[66]

In order to expose these imposters, the young man resorts to slumming; in order to see a rehearsal, this young man joins them in playing a part in their performance. The desire to expose the truth about beggars leads naturally to slumming; one can only expose the truth by being false oneself. The professional man's anxiety about beggars has its source in the distorted image of themselves that the beggar reflects back on him. The beggar is his alter ego, the Hyde to his Jekyll.[67] The fact that these writers use the adjective "professional" to modify the noun "beggar" shows their uneasy awareness of this proximity, and begrudgingly acknowledges the skill involved in the beggar's profession.[68] Francis Peek labeled such vagrants "those who will not work," but *even he* acknowledged the planning and forethought involved in professional begging: "There are vagrants who periodically tramp the country, and are a terror to the cottagers in lonely places; there are the mendicants who map out the suburbs into districts for begging purposes, and go backwards and forwards as regularly as any man of business to his office..." (Peek 19).

The image of the beggar as man of business who commutes to his "office" is the central conceit of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1891 story "The Man with the Twisted Lip," which

[66] Grant follows up on his promise by delivering a scene of comic dialogue worthy of the stage, in which three beggars—one Scottish, one Irish, one English—attempt to understand each other's dialect well enough to coordinate their efforts.

[67] Here, I am indebted to Stephen D. Arata's argument in "The Sedulous Ape." Arata argues that Hyde reflects the repressed violence of the professional bourgeoisie as much as the atavism of the lower classes or the decadence of the aristocracy.

[68] Mark Hampton discusses the ambivalence surrounding journalism's increasing professionalization in the late-nineteenth century: his article "Defining Journalists in Late Nineteenth Century Britain" focuses on "the inherent tensions of a profession whose claims to status derived from control over an 'open' public discourse, rather than arcane 'professional' knowledge." The National Association of Journalists, the first professional society for journalists in the UK, was founded in 1884, in Manchester (Hampton 138-139).

explores the uncomfortable proximity of the professional beggar to other sorts of professional men, and the easy transition from one to the other. The main plotline follows Holmes's search for a missing person; Mrs. St. Clair is concerned that her husband, Neville St. Clair hasn't returned from his mysterious "business" in the city. The solution of the mystery reveals that "no crime, but a very great error" has been committed: Neville St. Clair daily transforms himself into a very successful professional beggar named Hugh Boone, when he commutes to the city. Rather than risk discovery by his wife, who accidentally sees him on an impromptu trip into London, "Boone" allows himself to be arrested for the murder or abduction of St. Clair.

The frame narrative that opens the story parallels the main plotline; Kate Whitney enlists Watson's help in tracking her husband to an opium den in the East End. Isa Whitney's disappearance frames the narrative as a story about men leading doubles lives, including Sherlock Holmes. Watson finds more than he bargained for at the opium den; Kate Whitney is not the only one whose partner has gone astray. This story corroborates Rex Stout's joking assertion that "Watson was a woman;"[69] in this story, Watson plays the role of the concerned wife. His discovery in the opium den foreshadows Mrs. St. Clair's discovery later in the story; she finds her husband, and Watson finds Holmes, unexpectedly, in the opium den. Like Boone, Holmes has assumed a disguise: Watson is astonished to see an "old man… very thin, very wrinkled, bent with age, an opium pipe dangling down from between his knees" transform before his eyes into his partner, Holmes (Klinger ed. 164-165).

Like Holmes, St. Clair is adept at disguise. Just as Holmes occasionally dons a disguise in pursuit of his profession, St. Clair earns his living through impersonation. The similarities

[69] In an article with this title, for *The Saturday Review* (March 1, 1941), detective fiction author Rex Stout anticipates Lucy Liu's role as "Joan Watson," in the CBS television show *Elementary*, by half a century.

between St. Clair and Holmes do not stop there. Holmes solves this case by becoming even more similar to St. Clair, down to his physical pose and attitude. Consider the following two descriptions of St. Clair's alter ego, Hugh Boone, and Sherlock Holmes, respectively; the first narrated by Holmes, the second by Watson:

> His name is Hugh Boone, and his hideous face is one which is familiar to every man who goes much to the City. He is a professional beggar, though in order to avoid the police regulations he pretends to a small trade in wax vestas. Some little distance down Threadneedle Street, upon the left-hand side, there is, as you may have remarked, a small angle in the wall. Here it is that this creature takes his daily seat, cross-legged with his tiny stock of matches on his lap, and as he is a piteous spectacle a small rain of charity descends into the greasy leather cap which lies upon the pavement beside him. (Klinger ed. 173-174)

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> It was soon evident to me that [Holmes] was now preparing for an all-night sitting. He took off his coat and waistcoat, put on a large blue dressing-gown, and then wandered about the room collecting pillows from his bed and cushions from the sofa and armchairs. With these he constructed a sort of Eastern divan, upon which he perched himself cross-legged, with an ounce of shag tobacco and a box of matches laid out in front of him. In the dim light of the lamp I saw him sitting there, an old briar pipe between his lips, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the corner of the ceiling, the blue smoke curling up from him, silent, motionless, with the light shining upon his strong-set aquiline features. (Klinger ed. 184)

Figure 17: Sidney Paget's illustrations of Holmes (left) and Hugh Boone (right)

Both men sit cross-legged, with a stock of matches in front of them. The visual similarity between the two men is striking, especially considering Sidney Paget's iconic illustrations of both men (Figure 17). Their similarities are more than skin deep. Both men trade upon their unique mental abilities: Boone upon his "wit," Holmes upon his powers of deduction. "A small rain of charity" descends on Boone, while Holmes uses his meditative pose and the mental state it induces to solve the mystery. Both are practicing their profession, but neither engages in physical labor. As Audrey Jaffe points out, the detective and the beggar, like the writer, do most of their work while sitting still: "[t]he story displays anxiety about labor that appears not to be labor" (Jaffe 66). "The figure who professes rather than produces—whose speech, writing, or self is his commodity—blurs the easily readable relationship between producer and product, laborer and commodity; the professional performs services whose merit, at least to some extent, the client has to take on faith" (Jaffe 67). Just as St. Clair switched from his "arduous" job as a journalist to sitting still and begging, Conan Doyle changed professions from doctor to author—trading on his wit and words. The Sherlock Holmes stories brought Doyle fame, notoriety, and

cash, but he felt that these productions demeaned him, just as St. Clair worried his alter ego would bring shame on his family.[70]

The narrative of the middle-class man leading a double life in late Victorian fiction often functions as a cautionary tale or moral fable. Dorian Gray and Dr. Jekyll's alter egos act out these men's amoral (even immoral) fantasies. Hugh Boone is an imposter, but he is not a criminal. St. Clair experiences shame, not remorse, when his "dodge" is discovered. St. Clair's shame over his chosen "profession" springs from its overtly theatrical nature, and from the lower-class character he adopts—or else his shame is itself the "great error" to which Holmes refers. Notably, the rest of the story's characters accept the idea that the competing demands of the domestic hearth and the world of business are incompatible; modern urban and professional life necessitates a bifurcation or splitting of identity.[71] Even Watson is willing, perhaps eager, to be seduced away from his wife. Watson writes that "Folk who were in grief came to my wife like birds to a light-house," but he cannot resist the lure of adventure that Holmes represents: "I could not wish anything better than to be associated with my friend in one of those singular adventures which were the normal condition of his existence." (Klinger ed. 161, 166) Watson's relations with his soothing wife and his stimulating partner present conflicting compensations and

[70] Scholars frequently comment on male authors' ambivalence about writing fiction (specifically adventure fiction or Romance as opposed to realist fiction) as a profession at the fin-de-siècle. Theresa Jamieson writes that the "manliness" of those who labored intellectually was suspect in the Victorian period. At the same time, the "industrialization" of fiction writing as a career led some authors to question the artistic merit of their works, often produced in a "white heat" of haste, since these authors depended on the productions of their pen for their livelihood. Jamieson asserts that writers at the fin-de-siècle "now had to negotiate the shifting identification of literature as both art and business. An element of this ambivalence can be seen in R. L. Stevenson's response to the success of *Jekyll and Hyde*, for though the text's reception consolidated his reputation as a writer, he was motivated to consider whether its popular appeal was in fact rather damning evidence of the level of its intellectual depth or artistic merit" (Jamieson 87). Stephen Arata also examines Stevenson's ambivalence about his own artistic creations, suggesting "that we might usefully approach *Jekyll and Hyde* as an indirect attempt by Stevenson to size up his situation as a professional writer at the close of the nineteenth century" ("Sedulous" 251).

[71] Interestingly, the bifurcation of identity caused by the competing demands of domestic and professional life is not fraught with moral baggage in earlier works of Victorian fiction such as Dickens's *Great Expectations*. Wemmick very happily conducts separate lives in the city and the suburbs.

pleasures; however, Watson's dual identity as respectable doctor and partner in (solving) crime can coexist in the world of Doyle's stories. Holmes, similarly, plays many roles, and does not consider one aspect of himself to be his "true" self. His Baker Street apartments are his living quarters, his consulting room, and the space he shares with his professional and domestic partner, Watson. Mrs. St. Clair likewise understands that her husband wears many hats; or rather, that he writes multiple hands. "And you are sure that this is your husband's hand?" Holmes inquires of Mrs. St Clair regarding a letter, supposedly written by her husband. "One of his hands," she replies, "His hand when he wrote hurriedly. It is very unlike his usual writing, and yet I know it well." (Klinger ed. 182) In "The Man with the Twisted Lip," identity is performative, multiple, and fluid. St. Clair is the most masterful exploiter of this performative conception of identity, but also its most ashamed practitioner.

St. Clair and Holmes's likeness also suggests that the streets of London are overtly theatrical spaces where identity is performed. Boone is successful, not because his poverty seems particularly genuine, but because he is entertaining, and draws attention to himself. Holmes remarks of Boone: "His appearance is so remarkable, that no one can pass him without observing him" (Klinger ed. 174). Not only his appearance, but also "his wit [marks him out from the common crowd of mendicants], for he is ever ready with a reply to any piece of chaff which may be thrown at him by the passers-by" (Klinger ed. 175). It is no coincidence that St. Clair's previous occupations were journalist *and actor*. As James Grant has shown, there is a likeness between beggars and actors, and this likeness works both ways: beggars are like actors, as we have seen, but actors are also precariously close to becoming beggars.

The spectacle of actors' poverty sometimes played out very visibly onstage, according to Grant. In his chapter on "Penny Theatres," Grant describes an occasion when two actresses argue

noisily, in a "robing-room made out of a corner of the stage," about which of them should be able to eat the crust of bread used as a prop in a certain scene. The audience overhears their argument, unsure at first "whether the parties to it were actually quarelling with each other, or only acting" (Grant 165-166). The audience members ultimately adjudicate between these two actresses, arguing sensibly that the ladies should split the crust and share it. Real life and theater are complexly imbricated and interwoven, leading to a special intimacy between actor and audience, who interact vocally in this lower-class theatrical venue. Street and stage exist in a symbiotic relationship to each other; beggars like Boone borrow from the conventions of the stage, while the actors' poverty affects the performances that occur onstage. The streets became the stage on which the performance of social class took place.

Victorian drama is often denigrated by twenty- and twenty-first-century critics, and was derided even by the Victorians themselves. However, instead of original written drama, the Victorians had an inherently theatrical imagination, as well as a sophisticated awareness of the theatricality of social life, and the porous boundary between street and stage.[72] Life imitates art to the extent that social behavior itself is a kind of drama. Drama is then less a distinct genre for the Victorians than a mode that informs their depictions of social interactions and social class. Charles Lamb, for instance, explicitly compares beggars to actors, and argues that the "authenticity" of beggars is beside the point: "Rake not into the bowels of unwelcome truth to save a half-penny. It is good to believe him…. When they come with their counterfeit looks and mumping tones, think them players. You pay your money to see a comedian feign these things,

[72] In a [related vein], the character Henry Wharton in Mary Augusta Ward's novel *Marcella* exclaims, "We have no drama in England at the present moment worth a cent; so I amuse myself with this great tragi-comedy of the working-class movement. It stirs, pricks, interests me, from morning till night. I feel the great rough elemental passions in it, and it delights me to know that every day brings us nearer to some great outburst, to scenes and struggles at any rate that will make us all look alive." (Ward 185)

which, concerning these poor people, thou canst not certainly tell whether they are feigned or not" (Lamb 274-275). Think them players: if the beggar, like Hugh Boone, is entertaining enough to earn a coin, he deserves it. His performance is a kind of labor.

In "The Man with the Twisted Lip," Sherlock Holmes exposes the professional beggar as a fraud, literally wiping the grin off Boone's face: "Holmes stooped to the waterjug, moistened his sponge, and then rubbed it twice vigorously across and down the prisoner's face.... Never in my life have I seen such a sight. The man's face peeled off under the sponge like the bark from a tree." (Klinger ed. 189) Holmes discovers the solution to the mystery in that most private of bourgeois spaces: the bath room; it is easy, therefore, to read Holmes as an instrument of bourgeois morality. Armed with a sponge, Holmes wipes away the dirt from the beggar's face, cleaning him, civilizing him, returning him to his proper identity. The image of Holmes wiping off the beggar's "face" is reminiscent of the grotesque Victorian advertisements for Pears Soap (Figure 18). In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock discusses many of these racially charged images, in which a white child helps a black child "improve his complexion"—by rubbing off his blackness with soap. McClintock suggests that the Victorian obsession with cleanliness was a means of preserving racial purity and class distinctions: "Soap and cleaning rituals became central to the demarcation of body boundaries and the policing of social hierarchies" in Victorian Britain (McClintock 33). However, the likeness between detective and beggar, which I have outlined above, complicates this reading of Holmes as the enforcer of middle-class morality. Holmes simultaneously polices bourgeois values and undermines them. Holmes accepts that class and masculinity are a performance, and unlike St. Clair, he feels no anxiety about the invisibility of his labor. He boasts that he reached his results in this case "by sitting upon five pillows and consuming an ounce of shag." Holmes may seem like the instrument of bourgeois

values, but his Bohemianism and amorality represent the antithesis of those same values. St. Clair views slumming as shameful; Holmes revels in it. “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” like so many other Sherlock Holmes stories, restores social order by the end of the story, without establishing a sense of moral order.

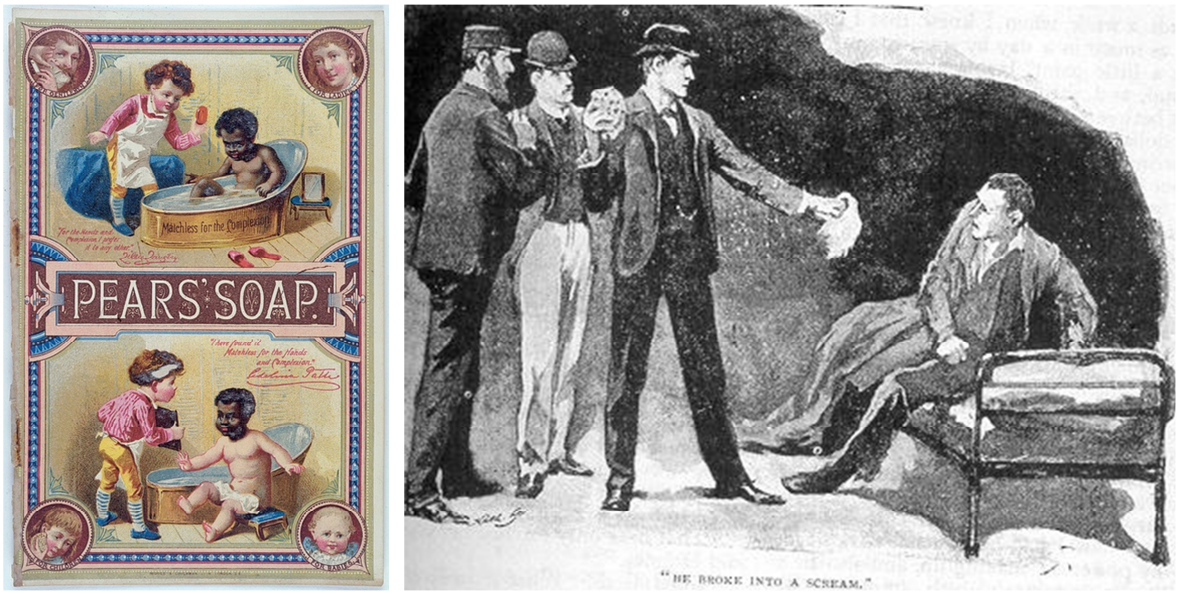

Figure 18: left: an advertisement for Pear's Soap (ca. 1890) and right: Paget's illustration of Holmes wiping the prisoner's face

“The Man with the Twisted Lip” undermines the bourgeois idea that the professional beggar is undeserving. Like Charles Lamb, Holmes regards beggars like Boone as “merely players.” “I have watched the fellow more than once before ever I thought of making his professional acquaintance,” Holmes admits to Watson, “and I have been surprised at the harvest which he has reaped in a short time.” Holmes’s language is descriptive rather than judgmental; his reactions are similar to those of an audience member in a theater. Holmes sees the beggar as spectacle rather than nuisance (“I have *watched* the fellow more than once...”) and his reaction is admiring rather than moralistic (“I have been *surprised*...”). Holmes acknowledges that a certain amount of skill goes into the beggar’s performance. In his professional capacity as a detective, Holmes restores social order at the end of the story, but in his private capacity he admires a

fellow actor. By contrast to the rhetoric of the Poor Laws, which were bent on winnowing the deserving from the undeserving, Holmes's metaphor compares St. Clair's work with agricultural labor (he "reaps" a "harvest"), thus critiquing the judgment social authorities cast on such beggars. Instead, his speech encourages the reader to see likeness in the beggar rather than difference, to sympathize with him—to imagine that under the dirt, scars, and rags, is a human face like their own. Holmes wipes off the beggar's face to reveal his common humanity, but also to pay homage to his skill as an actor. What most professional men do unconsciously—create a persona, don a mask—he does consciously, and with consummate skill.

He Do the Poor in Different Voices: Mayhew's Dramatic Performances of London Labour and the London Poor

"Just 'cause they're in the streets, doesn't mean that they lack opinions."
–Gus Haynes, *The Wire* (season 5, episode 5)

In "The Man with the Twisted Lip," Neville St. Clair leaves his career on the stage to become a journalist; Henry Mayhew made the reverse progression. Initially a correspondent for the *Morning Chronicle*, with a column dedicated to cataloguing and classifying London's working and vagrant poor, Mayhew eventually set up offices on his own account, continuing *London Labour and the London Poor* as a free-standing publication. In this section of the chapter, I examine his ill-fated attempt to adapt and perform *London Labour* on the stage. Like St. Clair, Mayhew ultimately flees from his adopted personae.

Between April and September 1857, Mayhew took his sketches of London street life on the road. Many authors of this time undertook public reading tours; by 1857, Dickens had been giving charitable readings of his works for several years; in 1858, he gave his first

"professional," or for-profit performance (see Andrews 268 ff). Dickens did perform his characters "in different voices," but his set and costume were anti-theatrical; Dickens wore evening dress and stood at a lectern. His set consisted only of a screen placed behind him to help project his voice, and a single spotlight to illuminate his figure (see Andrews 142-143). As Malcolm Andrews describes it, Dickens "did not depend on stage props to create an illusion, only on auditory and visual enhancements to his own dramatic skills" (Andrews 144). Mayhew's initial lecture tour, "Oddities of the London Streets," which ran from April to May 1857, was likewise restrained and traditional, and did not feature costumes. Mayhew's second tour, "Curious Conversazione" (July-August 1857) was more theatrical; an advertisement promised potential audience members the chance "to meet a few ODD CHARACTERS out of the STREETS of LONDON, amongst whom the following have promised to appear in their professional costumes:—The London Costermonger, the Punch and Judy Man, the Death and Fire Hunter, Old Water Cress Seller, the Jew Clothesman, the Professional Beggar, &. &c." (*Morning Post* 7 July 1857; qtd. Hakala 218-219). By contrast to Dickens's more respectable reading tours, Mayhew embraced the dramatic potential of his material, impersonating his various characters, changing costumes between sketches as well as doing the voices.

The final iteration of Mayhew's performance tour, "Punch on the Platform," added an additional element borrowed from the stage; to keep the audience entertained during Mayhew's costume changes, Mayhew's manager Thomas Beale engaged pianist "J. L. Hatton to play and sing whenever he might be required to vary the programme by so doing" (qtd. Hakala 213). Hatton's comic songs mark "Punch on the Platform" as a variant form of the vaudeville or variety show, a popular or "low" entertainment, a product of the "illegitimate theater." With each iteration, Mayhew's lecture tour became increasingly theatrical. As Taryn Hakala argues,

"Mayhew's public performance of his own investigative journalism represented a new genre: part educational lecture, part pathetic narrative, part comic entertainment" (Hakala 224). The opening of "Punch on the Platform" was highly anticipated; in a puff piece, the *Bristol Athenaeum* declared, "Something of what Mr. Dickens has done in books and Mr. Jerrold in Plays, Mr. Mayhew attempts on the Platform" (August 1, 1857).

But "Punch on the Platform" came to an abrupt halt almost as soon as it began. As Thomas Beale recalled in his memoir, *The Light of Other Days*, the opening performance in Brighton's Town Hall, on Tuesday, September 15, 1857, started as planned, with a song and a short introduction in Mayhew's "proper person": "J. L. Hatton plays a short introduction on the pianoforte, Henry Mayhew comes onto the platform. He says a few lines, and is suddenly and unaccountably much embarrassed. The introductory speech at an end, he leaves Hatton to sing a song." (qtd. Hakala 211) Hatton was forced to sing for a much longer interval than he expected; Mayhew never returned to the stage, and cancelled his remaining engagements for "Punch on the Platform" (or rather, as Beale wryly put it, "Punch off the Platform"). The bohemian journalist *cum* entertainer had spotted his father, Joseph Mayhew, sitting in the front row. Henry had crashed headlong into the very embodiment of Victorian respectability. Just as Neville St. Clair flees when he sees his wife, Mayhew could not bear to face a family member witnessing his performance.

Henry Mayhew had a difficult relationship with his father, whom he dubbed, in a poem of the same title, "The Respectable Man" (Yeo and Thompson 13). Joseph Mayhew, a London solicitor, likely regarded his son's profession as a journalist as a form of "slumming" to begin with. Henry resented his father's miserliness (he reportedly bought umbrellas by the gross, and calculated the fare of cab rides down to the penny), and he resented the small allowance that

gave his father a hold over him (Humpherys 2-3). Like his other siblings, Henry rejected Joseph's wish that he should follow in his footsteps and become a solicitor; instead he pursued a career as a journalist. As a mild form of rebellion, Henry socialized with a bohemian and anti-establishment set of fellow writers and journalists. Henry was often short on cash, and even declared bankruptcy in 1847. The sight of his father in the Brighton theater likely aroused his ambivalent feelings about writing, and now performing, for a living.[73] (Think of Neville St. Clair's shame that his children might find out about his career as a professional beggar![74])

Scenes of embarrassment on stage are common enough in the Victorian novel; think of Wopsle's preposterous performance as Hamlet, in *Great Expectations*. His strutting and stammering arouse a mixture of pity and mockery in Pip: "We had made some pale efforts in the beginning to applaud Mr. Wopsle; but they were too hopeless to be persisted in. Therefore we had sat, feeling keenly for him, but laughing, nevertheless, from ear to ear" (255). Henry Mayhew's untimely exit from the stage similarly evokes comedy and pathos. Most critics of Mayhew's work regard his foray into the theater as unfortunate—if they talk about it at all—and humorous at best.[75] But instead of laughing at Mayhew, as Pip laughs at Wopsle, I propose that we should make more than a "pale effort" to applaud his performance.

[73] According to George Hodder, Joshua "made such a solemn appeal to [Henry] as to his compromising the respectability of his family by continuing so 'degrading' a pursuit, that he determined to abandon it" (qtd. Humpherys 10). When Joshua died in 1858, the following year, he left Henry only a small allowance of £1 per week. While it would be a stretch to say he disinherited his son on account of his appearance on stage—rather than for the dozens of other financial and social indiscretions he committed—it is clear that he died displeased with his son: "To my son Henry I cannot make any personal bequest because he cannot possess any property to his own use" (qtd. Humpherys 10).

[74] When searching the opium den for Neville St. Clair, the police come upon his clothes, and a pile of children's bricks: "The toy he had promised to bring home"—a metonym for the respectable domesticity St. Clair leaves behind him when he commutes into the city, and for the commitments it invokes.

[75] I can only find one scholar who takes Mayhew's staged sketches seriously: Taryn Hakala writes about them at length in her dissertation, *Working Dialect: Nonstandard Voices in Victorian Literature*, pp. 211-224.

Many critics see a decline in Mayhew's work following his break with the *Morning Chronicle* in 1850. Eileen Yeo, for example, argues that "Mayhew was capable of his best work" between 1849-1851, when he was "[f]reed temporarily from financial worries and able to stretch his mind in ways not immediately designed to make quick money" (Yeo & Thompson 51). Yeo buys into the notion, common during the Victorian period, that writing for money can compromise an author's artistic or ethical standards. Yeo sees the entertainment value of Mayhew's *London Labour* sketches as a dilution of their sociological and ethnographic value, lumping his later sketches in with other "low-life scenes," such as Pierce Egan's "Tom and Jerry" sketches in *Life in London*, which suffered "from under-disciplined curiosity and over-developed theatricality," according to Yeo (Yeo & Thompson 66). For Yeo, "theatricality" is a term of opprobrium. Mayhew may not have had "financial worries" while writing for the *Morning Chronicle*, but he certainly could not write what he wished; he broke with the editors over their censorship over his column.[76] Being his own employer freed Mayhew to speak his mind, and his so-called "financial worries" motivated him to develop a closer relationship with his readers.

Yeo worries that Mayhew's sketches after his break with the *Morning Chronicle* aimed to entertain, rather than educate the reader; Regina Gagnier similarly expresses skepticism about the literary aspects of Mayhew's sketches: "After the furor over the *Morning Chronicle* letters," writes Gagnier, "Mayhew continued his project with interviews of the London streetfolk in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861-1862), which are sometimes seen as a decline from

[76] Mayhew's critical remarks about free trade were cut from his column, and on 4 October 1850, the editors of the Chronicle published an article in Mayhew's column, praising piecemeal wages in the tailoring industry, which Mayhew did not write. Messrs. H. J. & D. Nicholl, tailors, had placed advertisements in The Chronicle, and were displeased by the tone of Mayhew's earlier critiques of the tailoring industry, though he did not specifically name any firm in particular (see Humpherys 20). On 28 October, Mayhew met with the London tailors to repudiate the article, and declare his break from the *Morning Chronicle*. (See Yeo and Thompson for details, pp. 34-37).

his attempt at a systematic analysis of poverty from the inside into his considerable talent as an impressionist of streetlife 'character'" (Gagnier 83). E. P. Thompson likewise identifies two sides of Mayhew: Mayhew the "systematic empirical sociologist," and Mayhew the "gifted impressionist with an eye for 'character.'" (Yeo and Thompson 45).[77] Like Gagnier, Thompson places the word "character" gingerly in scare quotations. If one favors Mayhew as sociologist, then the movement from the *Morning Chronicle* letters to *London Labour and the London Poor*, and then finally to "Punch on the Platform" and "Curious Conversazione," is definitely a decline. Thompson refers to Mayhew's abortive theatrical tour very briefly, as "a venture which ended in disaster" (Yeo and Thompson 49). However, if we readjust our conception of Mayhew's goals, and see him as a writer who aimed to transmute his subject material into art, then we can view his dramatic performances as the culmination of his ambitious project to represent the spectrum of characters on the London streets.[78]

Such a stance is, admittedly, perverse—first of all, because Victorian theater has historically been underappreciated, and secondly because Mayhew's performance was marked as low entertainment, by the presence of the piano player and comic musical interludes. In order to

[77] Anthony S. Wohl argues that this bifurcation or blend of subjective and objective perspectives was an inherent feature of nineteenth-century works of local ethnography. The genre of slum exploration literature "was full of ambiguities because it vacillated between viewing London, on the one hand, as a laboratory and, on the other, as a theatre, between science and art, between reason and emotion, between individualizing or careful categorizing and stereotyping, between objectivity and subjectivity" (Wohl 81).

[78] The image of transmuting a baser substance into a higher one is an appropriate metaphor for Mayhew's work, since, in terms of the material culture he represented, Mayhew was very interested in the concept of recycling, or rather, what we would refer to today as "upcycling" ("the operation or process of reusing waste materials to create a product of higher value or quality": OED, "upcycling," n.). Mayhew was able to see the potential beauty and use value in refuse, trash, and detritus. In the sketch "Street Sellers of Second-Hand Articles," Mayhew describes the manufacture of "shoddy," a fabric made from unraveled threads of other fabrics, and he points out that these materials can be reclaimed: "In some article the re-manufacture is beautiful…. Thus the rags which the beggar could no longer hang about him to cover his nakedness, may be a component of the soldier's or sailor's uniform, the carpet of a palace, or the library table-cover of a prime minister." (Douglas-Fairhurst, 151-152). Mayhew's literary project, similarly, aimed to reveal the hidden usefulness and beauty in lower-class working life, to transform their difficult lives into literature. Mayhew could appreciate the aesthetics of lower-class life, and aimed to make his readers see this neglected beauty.

view "Punch on the Platform" as the pinnacle of Mayhew's project, we must first readjust the criteria by which we measure success. In a departure from the bulk of Mayhew scholarship, I argue that Mayhew's performance in "Punch on the Platform" and "Curious Conversazione" represents the culmination of Mayhew's increasing desire for intimacy with both his readers and subjects, and his effacement of himself as intermediary. I propose that we reclaim the theatricality of *London Labour and the London Poor*, not as "over-developed," or simply an unfortunate move to make money, but as absolutely central to Mayhew's project.

Mayhew's sketches were unique in that Mayhew allowed the poor to speak for themselves. Mayhew claimed that his project was "the first attempt to publish the history of a people, from the lips of the people themselves…in their own 'unvarnished language'" (*London Labour* 1.iii).[79] Mayhew interviewed his subjects, but for the most part, he eliminated the intervening questions he posed, presenting the interviewees' speech as an uninterrupted monologue. "The interviewer is absorbed into the voice of the interviewee," Mary Shannon notes, "so there is less of a mediating voice between the words of the informant and the conclusions drawn by the reader" (Shannon 155). Robert Douglas-Fairhurst likens Mayhew's technique to the literary form of the dramatic monologue: a genre "carefully situated between theatrical speech and the quieter reflections of print" (Douglas-Fairhurst xxxiii). Hakala deftly analyzes the subtle shifts in Mayhew's early letters for the *Morning Chronicle*, between free indirect discourse and direct first-person speech as Mayhew gradually excises his own interrogations, while asserting his observations at intervals (Hakala 185-190). "Mayhew flows in and out of representing the weavers' voices directly, interjecting his own voice less and less as

[79] Hakala contrasts Mayhew's transcription of regional dialect to the representation of lower class and regional speech in the Morning Chronicle letters of Angus Reach, the correspondent for the Northern Districts, who "often represents the regional speech of his informants with standard phonology…rather than capitalizing on the Northern dialects, even if only for their quaintness" (Hakala 190).

the letter progresses," Hakala writes, of Mayhew's second letter for the *Morning Chronicle* (Hakala 187). Effacing himself as interlocutor allowed for greater intimacy between Mayhew's readers and his subjects. Angus Reach's letters, by contrast, employ the dry analytical language of the Parliamentary Blue Book, as Hakala notes.

Mayhew's intimacy with his readers increased after his break with the *Morning Chronicle*, when he began to sell *London Labour and the London Poor* in weekly serialized installments. "What is most interesting, in this new phase of publication," notes E. P. Thompson, "is the palpable sense of relationship between Mayhew and his audience—a relationship which, until then, had been mediated through the correspondence columns of the *Chronicle*. Each twopenny part was bound in a wrapper, on which Mayhew printed information and enquiries received from readers, together with his own replies" (Yeo and Thompson 42). The wrappers served a dual purpose for Mayhew, as he announced on the initial wrapper, for his fifth number: "In compliance with the request of many Subscribers, the outer pages of this periodical will, in future, be used as a wrapper, intended to be cut off in binding, [sic] This will not only keep the work from being soiled, but enable Mr. Mayhew to answer the inquiries of his several Correspondents" (Taithe 87). These wrappers served a practical function in keeping the periodical clean; Leah Price points out that "*London Labour* constantly reminds us that we're wearing out its pages…. Even as the wording of the wrappers incorporated readers' writing, their material form kept dirty hands at a distance" (Price 238). I focus on the former function: Mayhew's use of these wrappers to increase his intimacy with his readers. Like the Proscenium of the stage, these wrappers simultaneously marked off the boundary between audience and performer (or reader and writer), but also established a relationship between the two. The wrappers allowed readers to become even closer to Mayhew's subjects, sometimes in very

tangible ways. Often, readers inquired about a particular character Mayhew described. At one point, readers raised enough money to replace the "delapedated" harp of a street musician (Yeo and Thompson 43, Taithe 99).

The wrappers allowed Mayhew's readers to feel that they were interacting with Mayhew's subjects. At the same time, Mayhew's move to his own offices brought him physically closer to the theater. Not only do Mayhew's sketches resemble dramatic monologues, as Douglas-Fairhurst asserts; the theater was also close to Mayhew's project in terms of geographical proximity. As Mary Shannon points out, "The office of *The London Labour and the London Poor*, at 16 Upper Wellington Street, was practically equidistant between the Lyceum and Covent Garden theatres…and was in the middle of a cluster of theatres which included Drury Lane, the Olympic…and the Adelphi…. The presence of the theatre and the presence of journalists were equally inescapable during evenings on Wellington Street" (Shannon 113, 117). Mayhew's new independent offices, after his break with the *Chronicle*, were geographically close to many theatres, allowing for a rich cross-pollination between page and stage.

In the transition from page to stage, Mayhew accomplishes several things. First, this transition achieves a shift from the representation of an aggregate "type" to the representation of an individual character. In *London Labour*, for example, Mayhew catalogues the habits, amusements, finances, religion, sexuality, etc. of costermongers as a group; in *Curious Conversazione*, he allows a single costermonger to speak as a representative of his type, but first and foremost as an individual character. The costermonger may speak of "our chaps" or "ve costers" (we costermongers) plural, but he stands in front of the audience as a single individual. Natalie Prizel has argued that "the taxonomical Mayhew, intent on distinguishing between workers and non-workers, deserving and undeserving" poor, exists alongside a Mayhew who is

more interested in "performance and portraiture…two categories that push away taxonomy in their emphasis on singularity" (Prizel 443). This tension between Mayhew as taxonomist and Mayhew as portraitist (another way of voicing Yeo's distinction between Mayhew as sociologist and Mayhew as impressionistic sketcher of "character") is also a tension between the verbal and the visual. The illustrations in Mayhew—engravings made after daguerreotypes by Henry Beard—point to the singularity and individuality of the subject. Prizel focuses particularly on Mayhew's sketch and visual portrait of the crippled seller of nutmeg-graters. While this man exists within the larger framework of Mayhew's taxonomical category of street-sellers, his portrait and the verbal sketch are unique. From the particular disability that characterizes his body, this uniqueness or particularity extends to the items he sells: how much demand can there be for nutmeg graters?

While Mayhew as observer and taxonomist is the ultimate authority over his work, Mayhew as portraitist acknowledges the agency and volition of his subjects. Prizel argues that these street sellers are canny performers, performing "marketable versions of themselves" that fit into Mayhew's preconceived categories. "Mayhew's informants are by far his most important collaborators," Prizel asserts, "insofar as their performances of the self provide the essential content of his work" (Prizel 434-435). Putting his subjects on the stage tacitly acknowledges their status as actors who initially perform for Mayhew and his readers, and the "acts of self-fashioning that constitute each portrait" (Prizel 434).

By presenting his characters onstage, Mayhew is also able to foreground the peculiarities of their voice and language. As Mayhew writes in his preface to *London Labour*, his goal is to tell the history of the people "in their own words," a goal he accomplishes more thoroughly when he represents these characters onstage. When discussing costermongers in prose in *London*

Labour, Mayhew devotes a section to the "Language of Costermongers," explaining the slang of this class to the uninitiated: "The slang language of costermongers is not very remarkable for originality of construction," writes Mayhew, "it possesses no humour: but they boast that it is known only to themselves…The root of the costermonger tongue, so to speak, is to give the words spelt backwards, or rather pronounced rudely backwards" (*London Labour* I.23). Mayhew then provides a brief dictionary of costermonger slang. However, when Mayhew gets inside the costermonger's skin, so to speak, and ventriloquizes his voice, he finds the humor hidden in this linguistic game:

> Our chaps mostly talks vot's called "kab genals." Vot on airth's "kab genals," d'ye say? Vell, I never! I thought you did know the price of old rags! Vy "kab genals" is on'y the vords "back slang" shoved right bak'ards. Don't ye see. A'n't *c a b* the bak'ards for "back," and isn't "*genals*" the topsy-turvy for "slang." Oh! You a'n't half fly…
>
> In the "kab-genals" patter, ye see, all the vords is pernounced as if they vos spelled wrong-end fust. Like this here now—"Tuc ti" is the back-slang for "cut it;" and this is the vay ve does the reck'ning up in that there kind o' talk. So keep your heyes vide open, for I'm a-going over the numbers just like a crab vould, ye know—back'ards.
>
> Eno, ote, erth, rofe, evif, neves…. [He proceeds to count through the numbers up to twenty, and then to give the back slang for various denominations of currency.]
>
> But on'y to think o' my having to give you a lesson in l'arning! A'n't your eddication been neglected though, that's all! (*Curious Conversazione* 6-7)

In ventriloquizing the coster's speech, Mayhew finds the latent humor in it, which consists in mocking the pretentions of the upper classes. In the original *London Labour* sketches, Mayhew is condescending in his treatment of coster slang, but he turns his mockery toward the upper classes in *Curious Conversazione*, addressing the audience directly. ("You ain't half fly!" and "Ain't your education been neglected?")[80] Ellen Rosenman argues that the "vulgarity" of the street sellers in Mayhew's sketches "arises not from a lack of sophistication, but from a deliberate intention to offend, resting on an awareness of the power dynamics of class relations" (Rosenman 55). However, the stage costermonger aims not to offend but to entertain his middle-class audience through his gentle mockery of their own pretensions to education and respectability. If Mayhew was successful in making the audience laugh, he made them laugh at themselves, rather than at the costermonger. Where Mayhew sought in *London Labour* to educate his readers, in *Curious Conversazione* Mayhew gently mocks them for their lack of knowledge. In his prose sketch, Mayhew says the costermongers pronounce their words "rudely backwards," but for the stage version, he adds in the colorful literary analogy to the crab, walking backwards.

The coster's speech in *Curious Conversazione* is humorous, but also unrelentingly critical of the powers that be. In his section on costermongers in *London Labour*, Mayhew repeatedly mentions the costermongers' hatred of policemen, which sounds like simple aggression: "The notion of the police is so intimately blended with what may be called the politics of the costermongers that I give them together…. As regards the police, the hatred of a costermonger to a 'peeler' is intense," writes Mayhew, "and with their opinion of the police, all the more ignorant

[80] In Arundhati Roy's 1997 novel *The God of Small Things*, the characters Estha and Rahel similarly speak backwards, as children, and to similar effect: in both instances the powerless (children, the working classes) speak backwards in order to annoy, confound, and tease the powerful (adults, the upper classes).

unite that of the governing power…. To thwart the police in any measure the costermongers readily aid one another…. I am assured that in case of a political riot every 'coster' would seize his policeman" (*London Labour* I.20). In *Curious Conversazione*, by contrast, the costermonger's political views gain nuance and sophistication. After the costermonger explains the system of "slang" or false weights and measures by which costermongers trick their customers—using hollowed out weights, or ones filled with cork—he defensively admits, "Yes, in coorse ve has our tricks o' trade too, as vell as the reg'lar shopkeepers," linking his cheating in the underground economy to the dubious practices of more respectable salespeople (*Curious Conversazione* 8). The costermonger doesn't stop here, but extends this notion of false and hollow appearances to the most powerful figures in the land:

> Then as for yer 'Marchint Princes,' vy they a'n't no better than *cork veights* arter all. They looks big and solid enough to be sure, but ven ye comes to turn 'em up, ye finds they're stuffed up on'y vith paper in place of the reel substarntial metal. A'n't a seat in Parliament too, since these here British Bank disclojures, come to be just like a seat on my donkey?—a wery duberous persition; and von vitch makes a many a clever chap appear but little above a hass. (*Curious Conversazione* 9)

Here Mayhew introduces a topical reference to current events. According to Erik F. Gerding, the 1850s in England were characterized by "Widespread fraud at banks, including Strahan Paul and Bates, Tipperary and Royal British Bank (losses when these three banks failed rivaled magnitude of investor losses in Madoff Ponzi scheme of 2000s)" (Gerding 102). This financial crisis resulted in the institution of limited liability regulations to minimize investor losses. While introducing this topical reference, however, Mayhew gives the costermonger credit for more

political acumen and subtlety than the simple hatred of police that he depicts in *London Labour*, and more humor. The costermonger's language is replete with metaphor (merchant princes are cork weights) and simile (a seat in Parliament is like a seat on an ass). His language is inventive, flexible, and humorous.

Whereas one of Mayhew's major aims in the prose sketches is to establish categories with clear boundaries, he collapses the categories and blurs the boundaries in the dramatic scenes through analogy and performance. Costermongers are not so very different from respectable shopkeepers, and they also resemble merchant princes and even members of parliament. Where the goal of the prose is to establish a taxonomy by which audiences can distinguish between worthy and unworthy, the dramatic performance aims to create sympathy across those categories. Mayhew's performance allows his audience to identify with his subjects, who are really not so different from themselves. Mayhew's embarrassment at seeing his father demonstrates his extreme identification with his subjects; he is embarrassed at having fallen to their level.

The character in *Curious Conversazione* who is most uncomfortably similar to Mayhew is the professional beggar, based on Andrew Halliday's sketches in volume IV of *London Labour*. As I mentioned in my section on Conan Doyle's "The Man with the Twisted Lip," journalists especially resent professional beggars because they too closely resemble themselves. Beggars use spoken and written words in order to connect to an audience and gain their sympathy and coin. They "affect" respectability, but by doing so, they illustrate that respectability is a contingent and fragile concept that depends on performance. The professional beggar arouses anxieties about correctly reading class; it is difficult to tell the class trajectory of these imposters. How can one tell the difference between a case of downward class mobility (a "distressed scholar" or "decayed gentleman" for instance), and an upstart beggar who merely

affects respectability? Professional beggars have skills that make them uncomfortably similar to other sorts of professional men; Halliday writes:

> His calling is a special one, and requires study, perseverance, and some personal advantages. The begging letter writer must write a good hand, speak grammatically, and have that shrewd perception of character peculiar to fortune-tellers, horoscopists, cheap-jacks, and pedlars. He 'must read and write, and cast accounts;' have an intuitive knowledge of the 'nobility and landed gentry;' be a keen physiognomist, and an adept at imitation of handwritings, old documents, quaint ancient orthography, and the like. He must possess an artistic eye for costume, an unfaltering courage, and have tears and hysterics at immediate command. (*London Labour* IV.403)

In other words, the begging letter writer is some combination of writer and actor; a master of both verbal facility and imitation, the begging letter writer's qualities sound strikingly similar to the unique combination of qualities Mayhew brought to his dramatic performances! (Later critics similarly praise Mayhew for his knowledge of and ability to depict character.)

The main focus of the section on "Beggars and Cheats" in volume IV of *London Labour*, is the effort to distinguish between true beggars and imposters, between deserving and undeserving poor—a goal it shares with the New Poor Law of 1834. "The beggar whose poverty is not real, but assumed, is no longer a beggar in the true sense of the word, but a cheat and an imposter, and as such he is naturally regarded, not as an object for compassion, but as an enemy to the state," writes Halliday (*London Labour* IV.393). Halliday proceeds to discuss various beggars, cataloguing the many ways in which beggars can deceive the unwary public. He also

discusses the Mendicity Society, the "object" of which society "was to protect noblemen, gentlemen, and other persons accustomed to dispense large sums in charity from being imposed upon by cheats and pretenders, and at the same time to provide, on behalf of the public, a police system, whose sole and special function should be the suppression of mendicancy" (*London Labour* IV.399). Halliday's goal, like James Grant's in *Sketches in London*, is to taxonomize various kinds of cheats and imposters in order to prevent people from giving their money to unworthy persons. The assumption is that most beggars aim to deceive. "It will be found that imposture in beggary has invariably been the offspring of a high state of civilization, and has generally had its origin in large towns" (*London Labour* IV.393). In other words, Londoners are particularly at risk. It is the duty of the investigator and journalist to reveal these deceptions to the public.

However, when Mayhew translates Halliday's professional beggar for the stage in *Curious Conversazione*, a curious thing happens. Mayhew impersonates the beggar, who demonstrates to the audience the various ways in which he deceives people. The beggar begins by performing his destitution for the audience, but then he breaks the fourth wall, admitting to them that his poverty is merely an act, and bringing them in on the secret. "Ladies and gentlemen,—I am ashamed to appear before you in this degraded condition, but I can assure you I have not the wherewithal to purchase more decent apparel," he begins his sketch, outlining his poverty, and his desire to become a teacher in a genteel academy, if he only had the right clothes, and appealing to the audience for a donation (*Curious Conversazione* 29). But after outlining this scenario, the beggar breaks character: "[*Suddenly altering his tone and manner.*] Now, that's what we call the distressed usher lurk! And a very tidy lurk it is too, if so be as you can throw in a mouthful or two of dog Latin—just a little bark, ye know, or dash of the canine, as the doctor's

[sic] call it—and with a little whine too, if ye like, so as to make the dose more palateable" (*Curious Conversazione* 30). Again, we see the hallmarks of Mayhew's dramatic sketches: the added humor that is often absent in the original prose version (the joke about dog Latin, the pun on whine/wine), and the direct and honest address to the audience.

Where Halliday aimed to expose the beggar, in Mayhew's dramatic performance, the beggar exposes his own tricks for the audience, like a magician revealing what goes on behind the curtain. But an even stranger thing happens at the end of the sketch. After revealing his multiple lurks to the audience, the beggar nevertheless asks them in all sincerity for a donation:

> So, ladies and gentlemen, I'd respectfully ask yer, what are we poor beggars to do to live in ease and comfort. If therefore you would kindly leave a small pittance for me at the doors, I should be ever grateful, as I can assure you we have been decently brought up, and never been used to [ha]rd work in all our lives. (*Curious Conversazione* 35)

Mayhew's representation of the professional beggar undergoes a radical shift from *London Labour and the London Poor* to its incarnation on stage. The major goal of Halliday's articles on beggars is to educate his readers so they can avoid giving to unworthy objects, whereas the performance of *Curious Conversazione* aims to arouse sympathy in spite of the beggar's open admission that his performance is a deception. He asks them to pay his performance, regardless. Mayhew's professional beggar anticipates Bernard Shaw's Alfred P. Doolittle, another shameless beggar on the stage: "I'm one of the undeserving poor: that's what I am," Doolittle admits, "But my needs is as great as the most deserving widow's that ever got money out of six different charities in one week for the death of the same husband…. I ain't pretending to be

deserving. I'm undeserving; and I mean to go on being undeserving. I like it; and that's the truth" (*Pygmalion* Act II). Like Mayhew's professional beggar, Alfred Doolittle admits to being undeserving, but asks for a donation anyway, arguing for his fundamental equality with fellow human beings at the level of basic needs. Higgins, recognizing that Doolittle is trading on the currency universally recognized by academics, "a certain natural gift of rhetoric," gives him the money he requests.

By contrast to the rhetoric of the Poor Laws—winnowing the wheat from the chaff, distinguishing between authenticity and imposture—the performance of class difference aims to question, complicate, and interrogate those tidy distinctions between deserving and undeserving. A few writers went against the grain of such rhetoric, arguing that the performance of poverty should be enough to arouse the onlooker's sympathy; it is better to be deceived than to be overly skeptical. As in the theater, it is best to suspend one's disbelief. Again, I return to Charles Lamb's idea that "painted distress" should not provide an excuse not to "act a charity." Crucially, Lamb implies that both parties in this "scene of sympathy" are engaging in a performance. The distress might be painted, but the sympathetic onlooker is also "*acting* a charity." By implying that both participants in this scene are actors, or participators in a performance, Lamb calls the authenticity of the charitable giver into question. Like Lamb, William Blanchard Jerrold asserts that "It is better for all parties that we should continue to believe in the genuineness of every giver" (Jerrold 222). For Jerrold, the beggar must also suspend his disbelief of the authenticity of the giver's motives. Authenticity is not the point; rather, it is more important to engage in this social scene, however artificial, in order to facilitate cross-class interaction, sympathy, and exchange. William Dean Howells makes a similar argument in his essay "Tribulations of a Cheerful Giver" (1895). By contrast to Halliday, who

asserts that the begging imposter is an enemy to the state, Howells writes, "I am not able to think very ill even of imposters. It is a great pity for them, and even a great shame, to go about deceiving people of means; but I do not believe they are so numerous as people of means imagine … All that I contend for is the right—or call it the privilege—of giving to him that asketh, even when you do not know that he needs, or deserves to need" (Howells 420). Mayhew the journalist aims to categorize and taxonomize the London poor, to distinguish between true and false beggars, but Mayhew the actor sides with Lamb, Jerrold, and Howells in his rejection of these categories.

Slumming, as a form of acting, complicates the moral judgment surrounding the notion of imposture. As I discussed in my first chapter, imitation is not only the sincerest form of flattery, but also the foundation of a moral education. Imposture is immoral in that it succeeds too well in imitating its object, deceiving the viewer. But where do we draw the line between imitation and imposture? Why is one so praised and the other reviled? Halliday flirts (albeit unwittingly) with this fine line in his introduction to the section on "Beggars and Cheats" in volume IV of *London Labour*. In his discussion of the history of begging and the rise of imposture, he romanticizes the early days of begging and early episodes of slumming:

> In early times beggary had even a romantic aspect. Poets celebrated the wanderings of beggars in so attractive a manner that great personages would sometimes envy the condition of the ragged mendicant and imitate his mode of life. James V. of Scotland was so enamoured of the life of the gaberlunzie man that he assumed his wallet and tattered garments, and wandered about among his subjects begging from door to door, and singing ballads for a supper and a night's lodging. The beggar's

> profession was held in respect at that time, for it had not yet become associated with imposture… (*London Labour* IV.393, emphasis added).

Halliday seems blissfully unaware of the irony of his statement. Halliday uses the word "imitate" to describe the king's activities, but the king's activities are not immune to criticism; it is dishonest to beg money from people who need it more than oneself. Halliday's description reveals a class-based double standard: pretending to be a beggar is harmless and romantic "imitation" when a king does it, but "imposture" when a needier person engages in this behavior.

In his *London Labour* sketches, Mayhew aimed to taxonomize and classify the London Poor "under three separate phases, according as they *will* work, they *can't* work, and they *won't* work": the classic categories of the Poor Laws (Thompson and Yeo 102). In his dramatic performances, Mayhew aimed to imitate the beggar, in the manner of King James V. But in doing so, Mayhew revealed himself to be an imposter, and fled the stage.

Poke Bonnets and Plain Brown Holland: The Uniforms of Odd Women in London's East End

As professional opportunities for women expanded throughout the nineteenth century, philanthropic or charitable activities seemed to dovetail naturally with women's existing roles. F. K. Prochaska observes that "A distinctive feature of women's work in nineteenth-century philanthropy is the degree to which they applied their domestic experience and education, the concerns of family and relations, to the world outside the home" (Prochaska 7). Jill Rappoport similarly argues that charity "allowed middle-class women to expand the ideological and practical reach of their domestic 'sphere.'" (Rappoport 6)[81] One literary example of a woman operating in an expanded domestic sphere is George Eliot's Dorothea Brooke, whose

[81] Dorice Williams Elliott makes a similar argument in *The Angel Out of the House*. "Women's philanthropy seemed to be a natural extension of their domestic role," she writes (Elliott 6).

"incalculably diffusive" influence is ultimately grounded in her marriage to a good man; her charity begins at home and naturally extends outwards, like widening circles in a pool. Though charity work seemed to present an appropriate role for women, nevertheless, women's forays into more public and visible work raised anxieties about independent or unfeminine women. Male writers often depicted female philanthropists in an unflattering light; Dickens's meddling Mrs. Pardiggle and ridiculous Mrs. Jellyby are famous examples. While the saint and the shrew are two well-known and understood models of Victorian female charity workers, the heroines of late-Victorian slum narratives do not fit neatly into either paradigm. The uniforms or costumes of charity workers empower these female characters to act anonymously; in this disguise, they are free to reimagine their own identities as individual women, and also to reinvent themselves as members of a community of women, regardless of class boundaries, and outside the limits of the nuclear family.

In this section of the chapter, I examine two late-Victorian novels featuring women who venture into the slums of London: *Marcella* by Mary Augusta Ward (1894), and *In Darkest London* by Margaret Harkness (1889).[82] While *Marcella* ultimately contains the subversive energies of the slum plot within the more conventional confines of the marriage plot, the ending of *In Darkest London* leaves many loose ends unresolved. But crucially, these two novels depict single women who don a professional "disguise" in order to conduct philanthropic work in the slums of the East End. While these novels are not entirely enlightened in terms of class relations and class consciousness, they do create a space for female agency. As Deborah Nord has argued, the city of London was an ideal space in which to explore new roles for women, because the city "represented the antithesis of those private and protected spaces that middle-class women had

[82] Originally titled *Captain Lobe*, and published under the pseudonym John Law.

traditionally occupied" (Nord 182). The heroines of slum narratives use their professional uniform as a way to present their bodies in public. These costumes and props mark these women as "odd" (both peculiar, and single or singular), while allowing them to stage and perform their gender in new ways and in new spaces. Shifting my focus from beggars to reformers in this final section, I argue that we can understand reform and profession as performative; both involve not just taking a stance on an issue, but striking a pose, taking action, donning a uniform, making an entrance. Shannon Jackson, historian of Chicago's Hull House, has coined the portmanteau term "reformance," to describe the idea of social reform accomplished through ritualized performance. "Sharing an etymological root that means 'to bring into being' or 'to furnish,' *performance* underscores the material acts of construction implicit in the term *reform*" (Jackson 8). In the novels I explore in this section, performance is exploratory rather than conventional. Late-Victorian "reformance" brings into being new ways of performing class and gender roles. Like the new methods of acting popularized in the late century, these new roles repudiate the conventional signs and symbols of the past. Like Ibsen's Nora Helmer, Ruth and Marcella leave their homes in order to play new parts in the unfolding drama of their lives as women.

These novels have important differences of plot, character, and style, but their similarities are striking. The heroine of each novel is a single woman. Ruth is orphaned as well, and therefore doubly unattached and unchaperoned; Marcella, though not an orphan, has a tenuous relationship with her parents, who send her off to boarding school at a young age. Both women are heiresses: Ruth will inherit a candy factory, and Marcella is the heiress of her family's estate. Both foray into the East End of London, in disguise or incognito, and both heroines espouse a greater "cause" or social scheme: Marcella becomes a socialist, and Ruth joins the Salvation Army.

But the most essential element tying these characters together is their gender. Because these novels focus on *women* who venture into the slums, they explore the controversies surrounding new professional roles for women. Ellen Ross argues that the vexed role of women in philanthropy was made visible in the problem of their dress: "As they moved about among their clients or parishioners, women, because of their dress, were far more conspicuous as classed bodies than were their male counterparts," writes Ross. "Men clothed themselves effortlessly for slum expeditions in expensive but dark-hued tweeds. For women, dressing was more involved, for true female gentility was signaled by elaborate costumes, underclothing, and headgear" (Ross 16). Clothing for female slum workers conveyed a complex intermixture of class, sexuality or virtue, and professional status. Though Salvation Army founder William Booth urged his adherents to "be odd," such an exhortation was more fraught for women who attempted to signal their oddness visibly through their sartorial choices (qtd. Le Zotte 249). (Not to mention that simply appearing unchaperoned on the London streets was enough to mark a woman as "odd.")

Both Ruth and Marcella don the uniform of the new professional woman: Ruth opts for the "poke bonnet" and collar of the Salvation Army "Slum Sister," and Marcella chooses the uniform of the professional nurse. Uniforms can confer the benefit of anonymity and conformity, but for Marcella and Ruth, these uniforms also heighten their sexuality in problematic ways. These professional "costumes" either make them overly sexualized or unfeminine, but they are never neutral. Marcella's nursing uniform, for example, draws attention to her desirability in ways that anticipate the misogynistic "sexy nurse" costume and stereotype, making her an object of desire for more than one man. In the passage below, Marcella mesmerizes Harry Wharton, a liberal MP and one of her two suitors:

> Wharton looked at her irresolute. He had spent half an hour with her *tête-à-tête* before Louis Craven arrived, and he was really due at the House. But now that she was on the scene again, he did not find it so easy to go away. How astonishingly beautiful she was, even in this disguise! She wore her nurse's dress; for her second daily round began at half-past four, and her cloak, bonnet, and bag were lying ready on a chair beside her. The dress was plain brown Holland, with collar and armlets of white linen; but, to Wharton's eye, the dark Italian head, and the long slenderness of form had never shown more finely. He hesitated and stayed. (Ward 372-373)

The passage uses free indirect discourse to enter Wharton's thoughts: "How astonishingly beautiful she was, even in this disguise!" Though Marcella makes no attempt to hide her true identity, Wharton still refers to her nurse's uniform as a "disguise"; her clothing adds an element of intrigue and mystery to her identity. Like Dorothea Brooke, Marcella has "that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress." Though the utilitarian garb of the "new-style" nurse was intended to downplay her sexuality, it could have the opposite effect. The uniform of the "new-style" nurse was in part an attempt to regulate the excesses of the female body, as represented in Figure 19, which contrasts the working-class, debauched, and sexually promiscuous figure on the left with the middle-class, genteel, and chaste uniformed figure on the right. Sairey Gamp's bottle and shabby umbrella are transformed into the spiritual symbol of the cross. However, Catherine Judd complicates the notion of a simplistic dichotomy between the two models, arguing that "the saintly nurse was in and of herself a highly eroticized figure, and Victorian writers and reformers remained at least tacitly aware of the inherent eroticism contained in representations of the 'saintly' new-style nurse" (Judd 34).

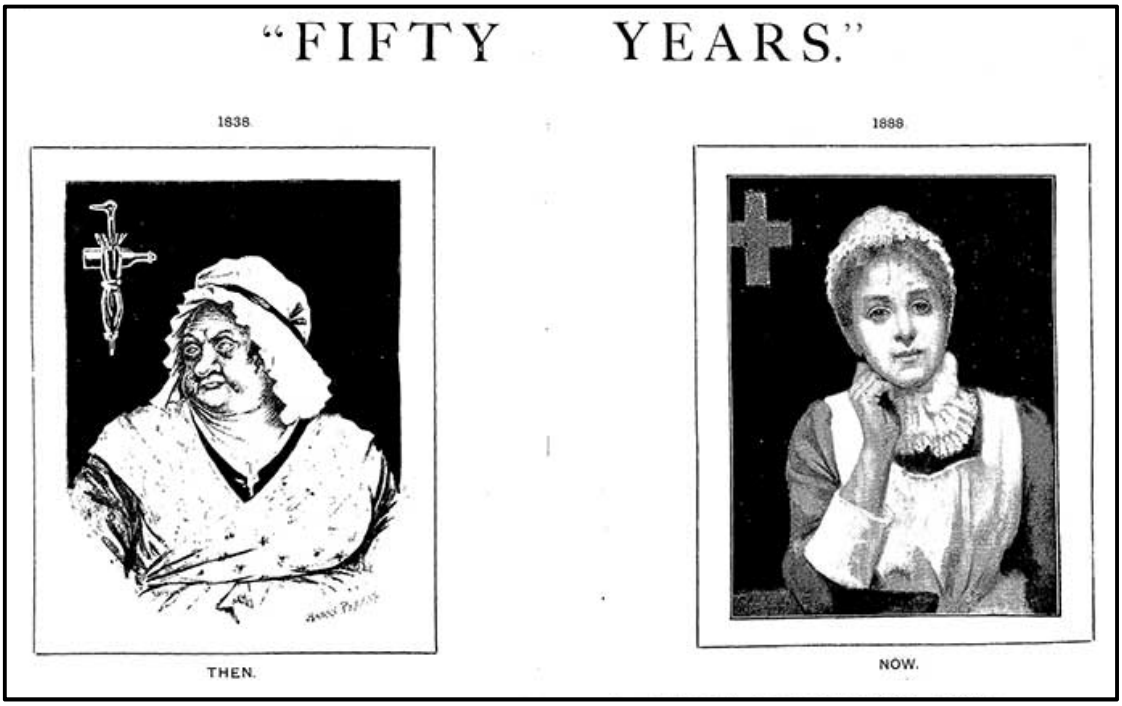

Figure 19: Supplement to the "Nursing Record" (December 20, 1888)

Thus, while Marcella maintains her respectability and chastity during her stint as a nurse, Harry Wharton's admiring gaze recalls the clandestine kiss they shared, which caused Marcella and Aldous to break off their engagement. Brooks and Rafferty note the ambiguity of the nurse's sexuality: "The nurse in her garb was both nun-like and veiled in purity but also worldly, one who had intimate dealings with bodies." (Brooks and Rafferty 49)

Harkness's Captain Lobe, a Salvation Army captain, fears that if his love interest Ruth joins the Salvation Army, she too will be exposed to the gaze and desires of other men:

> Even Salvationists have prejudices. Captain Lobe conjured up a vision of Ruth working among the scum of London, with no other protection than an S on her collar, and a poke bonnet. Drunken men are not safe company for young women who go about at all hours of the day and night in the very lowest East End districts. Captain Lobe thought of this, and it made him hesitate. Yet he had given

> other girls who had become slum saviours every encouragement; he had not shrunk from seeing them put on the Salvation apron. Why did he say to himself that Ruth was too young for slum work, too delicate? (Harkness 25-26)

Like the passage from *Marcella*, this passage from *In Darkest London* uses free indirect discourse to ventriloquize a male character's thoughts about a female slum worker. Both passages emphasize the woman's sexuality, though the first focuses on the male's scopophilic pleasure, while the second describes the male's feelings of anxiety, jealousy, and possessiveness. In the second passage, at least, the woman's public display of her sexuality is depicted as a problem. But how do these female characters *themselves* feel about their costume and vocation? While the male characters find pleasure (or anxiety) in looking, the female characters find pleasure in performance and action, as well as in the sisterly bonds they form with other women. According to Jennifer Le Zotte, "The [Salvation Army] uniform signaled liberation for women," giving them access to portions of the city and to experiences that would normally be considered beyond the pale of respectability (Le Zotte 250). This section of my dissertation tests Le Zotte's claims by seeing whether novels written by women depict such uniforms as liberating for women.

Marcella envisions a utopian community that crosses class boundaries, and is not defined by the demands of heterosexual romance and the nuclear family. Marcella becomes a nurse in order to distance herself from her parents, and her two rival love interests: the benevolent conservative landowner Aldous Raeburn, and the roguish and radical member for Parliament Harry Wharton. Though Marcella espouses Socialist views early in the novel, her stint as a nurse encourages her to test this ideology against the facts of life in the East End slums. Her nurse's "disguise" allows her to reinvent herself, and to reshape the narrative of her life. As a novel,

Marcella searches for new ways to narrate women's lives and loves. *Marcella* strives to be a love story where love is broadly defined; more than a simple narrative of heterosexual coupling, the novel examines alternate forms of love: *philia*, *agape*, and *caritas*, as well as *eros*.[83]

While Wharton admires Marcella's "slenderness of form" in her nurse's uniform, Marcella has other ideas about him: "Altogether, to have met him again was pleasure; to think of him was pleasure; to look forward to hearing him speak in Parliament was pleasure; so too was his new connection with her old friends" (Ward 378). Though the grammatical structure of this sentence emphasizes the word "pleasure" through its use of epistrophe, Marcella's definition of pleasure is very different from Wharton's. "And a pleasure which took nothing from self-respect; which was open, honourable, eager," the paragraph continues (Ward 378). Marcella's pleasure consists in the renewal of her friendship with Wharton, in spite of their past history. The novel suggests the possibility that men and women can be friends on terms of equality and not be romantically involved: "Such equal friendships between men and women grow more possible every day," the narrator confidently asserts (Ward 379). Though the plot of the novel puts pressure on this utopian ideal, the narrative nevertheless insists on platonic and nonhierarchical relationships between the sexes as the "ever-growing possibility," which Mona Caird described in her infamous 1888 essay on "Marriage." Like Caird, these novels "look forward steadily, hoping and working for the day when men and women shall be comrades and fellow-workers as well as lovers and husbands and wives" (Caird 200-201).

Though it is framed by the marriage plot, *Marcella* strives to be a different kind of love story, and this struggle to break the mold of traditional plots for women brings the tension

[83] C.S. Lewis famously analyzed these Greek terms in *The Four Loves* (1960). *Philia* refers to love between friends, *agape* denotes unconditional love, and *caritas* gives us our English word "charity." *Eros*, of course, denotes sexual and romantic passion.

between the progressive and conservative strains of the novel to the foreground. Ultimately, this is a novel about a woman's conversion from politics to religion, from socialism to Christianity, from radicalism to reform. The language of personal conviction replaces the language of political reform in Marcella's vocabulary; "During the past few weeks there had been something wrestling in her—some new birth—some 'conviction of sin.'" (Ward 386). Marcella longs for "the power to lose herself—the power to *love*" (Ward 387). On one hand, this desire represents a departure from women's traditional domestic roles; Marcella longs for the power to love, not a husband, but her fellow human beings—specifically the lower-class *women* who make up the majority of her patients. Marcella's experiences in the East End break the conventions of the domestic novel: she primarily interacts with people of a different class than hers, but of the same gender. She lives with Minta Hurd, a former tenant on Aldous's estate, whose husband is in prison. Therefore, Marcella's longing to love is a longing for same-sex connections. Her visits to these patients are emotionally charged and physically intimate. Mrs. Jervis remarks that Marcella has "nice hands": "they don't never seem to *jar* yer" (Ward 380). Her daughter Emily has left her abusive husband, discarding her wedding ring. Marcella expresses pity for Emily, "laying her hand on the ringless one that held down the shirt on the board" (Ward 381). This image of female touch is a powerful moment of cross-class intimacy that directly repudiates the heterosexual marriage plot. Emily's husband "was a rough man," but the hands of the female nurse are gentle and soothing. Mrs. Vincent, yet another battered wife, pulls up her sleeve to show Marcella the "large bruise" that her husband has left on her "white delicate arm." In this intimate moment, when the patient reveals her body to her nurse, Marcella finds Mrs. Vincent attractive: "even in this abasement Marcella was struck once more with her slim prettiness, her refined air" (Ward 385). "The woman clung to [Marcella], moaning about her husband" (ibid).

In these physically intimate, potentially erotic scenes, husbands are abusive and absent figures. Marriage has brought only pain and disappointment, while a relationship with a woman of a different class, a woman in uniform, promises to bring healing and comfort.

In these powerful encounters with other women, Marcella departs from the conventions of the woman's role in the domestic novel. And yet, in its shift to the language of religious conversion, the novel and its heroine shift from radical notions of political revolution to a moderate vision of social reform. In some respects, *Marcella* is a New Woman novel; it envisions a world in which women have a professional role to play outside the family, and in which men and women can enjoy platonic friendships. In actuality, Mary Augusta Ward advocated for women's education, but she actively fought against female suffrage. In "An Appeal Against Female Suffrage" (1889), Ward expressed her belief "that the emancipating process has now reached the limits fixed by the physical constitution of women, and by the fundamental difference which must always exist between their main occupations and those of men." (Lewis 410). Ward asserts that "the care of the sick and the insane; the treatment of the poor; the education of children" are natural extensions of women's proper role as nurturers and care-givers, but argues that addressing "questions of foreign or colonial policy, or of grave constitutional change" would be unnatural and beyond the scope of women's powers of "sound judgement." *Marcella* ultimately suggests that moderate and gradual reform should be accomplished through the implementation of complementary but distinct gender roles. The narrator claims that Marcella's marriage to Aldous will allow her to effect true social change in her appropriate sphere and with a masculine partner: "Modification, progress, change, there must be, for us as for our fathers! Would marriage fetter her? It was not the least probable that he and she, with their differing temperaments, would think alike in the future, any more than in the past.

She would always be for experiments, for risks, which his critical temper, his larger brain, would of themselves be slower to enter upon. Yet she knew well enough that in her hands they would become bearable and even welcome to him" (Ward 538). The narrator briefly entertains the notion that marriage could "fetter" Marcella, only to dismiss it immediately, arguing that Aldous's "larger brain" will steer and channel Marcella's energy, passions, and ideas.

Like Marcella, Ruth is a New Woman in some respects, but in others, is limited by stereotypical gender roles. It is difficult to access Ruth's interiority or subjectivity. (*In Darkest London* is also less polished and stranger than Ward's novel.[84]) It is tempting to think of her, as Captain Lobe does, as a *tabula rasa* or blank slate: "Her clear white forehead looked like an ivory tablet, upon which Time had written no false word, no evil thought, nothing but love and truthfulness" (Harkness 29). Ruth's defining feature is her golden hair, which signifies not only beauty, but is described as "a halo of holiness" (ibid). Ruth herself seems like an empty cipher, which makes some sense considering the novel was originally titled *Captain Lobe*, not *Ruth*. Rather than a fully developed character in her own right, Ruth is an object of desire, admiration, and jealousy for other characters.[85] But she is, crucially, defined by her relationship with other women—her mother, her guardian Hester, the "labor mistress" and socialist Jane Hardy, and the Salvation Army Slum Sisters with whom she lives and works—and not primarily by her relationship with men. She is raised by Hester to imitate her mother: "Her great aim in life had been to become like her dead mother, for Hester had taught her to think her dead mother perfect"

[84] Though a fascinating novel that touches on many social issues of the time, *In Darkest London* frustratingly avoids developing some of its most original material. One tantalizing plot line that goes nowhere involves a dwarf named Napoleon, who exhibits himself in a freak show, as the "missing link" of evolutionary biology. Napoleon and Captain Lobe have a marvelously strange conversation in the very first chapter of the novel, about whether midgets have souls (Harkness 15). But rather than pursue this line of inquiry into the spiritual and social status of marginalized characters, Harkness kills off Napoleon rather unceremoniously, in the middle of the novel.

[85] Cameron and Dunleavy alternately describe Ruth as a "conduit of sympathy." Her simple observation of and sympathy for the poor allows the reader a supposedly unbiased view of London's social problems, and creates a sense of sympathy in the middle-class reader (Cameron and Dunleavy 131).

(Harkness 72). She resists the advances of the factory manager Mr. Pember, and her relationship with Captain Lobe is not consummated within the novel.

One of the few passages in the novel to directly ventriloquize Ruth's thoughts occurs after she suffers from smallpox and loses her hair:

> She reached down the triangular piece of looking-glass, and knelt on the floor, close to the grate. The flickering flames showed her pale face. Her golden hair had lost its gloss, her grey eyes had sunk deep down below her forehead, and from brow to chin she was marked by the cruel small-pox. She looked steadily at herself for a minute; then she let the glass fall on the floor, and as it shivered to bits she gave a sob—a sob that had no tears in it. (Harkness 173).

Ruth has an identity crisis, and develops interiority, precisely at the moment when she loses her hair, which had been her defining feature. Perhaps her tearless sob acknowledges the fact that she must now build her identity on new and uncharted grounds. Ruth's illness has the same function as the uniform: to shift her value from external to internal characteristics. In place of the "halo" of golden hair, Ruth will have a different sort of halo: the poke bonnet of the Salvation army uniform. Harkness's narrator asserts that the "Salvation uniform gives the 'snub direct' to all that is becoming in the way of female dress," but the Slum Sister's poke bonnet is in fact a distinctive sort of fashion statement (Harkness 173). An article in the evangelical temperance periodical *The Quiver* declares, "The poke bonnet worn by Salvation Army women has for years served as the symbol of sacrifice and service." This writer describes the "conference on millinery" which led to the bonnet's design: "Catherine Booth, the 'Mother of the Salvation Army,' planned the bonnet under circumstances that were thoroughly characteristic. Shutting herself up in a room with her daughter, and surrounded by bonnets of various sorts and sizes, she

set to work to devise for the women of the Army a headgear which would be at once plain, distinctive, and attractive" ("The Uniform of the Poke Bonnet," 299). The writer implies that the bonnet was not intended solely to mortify the flesh, but to be attractive in its plainness (like Marcella's nursing uniform), and to signal clearly a woman's vocation. Catherine Booth envisioned the poke bonnet as a fashion statement that would reorient notions of women's fashion; like their accessories, women could be both attractive *and* useful (Figure 20). This anecdote also shows women's agency in adapting a quasi-military uniform to shape and control their image, and create a perception of professional femininity.

Figure 20: "The Uniform of the Poke Bonnet," p. 301

Even before her illness, however, Ruth is not *just* a pretty face; she insists from the very beginning of the novel that she wants to dedicate her life to service by joining the Salvation Army. Harkness does not develop Ruth's psychology in any depth, so it is unclear what motivates her to pursue this goal; nevertheless, her career goal is clear. The early chapters of the novel follow Ruth as she observes the life of the London poor in her own factory, in the streets, in their homes, and in places of entertainment such as public houses and penny gaff theatres. She plays the role of passive observer; merely taking in all that

she sees without analyzing it (like the urban street walker or *flâneuse*), but her response remains unchanged: "I wish to dedicate myself to the Army's service" (Harkness 37). The Salvation Army was unique among other Protestant organizations and sects in that it actively encouraged women to preach: Catherine Booth's "assertion of women's *right* to preach the gospel disrupted a powerful sphere of masculine privilege while opening a reconsideration of women's spiritual and practical authority" (Walker 9). Ruth's desire to join the Army then, signals her desire to enter the public sphere of male authority and profession.

Though Ruth's motivations remain murky, the historical record is replete with the writings of actual women who joined the Salvation Army in the late-Victorian era. The Salvation Army officer Blanche B. Cox, who instituted a dress code for Salvation Army Slum Sisters, explained her motives for "dressing down": "We dress like the people—with shabby clothes, shawls, aprons, and often bare heads. This enables us to make ourselves at home in the poorest hovel…Our dress, we find, helps us go as SISTERS—not VISITORS." (qtd. Rappoport 110) As Jill Rappoport has argued, the uniform of the Slum Sisters allowed these women "to cross socially bounded spaces, and also to claim, through sisterhood, the ability to transcend and traverse class" (Rappoport 111). The relationship of sisters is a horizontal, rather than vertical or hierarchical relationship. Rappoport questions the success of this idealistic mission, arguing that "dressing down" "emphasiz[es] the very hierarchy it tries to traverse," by calling attention to the descent in class status the Slum Sisters accomplish. "The poor are never shown 'dressing up' to be sisters," Rappoport drily remarks (Rappoport 114). The schemes of real life and fictional characters to enter into the lives of the London poor were not always entirely enlightened in terms of class; however, these women did envision a utopian community in which women shared a common bond, regardless of class boundaries.

These novels suggest the radical possibility that women might find pleasure and fulfillment in their professional work and in female friendships; nevertheless, their long narrative arc bends toward marriage. *Marcella* ends with the sound of wedding bells. Marcella nearly reverses traditional gender roles and proposes to Aldous Raeburn, but he understands her signal, and asks the question himself. *In Darkest London*, however, resists the narrative closure offered by matrimony. S. Brooke Cameron and Matthew Dunleavy argue that "Through Ruth…the narrative gradually shifts its focus from social problems to romance." Cameron and Dunleavy see this shift as a marker of "the limits of sympathy," arguing that the novel substitutes middle-class sentimentality about the poor for true social reform. However, I disagree with Cameron and Dunleavy that Harkness "posit[s] domestic bliss as a solution" to the social problems presented within the novel (Cameron & Dunleavy 110-111). Rather, Harkness's novel attempts to realize Amy Levy's vision of a world in which heterosexual marriage is no longer the dominant cultural institution governing relationships: "Grant, in a million years at most, / Folk shall be neither pairs nor odd" ("A Ballad of Religion and Marriage").

"Domestic bliss" eludes the main characters of Harkness's novel, and the novel ends neither with pairs nor odd, but rather with the hint of a *ménage a trois*. In the final chapters of *In Darkest London*, Ruth and Captain Lobe become engaged, but the novel withholds the closure of a traditional happy ending. Ruth has been disfigured by smallpox, and the Salvation Army sends Captain Lobe to a new post in Australia. They will have to wait two years until Captain Lobe can return, or send for Ruth to join him. Ruth stands at the docks, watching the ship sail away, accompanied by her friend Jane Hardy, the socialist labor mistress and women's rights advocate. Jane tells the captain that she may accompany Ruth to Australia, when the time comes, "if they're sound there on the Woman Question" (Harkness 194). Not only does Jane triangulate the

coupling of Captain Lobe and Ruth; she queers it as well, deeming Captain Lobe an honorary woman: "He quite upsets my theories about men…but there! He isn't a man—he is a woman" (Harkness 200).[86] These very strange final words of the novel are uttered by Jane Hardy. *In Darkest London* comes closest to realizing the utopian ideal that both of these novels (at least temporarily) entertain: a gynocentric society in which heterosexual coupling is not the *sine qua non* of human relationships.

The uniforms of the nurse and the Salvation Army slum sister allow Marcella and Ruth to perform new professional roles for women, to be "odd bodies"—women who are not primarily defined in terms of their relationship to men, but rather by their own actions. Their bodies are not merely objects of male desire, but also crucial actors in the social drama of London's East End. Their oddness is signaled by their dress; the new props and costumes of professionalized women's charity work—the nurse's bag, the Salvation Sister's bonnet—allow them to perform unconventional roles. They deviate from the saint and the shrew, previous models of women's charity, in their attempt to form egalitarian sisterly bonds with women of various class backgrounds. Marcella's attempted friendship with Minta Hurd, her intimate interactions with female patients, and Ruth's attachment to Jane Hardy are more interesting, and more fulfilling, than their relationships with their male love interests.

[86] In his status as an honorary woman, Captain Lobe resembles the cross-dressing Prince in Tennyson's 1847 poem, *The Princess*. The eponymous heroine tells him, "And you look well too in your woman's dress" (part iv. Line 508). See Chase and Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy*, chapter 6, for astute analysis of the prince's androgyny (Princeton University Press, 2000).

CHAPTER THREE:THE WHITE ZULU, THE IRISH CHELA, AND THE HAJI FROM THE FAR NORTH: THE PERFORMANCE OF CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN BOYS' ADVENTURE FICTION

"If a man turns to disguise as a way of life, it suggests a savage dissatisfaction with himself," writes Fawn Brodie, psychoanalytic biographer of Sir Richard Burton: Victorian explorer, linguist, ethnographer, translator, and master of disguise (Brodie 89). This chapter puts pressure on Brodie's claim, examining the motives and effects of cross-cultural disguise in late-Victorian boys' adventure fiction. In it, I argue that cross-cultural disguise suggests a savage dissatisfaction not with a character's individual identity, but rather a critique of monolithic ideas of masculinity and whiteness as innate, essential characteristics and markers of superiority. In order to defend whiteness as a distinct cultural and racial identity in the contact zone of empire, white colonizers resort to a pantomime or melodramatic performance of whiteness, exposing the dominant British culture to mockery, parody, or ridicule. The imperfectly white Kim enacts whiteness in dumbshow, reducing whiteness to a set of melodramatic gestures, while the quintessential English gentleman John Good stresses the importance of dressing like a gentleman, resulting in a comic scene of undress or hybridity. The exaggerated performance of whiteness undermines its essential nature and innate qualities.

Because of their genre, boys' adventure fiction, Kipling and Haggard's novels are preoccupied with the proper formation of masculine identity, and they insistently raise the questions, "What is a Sahib?" and "What is a gentleman?" Instead of answering these questions with a clear definition, the characters perform them. In these novels, boys' competitive play is a rehearsal for adult behavior, and theatricality connects the behavior of the child to that of the man. For the boy protagonist, empire consists of competitive play—the "Great Game" in Kim or the Orientalized playacting in *Stalky & Co*. According to Johan Huizinga's theory of play, the

single combat between Sir Henry and Twala is an adult version of this competitive play. (See *Homo Ludens*, 91). Huizinga points to the importance of "dress up" as a central aspect of play: "The terrors of childhood, open-hearted gaiety, mystic fantasy and sacred awe are all inextricably entangled in this strange business of masks and disguises" (Huizinga 13). Kim's exuberant Indian disguises, the blue turban and lilac pyjamas in *Stalky & Co*, and Sir Henry's Kukuana warrior dress are all part of the elaborate fantasy world of imperial play. This playacting is a rehearsal for the spectacle and performance of Empire, which also involves "dressing up" in appropriate costumes. John S. McBratney notes the importance of the uniform for the British projection of power: "the British had to govern by prestige rather than force. They had to project a spectacle of power based upon sets of signs that clearly demarcated the ruler from the ruled. One of these semiotic registers was the Anglo-Indian uniform" (McBratney 36). But instead of using the uniform in his playful dress rehearsal, the boys (and boyish men) in these novels often don native dress and perform non-European identities. It seems paradoxical that rehearsing the part of "English gentleman" involves role-playing non-white, non-English parts—and even, as I will show in my discussion of *Stalky & Co*, occasionally playing female roles. The elaborate play-acting that prepared men to take their places as administrators of empire reveals the construction of British imperial masculinity to be flexible, creative, and playful—and open to experimenting with non-white or even non-male roles. Exemplifying the traditional theory of British masculinity, J. A. Mangan, for instance, sees "games and the games fields" of the English grammar school as central to the formation of English middle-class masculinity; they were "expensive symbols of social ambition" on which boys practiced "emulating superiors and distancing themselves from inferiors" (Mangan 228). A. B. Haslam, headmaster of Ripon from 1879-1890, expressed the belief that this so-called "games ethic"

prepared British youth for their role in the empire: "there was no doubt that the training of English boys in the cricket and football field enabled them to go to India" (qtd. Mangan 231). By contrast to Mangan and Haslam's conception of the formation of British manhood, this chapter examines play-acting as formative of British masculinity, but rather than emulating superiors and distancing themselves from inferiors, this play-acting precisely involves the impersonation of identities considered "lower" in the social hierarchy. Rather than consolidating a sense of Englishness, "we find that what is portrayed as characterizing English experience is rather often the opposite, a sense of fluidity and painful sense of, or need for, otherness" (Young 2).

Burton certainly felt this need for otherness. Was Burton dissatisfied with himself, as Brodie claims? His exuberant pride in his exploits would suggest otherwise, but it is abundantly clear that many of Burton's contemporaries were displeased with his actions. Burton's pilgrimage in disguise to Muslim holy sites at Mecca and Medina certainly aroused controversy in its day, just as Rachel Dolezal's claims to "identify as black" have excited passionate responses in recent years, though for very different reasons.[87] In the twenty-first century, cross-racial disguise is criticized as cultural appropriation,[88] but in Burton's day, the controversy

[87] The appropriation of African-American culture became an issue of debate nationwide when Spokane NAACP president Rachel Dolezal's parents "outed" her as white. Dolezal's insistence on her black identity touched a nerve in American conceptions of race and identity politics. Carla Kaplan, writing for the *Chronicle*, pointed out that liberals who firmly espouse the notion that race is a social construct, found themselves making arguments that seemed to rely on notions of essentialism, in response to Rachel Dolezal's case. Kaplan writes, "[Dolezal's] defense of what some dub deception is consistent with social constructionism, which maintains that there is no biological or essential basis to race and that all notions of racial difference are rooted in culture." Rachel Tuvel's article "In Defense of Transracialism," published in the philosophy journal *Hypatia* in March 2017, contrasts the furor aroused by Dolezal's so-called "transracialism" to liberals' widespread acceptance of the transgender community. Tuvel's article has aroused its share of controversy. Alicia Gaines counters that the analogy between race and gender is flawed, since racial impersonation is not equally available to all. "Even with a consideration of the long and understandable histories of racial passing from black to white…this option is not equally available to all. If the police stopped a person of color, their stubborn insistence, 'I identify as white,' would never be a viable alibi. Consequently, it is dangerous to collapse the nuanced categories of gender identity onto the realities of race and racism" (Gaines 170).

[88] For an insightful discussion of the controversy surrounding "empathetic racial impersonation" in 20th and 21st century America, see Alicia Gaines' book *Black for a Day* (2017) (Gaines 8). Gaines argues that such cross-racial

revolved around the contested ideal of the English gentleman. In the preface to the third edition of his *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina*, published in 1874, Burton addressed some of the objections to his account, specifically the idea that the imitation of another religion inevitably involved a "violation of conscience." Burton even quotes at length from his critics, including fellow explorer of Arabia William Gifford Palgrave, who felt that

> to feign a religion which the adventurer himself does not believe, to perform with scrupulous exactitude, as of the highest and holiest import, practices which he inwardly ridicules, and which he intends on his return to hold up to the ridicule of others, to turn for weeks and months together the most sacred and awful bearings of man towards his Creator into a deliberate and truthless mummery…all this seems hardly compatible with the character of a European gentleman, let alone a Christian (xiv-xv).

Burton begins his response with an *ad hominem* riposte, pointing out that Palgrave's own religious affiliations were not *un*complicated; he was "born a Protestant, of Jewish descent," but later converted to Catholicism. Burton's own attitude toward Christianity was certainly complicated by his relationship with his devout Catholic wife, who was constantly trying to convert him. However, his response to these criticisms also engages seriously with the theological relationship between Christianity and Islam. Burton questions Palgrave's assertion that he "ridicules" the sacraments of the Islamic faith, asking, "What is in the Moslem Pilgrimage so offensive to Christians—what makes it a 'subject of ridicule'? Do they not venerate Abraham the father of the faithful?" (xvi) Burton goes on to make the classic argument that Christians and Muslims are both "people of the book," emphasizing the theological

masquerades produce false consciousness in its practitioners, by convincing them that sympathy is a sufficient response to the plight of oppressed minorities (rather than, say, political agitation or action).

principles they hold in common as monotheists, rather than their differences. Palgrave's criticism and Burton's response introduce the questions that will shape the argument of this chapter, and their debate remains relevant to controversies over cultural cross-dressing even today; Larycia Hawkins, the first African-American woman to become a tenured professor at Wheaton College, an evangelical Christian college in Illinois, donned a hijab in solidarity with persecuted Muslims during the Advent season of 2015. Her Facebook post echoes Burton's defense: "I stand in religious solidarity with Muslims because they, like me, a Christian, are people of the book. And as Pope Francis stated last week, we worship the same God." Wheaton College put her on administrative leave, and they "agreed to part ways" in 2016, despite Professor Hawkins' insistence on her affirmation of the college's Statement of Faith. (See Pashman n.p.)

Hawkins's affirmation of similarity where tradition has established difference links her defense to Burton's preface, which implies that the act of disguise is not a restless escape from self into something completely different, as Brodie suggests, but rather that disguise involves the recognition of the affinity between self and other. Burton's editor, Rev. T. L. Wolley, speculated that Burton's attraction to all things "Oriental" might spring from his own personality and predilections, but also noted that Burton's physique suited him to the role he desired to play. Wolley remarked that Burton's "Eastern cast of features already seemed to point him out as the very person of all others best suited for an expedition like that described in the following pages." (x-xi) Burton certainly did not identify as fully English, due to his unconventional upbringing in France and Naples. As Kaja Silverman wrote of T. E. Lawrence, popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia because of his impersonation of Arab culture, Burton's "imitation…veers over into identification" (qtd. Kennedy 69). Burton's obsessive interest in Islam and Arab life revealed more about him than it did about his ostensible subject of exploration.

Jesse Oak Taylor observes that "Performance is often misleadingly understood to be about the disguising of reality, rather than the reality of the disguise" (Taylor 191). Drawing on Lynn Voskuil's notion of "natural acting," I argue that the theatricality of Burton's narrative does not necessarily negate its authenticity. We can and should believe Burton's claims to genuine emotion are authentic. For instance, when Burton visits the Kaaba in the House of Allah, the center of the Islamic world, he claims "that, of all the worshippers who clung weeping to the curtain, or who pressed their beating hearts to the stone, none felt for the moment a deeper emotion than did the Haji from the far north." (vol. iii, p. 39) Burton's emotion is genuine, even if his pilgrimage is premised on deceit and imposture. Palgrave's denunciation of Burton's masquerade as "truthless mummery" demonstrates the antitheatrical prejudice that some critics associate with the Victorians. Lionel Trilling attributes this repudiation of theatricality to the "fear that the impersonation of a bad or inferior character will have a harmful effect upon the impersonator, that, indeed, the impersonation of any other self will diminish the integrity of the real self" (qtd. Barish 305). By contrast, Voskuil contends that many nineteenth century texts support "the seemingly paradoxical idea that the authentic expression of intense passion could not be disengaged from its theatricalized embodiment" (Voskuil 12-13). For the purposes of this chapter, "authenticity" of cross-cultural disguise does not refer to the accuracy of the imitation, but rather it will understand this performance as an expression of some aspect of the self that cannot be expressed within the limited range of gestures permitted within English culture.

Palgrave's critique of Burton's actions as "hardly compatible with the character of a European gentleman" raises the key question for this chapter: What is the character of an English gentleman? How should this character be represented, and how did cross-cultural exchange in the contact zone of empire reinforce or complicate the way this character is "performed" in the text? Costume and gesture play a central role in the theatrical performance of racial identities. More so than skin color, costume and gestures are changeable, learnable, obtainable, and in the case of clothing, exchangeable. By focusing on costume and gesture, these novels render the borders of race more porous. Reducing racial identities to garb and mannerisms renders native culture open to appropriation by the colonizers, but it also renders whiteness problematically available and open to imitation.

Figure 21: Burton in disguise as Mirza Abdullah

In Homi Bhabha's famous concept of the "mimic man"—the anglicized Indian is "almost the same but not white." According to Bhabha, these mimic men present a threat to the hegemonic concept of English superiority. Since culture can be learned and imitated, skin color becomes the marker of absolute difference. Parama Roy turns Bhabha's theory on its head: she asks, "What happens when Bhabha's formulation of the inherent ambivalence of colonial

discourses and its hybridized effects is traversed by related preoccupations and anxieties—the necessity for impersonating the native or the fear of going native?" (P. Roy 27) What happens when the colonizer imitates the colonized native? How does this reversal revise Bhabha's theory? For Roy, Burton and Kim's "native impersonation" demonstrates "the fullest faith in their own unfragmented subjectivity and in their ability to disguise and conquer" (P. Roy 27). In other words, they can play native because they have no fear of actually going native; they can always assume their white privilege again. In contrast to Roy, I argue that the colonizer's ability to pass as native potentially calls into question the innate superiority of whiteness. The masquerade of cultural transvestism turns the colonizer into a hybrid figure, whose hybridity is a threat to the binaries that underpin racist ideology. My argument draws on postcolonial theories of hybridity by Robert Young and Homi Bhabha, who asserts that the hybrid character "is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside" (Bhabha 165).

The process of narrating that uncontainable self is a process of rewriting, or writing over, authoritative cultural texts, as well as the unwritten rules of culture. According to Bhabha, "the emblem of the English book [is] an insignia of colonial authority and a signifier of colonial desire and discipline" (Bhabha 144). Bhabha argues that colonial subjects appropriate authoritative English books such as the Bible, adapting them to their own purposes, even using its pages for "waste paper," thus subverting the colonizers' authority. By contrast, Burton asserts his hidden power as a colonial authority, by taking a hollow container for carrying the holy book of Islam and using it to store the clandestine notes for his own personal narrative:

> Pilgrims, especially those from Turkey, carry…a "Hamail" to denote their holy errand. This is a pocket Koran, in a handsome gold-embroidered crimson velvet

> or red morocco case, slung by red silk cords over the left shoulder. It must hang down by the right side, and should never depend below the waist-belt. For this I substituted a most useful article. To all appearance a "Hamail," it had inside three compartments, one for my watch and compass, the second for ready money, and the third contained penknife, pencils, and slips of paper, which I could hold concealed in the hollow of my hand. These were for writing and drawing: opportunities for making a 'fair copy' into the diary-book, are never wanting to the acute traveller. He must, however, beware of sketching before the Bedawin, who would certainly proceed to extreme measures, suspecting him to be a spy or sorcerer. Nothing so effectually puzzles these people as the Frankish habit of putting everything on paper; their imaginations are set at work, and then the worst may be expected from them. (vol. I, pp. 232-233)[89]

Whereas the Indians Bhabha describes use the English sacred book as a source of waste paper, Burton uses a receptacle meant to hold the holy book of Islam as a container for scraps of paper, which he will reconstitute as the materials for his own book. The Indians undermine colonial authority, while Burton asserts his own mastery of the "systems of information and behavior" of "an alien culture" (*Orientalism* 196). Yet the subject of Burton's book is less the "alien culture" of Islam, than the narrative of its own construction—not Arab life at all, but a record of the challenges the author had to overcome in order to produce such a book. His book dramatizes and presents the process of its own construction.

The full title of Burton's account is "Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina." The key word here is *personal*; Burton takes the trappings and costumes of the Muslim

[89] In interesting analogy to Burton's Hamail, Hurree Babu gives Kim a container with three compartments, which he uses to hold medicines (163)

world and appropriates them for the purposes of his "personal" narrative, which is a record not so much of Muslim or Arabic manners and customs, as of one man's quest for mastery of an alien culture. According to Joseph McLaughlin, Jack London's work of incognito investigative journalism *The People of the Abyss* narrates the exploration of London the author as much as London the city. London's "ethnographic text" is also an account of "self-fashioning" (McLaughlin 107). The same could be said for Burton's *Pilgrimage*. The narrative of the quest or pilgrimage shapes all of the texts I will discuss in this chapter, and many of the texts contain multiple overlapping or competing quests. Kipling's Kim searches for his personal history and identity, but his quest coincides with a Tibetan lama's quest for Enlightenment. These quests are also intertwined with the "Great Game" of imperial espionage; as the lama marks his prayers with a rosary, Kim uses a set of beads to take surveying measurements in the service of British imperialism. In *King Solomon's Mines*, Allan Quatermain narrates two quests: the search for Sir Henry Curtis's long-lost brother, and the quest for the diamond mines of the title. In both cases, personal journeys overlap with quests for material or spiritual gain. Similarly, Burton's pilgrimage to Mecca is a search for acceptance and identity. Burton revised his assumed identity several times in order to defer suspicion and to secure the trust of his fellow pilgrims. Until he reached Alexandria, Burton maintained the character of a Persian prince. However, at this stage of his journey, the necessity of securing a passport led him to change his identity to that of a dervish who practiced medicine. Burton felt that any eccentricities in his behavior would be excused, since the dervish tends to be a marginalized figure. In Cairo, Burton befriended a Russian Muslim named Haji Wali who convinced him to abandon his assumed nationaliy, since Persians are regarded with suspicion by other Hajis because of their heterodox Shiah beliefs. According to Thomas McDow, "Most Sunni Muslims, such as those of Egypt in the nineteenth

century, considered Shiites as almost apostates" (McDow 501). Taking Haji Wali's advice, Burton maintained the assumed persona of physician but switched his nationality to Pathan, also known as Pashtun, a Sunni people who inhabit the land between modern-day eastern Afghanistan and western Pakistan. As McDow points out, Burton's *faux pas* cast doubt on his self-representation as master of disguise, and expert on foreign religions and cultures.[90] At another point in his narrative, Burton assumes the identity of an Arab, in order to avoid paying a "capitation tax" (vol i. p. 228). If, like biographer Fawn Brodie, we imagine Burton on the psychoanalyst's couch, we might plausibly infer that Burton's changing persona reveals his conflicting desire to maintain his eccentricities, while also securing social acceptance; like many adolescents, he simultaneously wants to blend in and to stand out.

Burton's pilgrimage is premised on the likeness between self and other, on recognizing similarity rather than difference, and yet his performance also pushes the boundaries of conventional British manliness. Burton's conduct is not compatible with the "character of a European gentleman," but not for the reasons Palgrave cites. In order to play the part of a pilgrim convincingly, Burton must abandon his English habits and language. However, he never fully immerses himself in Arab life; his Hamail is hollow and contains the materials of writing. He is neither one nor the other; he is a hybrid creature. His hybridity challenges the notion that whiteness, Englishness, and manliness are essential and innate characteristics, rather than learned and performed behaviors that can also be deconstructed and unlearned. Even before his

[90] Thomas F. McDow argues that literary theorists are too willing to take Burton at his word, and to put too much faith in his claims to be a master of disguise, an all-seeing but unseen eye. Edward Said, for example, evinces limitless faith in Burton's abilities; according to Said, "Burton was able to become an Oriental; he not only spoke the language flawlessly, he was able to penetrate to the heart of Islam" (*Orientalism* 195). McDow argues, by contrast, that Burton's disguises were not always as convincing as his narrative asserts. "Burton formed multiple identities on his trip, and these were doubted, challenged, and, at times, reformulated," McDow writes (McDow 510). Dane Kennedy similarly casts doubt on Burton's superhuman abilities to master language and disguise, speculating that Burton's traveling companions were suspicious of his disguise, but they kept quiet because Burton was subsidizing the cost of their journey (Kennedy 73).

pilgrimage, Burton's English peers felt that his interest in other cultures and languages somehow tainted his whiteness; during his stint as an officer in the Bombay army, while Burton was learning Arabic, Hindustani, Gujarati, and Sanskrit, he was known to his fellow officers as "the white nigger" (Brodie 50). This hybrid identity ("white but not quite," to revise Bhabha's formulation), produced by the English attraction to other cultures and races, and the act of cross-cultural disguise, is the major focus of this chapter. Haggard's "white Zulu" and Kipling's Kim, a "poor white of the very poorest" are two examples of this phenomenon, where cultural encounter in the contact zone of Empire complicates the depiction of English male character. Ian Baucom has described the struggle to define English identity as a debate between place and race. Is Englishness defined primarily by quintessentially English spaces and experiences, or by where one's parents were born? Baucom focuses on the former category, examining the sacred spaces or *lieux de memoire* that have historically constituted Englishness. This chapter will examine the narratives that have shaped conceptions of English imperial masculinity: cross-cultural disguise, a frequent narrative device in boys' adventure fiction, defines Englishness in opposition to its imperial Other, but the performance of alterity complicates the boundaries between the two. "The empire," as Baucom notes, "is less a place where England exerts control than the place where England loses command of its own narrative of identity" (Baucom 3).

A full treatment of the historical phenomenon of cross-cultural impersonation within the context of the British Empire is beyond the scope of this study, though many real-life figures followed Burton's example. John Dunn, a man of Scotch heritage who was born in the Cape Colony, obtained a tract of land in Natal where he set himself up in the style of a Zulu chief. A self-styled King Solomon, Dunn eventually presided over a household of forty-seven wives and over a hundred children (Hurwitz 61). Salvation Army missionaries in late-Victorian Natal

similarly adapted their clothing and lifestyle to fit with native culture, in order to make the gospel more appealing to the Zulus. Salvationists around the globe made similar sartorial adjustments, following Catherine Booth's injunction to be "all things to all men" to secure their salvation (qtd. Eason 13). Carrying out this exhortation in an imperial context led to some comical instances of culture-shock. Andrew Eason discusses the compromise that the Salvationists reached in their desire to adapt to Zulu dress, while still adhering to Victorian standards of modesty: "Since the Zulu people wore considerably less clothing than the inhabitants of either India or Europe, the Army's leader was hesitant to permit complete accommodation in this particular sphere" (Eason 22). The missionaries attempted to adapt their dress to Zulu style without wearing quite so little clothing as the natives accustomed to the climate of Southern Africa. I will mention these historical examples where relevant, but Sir Richard Burton is the only real-life cultural impersonator that I examine at length. Burton's narrative was influential in shaping later fictionalized narratives of cultural cross-dressing, and critiques of his narrative raise crucial questions for the novels I will discuss. Figures like Burton inspired cultural transvestites in fiction, such as Mr. Murthwaite in Wilkie Collins's novel *The Moonstone*, a man who brings the exoticism of empire home to England. Murthwaite is a thinly veiled portrait of Burton; passages from Murthwaite's narrative of his pilgrimage to the Hindu shrine to the god of the moon read as loose paraphrases of passages in Burton's narrative. Consider, for example, Murthwaite's description of his adopted persona:

> I gave myself out as a Hindoo-Boodhist [sic], from a distant province, bound on a pilgrimage. It is needless to say that my dress was of the sort to carry out this description. Add, that I know the language as well as I know my own, and that I am lean enough and brown enough to make it no easy matter to detect my

> European origin—and you will understand that I passed muster with the people readily: not as one of themselves, but as a stranger from a distant part of their own country. (*The Moonstone* 470)

Compare this with Burton's description of his adopted character, Mirza Abdullah (Figure 21):

> After long deliberation about the choice of nations, I became a "Pathan." Born in India of Afghan parents, who had settled in the country, educated at Rangoon, and sent out to wander, as men of that race frequently are, from early youth, I was well guarded against the danger of detection by a fellow countryman. To support the character requires a knowledge of Persian, Hindostani [sic], and Arabic, all of which I knew sufficiently well to pass muster; any trifling inaccuracy was charged upon my long residence at Rangoon. (Burton, i: 45-46)

Notice that both men adopt a hybrid persona; Murthwaite becomes a man of mixed religious background and Burton claims that he is the child of immigrants, and the product of a foreign education. In Burton's case, this hybridity mirrored his own sense of being a perpetual outsider. Dane Kennedy argues that the alias of Mirza Abdullah appealed to Burton precisely because of this hybridity and "heterogeneity" of origin (Kennedy 72). Both passages use the phrase "pass muster," a military phrase, since these false pilgrims know that their character will not completely fit in to the surrounding culture, but will be viewed as an outlier or stranger. Both passages cite the knowledge of languages as absolutely crucial to their endeavors, and both acknowledge the dangers of detection. I draw attention to these similarities at length because Murthwaite is a fictionalized version of Burton, and Collins's novel is, among other things, an interpretation of or response to Burton's narrative.

The butler Gabriel Betteredge describes this fascinating man as "an eminent public character," the "celebrated Indian traveller, Mr. Murthwaite, who, at risk of his life, had penetrated in disguise where no European had ever set foot before." Betteredge speculates that Murthwaite, "was tired of the humdrum life among the people in our parts, and longing to go back and wander off on the tramp again in the wild places of the East." (*The Moonstone* 77) Betteredge's use of the phrase "on the tramp" connects Murthwaite's incognito explorations of empire to the slumming that was occurring closer to home; James Greenwood's "A Night in a Workhouse" was published in 1866, two years before *The Moonstone*. Greenwood merely went on tramp in the wild places of the East End, but even this portion of their own metropolis was Orientalized and its inhabitants racially othered in the Victorian imagination.

It is no accident that the detective novel emerged in the decades that were consolidating the discipline of ethnography, which has been dubbed "the handmaiden of imperialism." Murthwaite is both ethnographer and a detective, but also demonstrates what Ian Baucom calls "that perilous dabbling in ethnography which threatens always to become the act of going native" (96). A familiarity with the minutiae of native cultures is necessary in order to govern or infiltrate foreign lands, but this knowledge can also efface a knowledge of one's own origin story. Murthwaite assists Mr. Bruff, the solicitor, in investigating the three Indian Brahmins and the clairvoyant boy, some of the suspects early in the case of the stolen Moonstone. In the following passage, Murthwaite makes clear that narration and interpretation are culturally relative:

> The clairvoyance in this case is simply a development of the romantic side of the Indian character. It would be refreshment and an encouragement to those men—quite inconceivable, I grant you, to the English mind—to surround their

> wearisome and perilous errand in this country with a certain halo of the marvellous and the supernatural. Their boy is unquestionably a sensitive subject to the mesmeric influence—and, under that influence, he has no doubt reflected what was already in the mind of the person mesmerising him.…The Indians don't investigate the matter in this way; the Indians look upon their boy as a Seer of things invisible to their eyes—and, I repeat, in that marvel they find the source of a new interest in the purpose that unites them. I only notice this as offering a curious view of human character, which must be quite new to you. We have nothing whatever to do with clairvoyance, or with mesmerism, or with anything else that is hard of belief to a practical man, in the inquiry that we are now pursuing. My object in following the Indian plot, step by step, is to trace results back, by rational means, to natural causes. (*The Moonstone* 290)

In this passage, Murthwaite refers to "Indian character," and "the Indian plot," which might be "inconceivable to the English mind" or at least "quite new" to Mr. Bruff. Interpretation, and therefore detection, are culturally determined and therefore relative: "the Indians don't investigate the matter in this way." Murthwaite attempts to interpret the Indian character and plot from an English point of view, reducing them to rational explanations. Murthwaite talks of "the English mind" and the "Indian character" as if they are diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive; however, he himself represents their synthesis.

The Moonstone is preoccupied with the question of what makes an English gentleman, and how contact with foreign cultures can corrupt those notions of manliness. Betteredge looks to Robinson Crusoe as his model of embattled English masculinity, but Crusoe contends mostly with the forces of Nature, not with the force of an entire alien culture. Betteredge judges Franklin

Blake to be insufficiently English, because of his continental education, and for a time it seems that Blake himself is the thief. However, the true thief is the least expected person, the quintessential English gentleman, Godfrey Ablewhite, whose death occurs while he is disguised as a dark-skinned sailor. As in Conan Doyle's story "The Man with the Twisted Lip," the detective wipes the disguise off the deceitful man's face, revealing the white face beneath the brown. Though Franklin Blake characteristically looks away during this operation, the street urchin Gooseberry narrates Godfrey's unmasking. While Franklin initially sought to pin the crime on an Indian outsider, Sergeant Cuff reveals the criminal to be a white person, and a member of the family. Timothy L. Carens argues that *The Moonstone* "uncovers the forgotten strangeness that inhabits the familiar, the imperfectly repressed savagery that lives on in the family." In doing so, the narrative "destabilize[s] the dichotomies naturalized by imperial ideology" (Carens 241). Rather than affirming white superiority, or even upholding the boundaries between races, the novel locates true heroism in the hybrid body of Ezra Jennings, whose piebald hair brings together black and white without mixing them. Tamar Heller suggests that Jennings's hybridity is what attracts many scholars to him; his hybridity "draws attention to issues of race and power," and extends to his gender identity as a man who has a "female constitution" (Heller 363-364). Murthwaite can pass as an "English gentleman" in the drawing room as easily as he can pass as a "Hindoo-Boodhist" in the far-off places of the East. By contrast, Jennings hybridity makes him a perpetual outsider; his strange appearance allows him to fit in nowhere. Though his profession of doctor's assistant associates him with science, rationality and progress, his opium addiction associates him with another lucrative Indian product, as well as with the Orientalized stereotype of decadence and lethargy it connotes. Murthwaite speaks the Indian Brahmins' language, but only Jennings can fill in the gaps and

trace the dark spaces of the English unconscious mind. Many characters in this novel are hybrid in terms of cultural identity: Franklin Blake has European sides to his identity since he was educated abroad; Murthwaite uses his ability to pass in order to pursue his ethnographic research; Godfrey and Sir John use their access to Indian culture to exploit its riches. But only Jennings, the racially hybrid and emphatically othered character, can solve the mystery.

The treachery implicit in Godfrey's act of cultural cross-dressing calls into question the motives of the cultural explorer, whose desire to cross social boundaries may have sinister intentions. Godfrey Ablewhite's cultural transvestism casts doubt on the disinterestedness of Mr. Murthwaite's pursuit of exotic thrills in the East. Is Burton (or Kim, or Sir Henry Curtis) more like Murthwaite, or more like Ablewhite? Is it possible to separate the ethnographer from the thief? In fact, there are traces of both Murthwaite and Ablewhite in the racial impersonators I examine in this chapter. Their motives are mixed. It is significant that all of these narratives are structured as quests or journeys; the quest for mastery over the other, or knowledge of the other, reflects the anxieties and flaws of the self. As Gail Ching-Liang Low writes, "In these stories of Haggard's, the significance of the Other lies in the fact that he is symbolic of something that the Western mind must learn about itself" (Low 66). According to Marty Gould, "the empire came to England via the stage," through ethnological exhibits and orientalist pantomimes, and "it was in the theatre and related venues of popular spectacle that Britons came to see themselves as masters of an imperial domain" (Gould 2). The theatricality or spectacle of empire as seen on the stage, in turn, shaped the presentation of the empire in the novel. Performing the role of the other is the way in which novelistic characters engage with the different kind of selves, the different plots, that are possible in the spaces of Empire, thereby revising or rewriting their own narrative of white, masculine, British selfhood.

White Zulus and Pseudo-Zulus: Performing the Zulu in <u>King Solomon's Mines</u> and <u>Mameena</u>

> Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the two shall meet,
> Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
> But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
> When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth.
> -Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West" (1889)

Just as the novel *Kim* insistently raises the question, "What is a Sahib?", Allan Quatermain, the narrator of H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, begins his narrative with the question: "What is a gentleman?" (*King Solomon's Mines* 10) And as in *Kim*, the answer is unclear: "I don't quite know," Quatermain admits, but argues that the category does not always align with race or nationality: "I've known natives who are…and I have known mean whites with lots of money and fresh out from home, too, who ain't" (*King Solomon's Mines* 11). According to Robin Gilmour, "It was the subtle and shifting balance between social and moral attributes that gave gentlemanliness its fascination" (Gilmour 4). The contact zone of empire complicated previous notions that gentlemanliness depended on "birth," by adding a racial component to this distinction. Haggard's novel ultimately affirms the idea that the true gentleman will draw on the best models of masculinity from various cultures, but he must retain his racial purity. "Two strong men" of different races or cultures can "stand face to face," as in Kipling's ballad, and become better men because of the encounter. The exclusion of women from the equation allows for cultural, but not racial, hybridity in the pursuit of a masculine ideal.

The narrative presents various models of the gentleman—English or otherwise. Bradley Deane argues that ideals of manliness and strategies of empire radically shifted between the early to the late-Victorian period, from a model of manliness that sought internal development and self-affirmation, and a moral model of empire—to a more aggressive model of manliness that focused on group affirmation and competitive play, and a similarly amoral attitude toward

empire as a game, rather than a moral and civilizing mission. Captain John Good, one of Quatermain's companions on his journey, embodies the more old-fashioned model of masculinity, in which manliness is insistently tied to cultural Englishness. Good declares, "I always like to look like a gentleman" (*King Solomon's Mines* 44). Quatermain provides the following description to demonstrate what Good thinks a gentleman should look like:

> There he sat upon a leather bag, looking just as though he had come in from a comfortable day's shooting in a civilized country, absolutely clean, tidy, and well dressed. He had on a shooting suit of brown tweed, with a hat to match, and neat gaiters. He was, as usual, beautifully shaved, and altogether he was the neatest man I ever had to do with in the wilderness. He even had on a collar, of which he had a supply, made of white gutta-percha. (*King Solomon's Mines* 44)

Good's list of accessories reads like a Victorian version of "Stuff White People Like," and is similarly meant to be read as funny.[91] Though ironically, the garb of a "civilized country" includes some objects gleaned from the riches of empire; gutta-percha is a rubber-like substance made from the "juice of various trees found chiefly in the Malayan archipelago," which the Victorians knew as the East Indies (OED, "gutta-percha"). Good's attire marks him as "the very model of a modern English gentleman," and his name is an unsubtle indication of his moral virtue. And yet, Good is most often the butt of jokes in the novel, and is often feminized, rather than depicted as a paragon of masculinity. Good becomes an especially comic figure when the group of adventurers encounter the tribe of the Kukuanas, who interrupt Good in the midst of performing his toilette. Good is interrupted while shaving, and in a state of half dress. He wears a flannel shirt, but no trousers, and his face is half shaved. The Kukuanas interpret this state as

[91] "Stuff White People Like" is a satirical blog started in 2008 by Christian Lander. The blog specifically satirizes urban, affluent, and politically left-leaning white culture.

miraculous, along with Good's one "glass eye" or monocle, and his removable false teeth.[92] Good is a comic hybrid figure for Quatermain ("I was convulsed with laughter as I watched him struggle with that stubbly beard"), whereas the Kukuanas revere him for his oddness, and, crucially, for the whiteness of his skin—an early instance of the common narrative trope where natives who have not seen white men before instantly take them for gods. The notion of English gentlemanliness as embodied by Good is both a cultural and racial concept, which involves having "singularly white skin," but is also a performative category involving props and costume (*King Solomon's Mines* 90). The Kukuanas interrupt Good while halfway through putting on his *whiteface*.[93] Good is the performer backstage who does not have time to finish putting on his makeup and costume before his cue calls him onstage. Marvin McAllister discusses a distinct fringe tradition of whiteface minstrelsy: "Attuned to class as much as race, whiteface minstrels often satirize, parody, and interrogate privileged or authoritative representations of whiteness," writes McAllister (1). Similarly, even though Good is in fact white, his exaggerated performance of whiteness, and especially its comic interruption, mocks traditional notions of white British masculinity.

Good's model of gentlemanliness makes him an object of ridicule, and his hybrid half-dressed state as he enters the kingdom of the Kukuanas represents English manliness at its most

[92] Haggard basically plagiarized this anecdote from Scottish explorer Joseph Thomson's account of his African adventures, *Through Masai Land* (1883). During his encounter with the Masai, Thomson taps his teeth to assure the natives that they are perfectly firm. "Here let me inform the gentle reader," he writes, "that I have a couple of artificial teeth, which at this juncture were perfect treasures. These I manipulated to the astonishment of the Masai, and as they thought I could do the same thing with my nose or eyes, they hailed me at once as a veritable 'lybon n'ebor' (white medicine man)" (Thomson 356). Thomson was displeased with Haggard's unauthorized borrowing of his material, and published a rival novel, *Ulu: an African Romance* (1888), which however, did not enjoy the success of Haggard's African romances.

[93] Ira Aldridge, a famous black Shakespearean actor in Victorian Britain, provocatively responded to the trend of blackface minstrelsy with his own whiteface performances of Richard III, Rob Roy, and a Bavarian maid (See "Othello's Daughter," New Yorker: July 29, 2013). Eddie Murphy's "White Like Me" sketch for *Saturday Night Live* (Dec. 15, 1984) is another famous satirical example of whiteface performance. See also McAllister, *Whiting Up: Whiteface Minstrels & Stage Europeans in African American Performance* (2011).

vulnerable. He becomes an object of desire for native women, and falls in love with a Kukuana woman, thus threatening to produce an actual mixed-race child, rather than simply being a comic hybridized figure himself. His vulnerable whiteness is emphasized by his exposed skin. Missing his trousers, Good is depicted as sexually available to the desires of native women, as Sir Henry jokes at his expense, "It will never do for you to put on trousers again" (*King Solomon's Mines* 90).

While Good is a comic figure who threatens to become a tragic one, the true manly man of the novel is Sir Henry Curtis. Unlike Good, who maintains his Englishness to the point of ridiculousness, Sir Henry adopts a style of masculinity that is comfortable borrowing emblems of manliness from African culture. While Good exemplifies Deane's definition of early-Victorian masculinity, with its emphasis on civilized behavior and appearance, Sir Henry Curtis resolutely embodies the late-Victorian ideal of competitive, aggressive manliness and empire building. Deane notes the irony that "at the very moment of Britain's greatest colonial power, the zenith of its cultural arrogance and racial chauvinism, the Empire was bolstered by fantasies of a manhood that transcends the distinctions of border and breed" (Deane 3). This notion that gentlemanliness is not an exclusively English quality can be seen in Quatermain's admission that "natives" can be gentlemen, as well as in Rudyard Kipling's poem, "The Ballad of East and West," in which masculinity transcends "Border, Breed, and Birth." The "two strong men" that Kipling refers to in his poem map neatly onto Sir Henry Curtis and the Zulu warrior Umbopa. They have so much in common, that Sir Henry is dubbed an honorary African, or White Zulu.

Like Kipling's *Kim*, *King Solomon's Mines* is a novel dominated by male characters, so much so that Allan Quatermain boasts that "there is not a petticoat in the whole history" (*King Solomon's Mines* 10). (He does not count the aged witch Gagool or the alluring Foulata, both

native women who present danger or temptation to the white men.) Kim has many father figures throughout the narrative, but no real mother figures.[94] Similarly, Allan Quatermain frames his narrative as a letter from father to son. *King Solomon's Mines* narrates what Anne McClintock calls the fantasy of "phallic regeneration," by which the male heroes give birth to themselves as the new fathers of the colonial family. Haggard's novel is curiously hostile toward the female body and the facts of procreation. Gagool and Foulata are both killed in the mines. McClintock writes that the men are imprisoned in the womb-like space of the mine, which they expect will also be their tomb, until they find an exit, and "give birth to themselves in the mine womb" (McClintock 257). McClintock's analysis leaves out the mixed or hybrid product of the relations between men—the White Zulu: a socially acceptable substitute for a mixed-race child. The colonists' desire to mix with the native culture is sublimated; instead of heterosexual unions, homosocial interactions produce this hybrid identity. As Stephen D. Arata points out, "the British have always found the notion of symbolic hybridity congenial," provided it remains symbolic only ("Universal" 17).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary "A few examples of th[e] word [hybrid] occur early in 17th cent.; but it was scarcely in use till the 19th." The term was popularized as part of a cohesive theory of racial difference in the nineteenth century, in response to the debate whether humans were one species, or many. A hybrid originally meant a cross between two different species, whose offspring would be infertile—such as a mule (the cross between a male donkey and a female horse). Robert Young explains that "The use of the term 'hybridity' to describe the offspring of humans of different races implied... that the different races were

[94] Kim does have a half-caste foster mother, who insists on dressing him in European clothes. And later in the narrative, the Kulu woman or Sahiba helps nurse him through a fever. These women are instrumental in helping Kim, but he does not develop emotional ties with them, and complains that "he is eternally pestered by women" (*Kim* 291).

different species: if the hybrid issue was successful through several generations, then it was taken to prove that humans were all one species, with the different races merely sub-groups or varieties—which meant technically it was no longer hybridity at all." (Young 9) In spite of ample proof that mixed race unions did indeed produce fertile offspring, opponents of miscegenation fell back on the belief that the products of such unions were degenerate, less vigorous, and diminished in fertility. In large part, the narrator of *King Solomon's Mines* is wary of procreation and heterosexual sex because of the threat of miscegenation. Allan Quatermain tells King Twala that "we white men wed only with white women like ourselves." (*King Solomon's Mines* 132) When Captain Good falls in love with the alluring Foulata, Quatermain predicts that this match will only produce complications. But when Foulata dies, even she acknowledges that mixed-race marriages are undesirable: "I am glad to die because I know that he cannot cumber his life with such as me, for the sun cannot mate with the darkness, nor the white with the black" (*King Solomon's Mines* 206). The novel cannot endorse a mixed-race marriage because it cannot acknowledge the possibility of mixed race descendants. However, the novel does provide an alternative. Heterosexual cross-race relationships are undesirable, but homosocial interactions among men of different races produce a different sort of hybridity, involving performance and play. Young asserts that "hybridity must always be a resolutely heterosexual category. In fact, in historical terms, concern about racial amalgamation tended if anything to encourage same-sex sex (playing the imperial game was, after all, already an implicitly homo-erotic practice)." (Young 26) By contrast, I argue that the hybridity embodied by the "White Zulu" is a specifically homoerotic phenomenon. It emerges in battle, in a setting where men of different races interact, away from women and the threat of interracial heterosexual encounters.

Quatermain only uses the phrase once, in passing, but the concept of the White Zulu will be crucial for the narrative. Early in the novel, Allan Quatermain encounters Sir Henry Curtis for the first time, and gives the reader this curious description of the man, which prefigures his later role in the story:

> I never saw a finer-looking man, and somehow he reminded me of an ancient Dane. Not that I know much of ancient Danes, though I knew a modern Dane who did me out of ten pounds; but I remember once seeing a picture of some of those gentry, who, I take it, were a kind of white Zulus. They were drinking out of big horns, and their long hair hung down their backs, and as I looked at my friend standing there by the companion-ladder, I thought that if one only let his hair grow a bit, put one of those chain shirts on to those great shoulders of his, and gave him a battle-axe and a horn mug, he might have sat as a model for that picture. And by the way it is a curious thing, and just shows how the blood will out, I found out afterwards that Sir Henry Curtis, for that was the big man's name, is of Danish blood. (*King Solomon's Mines* 12)

Quatermain draws on notions of racial degeneration in this passage. The modern Zulus are analogous to the ancient Danes, because the Zulus are behind Europeans in terms of development. He also draws on the concept of atavism: Sir Henry hearkens back to an earlier ancestral or racial type. The picture is also explicitly performative; Quatermain imagines Curtis dressed up and posed, as in a historical reenactment or tableau. Like the Victorian literary critic Andrew Lang, Quatermain believes that the Norseman's blood lies "dormant" in Curtis's veins (qtd. "Universal" 10). Lang believed that this dormant blood might be revived by extensive reading of Norse sagas; Quatermain relies on the transformative power of costume and

performance to bring out these latent qualities. Later in the novel, this fantasy is realized, when Quatermain, Curtis, and Good go to battle with the Kukuanas. Umbopa has resumed his Kukuana name, Ignosi, along with his identity as the long-lost rightful heir to the throne.

> We got up and dressed ourselves for the fray, each putting on our chain armour shirt, for which garments at the present juncture we felt exceedingly thankful. Sir Henry went the whole hog about the matter, and dressed himself like a native warrior. 'When you are in Kukuanaland, do as the Kukuanas do,' he remarked, as he drew the shining steel over his broad shoulders, which it fitted like a glove. Nor did he stop there. At his request Infadoos had provided him with a complete set of native war uniform. Round his throat he fastened the leopard-skin cloak of a commanding officer, on his brows he bound the plume of black ostrich feathers worn only by generals of high rank, and about his middle a magnificent moocha of white ox-tails. A pair of sandals, a leglet of goat's hair, a heavy battle-axe with a rhinoceros-horn handle, a round iron shield covered with white ox-hide, and the regulation number of tollas, or throwing-knives, made up his equipment, to which, however, he added his revolver. The dress was, no doubt, a savage one, but I am bound to say that I seldom saw a finer sight than Sir Henry Curtis presented in this guise. It showed off his magnificent physique to the greatest advantage, and when Ignosi arrived presently, arrayed in a similar costume, I thought to myself that I had never before seen two such splendid men. (*King Solomon's Mines* 147)

Note that vision is the operative sense in this passage; in fact, the novel as a whole emphasizes the act of looking or seeing. Masculinity is explicitly a spectacle or theatrical display for an

audience: in the earlier passage, "I never *saw* a finer looking man," and here, "I had never before *seen* two such splendid men." Sir Henry embodies what James Eli Adams refers to as "an image of the hero as spectacle," and affirms "the intractable element of theatricality in all masculine self-fashioning" (Adams 22, 11). Quatermain frequently describes himself looking at another man, and affirming his masculinity.

Sir Henry's adopted Kukuana warrior garb affirms his identity as a White Zulu, and only enhances his masculinity. Far from "going native" and degenerating, as Kurtz would do in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, only thirteen years after Haggard's novel, Sir Henry appropriates and elevates the Zulu warrior garb. His masculinity transcends his race, and finds an affinity to what is similar to itself in the native culture: stoicism, courage, and strength. Crucially, Sir Henry is performing culture, not race. Curtis does not attempt to "pass" as African. He retains his whiteness and therefore his power and station, while adopting the most desirable elements of Kukuana culture. Note that Sir Henry has donned the garb of a warrior of high station, "a commanding officer," not a rank-and-file soldier.

"But [Ignosi] cannot, of course, dress like Curtis," as Young points out, "In this fantasy, cross-cultural dressing works in one direction only" (Young 60). Rather than producing a hybrid culture that includes both white and black, the adventurers' attraction to Zulu culture regresses into greed and trophy taking. When Ignosi invites the white men to stay in Kukuanaland as honored friends, offering them houses, land, livestock, and (most crucially) wives, they refuse, stating their desire to return to their native land. Ignosi reluctantly agrees to this segregationist logic: "that which flies in the air loves not to run along the ground; the white man loves not to live on the level of the black," prefiguring the system of Apartheid that would later divide South African society along racial lines (*King Solomon's Mines* 223).

Though Haggard's novel flirts with the notion of hybridity, and a performative identity that mixes elements of both cultures in the contact zone, it ends resolutely with segregation. The British adventurers return to England, appropriating some artifacts as souvenirs or trophies to commemorate their adventures. Curtis displays the violent relics of hunting and battle in his manor house in England: "the tusks of the great bull that killed poor Khiva have now been put up in the hall here...and the axe with which I chopped off Twala's head is stuck up over my writing table." (*King Solomon's Mines* 233) These trophies ennoble their owner and remind him of his valor and military prowess. But again, this cultural borrowing only fully works in one direction; Good gives an eye-glass to Infadoos as they leave Kukuanaland; but this present has the opposite effect of Curtis's battle trophies. Not only is it Good's *spare* eyeglass; it merely succeeds in making Infadoos look ridiculous: "Anything more incongruous than the old warrior looked with an eye-glass I never saw. Eye glasses don't go well with leopard skin cloaks and black ostrich plumes" (*King Solomon's Mines* 226-227).

In spite of the white men's refusal to accept Ignosi's offer of community and kinship, Umbopa/Ignosi is also a sort of "white Zulu." In the case of Sir Henry Curtis, his skin is white, but he adopts some aspects of Zulu culture; reversing this paradigm, Umbopa is dark-skinned, but European in manner and tastes. When the white men first encounter Umbopa, Quatermain describes his attractiveness in detail, noting that he is "very light-coloured for a Zulu" (*King Solomon's Mines* 38). Umbopa's account of himself reveals him to be a social outsider and a nomad, much like Burton's "haji from the far north," or Murthwaite's hybrid persona: "I am of the Zulu people, yet not of them. The house of my tribe is in the far North; it was left behind when the Zulus came down here a 'thousand years ago,' long before Chaka reigned in Zululand. I have no kraal. I have wandered for many years," Umbopa explains, adding that he came to

Natal "because I wanted to see the white man's ways" (*King Solomon's Mines* 39). Like Bhabha's mimic man, Umbopa is thoroughly Anglicized. He is familiar with white men and their ways. Quatermain and company admire Umbopa precisely because he is more like them than most Africans.

Depictions of Zulus in the English popular press echo Haggard's positive depiction of Umbopa, confirming that when English readers looked at the Zulu people, they saw likeness to themselves, as in Low's concept of the "distorted mirror" which "imagines the black body-politic as an idealized and nostalgic counterpart for the white reader" (Low 6). An article in the *Temple Bar* (1879) declared that the "Zulu possesses one of the most beautiful skins in the world" (28), reflecting Quatermain's eroticized description of Umbopa's "magnificent-looking" physique, and "scarcely more than dark" skin (*King Solomon's Mines* 40). Sir Henry Curtis shares in this homoerotic attraction to the black man: "I like your looks, Mr. Umbopa," he declares. (See Figure 22 for an illustrator's rendering of the three white men gawking at this specimen of African manhood.) Umbopa is the quintessential example of the "noble savage."

Theatrical representations and ethnological exhibits tended to confirm the conception of the Zulus as a noble warrior race. Such ethnological exhibits included "The Zulu Kaffirs," exhibited by Charles Caldecott in 1853, and viewed by such literary luminaries as Charles Dickens and George Eliot, and Farini's "Friendly Zulus," exhibited in 1880. According to Tiziana Morosetti, these theatrical representations claimed authenticity, and fostered "a perception of the Zulus as superior to their neighbouring groups" (Morosetti 88). Caldecott's Zulus were described in the press as "remarkably well-made," while Farini's Zulus were deemed "athletic and not at all repulsive-looking" (qtd. Morosetti 89). Such ethnological exhibits were deemed authentic because they confirmed audience members' expectations, which were often the

Figure 22: Illustration by Walter Paget for Cassel & Company edition (1888)

product of theatrical and journalistic representations, in a self-reflexive feedback loop: "what audiences expected on the basis of what was presented to them as 'real' also served as scientific demonstration: the Zulus appeared according to public expectations, and as they met such expectations, they must therefore necessarily be Zulus" (Morosetti 95) Nevertheless, Zulu exhibits also mapped onto existing theatrical genres: the battle of Rorke's Drift, a crucial conflict in the Anglo-Zulu War, was represented on at Astley's Amphitheatre—famous for its circus performances and equestrian acts—as the "Grand Military Spectacular Drama, The Kaffir War," on 26 April 1879 (Morosetti 91). *The Grand Equestrian Spectacle of the War in Zululand*, a similar bill of fare, was presented in Manchester starting in November 1879.

The British Army's encounters with the Zulus during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, following their invasion of Zululand, gave the colonizers a healthy respect for the Zulus as a martial people. The only way to explain the Zulus' occasional victories over the British army (the stunning defeat of the British at Isandlwana, for example) was to define them as a worthy opponent. The eventual subjugation of the Zulus by the British likewise affirmed British

superiority in a particularly satisfying manner. The British envisioned the Zulus as potential allies against "inferior" African tribes:

> In a people possessing so many fine qualities, proving their vast superiority to most other coloured African races, and which in some particulars causes them to approach more nearly to ourselves, there must be points upon which it would be possible to base an understanding that might be productive of no slight common advantage in the petty wars with other South African races, in which the colony might at some future date find itself involved. The national prejudices of the Zulu, enlisted on the side of his white allies, would go far to render his army a reliable, and invaluable, contingent. ("The Zulu at Home," 35)

The author depicts Zulus as Europeanized Africans; they "approach more nearly to ourselves" than other African races. Haggard himself echoed this sentiment in an article on "The Zulus," asking, "What will be the destiny of this people? None can say—it will be shown by time alone. But if I were an autocrat, I should try to make use of their splendid martial qualities in the service of the British Empire ("The Zulus," 770). And *King Solomon's Mines* imagines this alliance in action; Quatermain and his men join with Ignosi/Umbopa and the Kukuanas who are loyal to him, in order to defeat the wicked usurper King Twala and his followers. Twala's inferiority to Umbopa is manifested outwardly in his physical unattractiveness, contrasted with Umbopa's beauty. Quatermain describes Twala's face as "the most entirely repulsive countenance we had ever beheld" (*King Solomon's Mines* 105). Twala's physiognomy conveys his more "savage" nature: his lips are "thick as a negro's," he has a flat nose, and is missing an eye. Haggard's fantasy represents the British alliance with the "people possessing so many fine qualities," to defeat the supposedly more "degenerate" tribes.

The Kukuanas' encounter with white men reforms the most "barbaric" aspects of their culture—witchcraft and indiscriminate bloodshed—and the white man's appropriation of Zulu warrior culture allows him to realize his own racial heritage. Sir Henry Curtis' "Danish blood" makes him a White Zulu, just as much as his adopted Kukuana warrior garb. However, costume can change, but as Quatermain remarks, "The blood will out" (*King Solomon's Mines* 12). Blood is one of the key words and crucial concepts for this text. The narrative's quests revolve around blood: Sir Henry searches for "a man of my blood, my brother" (*King Solomon's Mines* 53). Though he had been estranged from his brother, Sir Henry realizes that "blood is thicker than water" (*King Solomon's Mines* 17). In their quest for the diamond mines, the white men use a map left by a Portuguese explorer, Dom da Silvestre, which they later discover was written with his (a white man's) blood. The shedding of innocent blood is the bone of contention in Kukuana society; Twala's indiscriminate killing has washed the land with "rivers of blood" (*King Solomon's Mines* 110). The white men, by contrast, declare, "we shed no blood of men except in just punishment," and secure a promise from Ignosi following his victory, that he will enshrine this principle as law (*King Solomon's Mines* 108). The refusal to spill innocent blood distinguishes the gentleman from the savage, regardless of skin color. But do attitudes toward shedding of blood determine manliness, by a moral standard, or is it the possession of good blood that makes a good man? Once again, the debate about gentlemanliness comes down to the dichotomy of worth vs. birth. Twala's gift of chain mail cloaks acknowledges the white men's superiority: "None but those of royal blood may be clad in them," Infadoos tells them (*King Solomon's Mines* 117). Thus, the costume of chain mail in which Sir Henry masquerades as a Kukuana warrior is actually given to him and his companions in recognition of their superior blood—the Anglo-Saxon warrior ancestry that Quatermain intuits when he first sees Sir Henry.

Costume—whether the horn mug and battle axe of the ancient Dane, or the ornamental feathers and throwing knives of the Kukuana—is an external marker that can signify class, gender, culture—but blood marks the distinction of race.

The white men are attracted to African cultures, and African bodies—particularly male bodies. Gail Ching-Liang Low asserts that "Colonial subjectivities produced by the powerful divisions of self and Other seem paradoxically to be dogged by a relentless nostalgia and desire for the excluded Others" (Low 3). Even as the colonizer works to preserve his superiority and difference, he is attracted to the culture he colonizes, and wishes to assimilate to it. Young argues that "We find an ambivalent driving desire at the heart of racialism: a compulsive libidinal attraction disavowed by an equal insistence on repulsion"[95] (Young 149). For Haggard's English characters, African culture and African bodies are attractive, but must ultimately be repudiated. Their flirtation with cultural hybridity demonstrates the desire, but their recourse to simplistic racism renounces this desire. Hybridity represents a threat to hegemonic white superiority. Hybridity in *King Solomon's Mines* produces not ambiguity (as in Bhabha), but contradiction: the novel's plot affirms that "two strong men" can stand face to face and annihilate boundaries of border, breed, and birth, but then contradictorily insists that blood determines essential racial distinctions. Quatermain mocks Good's comic whiteness, and affirms that natives can be gentlemen, but he ultimately reifies racial hierarchies. No wonder Ignosi interprets the white men's actions as betrayal.

[95] Eric Lott argues that blackface minstrelsy in nineteenth century America similarly displays an attraction to the culture it mimics and travesties—in his classic formulation, minstrelsy is an expression of love, but also theft. "The heedless (and ridiculing) appropriation of 'black' culture by whites in the minstrel show," writes Lott, "was little more than cultural robbery…which troubled guilty whites all the more because they were so attracted to the culture they plundered" (Lott 8).

Brian Singleton has described the colonists' "desire to be assimilated" to native culture "because of a perceived similarity with themselves" as a "momentary lapse," that is "simply a plot device" (Singleton 88). If so, it is a lapse that is repeated over and over again. Haggard and his English characters continued to be attracted to Zulu culture. Allan Quatermain does not remain in England, but returns to Africa many times, as Haggard returned to the subject matter he knew best. I turn now, briefly, to one of Haggard's later works, which connects Curtis's performance of the "White Zulu" to the performance of Zulu culture by white actors on the British stage. Haggard only adapted one of his novels for the stage:[96] *The Child of Storm,* published in 1913, fictionalizes an event in Zulu history—the 1856 civil war that resulted from the struggle for succession to the Zulu throne between Cetshwayo and his brother Mbuyazi. Haggard maps this recent historical event onto one of the founding myths of Western Culture: a "Zulu Helen of Troy" named Mameena instigates and shapes the course of the conflict. The story echoes the misogyny of Haggard's earlier African romances; when Quatermain rejects Mameena's advances, she embarks on a campaign of vengeance against the male sex, setting her many rival lovers against each other. The tale also reinforces the racist repudiation of interracial marriage found in *King Solomon's Mines*: Mameena attributes Quatermain's rejection to his unwillingness to "be stained with my black touch" ("Mameena" 292).

To advise him on the writing and staging of the play, Haggard recruited James Stuart, Assistant Secretary of Native Affairs in Natal, and author of a history of the 1906 Zulu rebellion. Australian actor-manager Oscar Asche, whom Haggard had met in Brisbane, took on the role of star actor/director. Asche was an experienced actor of non-European roles: he had starred as the

[96] Haggard turned to writing for the theatre late in his career, and mostly as a bid to make more money out of his stories. Haggard penned two plays, *Star of Egypt* and *To Hell or Connaught*, before turning to adaptation of one of his own novels.

beggar Hajj in the orientalist musical *Kismet*, and (like so many other white male actors of his and previous generations) had blacked himself up to play Othello. The play that resulted from this collaboration, *Mameena* (staged at the Globe Theatre in 1914), fits into the Victorian history of exhibiting or representing Zulus onstage—characterized by an obsession with realism and a simultaneous catering to British preconceptions of Zulus, often based on previous theatrical representations. Both Stuart and Asche valued authenticity, at least as they perceived it. Asche and his company toured the major South African cities in preparation for the production of *Mameena*, in order to study the music and dances of the Zulus (Singleton 91). Stuart was in charge of making or buying the costumes and props, with an obsessive attention to detail and accuracy:

> To this end three Zulu kraals had been making for three months all the costumes and properties required. This necessitated the hunting and killing of wild animals for their hide and fur, and the tanning and shaping of same, the making of assegais, knobkerries and other offensive weapons, whilst forty oxen, specially chosen for the various colours of their hide, had been killed to provide the eighty war-shields required (qtd. Coan and Tella 22).

In a review of the play in *The Academy*, Egan Mew praised the production for its "minute and telling detail," but commented on the unfortunate olfactory consequences of such attention to detail: "In 'Mameena,' the scent of a Zulu kraal penetrates the Globe from across the footlights. It is not the sublimated essence of roses or sweet gums…rather it is the heavy odour of taxidermy. That is the only unfortunate point in Mr. Oscar Asche's enormous undertaking" (November 7, 1914; p. 431). It is not often you read a theatrical review that describes the *smell*

of the production—one of the many aspects of performance not indicated by the words in the script!

In addition to assembling the requisite realia, Stuart brought two high-ranking Zulu men—Mandhlakazi kaNgini and Kwili ka-Sitshidi—to England to help train the cast to dance and move like Zulus. The cast of extras consisted of "Negroes" who were British, not African, who "require a lot of drilling" to play Zulus (qtd. Coan and Tella 30). Bernth Lindfors notes that it was common practice "to recruit non-African blacks" or pseudo-Zulus, "to masquerade as African savages or wild men" (Lindfors ix). But all speaking parts were played by white actors in blackface. Quatermain was the only white role in the play. As Tiziana Morosetti has noted, "Non-Europeans on the theatrical stage were mainly portrayed by white performers, in black-, red-, or yellow-face where appropriate, employing a number of visual and representational conventions (costumes, settings, props, make-up, movement, sound, etc.) that signaled the exotic to the audience" (Morosetti 1). As the examples in this chapter make clear, costume and props were often all that was considered necessary for the representation of non-European Others by whites. As we shall see in the next section of the chapter, in *Kim*, clothing is endowed with almost magical abilities to transform the white European's identity. The legibility of these visual elements could override any other considerations regarding the "realism" of the portrayal of Zulu life; Stuart wrote that in working out the choreography and blocking of the war dance and wedding scenes, "Zulu custom" was occasionally "overridden in order to attain what is thought to be a better dramatic result" (qtd. Coan and Tella 29). This "better dramatic result" was likely what fit with previous stage conventions for representing the exotic "Other." Morosetti argues that "The seriality of visual conventions means…the triggering of automatic associations on the

Victorian stage. There was…a shared understanding of what the exotic Other was expected to be" (Morosetti 14).

In return for their services, Mandhlakazi and Kwili were treated to (or subjected to) a full schedule of sightseeing in the capital of the British Empire: they were taken to the zoo, Madame Tussaud's, to Buckingham Palace to see the Royal Family, and to a magic show by Maskelyne and Devant. Not all of this entertainment was enjoyable to them, as we know from the account Mandhlakazi left of their stay in London. At Madame Tussaud's, Kwili declared, "I am going to be ill because these people do not speak…Let us go. I shall have nightmares when I am asleep" (qtd. Coan and Tella 377). "We saw many other tricks which we have forgotten," wrote Mandhlakazi, "because no-one can remember all the tricks in England"—perhaps a comment on the duplicity of the culture itself, as much as the entertainment they had witnessed (qtd. Coan and Tella 376). The two Zulus broke with their normal habits and wore shoes and hats while sightseeing, in order to avoid becoming a spectacle in their own right. It is clear that the British were uncomfortable when Zulus appeared outside the safe demarcations of the proscenium arch; the threat of miscegenation that haunts *King Solomon's Mines* and *Mameena* could also result from the mixing of races that stage exhibits facilitated. Asche noted that he could not hire a whole cast of Zulu actors "as the result of the behaviour of some white women at the South African Exhibition at Earls Court" (qtd. Coan and Tella 28). Asche refers to the *Savage South Africa* show which formed part of the Greater Britain Exhibition in 1899, and was performed at the Empress Theatre. The press reported that one of the Zulus was offering to kiss women in exchange for a small fee, and that women "oglers" waited at the stage door to converse with the Africans. The marriage of white woman Kitty Jewell to a member of the cast caused quite a

sensation. Stuart and Asche, as well as Kwili and Mandhlakazi, wished to avoid this kind of publicity.

The play was praised mostly for its scenic and picturesque qualities. Asche's lighting designs were innovative; he created a semi-circular panorama out of wood as a backdrop, onto which he projected effects of the sun and moon, clouds, and even Zulu warriors marching in the distance, by means of magic lanterns installed directly behind the proscenium arch and curtain (Singleton 93). However, the play was not a financial success, in part because a more immediate war was occupying the British imagination; enforced blackouts in London in the wake of WWI deterred theatergoers from their normal habits. And perhaps the kind of Victorian throwback ethnological exhibition that Asche, Stuart, and Haggard had staged was no longer as impressive as it had been in the 1850s, when Caldecott brought his Zulu troupe to London. By 1914, the cinema was beginning to rival the stage as the most popular medium for the visual representation of exotic lands and peoples.

"The White Boy Who is Not a White Boy": Kipling's Boys and the Performance of Whiteness

In some of Kipling's more gothic short fiction, the Englishman's appropriation or desecration of native culture results in the grotesque punishment of the white body. In "The Mark of the Beast" (1890), a drunken Englishman named Fleete grinds his cigar ashes out on the forehead of a statue of Hanuman, the Hindu monkey god. As punishment, Fleete is pursued by a leper known as the Silver Man, who has no face. The leper, horrifyingly, rubs his non-face against Fleete's chest. Fleete begins to exhibit animalistic behavior, and ultimately turns into a wolf, in an acute case of hydrophobia. In this story, "race is presented as a communicable disease," writes Stephen Arata (1993; p. 26). Fleete's friends manage to save him, but only after

exacting the antidote from the Silver Man, by committing acts of torture on the leper's body, which the narrator refuses to describe. Kipling sent the outlines of a similarly gruesome story in an undated letter to his good friend and fellow member of the Savile Club, H. Rider Haggard. The story concept begins with the sentence, "There was first one Englishman and one mummy" (Cohen 28). This sounds like the setup for a joke, but Kipling's story is far from humorous. The mummy has been protected by a curse, which decrees that he who disturbs it shall "die horribly in the open as a beast dies at the hand of a beast" (Cohen 28). The Englishman unwraps the mummy, but he avoids the consequences of his actions for a time, until he travels to southern Africa and decides to shoot at some elephants. The herd charges at him, dealing with him "after the manner of elephants till he was black-currant jam" (Cohen 28). For good measure, a hyena-like "Beast" devours what remains of the Englishman's battered body during the night, so that it cannot be buried properly. But Kipling's proposed story was too disturbing even for Haggard, whose description of an elephant hunt in *King Solomon's Mines* is quite gory, and the story remained an epistolary concept only. However, both "The Mark of the Beast" and the unpublished mummy story have a similar message: the white man who disturbs native culture will either become a beast, or be devoured by one. In these stories, the empire strikes back with a vengeance. Contrast this menacing vision of imperial violence with the lighthearted appropriation of native culture in Kipling's most famous novel, *Kim*. When Kim kicks a Hindu child and a Muslim boy off the cannon Zam-Zammah[97] at the opening of the novel, it is not a sign that he will later meet with a terrible fate for his insolence. The eponymous hero views India as a moveable feast—of smells, tastes, sights, but also of identities he can don at will—and all of these offerings are his for the taking. His whiteness is not engaged in a violent power struggle for

[97] Large cannon on display in front of the Lahore Museum. It symbolizes dominance over Indian territory: Kim proclaims, "Who holds Zam-Zammah holds the Punjab."

control of native culture, but the novel nevertheless presents a vision of whiteness that is hopelessly compromised by its contact with the colonies. The white body is not smashed to pieces—it does not become black-currant jam—but it is still transformed beyond recognition. The novel presents multiple conflicting versions of whiteness, and the narrative does not ultimately endorse any of them. As Radhika Mohanram writes, "Whiteness… becomes a shape-shifter, especially in the colonies (Mohanram 151). Kipling destabilizes the notion of whiteness in *Kim* by depicting whiteness as a performance, a set of gestures that can be learned and imitated. Kim's successful espionage depends not only on his mastery of the performance of whiteness but also on his ability to disguise himself in native costumes.

Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, as the title implies, is a Bildungsroman. "Who is Kim—Kim—Kim?" is the resounding and repeated question the novel attempts to answer (*Kim* 226). Following the classic formula of the Bildungsroman, the protagonist is an orphan who must make his own path in the world, and find or construct his own identity.[98] The novel provides some provisional answers to the question "Who is Kim?" in its very first chapter. The narrator declares, "Kim was English," and "Kim was white" in its second paragraph (*Kim* 53). And yet, the novel puts pressure, from the very beginning, on these assertions. Kim's "whiteness" is contradicted by the actual color of his skin; "he was burned black as any native" (*Kim* 53). And his supposed Englishness is flatly contradicted by his father's Irish origins.[99] The question of Kim's identity is complicated by the disjunction between Kim's origin and his circumstances, as well as by his fantastical ability to disguise himself.

[98] Kim's meditation on his name and identity is reminiscent of Pip's pondering of his own name, and the names of his parents (as carved on their tombstones) in the opening of Dickens's *Great Expectations*.

[99] The English have historically regarded the Irish as imperfectly white. In 1860, Charles Kingsley wrote an infamous letter to his wife, describing the Irish as animalistic beings whose likeness disturbed him: "[T]o see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black one would not see it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours." (qtd Martin 52). For a history of how Irish immigrants finally came to be regarded as white in America, see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (Routledge, 1995).

Kim will not be able to answer the question "Who is Kim?" until he knows how to answer the related question, "What is a Sahib?" According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Sahib is "A respectful title used by an Indian in addressing an Englishman or other European; an Englishman, a European." And yet Kipling's novel begs the question; what makes a Sahib? Is it the physical whiteness of one's skin? One's pedigree or genetic makeup? One's education and manners? Is a Sahib made or born? Edward Said answers the question with a tautology: "a Sahib is a Sahib" (*Culture and Imperialism*, 134-135). "Kipling's White Man," Said argues, was both "an idea and a reality…. It meant—in the colonies—speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others. It meant specific judgments, evaluations, gestures" (*Orientalism* 227). Being a white man in Kipling involves a complicated set of performances, but Said attributes a hegemonic and cohesive notion of whiteness to Kipling, which might find expression in Kipling's poetry (think of "The White Man's Burden," for example), but which the narrative of *Kim* does not uphold. As Mohanram astutely points out, Said does not intellectually engage with Kim's Irishness, and thus ignores Kim's ambiguous status as a potential *subject* of the British Empire (Mohanram 164).[100] Said also asserts that this monolithic notion of whiteness allows "little time for idle speculation on origins, causes, historical logic." And yet, idle speculation on origins—Who is Kim?—occupies our protagonist quite frequently.

Kipling's novel alternates between the idea of race as an essential characteristic, and as a social construct or performance. When Kim finally stumbles upon his father's regiment, the

[100] In Kipling's novel, being Irish is linked to being Indian, as indicated by passages such as: "The humour of the situation tickled the Irish and the Oriental in his soul" (*Kim* 284). And, as Tony Ballantyne has indicated, eighteenth-century historian Charles Vallancey "argued that Irish culture exhibited profound affinities with a range of 'Eastern' traditions" (Ballantyne 36). Ballantyne points out that "other leading figures in Irish intellectual life had close intellectual ties with India," and provides evidence of "substantial material, personal and ideological networks that linked Ireland and India within the British colonial system" (Ballantyne 36). Kim's Irishness perhaps also links him as much or more to India, than to England.

white men read Kim's family history in his birth certificate, then examine the boy's body to confirm his whiteness. In this scene, two kinds of evidence of whiteness or sahibness are presented—the documentary or verbal, and the visual. Kim's birth certificate confirms his parentage, and then the white soldiers expose the skin under his shirt. "You see, Bennett," declares Father Victor, "he's not *very* black" (*Kim* 133, emphasis added). Kim is determined to meet the white men's expectations: "If the Sahibs were to be impressed, he would do his best to impress them. He too was a white man" (*Kim* 142). And yet, the Sahibs themselves believe that whiteness and manliness are the products of a European education, and insist that Kim be sent off to school. Kim explains the priest's intentions to the lama: "He thinks that once a Sahib is always a Sahib," but later Kim adds, "I must needs go to a madrissah and be turned into a Sahib" (Kim 137). The entire scene is fraught with contradiction: whiteness is asserted as an unchangeable fact, but also a learned set of behaviors. Father Victor implies that whiteness and manliness can be taught: "They'll make a man o' you, O'Hara, at St Xavier's—a white man, an', I hope, a good man" (*Kim* 162). Father Victor's speech inspires a fit of introspection in Kim, leading him to ask, not for the first time "Who is Kim?" (*Kim* 163). Father Victor's speech is interesting for several reasons—not only does he assume that whiteness can be taught, he also implies that whiteness does not necessarily equal goodness, just as Quatermain asserted.

Kim internalizes the lesson that Mahbub Ali drills into him: "Thou art a Sahib, and a son of a Sahib," (190) repeating it in order to learn it by rote: "I am a Sahib and a Son of a Sahib," Kim reiterates; however, Kim actually recites this mantra to himself *in Hindi* (193).[101] If, for Said, whiteness implies "speaking in a certain way," Kim fails to meet this criterion. Clearly, his

[101] Young Rudyard, who was born in India and lived there until the age of six, did not think of English as his native tongue. He writes in his autobiography that his *ayah* and other servants had to remind him to speak English in the presence of his parents. "So one spoke 'English,'" writes Kipling, "haltingly translated out of the vernacular idiom that one thought and dreamed in" (*Something of Myself* 4).

education as an English gentleman is incomplete. Before he can work as a spy for the Great Game, Hurree Babu tells Kim he must be "de-Englished," but he has already had many opportunities to forget the lessons he learned at the white men's school (*Kim* 224). He spends all of his holidays from St. Xavier's wandering the Indian subcontinent in native dress, and late in the novel he flatly repudiates the lessons he has been taught, telling the monk, "I am not a Sahib. I am thy chela" (or disciple), to which the lama replies, "Perhaps I was once a Sahib" in a previous life: a perfectly logical conclusion, according to his belief in the cycle of reincarnation (*Kim* 304). In fact, Kim's constant use of disguise is a secular version of reincarnation. He too can say that he was "once a Sahib." The concept of Sahib-ness is fluid and dynamic; here we see a European character denying his whiteness, and an "Oriental" character asserting his potential whiteness. Clearly, Kim never completely learns how to be a Sahib, possibly because the concept is never clearly defined for him. As a Bildungsroman, *Kim* is unconventional; as Joseph Bristow puts it, "Kim very nearly grows up" by the end of the novel (Bristow 198). The lama has found his river, but the answer to the question "Who is Kim?" remains ambiguous. The novel closes while Kim is still an adolescent. His future is uncertain, just as the future of the British Empire was uncertain in 1901.

It is not only Kim's colonial upbringing and the darkness of his skin that present a challenge to the notion of his whiteness. His skills as a consummate actor and master of disguise allow him to don various identities seamlessly, calling into question which is the actual Kim. Mahbub Ali, the Afghan horse dealer who initiates Kim in the workings of the "Great Game" of British espionage, claims that Kim's hybrid identity gives him preternatural powers: "He was born in this land. He has friends…. It needs only to change his clothing, and in a twinkling he would be a low-caste Hindi boy" (*Kim* 154). Hannah Swamidoss notes that "Kim has a cultural

dexterity that arises from his lack of cultural roots and ethnic ties…. Because Kim belongs to no particular community or space, he can enter all with ease." (Swamidoss 275).

And yet many critics have argued that Kim's whiteness is his predominant racial identity. Gail Ching-Liang Low argues that Kipling's novel anxiously "insist[s] on Kim's whiteness" despite all evidence to the contrary" (Low 214). She reads the assertions of Kim's identity as a Sahib as the "safety net" which the novel uses to counteract the dangers of going native which Kim's pleasurable disguises present. According to Low, Kim's whiteness "functions as a residual 'truth' which cannot be erased despite Kim's appearance and behaviour" (Low 213). Anne McClintock likewise claims that "Kim's passing" as native "is the privilege of whiteness" since cultural passing does not work in both directions (McClintock 70). Hurree Babu, a Bengali who attempts to act English, by contrast, "represents the monstrous hybridism of East and West," and is a target of mockery in *Kim* (McClintock 70). However, I agree with Ian Baucom that such a reading of the novel "amounts to an act more of censorship than of reading" (Baucom 99). The novel supports both readings—of Kim as actually white, or actually native—depending on which passages you select. The narrator and characters just as frequently deny Kim's whiteness as affirm it. These contradictory readings spring from the confused picture of "Sahibness" that ultimately fails to cohere in *Kim*. "The white boy who is not a white boy," is the most accurate way to describe Kim, since the novel shifts between affirmation and repudiation of his whiteness (Kim 147).

Arata points to the dense allusions that pepper Kipling's fiction as evidence that he was well-read, and that the experience of India in Kipling is textually mediated; "Kipling was thus immersed in an Orientalist, textualized vision of the East" (Arata 1993; p. 22). However, with a few notable exceptions, including Neil Hultgren's *Melodramatic Imperial Writing*, and Gail

Ching-Liang Low's *White Skins/Black Masks*, scholars have not thoroughly analyzed the influence of theatrical representations of the East on Kipling's depiction of Anglo-Indian identities. In Kipling's *Kim*, both nativeness and Sahibness are depicted as performative, but native identities are represented by native dress, whereas "Sahibness" consists of a set of gestures. Both identities depend on notions of performance drawn from the drama, though the sartorial spectacle of Indianness draws on the elaborate costumes and spectacular staging of the burlesque (or extravaganza), and Sahibness involves a set of gestures as elaborately symbolic as those employed in melodrama. Kim begins to learn these gestures even before he is sent to the *madrissah* to learn them. In a scene early in the novel, Kim performs whiteness for an Indian audience—he imitates the soldier he has seen giving orders to mobilize troops. Kim's performance and accompanying description of the man relies solely on gesture: the man walks "in a stiff, wooden style." When deep in thought, he draws his "forefinger over his forehead and downwards till it [comes] to rest by the angle of the jaw." "Anon He twitches his fingers thus. Anon He thrusts his hat under his left armpit," Kim narrates, "He rubs the skin at the back of his neck—thus. Then falls one finger on the table and He makes a small sniffing noise through his nose" (*Kim* 98). Other than the hat, Kim mentions no articles of clothing associated with the soldier; instead, the man is characterized purely by a set of gestures and mannerisms: the way he moves his hands, the way he walks, the nervous tic or characteristic inhalation. Some of these gestures are particular to this individual, but Kim is also performing Sahibness, as Edward Said

Figure 23: Detail from the London Illustrated News (December 31, 1898) depicting Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane

defines it. This is the way a white man in India carries himself—the stiff and wooden style of walking, for example, is part of the codified gestures and movements of the soldier's drill.[102] Kim's performance is so impressive to his native audience that they credit him with clairvoyance. Crucially, Kim learns this set of gestures through imitation, by watching and mimicking a white man. Without going to school, he has already received a lesson in how to be a Sahib.

Contrast this purely gestural performance, in the tradition of melodrama, with one of Kim's many native personae, the costume of a Pathan, given to him by Mahbub Ali:[103]

> There was a gold-embroidered Peshawur turban-cap, rising to a cone, and a big turban-cloth ending in a broad fringe of gold. There was a Delhi embroidered waistcoat to slip over a milky white shirt, fastening to the right, ample and flowing; green pyjamas with twisted silk waist-string; and that nothing might be lacking, Russia-leather slippers, smelling divinely, with arrogantly curled tips. (*Kim* 212-213)

[102] See *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* by T. Moreman, for background on the debates over the British drill-book and its applicability in the colonies. Critics of the drill-book argued that the traditional set of gestures and movements that troops were taught were not helpful against guerilla forces. In an 1898 lecture, Major Arthur Yate declared that "A manual of instruction for uncivilised warfare is required. Her majesty's troops, and more especially those stationed in India and in our colonial possessions should be instructed and practiced, not only in the exercises and manoeuvres prescribed for modern European warfare, but also in the irregular methods of fighting which must be adopted against uncivilised races" (Moreman 82). To quote Sir Henry Curtis, "When in Kukuanaland, do as the Kukuanas do." The British Army in India needs soldiers who are more like Kim (or Stalky), and can adapt to native conditions.

[103] Recall that the Pathan was also one of Sir Richard Burton's assumed identities.

Gail Ching-Liang Low suggests that this "fascination with costume can be situated within a historical preoccupation with theatre and Oriental fashion in the nineteenth century" (Low 192). And indeed, Kim's costume evokes the lavish spectacle of the Victorian burlesque or extravaganza, rather than the melodrama. The almost magical ability for clothes to transform Kim literalizes the elaborate transformation scenes of the pantomime. He could be a character in one of the many Victorian productions of "Aladdin," or "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" (See Figure 23). The description exudes sensuality, noting the color, shape, texture, and even the smell of the clothing. Adjectives abound.

Contrast this exotic getup with the description of European clothes a few paragraphs later: Kim returns reluctantly to St. Xaviers, "sorrowfully, in European clothes, which he was fast outgrowing" (Kim 213). The clothes are not described with any lavish detail, only enough to convey the discomfort they cause. Clothes contribute to make the Sahib in Kipling's novel, to be sure, but they are less important than the physical state they induce, and the gestures they encourage or inhibit. They lack the transformative magic and sensual appeal of Oriental dress. European clothes are restricting; Oriental clothes are enabling. European clothes discipline the body, training it to move within a restricted set of gestures; whereas Oriental clothing indulges the senses. The notion that the identities of colonized others were available to the European must have been a consoling fantasy; dress is a commodity that can be bought and sold—like the objects in Lurgan Sahib's shop. Whiteness, by contrast, inheres not only in gesture but in knowledge; Ian Baucom refers to the multiplication table as the "saving talisman of sahibness" that Kim recites in order to resist hypnosis by Lurgan Sahib (Baucom 92).

In *Kim*, whiteness is a performance in the melodramatic mode. According to Peter Brooks, melodrama is "the drama of morality" (Brooks 20). Neil Hultgren has provided ample

evidence that imperialist literature borrowed metaphors and plotting from melodrama in order to invest the imperial endeavor with symbolic moral value. Hultgren argues that the melodramatic mode, because of its focus on morality, "contribute[d] to a passionate examination of the ethics of British imperialism" (Hultgren 18). Just as Dion Boucicault dramatized the heroism of the British (particularly British women) during the Sepoy Rebellion in his play *Jessie Brown*, Kipling describes the 1857 event in melodramatic terms. An old Sepoy soldier that Kim and the lama encounter on the trunk road attributes the event to "a madness" that "ate into the army," causing the sepoys to "kill the Sahibs' wives and children" (Kim 102). The soldier narrates that of the six-hundred and eighty men in his cavalry regiment, only three (including himself) remained loyal to the British. In this brief, melodramatic account of the Sepoy Rebellion, Kipling (through the old soldier) reduces the moral complexities of the events that led to the mutiny to a melodramatic struggle of good vs. evil, just as Boucicault "simplified the moral ambiguities of Britain's imperial crises and transformed these crises into occasions for national valor" (Hultgren 23). The ethics of melodrama depend on a clear-cut distinction between hero and villain. What Hultgren terms the "providential plotting" of melodrama does shape Kim's narrative at least as far as the lama is concerned. Kim's spiritual father figure is convinced that he will find the River of the Arrow, and find Enlightenment for himself and his chela, and the novel closes with his assertion that he has reached the goal of his spiritual journey.

However, most of the narrative of Kim does not adhere to the conventions of the melodramatic mode. Rather, the novel draws heavily on the performance techniques of the pantomime, burlesque, or extravaganza, with their emphasis on visual display and spectacle. These theatrical modes focus on surfaces and exteriors rather than depth, on play rather than morality. To depict the empire in a pantomime mode is to depict it as a collection of

commodities for consumption and enjoyment. The emphasis on Kim's clothing casts him as a character in an orientalist pantomime, and the morality of the pantomime, as I've outlined in my previous chapter, is simply to let the underdogs win and to humiliate the rich and powerful. For this reason, critics have had difficulty interpreting Kim from an ethical standpoint: his playful and amoral antics elude the categorizations of postcolonial criticism. Does Kim uphold the power of the British empire by acting as an undercover agent, or does he subvert the tenets of empire through his ability to escape from his white protectors and roam at his own pleasure? Critics have more often come down on the former side of the question. McClintock argues that "Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* offers a rich example of mimicry and cross-dressing as a technique not of colonial subversion, but of surveillance" (McClintock 69). Satya P. Mohanty likewise asserts that in Kipling's *Kim*, "adventure is indistinguishable from surveillance" (ed. LaCapra 326). However, examining Kipling's boy-spy from a theatrical standpoint complicates the idea of Kim's racial and national allegiances. From this perspective, the answer has to be both, and neither. Kim can play both the melodramatic white Sahib and the pantomime Indian native, and consequently he eludes racial and ethical categorization. Since the Sahib and the Oriental are constituted differently in terms of performance, they are not incompatible within the logic of the novel. Kim can be either or both because he can learn a set of gestures, while maintaining a wardrobe full of elaborate disguises. He can shift his method of acting from the melodramatic to the burlesque. Even as the hero of a Bildungsroman, he disappoints expectations; the novel leaves him with no clear path for the future, and he never really grows up. In order to understand the pantomime mode in *Kim*, it will be instructive to compare Kim to some of Kipling's boy heroes who *do* grow up: Stalky and his friends. These boys perform a pantomime that shapes their future as agents of the British empire.

Unlike H. Rider Haggard and many other of his Victorian contemporaries, Kipling did not write for the theater; he did not compose the kind of orientalist pantomimes that inspire Kim's Afghan costume. However, in the short stories "Slaves of the Lamp" parts I & II, later collected in *Stalky & Co.*, Kipling depicts a group of schoolboys preparing for a performance of H. J. Byron's "Aladdin, or the Wonderful Scamp" (1861). According to Anne Veronica Witchard, this was the definitive Aladdin pantomime of the Victorian era, which the boys have "rewritten and filled with local allusions" (*Stalky* 54). As Don Randall notes, by filling the orientalist pantomime with local allusions, the story "represents the school world in intimate relation with Orientalist fantasy," making connections between home and empire (Randall 102).[104] The boys' pantomime costumes are a cartoonish parody of Kim's luxuriant oriental outfits, with their bright colors, excessively loose or fitted tailoring, and gaudy accessories: Aladdin wears "pink cotton tights, a blue and tinsel jacket, and a plumed hat," the genie or Slave of the Lamp is dressed "in black tights and doublet, a black silk half-mask for his forehead," and the magician Abanazar wears "baggy lilac pyjamas" (*Stalky* 54). Beetle, Kipling's alter ego, is the writer responsible for adapting the play; he plays the Widow Twankey (Aladdin's mother) in the play and is consequently feminized, wearing a skirt. Another cross-dressed boy wears "a violet silk skirt and coquettish blue turban" (56). Catherine Robson observes that "trousers and school" marked the Victorian boy's "removal from maternal or feminine care in the home"; a change in clothing signified entrance into a masculine role (Robson 4). Kipling's depiction of schoolboys in drag reveals a nostalgia for "the gentleman's lost girlhood," a desire to return to

[104] Anne Veronica Witchard points out that Byron's adaptation of the famous story from the Arabian Nights already makes a clear connection between home and empire. Victorian pantomime versions of Aladdin were, oddly enough, set in China, and many of the characters are named for types of tea. Aladdin's mother Widow Twankey, is named for a variety of green tea. The play opens with the Vizier singing a song in praise of tea, that quintessentially British beverage. "By 1861," writes Witchard, "tea could be considered one of the spoils of Empire in so far as the maintenance of its availability for the British consumer had been a key factor of the Opium Wars" (Witchard 68). The pantomime thus reminds its audience of the Oriental source of staple British products.

the more permissive and liberated world of feminine play (Robson 11). At an all-boys school, these schoolboys employ cross-dressing out of necessity, but the use of drag is also a key feature of the pantomime. The original performance of Byron's *Aladdin, or the Wonderful Scamp* at the Strand Theatre (April 1, 1861) featured much gender-bending in the casting. Miss Marie Wilton played the role of Aladdin, Miss Katie Carson was cast as the Slave of the Lamp, and the Widow Twankey (Aladdin's mother) was played by Mr. James Rogers. According to Witchard, "The success of Byron's production confirmed the popularity both of a female principal boy and the casting of a man in the role of Aladdin's mother" (Witchard 68). Drag was a common feature of the pantomime; the "principal boy" or boyish protagonist was played by a woman, and the "dame" was a comical male actor in female dress (See Figure 24).[105] It is ironic that these performances, which are an important dress rehearsal for the boys' masculine roles as guardians of empire, often involve playing feminine roles, as well as racially othered roles. British imperial masculinity is performative, but it is playful and flexible in often surprising ways. Rather than resolutely white and rigidly gender normative, these young imperialists are skilled impersonators

Figure 24: Dan Leno, famous "dame," as the Widow Twankey Twankey at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane (1896)

[105] Though gender play was a typical part of the Victorian pantomime, it retained its power to shock. Sharon Weltman insightfully analyzes John Ruskin's discomfort at a production of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, in which the thieves were played by cigar-wielding girls. Young women smoking phallic cigars "compromise gender boundaries too bluntly to pass unremarked," writes Weltman (32).

of feminine or Orientalized identities. These roles are comic and often stereotypical, to be sure, but playacting licenses these young men to explore personae across the boundaries of gender and race.

The authorities at the school disapprove of this playacting; the unpopular Master King disrupts their rehearsal, scolding them for indulging in "Futile foolery just when your careers, such as they may be, are hanging in the balance" (56). The Coll, or college, depicted in the *Stalky & Co.* stories is a preparatory academy designed to prepare young men for careers in the army and administration of empire. The boys abandon their theatrical pursuits in favor of a scheme to humiliate King, but the two parts of "Slaves of the Lamp" combined show that the amateur theatricals are, in fact, an excellent preparation for the boys' future careers as agents of empire.[106] For Randall, it is crucial that Stalky "remains in costume throughout the duration of the maneuver he and his cohorts eventually undertake against housemaster King" (102). In fact, the rowdiness can be considered part of the performance.

"Slaves of the Lamp" part II depicts the boys as men, fifteen years later, reminiscing about their exploits as soldiers in the British army stationed abroad. Beetle, of course, becomes a writer, so the pantomime improvisations and satirical verses composed about his masters have certainly prepared him for his career. However, Stalky's stint in the pantomime has also prepared him to succeed in a brilliant but unconventional imperial career. In the first story, the plucky hero is dressed in a comic orientalist costume, in the pantomime tradition; in the second story, he has

[106] Intriguingly, Anne Veronica Witchard recounts that the Royal Artillery soldiers put on a production of H. J. Byron's *Aladdin* in Ferozepore, India, in 1882. Like Stalky & Co., they adapted the script to reflect local conditions: "the usual puns on the Chinese names have a military or colonial slant, for example, Jin-Sling, the Genius of the Ring, Ten-Shun, Captain of the Guard and Azu-Woz, his lieutenant" (Witchard 74). Aladdin sings "For I am a Chinaman!" a song riffing on Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta, *The Pirates of Penzance*: "For I am an Englishman," in the Gilbert and Sullivan libretto. Though Witchard attributes such humor to "China's status as a debased civilization and decaying race," such quips could also be interpreted critiques of British jingoism and exceptionalism (Witchard 75).

donned native dress and practically gone native in the Indian communities he enters. During the military action depicted in the second story, Stalky wears a poshteen, or posteen, "A coat or jacket, chiefly of Afghan origin, made of animal hide (generally sheepskin) retaining the fleece on the inside" (OED). Later, M'Turk describes Stalky as a kinglike presence within a Sikh community, wearing a garland of flowers around his neck. Like Kim, Stalky has an uncanny ability to impersonate native types. The Pathans "swore Stalky ought to have been born a Pathan" and "Rutton Singh said Stalky was a Sikh" (287). Like Burton, Stalky has mastered multiple languages: "Stalky jabbered Pushtu and Punjabi in alternate streaks" (288). Stalky has grown into the role he played at school, and has nearly gone native: "What was formerly a coincidental performative identification, a schoolboy's portrayal of an Oriental lamp-genie, is now presented as a thoroughgoing cross-cultural identification," writes Randall (103). We might contrast Stalky's easy and unproblematic assimilation to native life with Kurtz's degeneration into savagery in Conrad's novel, *The Heart of Darkness*, which is (remarkably) almost exactly contemporary with *Stalky & Co*. Rather than crying, "The horror! The horror!" Stalky plays on his bugle a rousing chorus of the music hall song that the boys sang in the first story: "Arrah Patsy, mind the baby." Before his mental breakdown, Kurtz is described as "an emissary of pity, and science, and progress" (Conrad 127). Because he once believed in the moral mission of empire, Kurtz's disillusionment constitutes a traumatic break from his past. The horror consists in the rupture between his noble ideals and the violent reality of conquest ("exterminate the brutes!"). Stalky, by contrast, embraces Deane's "imperial play ethic," in which the conquest of empire is an extension of boys' amoral competitive play. Stalky's earlier play acting at school has prepared him to adopt roles comfortably, rather than seeing them as fraught with moral complexity, and to see himself engaged in a battle of wits with his enemy.

Together, these "Slaves of the Lamp" stories depict play acting as a preparation for life in the Empire. In the first story, Stalky instigates a skirmish of missiles between Master King and a local dog-cart driver, and in the second story, Stalky manages to get two allied but hostile tribes in the northwest frontier of India to turn against each other. The stories parallel each other in obvious ways, as Dick Four points out: "Practically he duplicated the trick over again" (*Stalky* 296). References to the pantomime recur within the two stories, and "Arrah Patsy, mind the baby," the music-hall song they choose as a concluding number, comes back several times as a reprise, and is later used as a password during their imperial exploits.[107] At the end of "Slaves of the Lamp" part II, Beetle takes credit for Stalky's adventures: "Ain't I responsible for the whole thing?" he asks, "Who wrote 'Aladdin now has got his wife'—eh?" (*Stalky* 296-297). In Beetle's, and Kipling's mind, the ability to write and act in orientalist pantomimes is intimately connected to the administration of empire. Being in the army is like being in an acting company ("the Aladdin company" in the stories) in the sense that it requires concerted group effort and coordination, but also individual improvisation and invention. Stalky takes initiative rather than following orders, based on conditions "on the ground," just as Beetle adapts H. J. Byron's play to include local allusions. To be a good imperialist, one must also be a good actor and a good playwright or director.

Bradley Deane has dubbed the spirit of competitive play that constituted masculine performance in boys' adventure fiction the "imperial play ethic" (692). According to Deane, "Persistent boyishness put a more beguiling face on the New Imperialist ethos…transforming aimless process into endless adventure and the absence of universal law into a profusion of

[107] The song makes use of stereotyped Irish speech patterns and behavior, thus associating Stalky and Co. with "Kim o' the Rishti," and implicating them in Kim's Irishness. "Arrah" is an expletive or expression of emotion associated with the Anglo-Irish.

possibilities for exhilarating play" (Deane 87). For Deane, play can mean engaging in games, such as the "great game" in *Kim*, but it is also "self-consciously performative" (Deane 89). Building on Deane's argument, I argue that understanding race as a theatrical performance helps to untangle notions of what it means to be a Sahib vs. what it means to be a native in *Kim*. Playacting in *Kim* and *Stalky & Co.* is a serious pursuit. The imperial play ethic is also a pantomime ethic, which is amoral and comedic. Both *Kim* and *Stalky & Co*. avoid engaging the fraught moral or ethical struggle of melodrama, which Neil Hultgren has analyzed as a key element of Kipling's poetry. Kim and Stalky know how to perform the gestures associated with whiteness, but most often choose to don the costumes of native culture instead. In fact, *Kim* and *Stalky & Co.* present a fantasy of a postracial identity politics, in which racial identity is understood as performative, and therefore fluid and dynamic.[108] Sahibness is a performance, and one perhaps unsuited to the conditions in the colonies. (Just as Good's scrupulous grooming and costume of the English gentleman are mocked in *King Solomon's Mines*.)

The presentation of "Oriental" identities as magically available through dress is a fantasy that has its roots in the Victorian popular theater. The pantomime's magical transformations are precursors to Kim's fantastical ability to disguise himself. Like Stalky, Kim begins by transforming himself purely for the pleasure of it, and ends by using his assumed identities in the service of the British empire. In the end, there is no answer to the question, "Who is Kim?" because Kim's identity is completely performative, including the racial aspects of his identity.

[108] The novel similarly presents the fantasy of a totally ecumenical society; Kim can move between Muslim, Hindu, and Christian affiliations at will (while also functioning as the disciple of a Buddhist monk!) The epigraph to chapter XIV of the novel points to a vision of tolerance between the religions, which has certainly never been an actuality in Indian history: "My brother kneels (so saith Kabir) / To stone and brass in heathen-wise, / But in my brother's voice I hear / My own unanswered agonies. / His God is as his Fates assign— / His prayer is all the world's—and mine" (Kim 286). The train in the novel represents a utopian space of tolerance and coexistence fostered by colonialism—this gift of the British to the Indians facilitates a space in which people of all castes and creeds commingle.

Kim is the precursor to Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*; in Woolf's modernist Bildungsroman, clothing shapes the hero/ine's gender identity. Woolf writes that Orlando's "sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothing can conceive" (Woolf 153). Similarly, Kim's racial identity or cultural identification changes as frequently and as easily as he changes clothes.

CODA: THE PRINCESS AND THE POLICEMAN

> "In the first place, Miss Minchin lived in London. Her home was a large, dull, tall one, in a large, dull square, where all the houses were alike…"
>
> "Some people say that there is no romance in India."

These are the opening sentences of Frances Hodgson Burnett's novella "Sara Crewe, or What Happened at Miss Minchin's," and Rudyard Kipling's short story "Miss Youghal's Sais," both originally published in 1887-1888. Both stories begin with what Jane Bennett calls "the disenchantment of modernity," but as short stories tend to do, these stories proceed to complicate their opening gambits (Bennett 4). Miss Minchin's "home" is not really a home, nor is it a dull place; it is a lively boarding school for young ladies. India also turns out to be a scene of abundant romance. Pairing these two stories might seem counterintuitive: "Sara Crewe" is a story about a little girl at school, originally serialized in an American children's magazine; "Miss Youghal's Sais" is about a policeman in love, and was published in the Anglo-Indian periodical *The Civil and Military Gazette*.[109] However, these stories illustrate the connections this dissertation has drawn between home and empire. In both cases, England and India restore each other's magic, creating a romance or fairy tale (Kipling and Burnett's favored words, respectively) to enliven each other's prosaic dullness. In Burnett's story, an "Indian magician" must bring some magic into a young girl's life. And in Kipling's story, the romance of Indian life is recovered when it is experienced through the eyes of an Englishman. Both stories reenchant realism through the narrative device of cross-class or cross-cultural disguise, demonstrating Bennett's claim that "crossings have the power to enchant" (Bennett 17).

[109] Parallels between the authors proliferate, if you squint. "Sara Crewe" was originally serialized in the *St. Nicholas Magazine* for children, where Kipling's *Jungle Book* would be serialized in 1894. Both authors lived as expatriates in America for part of their lives.

In "Sara Crewe," Burnett's first published version of her famous children's novel *A Little Princess*, the eponymous heroine uses her imagination to compensate for her fall in fortune and her position as a servant in the boarding school where she was once the richest pupil. Unlike Elizabeth Banks, whose undercover journalism I discussed in my first chapter, Sara is not literally in disguise—she has actually been demoted to servant status—but she survives this trial by pretending that she is a princess in disguise. Though Sara's imagination saves her psychologically, she discovers that the literal bounty of empire is more satisfying than any flight of the imagination. When the mysterious "Indian gentleman" next door becomes her benefactor, and his Lascar servant, like a fairy godmother, transforms her drafty attic into an Orientalized boudoir fit for a princess, Sara calls it a "real fairy tale"—an excellent genre description of slumming narratives such as Greenwood's "A Night in a Workhouse."

In Kipling's story, the English policeman *becomes* the native servant who serves an English lady. "Miss Youghal's Sais" is Kipling's tribute to the pleasures of going native. Kipling's narrator uses the term "going Fantee" to describe the policeman Strickland's habit of donning native dress,[110] a concept that also features prominently in Kipling's novel *Kim*, as discussed in chapter 3. The policeman Strickland goes undercover as a native groom or "sais," to tend the horse of the Englishwoman he loves, whose family disapproves of their romance.[111] Strickland's efforts win him the girl's hand, but her parents insist that he give up his disreputable

[110] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "Fantee" is either "An Akan language of the Niger-Congo family, of Ghana and parts of Côte d'Ivoire," or a member of an Akan people in these parts of Africa. Kipling's appears to have coined the use of the term "going Fantee" as an equivalent of the phrase "going native." The OED lists Kipling's "Departmental Ditties" as the first use of the phrase in this sense, in 1885.

[111] R. E. Harbord contends that Charles Christie, a real life Sahib on whom Kipling may have based Strickland, was a master of disguise precisely because Anglo-Indian children like Kipling and Christie were brought up among native servants: "Such men, being brought up amongst servants and in daily intercourse with all classes of Indians from a very early age, assimilate without effort a thorough knowledge of several languages and dialects with their correct pronunciations and a knowledge of manners, habits and customs of the various classes." (Harbord 16) Kipling was also brought up among native servants, and had to be reminded not to speak Hindustani around his parents.

habit of "going Fantee." Ironically, he discovers that going native is more pleasurable to him than love. In both stories, the disguise of the servant humbles and disciplines the protagonist so that he or she can appreciate the benefits of Empire—power, knowledge, or wealth.

For both protagonists, a stint as a servant helps to prove their worth. In *A Little Princess*, the novelized version of "Sara Crewe," Burnett expands on this theme: "I don't know," Sara tells fellow student Ermengarde, "how I shall ever find out whether I am a really nice child or a horrid one. Perhaps I'm a *hideous* child, and no one will ever know, just because I never have any trials" (*Little Princess* 38). Sara's anxieties about the source of her own goodness—whether her good qualities are innate or the product of environmental conditioning—reflect the class-based anxieties that are the central concern of the book. Is Sara a princess because she has a fabulous wardrobe, or is she a princess inside? The novel gives Sara the chance to prove that her innate qualities—benevolence, intelligence, and imagination—entitle her to wealth. Like Cinderella, Sara will not remain a servant for long.

Like Jacob laboring to earn Rachel's hand, Strickland must learn how to serve his lady in order to win her parents' approval,[112] and this servitude also has strong class implications. Strickland's experience as a sais is an education in the virtues of the working classes: "Strickland vows that the two months of his service were the most *rigid mental discipline* he has ever gone through… he had to school himself into *keeping quiet* when Miss Youghal went out riding with some man who tried to flirt with her… Also, he had to *keep his temper* when he was slanged in the theatre porch by a policeman… or, worse still, when a young subaltern called him a pig for not making way quickly enough" (*Plain Tales* 33: emphasis added). In other words, Strickland must learn the "feminine" virtues of domestic servants and the working classes: tact, silence, and

[112] The reader may remember, from my second chapter, that winning (or defying) parental approval is also a central theme of the pantomime harlequinade.

submission. Impersonating a servant develops Strickland's interiority; similarly, Sara uses her time as a servant to develop the skill of internalization: "When people are insulting you, there is nothing so good for them as not to say a word—just look at them and *think*," she tells herself, "They know you are stronger than they are, because you are strong enough to hold in your rage and they are not." ("Sara Crewe" 21)

In the development of these "essential qualities of mind," Strickland and Sara follow Nancy Armstrong's paradigm of the female protagonist of the domestic novel. "Literature devoted to producing the domestic woman," Armstrong writes, "presume[d] to say that neither birth nor the accoutrements of title and status accurately represented the individual; only the more subtle nuances of behavior indicated what one was really worth" (Armstrong 4). For both Sara and Strickland, their interiority finds a potential outlet in writing or storytelling. Sara tells herself and her schoolmates stories that romanticize her plight, comparing herself to a princess locked away in the Bastille. And Kipling's narrator tells us that "One of these days Strickland is going to write a little book on his experiences. That book will be worth buying, and even more worth suppressing" (*Plain Tales* 34).[113] In their impulse to record their stories, Strickland and Sara resemble their literary forebear, Richardson's Pamela, whose epistolary narrative Armstrong analyzes.[114]

[113] In this, Strickland resembles Sir Richard Burton, many of whose publications were suppressed or banned.
[114] And in their impulses to record or narrate their experiences, Sara and Strickland are alter-egos for their authors. In *A Little Princess*, Sara imagines a warm room and food on the table, and they magically appear in the morning. Burnett also used her imagination to put food in people's mouths: she wrote serialized fiction in order to keep her impoverished family afloat. Biographer Gillian Avery writes that teenaged Frances, then living in Tennessee, "sold wild grapes" to raise money for paper and stamps, so that she could send her stories to *Godey's Lady's Book* (Avery np). Burnett published her first short stories when she was 19. Kipling began working as an editor at the *Civil and Military Gazette* when he was 16, and published his first volume of poetry on the subject of Indian life, *Departmental Ditties*, at age 21.

But the novel of interiority that Armstrong describes is never completely divorced from its public and collective counterpart: the theater. David Kurnick points out that many of the most famous novelists of interiority were also failed playwrights. He argues that this failure produces a longing for collectivity and the public sphere even within the most inwardly focused of novels: Kurnick writes, "The novel of interiority is a record not only of relentless intensifications of interiority but of the desire to escape from it" (Kurnick 4). Sara and Strickland's descent into the servant class develops their interiority, but the publication history of these two stories also reveals this impulse toward theatricality, which as I have argued in the preceding chapters, is a key characteristic of the narrative of cross-class or cross-cultural disguise. In particular, Burnett expanded her tale considerably, from short story to novel, by means of an intermediate theatrical adaptation. In 1902, Burnett adapted "Sara Crewe" as a play called "The Little Un-Fairy Princess," whose popularity prompted her to expand the original short story into the novel *A Little Princess* in 1905. Though her initial motive was financial, Burnett's process of adaptation demonstrates the crucial place of the theater in the repackaging and constantly transmediating literary culture of the nineteenth century.[115] Most importantly, this process encouraged Burnett to expand her cast of characters. After all, a play about a little girl who stares people out of countenance, and internalizes her feelings might have limited appeal. As Burnett herself wrote, "When I wrote the story of 'Sara Crewe' I guessed that a great deal more had happened at Miss Minchin's than I had had time to find out just then. I knew, of course, that there must have been chapters full of things going on all the time; and when I began to make a play out of the book and called it 'A Little Princess,' I discovered three acts full of things. What interested me most was that I found that there had been girls at the school whose names I had not even known

[115] Burnett's decision to dramatize her own story was partly a reaction to E. V. Seebohm's unauthorized dramatization of her novel *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, in 1888. Burnett brought a court case against him, and won. (Avery n.p.)

before." (Knoepflmacher ed. 3) Burnett externalizes Sara's inward drama by adding new characters to the play, most crucially the Cockney scullery maid Becky, who acts as Sara's foil in *A Little Princess*.

In "Sara Crewe," her doll Emily is Sara's sole interlocutor when she becomes a servant. Emily is an exemplary model of inwardness; as Sara says, "Perhaps Emily is more like me than I am like myself…She keeps it all in her heart" ("Sara Crewe" 22). But in *A Little Princess*, Sara shares her dingy attic with Becky. When Sara first climbs up to the servants' attic she will share with Becky, she initially asserts their equality: "I told you we were just the same—only two little girls—just two little girls. You see how true it is. There's no difference now. I'm not a princess anymore." Becky tearfully contradicts her, "Yes, miss, you are…whats'ever 'appens to you—whats'ever—you'd be a princess all the same—an' nothin' couldn't make you nothin' different" (*Little Princess* 107). Of these two conflicting ideas—Sara is either just a little girl, or she is a princess—the story vindicates Becky's point of view. As U. C. Knoepflmacher writes, "The two girls will remain decidedly unequal despite their temporarily shared attic quarters" *(Little Princess* xii). The difference between the two girls comes down to their "essential qualities of mind," their ability to imagine, tell stories, and remember things (Armstrong 4). But Burnett illustrates this Armstrongian inwardness through the theatrical devices of doubling and dialogue. Sara needs Becky as a foil to show that she is a princess inside.

While Kipling did not put Strickland onstage, the concepts of theatricality and performance opened out the initial romance he narrates in "Miss Youghal's Sais." The story ends with Strickland's marriage to Miss Youghal, but they do not necessarily live happily ever after. Strickland promises "to drop his old ways" of going native, "but it was a sore trial to him." And the narrator hints that Strickland will not be able to avoid the calls of the streets and bazars

forever: “Some day I will tell you how he broke his promise to help a friend” (*Plain Tales* 36). Strickland breaks his promise in a subsequent short story, “The Bronkhorst Divorce-Case,” using his native disguise as part of an effort to exonerate a friend who has been accused of sleeping with another man’s wife. The couple’s servants are the key witnesses, whom Strickland must convince to change their evidence. Though Kipling does not use theatrical adaptation directly, as Burnett does, he does turn the private drama of courtship and marriage of the first story outward, into the public spectacle of the divorce court. At the conclusion of the Bronkhorst case, “The whole court applauded wildly, like soldiers at a theatre” (*Plain Tales* 222). Together, Kipling’s two stories disenchant the marriage plot, and prove the true libidinal charge of Strickland’s “outlandish custom of prying into native life.” “It is the most fascinating thing in the world,” Kipling’s narrator declares, “Love not excepted” (*Plain Tales* 31).[116]

The Victorians *were* fascinated with crossing the boundaries of class and race, and prying into other lives. From servant impersonation in the home, to slumming in the East End of London, and cross-cultural masquerades in the far reaches of Empire, *Undercover in the Underclasses* attempts to taxonomize this monumental fascination, showing some of its causes and consequences for the literature of the period. Burnett’s and Kipling’s stories illustrate the fundamental arguments I have made in these pages: stories of cross-class or cross-cultural disguise make connections between home, city, and empire. These narratives blend the enchantment of fairy tale or romance with the gritty documentary realism of the journalistic exposé. The “dull” houses and streets of London and the “unromantic” spaces of imperial India reenchant each other by means of this fairy tale story of descent and rise, and the performance of otherness. The ordinary domestic servant may turn out to be a princess…or a policeman.

[116] In his preference for adventure and mystery over heterosexual domesticity, Strickland resembles his detective contemporary, Sherlock Holmes, and his partner Watson.

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