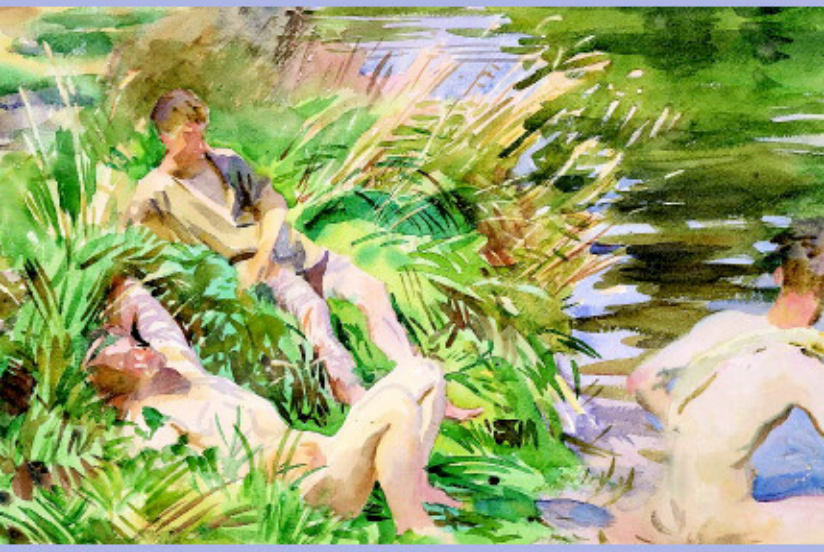
Eric Haralson

Henry James and Queer Modernity



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HENRY JAMES AND QUEER MODERNITY

In *Henry James and Queer Modernity*, Eric Haralson examines far-reaching changes in gender politics and the emergence of modern male homosexuality as depicted in the writings of Henry James and three authors who were greatly influenced by him: Willa Cather, Gertrude Stein, and Ernest Hemingway. Haralson places emphasis on American masculinity as portrayed in fiction between 1875 and 1935, but the book also treats events in England, such as the Oscar Wilde trials, that had a major effect on American literature. He traces James's engagement with sexual politics from his first novels of the 1870s to his "major phase" at the turn of the century. The second section of this study measures James's extraordinary impact on Cather's representation of "queer" characters, Stein's theories of writing and authorship as a mode of resistance to modern sexual regulation, and Hemingway's very self-constitution as a manly American author.

ERIC HARALSON is Associate Professor of English at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He has published articles in such journals as *American Literature* and *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, and has contributed to *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James* (1998). He is also the editor of the two-volume *Encyclopedia of American Poetry* (1998, 2001).

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From a love letter written by James Strachey, the famous translator of Sigmund Freud, to Rupert Brooke, the modern "Apollo" and doomed poet of World War One

January 7th, 1909, Hampstead, London

[Like you,] I also read Henry James. But it's fairly gloomy living here with a lot of people who don't in the least know what I'm thinking about, & who [would] hate me if they did . . . It [would] be some relief if I could talk to you about . . . things that I really care about. Shall I ever? . . . Somehow when I'm with you, there's always a damned awkwardness. *I*, at least, so often don't say what I mean . . . [T]hen I have ghastly moments sometimes, when it all seems to be explained by your . . . wishing most of the time that I weren't there . . . I'm sure it's all my fault; but I don't see how. Can't you help?

I [had] no notion all this was coming when I said that I also read Henry James. Shall I burn it?

Friends and Apostles: The Correspondence of Rupert Brooke and James Strachey, 1905–1914, ed. Keith Hale *(1998)*

Contents

Acknowledgments

This book considers how five American authors, and a few of their British counterparts, contended with new models of categorizing identity, especially gender and sexual identity, in the crucial period of cultural history that extends from the mid-1870s to the mid-1930s. I have been particularly interested in studying the strategies of resistance to such categorization found in their works – the often subtle ways in which they sought to combat evolving patterns of discrimination towards "deviance" or to turn new regimes of "difference" to the advantage of *their* differences, writing also on behalf of others marked out as "queer" or self-identifying against prevailing norms. Here it is my pleasant task to identify and categorize the many debts I have accrued during the course of this project, to distinguish among the persons, of various complex and engaging identities, without whose help and comradeship this book would not have been possible.

Although Columbia graduate school is now distant enough for nostalgia to have set in, very present to my mind is the invaluable guidance of my dissertation director, Jonathan Arac, the epitome of professionalism, intellectual endeavor, and warm collegiality. I was also fortunate to have as dissertation readers Robert A. Ferguson and Andrew Delbanco, whose prestige as scholars and teachers of American literature does not need my further testimonial, but I am glad to give it anyway. I am also happy to remember the steadfast support of Karl Kroeber, who was a constant source of mental agitation and buoyant humor. My memory of these fine mentors is aided by the circumstance that they continue to take an interest in my career and to nurture my development.

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widely curious, like the author we study), I want to thank a few more of them. In cases where I have committed an unwitting theft of their ideas, they themselves are to blame for having such seductive insights in the first place. I refer to, and express my gratitude to, Wendy Graham, Christopher Lane, Jonathan Levin, and David McWhirter (a special thanks to him for strategizing with me during the trials of seeking a publisher).

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generation in our profession – for teaching me so much about my research topics and compelling me to test, refine, and often revise my thinking.

This brings me to the most challenging category of all – that of my exceptional mentors – because each person listed here deserves separate praise. To begin with Martha Banta, I can only hope to be as prolific and as consistently interesting (sacred Jamesian word) on Henry James and so much else in American literature as she has been in her distinguished career. Thinking of our many conferences together, and our purely social "larks" in New York and Los Angeles, I cannot imagine a better friend or a more thought-provoking dinner companion. Richard Dellamora and I struck up our friendship in convention-land as well, the "alternative" Whitman gathering at Penn almost a decade ago: I thank him for his sponsorship of my work, for the inspiring example of his own, and for many enlarging conversations on James, Wilde, and their milieux. My debt of gratitude to Jonathan Freedman is especially large, encompassing his generous support as editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, his careful help with the manuscript of this book, his own stellar scholarly contributions, and his bountiful sense of "fun" (Jamesians tend to put this word in quotation marks). In all things Jamesian, Hawthornean, and Forsterian, Robert K. Martin has been an intellectual *provocateur par excellence*; we, too, have cultivated the habit of conference socializing, to the point where the MLA is not the MLA without his good company and witty, thoughtful commentary. Last in this category, but only alphabetically so, is John Carlos Rowe, who embodies many of my own professional aspirations, being an unsurpassed Jamesian, a wide-ranging Americanist who is helping to redefine and broaden what "Americanist" means, a politically committed teacher and scholar, and a democratic spirit who distinctively blends and balances the modes of dialogue, critique, and camaraderie.

For Cambridge University Press, the editor of the series in which this book appears, Ross Posnock, does not require me to burnish *his* Jamesian credentials, but I am pleased to testify to his additional virtues of patient kindness and unfailing guidance and support. Ray Ryan has been especially thoughtful and instructive, and I have appreciated the prompt expertness and pleasant reassurances of Rachel DeWachter, Nikki Burton, Jayne Aldhouse and Karl Howe. Kevin Broccoli helped me immensely with indexing, and Hilary Hammond supplied both meticulous copyediting and good cheer. My gratitude to the press designer for making such a handsome book, and a special thanks to Dr. H. Barbara Weinstein, Curator of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for permitting me to use Sargent's superb watercolor, *Tommies Bathing*, for the jacket design.

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Abbreviations

A	*The Ambassadors* (1903), ed. S. P. Rosenbaum, New York: W. W. Norton, 1964.
AB	"The Author of 'Beltraffio'" (1884/5), in Leon Edel (ed.), *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, vol. v, Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1962–5. (Text is taken from *Stories Revived*, London 1885, and thus substantially follows the original form in *English Illustrated Magazine*, June–July 1884.)
ABT	*The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, in *Writings 1903–1932*, ed. Catherine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman, New York: Library of America, 1998.
AM	*The American* (1877), ed. James W. Tuttleton, New York: W. W. Norton, 1978.
AS	*The American Scene* (1907), ed. W. H. Auden, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946.
AU	*Autobiography* (1913/14), ed. Frederick W. Dupee, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.
CH	Roger Gard (ed.), *Henry James: The Critical Heritage*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968.
CR	Kevin J. Hayes (ed.), *Henry James: The Contemporary Reviews*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
CS	*Collected Stories*, New York: Vintage Classics, 1992. (Contains "Flavia and her Artists" and "Paul's Case," both 1905.)
DG	*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985. (Text is taken from the revised and expanded book version published by Ward, Lock & Co., 1891.)

DS	*Dear Sammy: Letters from Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas*, ed. Samuel M. Steward, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.
EA	*Everybody's Autobiography*, Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1994.
EN	*Willa Cather: Early Novels and Stories*, ed. Sharon O'Brien, New York: Library of America, 1987. (Contains *O Pioneers!, The Song of the Lark, My Ántonia*, and *One of Ours*.)
EU	*The Europeans* (1878), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985. (Text based on the original edition published by Macmillan, 1878.)
FA	*Four in America*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947. (Contains the essay "Henry James.")
GHA	*Green Hills of Africa*, New York: Scribner's, 1935.
GL	Byrne R. S. Fone (ed.), *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature: Readings from Western Antiquity to the Present Day*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
L I, II, III, IV	*Henry James: Letters*, volume I, *1843–1875*, ed. Leon Edel, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974; volume II, *1875–1883*, 1975; volume III, *1883–1895*, 1980; volume IV, *1895–1916*, 1984.
LC 1	*Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, ed. Leon Edel, New York: Library of America, 1984.
LC 2	*Literary Criticism: French Writers, other European Writers, the Prefaces to the New York Edition*, ed. Leon Edel, New York: Library of America, 1984.
LL	*Henry James: A Life in Letters*, ed. Philip Horne, Harmondsworth: Viking/Penguin, 1999.
MF	*A Moveable Feast*, New York: Scribner's, 1964.
MOA	*The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress*, Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1995.
N	*The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock, New York: George Braziller, 1955.
PC	*The Princess Casamassima* (1886), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986 (text is taken from the first edition, published by Macmillan & Co., 1886).

PH	*The Professor's House*, New York: Vintage Classics, 1990.
RH	*Roderick Hudson* (1875), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981. (Text is taken from the first revised text, published by Macmillan & Co., 1879.)
SA	*Letters of Sherwood Anderson*, ed. Howard Mumford Jones and Walter B. Rideout, Boston: Little, Brown, 1953.
SAM	*Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs: A Critical Edition*, ed. Ray Lewis White, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1969.
SAR	*The Sun Also Rises*, New York: Scribner's, 1926/1954.
SL	*Ernest Hemingway, Selected Letters, 1917–1961*, ed. Carlos Baker, New York: Scribner's, 1981.
SP	*Willa Cather: Stories, Poems, and Other Writings*, ed. Sharon O'Brien, New York: Library of America, 1992.
T	*The Torrents of Spring: A Romantic Novel in Honor of the Passing of a Great Race*, New York: Scribner/ Simon & Schuster, 1998.
THJ	*Tales of Henry James*, ed. Christof Wegelin, New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1984.
TL	*Three Lives: Stories of the Good Anna, Melanctha and the Gentle Lena*, New York: Dover, 1994.
TM	*The Tragic Muse* (1890), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978 (text follows the first edition of 1890).
TS	*The Turn of the Screw* (1898), in *The Turn of the Screw and Other Short Novels*, New York: New American Library, 1962 (text follows first American appearance in book form in *The Two Magics*, Macmillan, 1898).
WO	*Winesburg, Ohio*, New York: Viking, 1969.
WP 1, 2	William M. Curtin (ed.), *The World and the Parish*, volume 1, *Willa Cather's Articles and Reviews, 1893–1902*; volume 11, *Willa Cather's Articles and Reviews, 1893–1902*, Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1970.

Introduction

> So much of life is queer, if we but dare feel its queerness.
> (Sherwood Anderson, *Memoirs*)

As the most politically charged term in my title, with respect to both literary criticism and the *realpolitik* of contemporary culture, "queer" deserves primary attention among my definitional tasks, before I can begin to examine the questions that underlie this study. Although it is hard to generalize about a field as diverse and proliferating as queer studies, especially one that programmatically prides itself on constant self-querying and self-renovation, the current mood in this subdiscipline seems introspective, even uneasy, after a long decade of evolution. Originally, the conceptual terminology of "queerness" (or "queer") drew its analytical and political force from the very quality that made it so appealing, as well, to Victorian and modernist authors and readers: a fluency or an indeterminacy of signification that was felt to be at once powerful and elusive. In *Saint Foucault*, for instance, David Halperin suggests that both the intellectual value and the subversive potential of *queer* depended on its being defined as indefinite, its referentiality mobile and contingent rather than fixed: "Queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers*. It is an identity without an essence . . . describing a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance."[1] One impetus of this challenging anti-definition (challenging in every sense) was clearly the desire to push against the damaging epistemological operations whereby the modern sex/gender system conflated identities with essences and fastened down referentiality in order to categorize, weed out, and punish those who were "at odds." The work of Judith Butler has put perhaps the strongest stamp on contemporary theorizings of sexual discourse, discussing the attempted reclamation (or "discursive resignification") of *queer* from its history of abuse and the strategic exploitation of its contingency

to turn a vicious stigma into a "term of affiliation" for purposes of lesbigay advocacy or antihomophobic critique.[2] Butler, like Halperin, conceives of the discursive transience of *queer* in the most radical possible fashion, suggesting that the politically necessary fictions of stable identity that the word names or inspires will have to adapt as oncoming generations of speakers and writers trope *queerness* into new shapes or possibly even out of existence.

Yet the democratic ebullience and liberating effects of such thinking – already conditional in Halperin's formulations[3] – have recently been qualified by warning sounds from some of the ablest practitioners of queer reading. Marilee Lindemann, whose work on Willa Cather informs my chapter on Cather's formative triangular relationship with her precursors Henry James and Oscar Wilde, observes that in academic literary criticism, "the assault on heteronormativity . . . has come to seem not revolutionary but routine," to the point where embracing the term *queer* for its subversive flexibility has become "not merely generous or pragmatic but evasive and risky."[4] Marjorie Garber concedes the need for a word to describe "transgressive self-invention," but wonders (*pace* Butler's more hopeful view) whether the lessons exemplified in Wilde's rhetorical strategies might not be forgotten, causing *queer* to reify as "yet another essentialized identity or political faction."[5] Leo Bersani moves in a different direction entirely, suggesting that no matter who is performing the queer reading, or how it is performed, the practical effect on the established order may be puny at best.[6]

I want to advance as a fundamental principle in approaching the conceptual task, and then in undertaking queer readings of my five main authors – James, Cather, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and Sherwood Anderson – that the critical posture recommended by the latter author, as expressed in the epigraph above, will be not merely useful but methodologically vital. Feeling or reading the "queerness" in life, in literature, in the very diction of *queer* – where *queer* itself is not limited to but manifestly includes matters of sexuality – is substantially a factor of *daring* to feel or see or read queerness. What differentiates the work of these American authors from most of their predecessors is their alert receptivity to this queerness, to the strange combinations that modern life casts up: a receptivity – sometimes despite powerful internal resistance, and sometimes even through the screen of homophobic prejudice – to modernity itself. "Queer" is so interwoven with the modern, and the modern with the queer (though neither is simply reducible to or synonymous with the other), that one's reading practice must be equally receptive.

This is not to say that one should succumb to what Rita Felski describes – and well resists – as "an over-arching meta-theory of modernity"

that grants interpretative superiority to present-day perspectives. Rather, the critical project must be to track "the mobile and shifting meanings of the modern as a category of cultural consciousness" by seeking to recover, as much as possible, the representations of modernity sanctioned by the historical objects being surveyed. This effort seems especially acute in addressing the span of years under consideration here – from 1875, when James published *Roderick Hudson* and began writing *The American*, to the mid-1930s, the period of Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and *Four in America*, with its important chapter on James. This sixty-year swath of cultural history witnessed a heightened preoccupation with "narratives of innovation and decline," as well as the self-conscious mobilization of "the modern" as a master trope by which Anglo-American society sought to understand itself. In Felski's helpful summation, " 'modernity' thus refers not simply to a substantive range of sociohistorical phenomena – capitalism, bureaucracy, technological development, and so on – but above all to particular (though often contradictory) experiences of temporality and historical consciousness."[7]

For Henry James, the struggle to articulate a modern manhood – apart from the normative script of a fixed national identity, a vulgarizing, homogenizing career in business and commerce, a middle-class philistinism and puritanical asceticism in the reception of beauty, and crucially, a mature life of heterosexual performance as suitor, spouse, physical partner, and paterfamilias – resulted in his valorizing the character of the disaffiliated aesthete. To what degree this modern aesthete's difference from other men may be attributed to "queerness" in the emergent sense of "homosexuality" shall be discussed later. What is striking and symptomatic about the work of all the authors I will examine, starting with James, is that while they simultaneously fostered the association between "queer" and "homosexual," they also sought to contain, constrain, and rhetorically manage the implications of that linkage: in effect, to mean only so much, or to mean it only so distinctly, in the way of sexual meanings. The "queerness" of their texts always opens on to a larger field of difference(s). Lindemann, for example, has noted that the recurrent word *queer* in Cather is a marker not only of "sexual ambiguity" but also of ethnic difference or corporeal distortion;[8] sometimes just the vague community impression that a young man "don't seem to fit in right," as in the case of Claude Wheeler in *One of Ours*, is enough to brand him *queer*, though the sexual implications of his difference must be patiently extracted from context (*EN* 1050).

James himself dramatizes the broader spirit of Anderson's above-quoted remark in the so-called Lambinet scene of *The Ambassadors*, which

culminates in Lambert Strether's acceptance of the novel's sexual intrigue; the unfolding, quasimystical events of his fateful day of discovery strike this well-read man as being "as queer as fiction" (*A* 308). This reflexive gesture of James's text makes for meaningful fun, suggesting that a realist fictional practice inevitably blurs the line that only seems to set the novelistic genre apart *as* fiction. Whatever is "queer" in literature seeps into the queerness of modern social reality, just as whatever is "queer" in reality may turn up in literature. In pointing to this coincidence or interpermeability of zones of queernesses, James instructs his readers that they, too, should be prepared for startling recognitions such as Strether's: for the exposure of a potent secret or "a *lie* in the charming affair" that constitutes the public surface of social life, and more particularly, for the revelation of a "deep truth of… intimacy" precisely where they (like Strether) have labored not to notice or acknowledge it – in other words, where they have not dared to feel it (*A* 311, 313).

Oh, *prefer*? oh yes – queer word. I never use it myself. (Herman Melville, *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, 1853)

Despite this contiguity, in *The Ambassadors*, between the word *queer* and a form of intimacy (technically, adultery) in violation of community norms, especially the norms of American post-Puritanism, it is not immediately apparent how phenomena "as queer as fiction," or phenomena queer *in* fiction of the Victorian and modern periods, can be related to the discourse of sexuality, or homosexuality, as such. Indeed, Strether's mental phrasing seems almost to lead *away* from eroticized resonances by recalling the sheer abundance and diversity of "queer" things in Anglo-American literature from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, most of which have no evident connection to sexuality. Even a highly selective catalog suggests the term's extraordinary range of application and, partly as a result, its diffuse referentiality. For instance, Anglo-American prose as well as verse of this vintage regularly featured dwellings or places of business that were "queer" in atmosphere, furnishing, or architectural condition: queer shops, lodgings, castles, gables, looking glasses, smelling bottles, and so forth. Characters in fiction notoriously succumbed to "queer" states of affect or imagination – queer moods, fancies, ideas, or reminiscences – or fell into "queer" habits and forms of self-expression: queer grins, laughs, looks, noises; queer little dances, tunes, ditties; queer "ways of putting it." If manners or bodies or faces became "queer" *enough*, the persons exhibiting them were set down as queer fellows, chaps, or creatures, or sometimes evoked more colloquially as queer birds or queer fish. Extreme manifestations

aroused suspicion that a person might be "queer in the head" or possibly residing in "Queer Street," that populous thoroughfare, running through the pages of especially English literature from Charles Dickens to Robert Louis Stevenson to Evelyn Waugh, where residents suffered from unspecified but unseemly "difficulties"; some of these unfortunates were probably "on the queer," as well, or living by forgery and theft, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* clarifies.[9]

In works by other prominent authors the reader learns even more about the proliferation of "queer" possibilities. Sailors could be dangerously, even fatally "queer" toward one another (Herman Melville, *Billy Budd*, 1886–91); "single gentlemen lodgers" were "a queer lot" (Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, 1906/7); men apparently had to worry about women "turning 'queer' " with age (Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome*, 1911); genius, too, could be a "queer thing" (James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 1922); horses might think it "queer" to stop without a farmhouse near (Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," 1923); and female poets were *also* "a queer lot" (Amy Lowell, "The Sisters," 1925).[10] As these and other literary examples suggest, "queerness," whether in persons or in things, often referred to an *internal* heterogeneity – perhaps a character who was a "queer mixture" of contraries (as in James's own "Daisy Miller," 1878) or a dry goods store that contained a "queer jumble" of wares (Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, 1919) – that simultaneously perplexed, attracted, alienated, and possibly mirrored the putatively normal outside observer (*THJ* 22; *WO* 196). At a minimum, it is safe to say that queer "happenings," objects, and types abounded in Victorian and modern fiction, so that James's Strether, whose adventures in alterity while abroad in Europe render him "changed and queer," was far from alone in his impressions and sensations (*A* 317).

But again, what might this rampant queerness in literature written between the mid-1870s and the mid-1930s have to do with sexuality? Is it necessary that an author *intend* for a text to be queer in order for it to be read queerly? One premise of this book is that each of these instances, and others that will be drawn from the work of my five main authors, participates to some degree in the broad, complex cultural process – a process uneven, shadowy, and multiply sited – by which "queer" came to include "homosexual" among its meanings, first in urban subcultures in New York, Paris, London, and elsewhere, and increasingly in popular parlance and mainstream media. To adapt Butler's theoretical terms, these textual instances constitute a formative (if inchoate) chapter in the strategic resignification of *queer* that would cohere as a political force in the 1980s. Clearly, some of these early examples can be more readily related than others (such as

Frost's pensive little pony) to the troping of *queer* into the vocabulary of sexual difference – the initially underground but ultimately very public discourse tradition in which *queer* (as well as *gay*) came to be "*used . . . tactically*" by men (and only somewhat less by women) to "position themselves and negotiate their relations with other men, gay and straight alike."[11]

As in the case of *The Ambassadors*, one often discerns this process in suggestive juxtapositions and contexts of usage, especially since the sexual shading of *queer* was bound to be muted and nuanced instead of self-advertising during this period. The claim is not that diction definitively establishes a character's homosexuality, nor that the examples in question *necessarily* signal the circulation of same-sex desire among the professional classes of London (near Stevenson's "Queer Street" in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*),[12] the sailors of the merchant marine (in Melville's *Billy Budd*), or among the denizens of men's boardinghouses (in Conrad's *Secret Agent*), but rather that the recurrent recourse to *queer* to evoke an uncanny emotion or a densely homosocial environment indicates the term's adaptability or inclination to its evolving sexual meaning. By the same token, although it is uncertain whether the idea of lesbianism, as such, underwrites Amy Lowell's reference to women poets as a "queer lot" ("The Sisters"), her inclusion of Sappho and Emily Dickinson in this deviant sorority marks her poem as a shaping force in itself in the emergence of the homosexual signifier. Even such unlikely seeming instances as Edith Wharton's may forecast the modern meaning of *queer* in a generally progressive spirit. When her character Ethan Frome, embodying a hapless masculinity, worries that women "turn queer" after menopause, the phrase does not mean "become lesbian," and yet as can be seen in considering Hemingway's relations with Stein, Wharton does engage a cultural logic that would increasingly understand a woman's "change of life" as a potentially ominous virilization that might well reinforce lesbian tendencies (*SL* 736). To extrapolate from these diverse examples, then, it might be said that the quality of diffuseness or indeterminacy – of widely dispersed differences – that distinguished *queer* is precisely what recommended the term to writers or narratives preoccupied with the murky dynamics of modern sexualities.

Even to make these moderate claims, as they strike me, is already to invite skepticism from certain quarters. The politically motivated resignifying of *queer* has predictably (and profitably) agitated the academy, notwithstanding Bersani's argument that Butlerian exercises in reverse discourse are not only *not* revolutionary ("spectacles of politically impotent disrespect") but are also easily reversed themselves (such "hyperbolic miming," being "too closely imbricated" with the very norms it mimes, falls subject to

re-reappropriation by the dominant culture).[13] Prestigious Jamesian scholars such as Alfred Habegger have hardly been reassured by this deflationary view. In fact, to Habegger's mind, the queer studies meaning of *queer* has so "overwhelm[ed]" the conventional Victorian sense of *queerness* – in his gloss, "an oddness . . . not felt to be desirable and . . . surpass[ing] harmless eccentricity" – that this older usage seems "obsolescent and . . . definitely unsmart," prompting a "defiant self-consciousness" in the speaker (particularly in the US) who wishes to employ it. As part of his own verbal recovery effort – a reading of James's *What Maisie Knew* as a *bildungsroman* of "the artist as queer moralist" – Habegger leans on the authority of the *OED* to argue that James could not have been thinking of "homosexual" when he wrote "queer": "James used the language of his time, not ours," and the earliest use of the word in its latter-day sense, according to the *OED*, occurred in 1922, or "six years after James's death."[14]

There are several problems with this resort to the dictionary, particularly in the case of such a loaded term, with such a complicated history, as *queer*. First, Habegger's formulation seems too complacent about "the language of [the] time," as if usage were governed by a unitary standard and no allowances needed to be made for variations owing to national setting (American versus British), the relative privacy or publicity of the text or utterance in question, or the lively, disparate, and often subcultural processes by which diction mutates and gathers new inflections. It is worth noting, for instance, that the *OED*'s 1922 source for *queer* as "homosexual" is a report on juvenile delinquency issued by the US Department of Labor, from which it can be inferred that the usage was already well established on the street. Indeed, the document seems to acknowledge this slang currency by placing *queer* in quotation marks: "a young man . . . 'queer' in sex tendency."[15] A more useful approach to the challenge of dating usage is advanced by George Chauncey, who studies "the broad contours of lexical evolution," rather than "reconstructing a lineage of static meanings," and who finds that the use of *queer* as "essentially synonymous with 'homosexual' " (though not with "effeminate") was already common in New York "by the 1910s and 1920s."[16] This usage had made it to the opposite coast of the United States by that time as well. In Sharon R. Ullman's *Sex Seen: The Emergence of Modern Sexuality in America*, one learns from court testimony in the Long Beach, California, homosexuality scandal of 1914 about the fancy "wardrobes among the 'queer' people" (which I will have reason to inventory shortly).[17]

The quasi-documentary gay rights novel *Strange Brother* (1931), by Blair Niles, pushes the dating of this specialized usage back even farther,

suggesting that *queer* as a term of opprobrium had found its way into American small-town vernacular even *before* 1910.[18] But most remarkably, Hugh Stevens borrows from Douglass Shand-Tucci's work to show that *queer* had acquired "a more assertive shade of pink" as early as 1895, when a Boston professional man, by the Jamesian name of Wentworth, warned his gay friends to be cautious inasmuch as "queer things are looked at askance since Oscar's exposé" (referring to the contemporaneous Wilde trials).[19] Thus, although the *OED* is probably correct in noting that this pink tincture to the word originated in the US, one cannot rely on its methods or sources for careful knowledge about the early, subterranean life of *queer*.

If approached as scripture in matters of linguistic history, the *OED* can be equally misleading on the use of *queer* as a noun substantive (as opposed to its adjectival form) to mean "*a* homosexual." W. H. Auden is credited with the first such usage, in a piece of writing from 1932, and yet a short story collection by the American writer Robert McAlmon makes it clear that this meaning was abroad in New York and in the expatriate circles of European capitals by the early 1920s. The postwar Berlin and Paris evoked in McAlmon's *Distinguished Air (Grim Fairy Tales)*, published in 1925 but based on the author's experiences of 1922–3, clearly belong to the vertiginous cabaret scene associated with Auden and Christopher Isherwood ("To Christopher, Berlin meant boys")[20] and later with Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1944/5), in which, for instance, "lubricious anecdotes of Paris and Berlin" are the stock-in-trade of the novel's gay aesthete.[21] McAlmon's personal reminiscence of Berlin, in particular, chimes as well with the city of transexual fantasia made familiar in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936): "along the Unter den Linden it was never possible to know whether it was a woman or a man in woman's clothes who accosted one."[22] Seeking to capture the argot of this modern urban netherworld, *Distinguished Air* uses *queer* extensively to mean a sexual "invert" (or an "androgyne"), as when both "war-made queer[s]" and congenital ones, like the drag queen "Miss Knight," congregate in "queer cafés" (*GL* 634, 632).

If McAlmon had discovered that "a queer" meant "a homosexual," then so had many other migratory artists of the time. To speak only of American, English, or Irish figures, those in the know would have included Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and William Carlos Williams, all of whom praised McAlmon's *Distinguished Air*; the author's social friends, many of them "elaborately double-lived person[s]" themselves (*GL* 634), such as Djuna Barnes, Ronald Firbank, Mina Loy, Marsden Hartley, Man Ray, and H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), the lover of McAlmon's former wife, Bryher (Winifred Ellerman); and writers whose works were published by McAlmon's

Contact Editions Press, notably his intimate friend Hemingway and his later antagonist Stein. As with the adjectival *queer*, one may reasonably assume that the meaning of "a homosexual (usually male)" was going the rounds in bars, cafés, and drag balls well before 1932 (the *OED* dating) and even before McAlmon adopted it in fiction. Again, this conjecture draws support from the Long Beach trials of 1914, in which one of the accused testified to – and a Sacramento newspaper duly reported on – a flourishing "society of queers" in the greater Los Angeles area, estimated at between two thousand and five thousand men.[23] In any case, one can be certain that by the time Hemingway worried aloud, in a 1933 letter, that Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* would recycle "some fag story" (probably started by McAlmon) that allegedly proved Hemingway to be "conclusively . . . very queer indeed," his unequivocal usage was already more than a decade old, and very likely much older (*SL* 387). Moreover, to the extent that the word *queer* traveled along with wo/men like McAlmon's "Miss Knight" (a.k.a. Charlie) – or as s/he says, "queer bitches like you and me" – in their peregrinations, this new meaning would have turned up, too, in the subcultures of "New York . . . [or] Paris, or London, or Madrid, or Singapore," becoming "just that international" as a consequence of the cross-cultural mobility of modernity (*GL* 635, 639).

The larger point, of course, is that one can no more pin down the first instance in which *queer* meant "(a) homosexual" in Anglo-American discourse than one can say that "modernity" commenced on or around December 1910, as in Virginia Woolf's famous formula, or, alternatively, that it began "in 1922 or thereabouts," as in Cather's estimation of just when the world "broke in two" in the aftermath of the so-called Great War (*SP* 812). The incremental, communal process whereby *queer* shaded into or acquired the meaning of "homosexual" possibly even antedated James; its very shadowy quality and multireferentiality constituted a latency that lent itself to the gradual elaboration of a signifying linkage. From this circumstance, however, it cannot be argued (against Habegger) that James definitively *did* refer to homosexuality when writing *The Tragic Muse*, with its "queer comrade" Gabriel Nash (*TM* 44); or *The Turn of the Screw*, with its "queer whisker[ed]" Peter Quint (*TS* 320); or *The Ambassadors*, which follows Strether from the "queer ignorance" of America to the "still queerer knowledge" of Europe and the "queer truth" about himself (*A* 277, 216); or yet again "The Jolly Corner," where the transatlantic exchange is reversed and a Europeanized American of Strether's age (Spencer Brydon) confronts the plural "queernesses" of New York in its "awful modern crush" (*THJ* 313, 315). Such a line of interpretation would have to contend, at a minimum,

with the fact that nearly all the examples of *queer* as "homosexual" adduced here – from 1895 to 1933, or in other words from the height of James's career until well after his death – occur in specialized subcultures, in private communications (their very privacy encouraging Hemingway's unrestrained use of "queer" and "fag," questions of homophobia aside), in suppressed or withheld prose (as in the instance from Auden cited by the *OED*), or in fiction that was "all but unpublishable" (as William Carlos Williams said of McAlmon's work) except in very limited, privately printed editions.[24]

In a book not only published but favourably reviewed in 1909, Gertrude Stein contributed as well to this gradual literary project of modernizing and augmenting the meaning of "queer" by collocating it with homosexual motifs or characters. Perhaps more to the point, her *Three Lives* (composed 1905–6) can serve as an example of the transition in usage, since some instances of *queer* in the text seem Dickensian in vintage and others correspond with Stein's more calculating, forward-looking use of the term in *The Making of Americans*. The protagonist of the segment entitled "The Good Anna," for example, is coded as a figure of lesbian desire whose sexuality gets rerouted into a "strong natural feeling to love . . . a large mistress," especially an employer who is evoked as "a woman other women loved" (*TL* 10, 27). When Stein refers to Anna's "queer piercing german english," the usage seems antiquated and innocuous; yet in the "queer discord" produced when Anna tricks out her "spinster body" with colorful clothes, the traditional sense of *queer* is simultaneously in effect and under renovation (*TL* 3, 18–19). Meanwhile, Stein's narrative aside on "all the queer ways the passions have to show themselves all one" (*TL* 12) provides an inkling of the challenge she will mount to modern gender binaries and sexual conformity in her later works, as I shall show: "There are many ways of having queerness in many men and women" (*MOA* 194).

By extension of my general logic, then, one cannot cite an historical threshold *after* which "queer" invariably possessed a sexual signification. It is tempting to say that by the end of the 1920s the meaning "homosexual" achieves a sort of critical mass. In Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) – an intermediate type of document inasmuch as it was published, then suppressed – one learns of the "queer antagonism" that a mother feels toward her daughter, the evolving transexual Stephen Gordon, because Stephen resembles her father; the father, himself a "queer mixture," recognizes Stephen's deviance by reading Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, the pioneering sexologist who waged (in J. A. Symonds's phrase) a "long warfare against . . . [homophobic] prejudice and ignorance."[25] Compounding the

case, young Stephen has an inexplicably strong "queer feeling" toward a housemaid, who in turn calls her "a queer kid" and "a queer fish" – all five of these textual instances occurring within the first few chapters, and the list only grows as Stephen matures to assume a distinctly queer (modern sense) embodiment.[26] The latter colloquialism, "queer fish," is especially interesting because E. M. Forster had already used it in reference to his gay figure Risley (modeled after Lytton Strachey) in *Maurice* (composed 1913–14; published 1971), and the character Anthony Blanche in Waugh's *Brideshead*, whose social habits and diction belong to the early 1920s, exults in his appetite for certain young men, or his "taste for queer fish": further examples of the queering of Victorian phraseology.[27] Yet when Sherwood Anderson in 1935, well after Forster and Hall, calls Hemingway a "queer bird" for perpetrating the masculine excesses of *Green Hills of Africa*, he is not consciously calling his fellow author a homosexual, though he may unwittingly point toward an anxiety about gayness that animates Hemingway's manly breast-beating.[28] Even as late as the 1950s, Victorian and modern usages would still be uneasily cohabiting the same significatory space. *Queer* as "homosexual" had entered published fiction for good in Gore Vidal's "Pages from an Abandoned Journal" (1956; *GL* 693), yet the scholar F. W. Dupee's contemporary portrait of Henry James clung to the older meaning: "growing away" from American culture in the mid-1880s, Dupee wrote, James saw "his name become almost a byword for queerness."[29]

I feel so queer that I can't talk. (Sherwood Anderson, " 'Queer,' " 1919)

It should be clear that Anderson is a significant litmus test of authorial intent here, since he gestures toward hospitality to a "queerness" of life that includes homosexuality and cross-dressing (as is richly evident from his *Memoirs*), and yet he casually employs a phrase like "queer bird" with no apparent inflection like that of his British counterparts, with their "queer fish." One particularly tempting item, in this line of inquiry, is his *Winesburg, Ohio* tale emblazoned with the title " 'Queer.' " The fact that Anderson sets the word off in quotation marks (the only title so punctuated out of the twenty-one sketches) seems to focus both authorial interest and readerly curiosity on the definitional question: just what did it mean to be "queer," or to be thought queer, or to feel oneself queer in small-town midwestern culture before 1920? By now, it should not be surprising to learn that Anderson's interrogation yields an ambiguous answer, for while sexuality is surely adumbrated as an important context for understanding the tale's "queer" youth and his violent efforts to shake both the shame

and the label of "queerness," the task of piecing together clues falls almost entirely to the reader.

At one level, that is, the constant rages of Anderson's protagonist in "Queer" seem sufficiently explained as a poor rural boy's sense of social inferiority, his wish not to replicate the experience of a storekeeper-father who is too pathetic to realize how "queer" he is. If "queerness" thus shades into questions of gender performance – in this case, a deficiency of masculine self-respect – the usage does not seem to carry a specifically sexual valence, and when the aggrieved young man "hunt[s] out another queer one" to serve as an audience for his confessions – a mentally impaired farmhand – the adjective "queer" extends to encompass yet another type of difference (developmental disability) that is divorced from sexual discourse. On the other hand, it cannot be coincidental that the boy's desperate bid to make himself "indistinguishable" from others ("I won't be queer[!]") involves an assault on another youth whom he idealizes and who is patently the soulmate he seeks in his frustrated quest for "warmth and meaning" in life. His intense quarrel with "queerness" culminates in something distinctly like homosexual panic, a feeling of "struggling for release from hands that held him" even as his own hands are beating the other boy "half unconscious." The real sadness in the affair, as the tale's narrator confides, is that *both* youths suffer from the same "vague hungers and secret unnamable desires," and yet their efforts at intimacy come to nothing but violence and self-violence (*WO* 190–201 *passim*).

With the phraseology of the closet in the air, the young man's final boast that his aggression has validated his normal masculinity ("I showed him I ain't so queer") begs to be read as the urgent disavowal that betrays same-sex yearning, even as it throttles any hope of realizing such desire (*WO* 201). Applying Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's argument that shame – the signature trait of Anderson's character – marks the psychical "place where the question of identity arises most originarily, and most relationally," one might take the story as a study in miniature of "that long Babylonian exile known as queer childhood," and might thus claim the "Queer" of the title as an early prototype of the "politically potent term" of our own era, which cleaves to developmental shame "as a near-inexhaustible source of transformational energy."[30] Given its historical moment, however, the tale suggests that only the cycle of trauma will be inexhaustible, as Anderson's young man flees to the big city, where his search for warmth and meaning is predictably foredoomed, and precisely (one is inclined to say) because of a failure to accept his "queerness" for the particular queerness it is.

Yet how does one reconcile this interpretation of the tale's political thrust with Anderson's persistent effort, as chapter 6 will further show, to sanitize the representation of fervent same-sex bonds and keep them safely under the sign of "mere" brotherhood or sisterly companionship? To select just a few examples of this telling pattern of insistence from his memoirs Anderson writes: "There was nothing of homosexuality in the feeling . . . Of that I am sure"; "love could grow as between man and man, a thing outside sex"; or again, "it [was] not a Lesbian love . . . [but] a love based on natural loneliness"; and so forth (*SAM* 150, 286, 473). Just what sort of "queerness" *is* being evoked, then, in the 1919 story entitled " 'Queer' "? How much of it, if any, can be accounted for by the emergent meaning of "homosexuality"? With whom – the author? the reader? the author *and* the reader in concert? – does this judgment or this quantification rest?

It is more important and certainly more interesting than convicting Anderson of a "homophobic" resistance to his own implications to notice that his homophilia takes the form of a willingness to yield meaning-making to individual readers – to let *them* dare to feel the queerness, including the queerness that is gayness, in his writings, and perhaps even to instruct him in what his own stories might mean: "in the years since [*Winesburg, Ohio* was published] several such men have come to me . . . [and] having had time to think I could sympathize with . . . their plight" (*SAM* 340). What distinguishes Anderson – and, I will argue, Stein, the matured author Willa Cather, and even that notoriously opinionated "Master" Henry James – is a willingness to let queer meanings mean queerly. In this respect, they keep up the good tradition of Walt Whitman, whose well-known panic over early gay readings of *his* work, especially the *Calamus* poems, was balanced by an openness to the idea of relinquishing "his" meanings even to such a nagging "queer" reader as the English writer John Addington Symonds: "Is that what *Calamus* means? Because of me, or in spite of me, is that what it means? . . . He is right, no doubt, to ask the questions; I am just as much right if I do not answer them . . . Perhaps [*Calamus*] means more or less than what I thought myself – means different, perhaps I don't know what it all means – perhaps I never did know."[31]

> One does not have to be queer to read queer. (James Creech, *Closet Writing/Gay Reading: The Case of Melville's Pierre*)

As Henry James himself might say, queer reading bristles with issues and conflicts. Although the same set of methodological questions might be posed concerning *any* author's life and work, and these questions will certainly arise in treating the other writers in this study, I want to take

James and his writings as an exemplary test case with respect to the following line of inquiry: What makes a writer or his/her text "queer" or "gay" (to use these quite different terms more casually for now)? Who has authority to make the call, or alternatively to disqualify an author or a text from being queer or gay, and what confers such authority? Can I "read queer" if I am not queer – and how do I know whether I am or not, or in other words, what makes a *reader* queer? Is the claim that an author or a text is queer or gay a matter of subjective judgment, or must the claim be submitted to and verified by a community of readers? If the latter, how broadly representative must that community be, and will a consensus do, or must the vote for or against "queerness" be unanimous? As John Brenkman argues in objecting to "a new allegorical criticism" that scans cultural documents for the "purported representation or 'construction' " of gender, sexuality, or other regimes of difference, "networks of signifiers are a dime a dozen in literary texts," so whose signifiers should be allowed to trump?[32] What is at stake, for cultural politics at large, in outing or "owning" important artists as gay, such as James or Cather, or in broadcasting the news about those whose gayness is on record, such as Stein? And what motivates the various forms of resistance to or skepticism about queer readings or gay claimings?

As I have discovered in teaching even graduate-level literature seminars, such a line of interrogation often becomes frustrating, wearying, or downright disabling, since "we just want to read the novel" or "we just want to discuss what the text *says*." Although it is tempting to fob off this posture of response on my students, it would hardly be candid, for the sustained probing of the theoretical premises involved in queer reading, even in the work of such repaying commentators as Judith Butler or Tim Dean,[33] sometimes overcomes my own resources of intellectual patience as well (like Scarlett O'Hara, I resolve to think about it tomorrow). In such moods, I too wish for what James's beloved young Hugh Walpole must have sought in inquiring after the thematic "statement" of *The Ambassadors*, drawing a gentle but significant rebuke from its author: "How can you say I do anything so foul and abject as to 'state'?"[34] Perhaps one's address of these challenging methodological issues (as well as one's effort to circumvent this Jamesian reproach) can be both alleviated and enlightened by resorting not to academic theory but to another lively source of reflection, Terrence McNally's award-winning play *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (1994).

> Shakespeare was gay, you know. (Buzz, in *Love! Valour! Compassion!*)

McNally's play does not "state" any more than James's novels do, and yet it clearly explores – in a spirit of serious frolic – many of the same questions

that intrigue me here. The play centers on the means and motives that inform the efforts of a group of gay men to cope with the complexities of identification or disidentification, alienation from or assimilation to straight culture (the revolting/enticing middle-class world of mortgages), essentialism or nonessentialism (is there such a thing as "gay music"? does one appreciate art "as a gay man" or "as a member of the human race"?) – all this during a period when the uplift of Stonewall seems increasingly distant and the ravage of AIDS depressingly present. According to the character Buzz's defensive reverse discourse, it is not gays but "straight people" who are "taking over" society and showing up "everywhere": "No one wants to talk about it, but it's true." The remark alludes to the tensions underlying *all* personal-political investments in the contest over what gayness really *is*, and whether it is meaningful, desirable, imperative, or perhaps impossible to identify and speak as "gay people" or to isolate and define a set of gay tastes, perspectives, and artifacts. The play's dialogue sequence in which the view that "[t]here's no such thing as gay music" (or gay literature) confronts the urgent feeling that "maybe there should be" to counteract an oppressive straightness indicates an identity politics in crisis, at risk of corrosion by antiessentialist doctrine ("no such thing"), or of absorption into a dominant culture perhaps indifferent to difference (the homosexualization of everything equals the distinctive gayness of nothing), or of dissolution through some collusion between these forces.[35]

In *Love! Valour! Compassion!* the running joke that animates this debate turns on the strategy of personal self-validation by chronicling the contributions of a gay vanguard to world cultural history, or what Henning Bech calls " 'the list of kings,' an endless succession of homosexual celebrities from '[the biblical] Jonathan to [André] Gide' through Socrates, Alexander the Great and Shakespeare." If McNally seems partly to share Bech's wariness about soft spots in this attempt to "convince by virtue of [the] *glorious venerability*" of homosexual talent,[36] he exploits the devices of drama to inquire sympathetically into the emotional sources of this quest of validation, as well as to test its political potential. As suggested by a reference work entitled *Outing America: From A to Z*, which circulates among the characters and is *chronologically* as well as alphabetically exhaustive (from Pocahontas to Dan Rather), the play toys with including every major figure in Anglo-American history among Bech's "homosexual celebrities": performers and composers such as Ethel Merman, Irving Berlin, the Gershwins, Julie Andrews, and Gertrude Lawrence; political types such as John F. Kennedy, Jr., and Lady Bird Johnson; and famous sportsmen from Babe Ruth to Knute Rockne to the swimmer Mark Spitz (according to Buzz: "They're

all gay. The entire Olympics"). In short, the normative presumption of a ubiquitous straightness, whether arrogant or simply unconscious, along with the distress this presumption creates for men or women who do not belong, is answered by the assertion of a (nearly) ubiquitous queerness.[37]

I would like to believe that the names of James, Cather, and Stein do not come up in the play's conversations because such self-evidently "queer" cases would spoil the fun, or would furnish too little grist for McNally's seriocomic mill: even disgruntled literary critics such as Lee J. Siegel and Joan Acocella (respectively) concede the closet in the cases of James and Cather,[38] and Stein's queer credentials have been attested in mainstream criticism from Edmund Wilson to William Gass.[39] Put another way, the gambit to engage the *theatergoer* in guessing at the erotic valences of famous cultural figures depends on nominating celebrities whose homosexuality or bisexuality seems at once dubious (to a more resistant "straight" viewpoint) and entirely possible, if not probable (to a more susceptible "gay" view). To have Buzz speak a line such as "Oscar Wilde was gay, you know" might have a transient entertainment value, but the cases discussed in *Love! Valour! Compassion!* serve the more important point that every reader (or viewer) brings a distinct subjective predisposition to reading that conditions the whole process of interpretation, from deciding what constitutes evidence to judging its significance and sufficiency to taking the *alternative* tack that a given case is transparent and beyond need of explication, or at least employing the rhetorical maneuver of framing the matter as self-evident ("gay, you know"). The implication here is not that any reading can be discounted because the reader's psychic makeup inevitably puts its impress on his or her procedures of interpretation, but rather that all readings are invested, and complexly so, regardless of whether the reader aspires to, or shows, a cavalier disregard for standards of objectivity. This would seem to be the import of those voices in McNally's play that satirize a gay-affirmative reflexiveness that essentializes cultural production and consumption: "It's by Tchaikovsky . . . One of us. Can't you tell? All these dominant triads are so, so gay!"[40]

If this latter, more skeptical position were given the last word, and its argument were transposed to the field of literary criticism, then the burden of demonstration would fall on those readers who hear Henry James's "chords" (in this case) as "so gay." Yet to reemphasize, this position is always *competing* with others, as is clear from the disciplinary bent of its teasing, and the character Buzz, who makes the most vigorous claims for a pervasive queerness of cultural history, reverses the burden of persuasion, while shifting the discussion to the category of specifically literary genius:

"Do you think a straight man would write a line like [Hamlet's] 'We defy augury'? . . . My three-year-old gay niece knows Shakespeare was gay. So was Anne Hathaway. So was her cottage. So was Romeo and Juliet. So was Hamlet. So was King Lear. Every character Shakespeare wrote was gay. Except for Titus Andronicus . . . Go figure."[41]

I am aware of the risk of analytical earnestness in approaching such a zesty speech (the *cottage*, too?), and of flattening the telling self-irony that characterizes *both* Buzz and those of his friends who tease him (also in the self-attenuating mode of camp) to the effect that it is simply "going too far" to insist on the Bard's homosexuality.[42] For those with ears to hear, the comment "Shakespeare was gay, you know" should chime with the same deadpan humor as would a line such as "Oscar Wilde was gay, you know." Yet McNally (in this homage to another gay playwright) also recognizes the serious and volatile controversy he joins in raising the question of Shakespeare's sexuality at all, a controversy that one might conveniently date from Wilde's own "The Portrait of Mr. W. H." (1889). As I shall show, the other period disputants on this issue included Symonds, whose underground gay-advocacy tracts were read by James; the American author Glenway Wescott, for whom the gay Shakespeare exemplified "the highest and strongest manly character" against the stigma of "effeminacy";[43] Gertrude Stein, who provoked Hemingway by claiming that homosexuals "do all the good things in all the arts," with Shakespeare as a paradigmatic instance (*DS* 56); and Hemingway himself, who had both Stein and Wescott in mind when he publicly inveighed against "those interested parties who [were] continually proving" that Shakespeare, Leonardo da Vinci, and other universal geniuses were "fags."[44]

McNally is clearly an interested party, and *Love! Valour! Compassion!* suggests that it still matters a great deal whether Shakespeare (or James or Cather) is or is not counted as a gay artist. On that note, one should make one final pass at Buzz's extravagant claim for Shakespeare's queerness (and for the queerness of everything in Shakespeare's vicinity) in order to notice how it puts in question certain assumptions about how sexuality can be "read" into or out of the artwork and the artist's own life – assumptions that date from the time of James, Wilde, and Symonds, of Cather, Stein, Anderson, and Hemingway. Here I mean to refer not only to the popular audience or the critics, but also to those more loosely conceived "readers" who made it their business to monitor, expose, categorize, and discipline writers ("from A to Z") in the fraught cultural zone of gender and sexual performance: social reformers and clergy, psychologists and medical doctors, journalists and cartoonists, politicians and members of the legal

profession. One central aim of this book, that is, will be to show how these various powerful social actors and their modes of "reading" homosexuality interacted with the development and self-expression of gay creative writers (who were constantly "reading" themselves and each other as well), and how the guiding assumptions and methodological corollaries of the period continue to pattern current responses to literary lives and texts, even for those interpreters who work against the grain.

Like his Victorian and modernist forebears, then, McNally's Buzz operates from the axiom that aspects of style – such as the tone and diction of a speech such as "We defy augury" – can reveal or betray authorial sexuality, and precisely because sexuality determines what sort of "line" an author can or cannot produce. By implication, only a straight author can write a straight line (or walk a straight line, or deliver a straight line), just as a queer line can only be composed by, and thus invariably signals, a queer author. Buzz's appeal to his little "gay niece" as a source of corroborating evidence of Shakespeare's (self-evident) gayness reinforces the premise that sexuality is fundamental, perhaps innate, to the fiber of selfhood: as such, it also forms a basis for instant recognition (so simple even a child can do it) of the same (homo)sexuality in an author like Shakespeare. Again, Buzz's calculated outrageousness is meant to radically shift perspective on the logic of interpretation that he parodies: what, after all, warrants the *normative* view of a plain-as-day correspondence between a Shakespeare-in-love conceived as resolutely heterosexual (with Anne Hathaway in her cottage) and his "natural" production of heterosexual love scenes (Romeo and Juliet), oedipal crises that impede "normal" sexual maturation (Hamlet), or paternal types whose predicaments and redemption are wholly referred to as freaks of biological reproduction (Lear)? Most importantly, Buzz's colloquial admonition to "go figure" might be taken as an injunction to go *re*figure what one has learned or taken for granted about the Anglo-American cultural heritage and its relation to sexual discourse, while the rhetorical gesture of "gay, *you* know" gets refunctioned as an appeal to the reader's assent to more daring readings.

Not surprisingly, the lines of interpretation – or rather, of therapeutic disruption – laid down by *Love! Valour! Compassion!* are substantially in accord with my own directions of reading. While I distinctly do not want to make the essentialist claim that only a gay reader can access gay signification or content, or to privilege so-called gay response as decisive, I do want to suggest (somewhat more cautiously than Buzz) that an appreciable fund of circumstantial evidence has accrued from gay readers of Henry James. As broadly implied by the book's epigraph, taken from James Strachey's

January 1909 letter to Rupert Brooke, a specialized subset of queer readings of James involves narratives – published or unpublished; epistolary, anecdotal, or more formally prosed – by fellow writers, dating in fact from James's major phase. Already in 1903, in the strained triangle of lesbian love represented in *QED*, Stein troped the sexual imbroglio of her favorite James novel, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), almost immediately after its publication.

Or was it the case, instead, to complicate the notion of a queer genealogy, that James's writing anticipated Stein in some condition of latency that qualifies the idea of a unidirectional "influence" between generations? For Alice B. Toklas, at least, *QED* was not Jamesian; rather, *The Wings of the Dove* already contained "some pure Gertrude phrases," just waiting for "Gertrude's dialectic" to come along and appropriate them, in the process giving James's sexual/textual politics a Steinian signature.[45] In essence, Toklas reminds one that *dialogue* may be a more productive conceptual model than lineal descent for thinking about the interplay between James's work and that of his modernist interlocutors. In different ways, to different effect, Stein, Cather, Anderson, and Hemingway all talk back to James and "influence" his writings by discovering or illuminating their proleptic queerness.

Thinking transatlantically, one ought to consider two British authors who also produced early texts (not long after Stein) that read *male* homosexuality into James's life and work. The first was Louis Umfreville Wilkinson, best remembered as an ardent young friend of the "incomparable" Oscar Wilde, and the second, James's own dear acolyte Hugh Walpole. Wilkinson was one of the earliest to grasp how the "strong, vindictive fury" unleashed by the 1895 trials sought to demonize Wilde and to purge his kind out of the system; later, while studying at Cambridge, he personally testified to how this strategy backfired, joining with other "normal young men of the *fin de siècle*" who were doing "their level best to become homosexual merely to do [Wilde] honour."[46] Sometime around 1912, Wilkinson composed a ribald parody of James entitled "The Better End," purportedly taken from the unpublished novel *What Percy Knew* by the (barely disguised) author "H*nr* J*m*s."[47] Just what the "better end" might refer to becomes clear when the story's reader, ushered into a cozy gentleman's library, finds the "elderly" James-figure bending before the hearth, trousers down, while a young man at the "rearward" "advance[s] to [the] target . . . bristl[ing], stiffly enough . . . to satisfy . . . their common intent." The act is staged as discreetly exhibitionist, with a "select" group of onlookers who wait while the youth – his "pointer . . . swelling and throbbing" under the

restraint of "an intellectual . . . subjugation" – coyly approaches, "stretching tangents" and holding "strangely aloof," yet with an air of "vertiginous precipitancy." The youth approaches, that is, in the style of a Jamesian sentence, for the vicarious pleasure of a Jamesian audience.

Wilkinson's own sentences out-James James to such a degree that, in Adeline Tintner's words, the "obscenity" remains "concealed from all but the most determined reader," yet the parody also invites such a reader to ask whether *James's* elaborate circumlocutions do not screen a homosexual subtext in his life and work.[48] Not to leave my own readers in suspense, the sexual act-in-progress results in a "consummation . . . [not] the most . . . satisfying," or as the narrator summarizes (duly scatologically), "in the end, little would seem to have come of it all." Indeed, it is to the pathetic result of the two men's interlude (a "devolvulent blanching stain" on the carpet) that "James" refers as Wilkinson spoofs the classic Jamesian tag line: "Ah, well, my dear, so there . . . we are!" The implication, of course, is that significant evidence of masculine desire lurks in James's texts – both his fiction and the biographical record – but any expectation of seeing such desire embodied and fulfilled is bound to be disappointed.

If one defines "text" more informally to include anecdotal lore, another sort of queer reading of James, in *propria persona*, comes from Walpole, who famously claimed to have made a pass at the Master, eliciting a panicky refusal: "I can't!"[49] The story is most likely apocryphal, if one judges it by Walpole's later, more intriguing fabrications, for the amusement of the Bloomsbury circle, about James's "supposed affairs with members of the King's Horse Guards."[50] In other words, Walpole rescripted the narrative of Henry James to give his audience the picture of a man who conformed to the type of "the queer gent [with] his bit of rough" or his bit of scarlet – as Alan Sinfield has described Stephen Spender – or perhaps the type, even more exotically, of Wilde's Dorian Gray, who must have done *something* decidedly lurid to destroy "that wretched boy in the Guards" (*DG* 183).[51] Walpole's stories of the Master (whether panicking *or* frolicking) seem to be "outrageous stories" indeed, as David Leeming says, but viewed from another angle, they show what James's intimates and the keenest readers of his fiction – Woolf, Forster, and Spender himself all came within range of Walpole's storytelling – were *prepared to believe* about him, or about the kind of life James might have led but for fate and ban. Walpole's sportiveness about what James might have done (but probably did not), as well as his report of James's terror at being propositioned (which possibly never occurred), imaginatively augments the plentiful substantive evidence of James's masculine desire, particularly around the figure of the handsome

soldier, however subtle its textual manifestations.[52] Perhaps most importantly, however, Walpole's account playfully recalls and indirectly honors the older American author to whom he had once comfortably written about his own adventures among the "homosexualists" of Petrograd and Edinburgh, receiving in return campy letters, begging for more of the spicy details.[53]

One final type of queer intertextuality that deserves mention is the suggestive way in which certain gay authors have seen their own lives (and subsequent life-writing) patterned by representations of same-sex desire in James. Here I will adduce only two cases in point, Spender and Isherwood, both of whom turned to James's "The Pupil" as a sort of framework or guide for "reading" love relationships of their own.[54] Not only did Spender interpret James's 1891 tale as "a fantasy about homosexuality," years before that reading became a popular item of critical dispute; he also took the delicate intimacy that is portrayed between James's "pupil" and tutor as a "metaphor of sorts" (in Leeming's words) for his own affair with the young man identified as "B" in Spender's memoirs.[55] Similarly, Isherwood thought of "The Pupil" when, in the late 1930s, he enjoyed a brief liaison with a youth whom he had tutored a decade earlier. According to Isherwood – imagining himself in the guise of James's character Pemberton – his own little "Morgan Moreen" had grown up to find that his former tutor was "really not much older" than he, and "still lively and sexy." The younger man not only enacted a Jamesian role (as "Morgan") but also made his "declaration of love," as Isherwood recounted, in "an involved, ambiguous neo-Jamesian style": ambiguity was his "way of flirting."[56] By extension, Isherwood concurred with such readers as Spender, Forster, and André Gide that James's coy, often involuted prose constituted an obscure form of flirtation in its own right.

> Why cloud the fact / . . . that James / is all that has been said of him[?] (Marianne Moore, "Picking and Choosing," 1920)

Does any of this make Henry James or "The Pupil" or *What Maisie Knew* (as opposed to *What Percy Knew*) queer? If it seems like something of a scholar's parlor game to speculate about what *might* have developed between a Morgan Moreen and a Pemberton (or between other male couples in my chosen James texts), one should remember that James famously trades in the currency of "what might have been" for psychodramatic depth in his stories, and that his endings open out to encourage, if not positively to solicit, readerly conjecture or "daring." In that vein, I want to suggest that beginning with authors like the Stein of *QED*, Louis Wilkinson, and

Walpole, continuing in Spender and Isherwood, and registering yet again (if very differently) in Cather and Hemingway, one finds a trove of powerful associative evidence in the persistent reimagining of James, his characters, and his thematic preoccupations in ways that amplify their queerness. Perhaps Marianne Moore, as quoted above, makes the most incisive claim (partly because it is also the most whimsical) for the author's magnitude and infinite variety by intimating that "Henry James" is a construction of the narratives that have grown up around him. More particularly, as Tintner helpfully chronicles, James and the possible sexualities that his ornate manner – on the page as in life – either conceals or reveals (or reveals by concealing) have continued to prove provocative to authors throughout the twentieth century and down to the present day. Post-Stonewall fiction has even conferred upon this endlessly reenvisioned "James" the physical life he probably missed, recreating him as polymorphously perverse not only in imagination but in experience: a man who sheds his Strether-like reticence to sample the "smooth accommodating bodies" of others in steam baths from New York to the Far East.[57]

There is one last point of protocol, here at the outset, that tempers but does not contradict the tendency of my argument for a Jamesian text commensurate with the reader's boldest flexibility and broadest range of interpretation. I would like to resist, or at least to remain skeptical of, *our* queer desire, as postmodern critics, for a theoretical or psychobiographical complexity that produces accounts of James and his writings in excess of their objects. Provisionally granting the question of James's "intentions" a theoretical legitimacy it may not warrant, I would contend that such a question is virtually mooted on quite another score: so intrinsically conditioned was James's productivity, from the very start of his career, that even his copious unconscious had designs on his narratives. It seems entirely plausible that, as Hugh Stevens argues, the homoeroticism circulating already in James's earliest works, such as *Roderick Hudson*, is not "sublimatory or accidental" on his part, and yet one may reasonably wonder whether the unsublimated purposiveness of this strand of narrative is a product of a replete self-awareness.[58] No authoritative answer is conceivable, of course, but by the very same token, nothing prevents one from striving for the best possible inferences and the most informed speculations on the issue of James's textual objectives: how conscious was this highly conscious artist of the sexual meanings of his art? In fact, I would submit that criticism is obliged to indulge in conjecture on this point, and not because the "findings" matter in some narrow biographical sense – I refer to that fetishizing of the authorial subjectivity that eventually overtakes most

contemporary life-writing – but rather because James, for all his stylistic idiosyncrasies, remains a *culturally* resonant representative. His "case," if you will, is instrumental to the evolving and politically important history of gay male writers.

Not that one must take James himself as an authority on James, but in this instance it seems germane to say that James had no *overt* political agenda to his writings, nor did his voluminous theorizing about the novel as a genre countenance such an agenda. Some other model of understanding the cultural work of his writing is needed to understand, in turn, how it engages in queer politics. One might adapt, with little violence, what James had to say about morality in fiction in general to the registering of sexual politics in his own fiction: if indeed "the whole thinking man is one," then his writings will express this whole self, including political sensibilities. To talk of politics as being mechanically "put into or kept out of a work of art" is inadmissible, since politics will be "part of the essential richness of inspiration" that produces the work in question (*LC* 2: 157). Sexualities, in turn, will be represented in the literary work irrespective of, or even in apparent contradiction to, the sexual constitution of the authorial subject. Narrativizing, by its nature, creates excesses and vagaries of signification, and textual meaning is always made, to underscore the point, in and by the process of intense, intimate exchange and negotiation that is reading.

It might be contended that one could not possibly "overdo it" when reading James, who prided himself on his own supersubtlety in animating supersubtle characters embroiled in supersubtle plots. On this view, one simply could not have a Henry James who is complex *enough*, or perhaps anguished or repressed enough, or (inevitably) queer enough, whatever meanings one ascribes to that term. The Henry James that I hope to evoke here is neither a perfect being (that misleading icon "the Master") nor a perfectly neurotic being, but just various, interesting, human, and (yes, after all) queer enough to express his splendidly nuanced "self" in a splendidly nuanced body of writing.

The purview of the study, as noted, extends from the mid-1870s to the mid-1930s, beginning in chapter 1 with *Roderick Hudson* and *The Europeans*, two novels in which James began trying out dissident modes of masculinity through his representations of the ill-fated sculptor Roderick Hudson and the bohemian gentleman Felix Young. My claim will be that these characters can be meaningfully thought of as "queer" (or "gay") in an anticipatory sense inasmuch as the very attributes, affective qualities, and final dispositions James assigns them (one man is consigned to death, the other to a fanciful afterlife in marriage) correspond powerfully with

developments in a discursive and regulatory regime that was incrementally composing the figure (or Foucauldian "species") of the modern male homosexual, especially under the stigma of aesthetical "effeminacy." The chapter will chart James's growing sensitivity to the pressures of this narrative intersection, and will consider the ways in which he utilized the resources of melodrama (*Roderick Hudson*) and camp (*The Europeans*) in an effort to manage the terms of his participation in this simultaneously inviting and dangerous modern cultural conversation. More pointedly, I argue, these outsetting works show James determined to set his own terms – with varying degrees of conscious and unconscious knowledge and disavowal – in what would become a career-long campaign of resistance to the reductive constraints of *both* the normative order of masculinity and the discourse of homo/sexuality.

Chapter 2 chronicles James's fictional and personal flirtations with alternative styles of masculinity – increasingly read through the screen of "homosexuality" in Anglo-American culture during the pivotal decade of the 1880s – as reflected both in the handling of character and plot in "The Author of 'Beltraffio' " and *The Tragic Muse*, and in the author's behind-the-scenes machinations around the variant homosexualities of Symonds and Wilde (as mediated principally through James's confidante Edmund Gosse). I argue that "The Author of 'Beltraffio' " marks yet a further advance in James's interest in and narrative engagement with a sexual-regulatory environment in which so-called effeminacy and aestheticism (again, constituents of his own person and personae) were being more intensely scrutinized as signs of possible deviance, as were intimate friendships between men of that construction. At the same time, I contest and qualify the now popular conception of a Henry James fully conversant with homo/sexual discourse or fully familiar with the workings of his own masculine desire in the early 1880s, a view especially promoted by recent James biographers such as Fred Kaplan and Sheldon M. Novick, Jr.

Chapter 3 takes up the famously teasing gothic affair of *The Turn of the Screw* for its registration of homophobic politics at the close of the turbulent 1890s, especially in the aftermath of the epoch-making trials and punishment of Oscar Wilde. I analyze how *The Turn of the Screw* allegorizes the destructive forces of a patriarchy determined to produce straight "little gentlemen" – and to weed out queer ones – but also how Anglo-American critics (implicitly) and psychologists (explicitly) read James's work as a monitory fable about the contagion of boyhood homosexuality, thus getting the gist (if perhaps missing the point) of poor little Miles's demise.

Chapter 4 moves from the pathos of an incipient and prematurely extinguished queer masculinity (in *The Turn of the Screw*) to the pathos of a fully adult but equally veiled version in James's favorite novel, *The Ambassadors*. A sort of capstone text for my argumentative purposes, *The Ambassadors* features the "belated man of the world" and bachelor-aesthete Lambert Strether as a culminating figure in James's quest to imagine a sympathetic masculinity whose bearings are homosexual, whose own sex appeal is significantly ambivalent, and yet whose affective complexities are not easily reducible to the rigidifying grids of the modern sex/gender system (*LC* 2: 1311). My demonstration of Strether's "queerness" – which importantly includes an amative attraction to charming young men – will rely on reading often very subtle signifiers of physical affection (the "eloquent pressure" of a caressing hand) and of emotional compatibility and fondness (notably, a dialogue built on the conversational mode of camp). Yet my broader objective will be to prove an essential continuity, in James's steady, gradual evolution as man and artist, between the thematics of masculine desire in its embryonic form in *Roderick Hudson* and its fruition in *The Ambassadors*.

Chapter 5 treats Willa Cather's distinctive response to James, both as an individualistic author in her own right and as part of an ongoing dialogue (in the writings of Stein, Hemingway, Anderson, *et al*.) on the cultural phenomenon named Henry James. Cather's particular value to this study lies in the way in which her queerness crosses gender lines to resemble, though not merely to replay, James's. Throughout her career, yet with gay-affirmative modifications that will bear watching, Cather mobilized and emulated "Henry James" as a model gender-style in writing – a sensuous yet ethically earnest and sufficiently masculine aestheticism – while concurrently using "Oscar Wilde" as the referent of an opposite, self-discredited masculinity: superficial, theatrical, and given to cultivating effeminacy in an Anglo-American culture that devalued and disempowered the feminine. Inasmuch as her representation of queer characters and social dynamics is equally as indirect and subtle as James's, Cather can also be profitably paired with him as precisely a challenge to queer reading.

Chapter 6 considers the running exchange among the works of Hemingway, Stein, and Anderson – as well as the highly influential *The Pilgrimage of Henry James*, by the cultural critic Van Wyck Brooks – as being influenced by and responding to the so-called Master in his several guises as fellow practitioner of the craft, zealous theorizer of literary narrative, expatriated aesthete, and outsized creature of biography, rumor, and myth. Hemingway in particular (who definitely knew the modern meaning of "queer")

provides an interesting case of the confluence between gender and sexual anxiety (not to mention the anxiety of influence), resulting in a writerly style and persona forged against Jamesian values and "James" the cultural construct. The study concludes, in the coda, with further consideration of Gertrude Stein, who completed a lifelong confrontation with her queer "precursor" James in both the international best-seller *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and the essay "Henry James," posthumously published as part of *Four in America*. Stein's readiness to enter into such a relation of queer-genealogical dialogue and to exploit (and explicitly address) a reader's ability to "read into" literary texts, her sabotage of the linguistic underpinnings of received dualisms, and her manipulation of sex/gender expectations mark her as the ultimate in "queer modernity."

1

Indiscreet anatomies and protogay aesthetes in Roderick Hudson *and* The Europeans

> Those [readers] who look for "and they lived together happily ever after" at the end of the last chapter of any of [Henry James's] novelettes will be disappointed.
>
> (Review of *Roderick Hudson*, *New York Herald*, 1875)

It is now common to advance Henry James's first acknowledged novel, *Roderick Hudson* (1875), as also his first significant foray into the representation of different modes of masculinity and, indeed, of male homosexuality. Robert Drake has recently canonized this narrative of "sublimated desire" in *The Gay Canon* (1998), predicting that "the gay reader" (comfortably unproblematized) will discover in *Roderick Hudson* an unfulfilled "love story" between two young American men: the titular hero, an ill-fated would-be genius as a sculptor, and his wealthy patron, Rowland Mallet.[1] Offering a more theoretical account, Hugh Stevens stakes his claim that James was "already a *gay novelist*" in his early thirties (a literary not a biographical claim) on the ways in which *Roderick Hudson* begins "explor[ing] the workings of same-sex desire, and the difficulties of admitting such desires, within a cultural formation marked by homosexual prohibition," albeit before the articulation of "the homosexual" as a pathologized, criminalized type in late Victorian science and jurisprudence.[2] According to Christopher Lane, the tutelary relation between Mallet and Roderick Hudson spills over into the "ambiguously erotic," which must be "diffused by an aesthetic ideal" that rules out bodily intimacy even though it tacitly annexes a homophilic "tradition of mentorship": only the protagonist's death can terminate the "persistent homo/sexual metonymy" of James's text.[3]

My own argument will be that one can indeed read what Stevens calls the "ghostly presence" of homosexuality in this early text, but that it is more useful to cultural analysis to concentrate on its ghostliness rather than on its presence.[4] To read *Roderick Hudson* as being "about" homosexual love and prohibition would be to read with the slightly cheating vision of

hindsight; one creates certain distortions of interpretation when one reads James (especially the James of the 1870s and early 1880s) through the screen of everything that has intervened, in the way of sexual discourse, between his historical moment and the present. This is not meant to preclude the value of constructive exercises in calculated anachronism – James as already a "gay" writer of a "gay" novel almost a century before Stonewall – but *Roderick Hudson* may be more productively interpreted as a cultural document by studying its contribution to and engagement with what would come to define "gayness." As I shall also show, James's later novels of the 1870s, the primary example being *The Europeans*, continue his engagement not only with the evolution of a particular subtype – the male homosexual (or protogay) aesthete increasingly stigmatized by, or alternately courting, epithets drawn from the vocabulary of "effeminacy" – but also with the authorial tools and resources necessary to communicate this difference to a selective audience, notably the mode of camp.

If in Foucault's well-known phrase "the nineteenth-century homosexual became . . . a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy," prose fiction participated heavily – with varying political implications – in the process of articulating a male homosexual "type" well into the twentieth century.[5] The shape of the face and the chest, the posture of shoulders, the relative pallor of skin; the mold of hands and fingers – their agitation, intimate proclivities, secretive habits; the look in the eyes, the contours and mobility of eyebrows, the freighted gaze or exchange of glances ("ocular commerce," in James's phrase); the flourishes of speech and gesture, the delicate timbre and seductive hum of the valvèd voice (as Whitman would have it); the flair for style and the penchant for sensual materialism, for ivory, velvet, jade, mahogany, or other items of imperial trade to caress, for gold, silver, or platinum to wear: these were only part of the growing repertoire of signifiers of homosexuality in Anglo-American literature from the 1890s through the 1920s (*TM* 22). Crucially, this narrative project of elaborating and representing the type was uneven and variously inflected rather than rapid and steady. By the same token, the association of this morphological-behavioral profile (or features thereof) with homosexuality accrued greater specificity and became less amorphous only gradually, so that the same or very similar details of character delineation could mean quite different things in the 1870s, then again in the 1890s, and then again after the First World War. Jamesian men such Roderick Hudson and Felix Young (*The Europeans*) cannot properly be thought of as "gay," at least not in the latter-day sense, despite the fact that they may possess some of the attributes we now count as potential signifiers of gayness. By the time one encounters the figure of

Hyacinth Robinson in James's *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), however, the textual information (especially in aggregate) that "his chest was narrow, his complexion pale," his hand "very delicate," and his "whole little person" theatrical and "slightly wasted" in appearance, prepares one to view the character as indeed a protogay "little gentleman," particularly when he is seen interacting with such virile types as Paul Muniment and Captain Godfrey Sholto.[6] The "proto" in this formulation (protogay) may strike some as fudging, particularly when one is being asked to recognize protogayness or protoqueerness circulating in literary materials before "queer" quite meant queer, but the prefix is vitally appropriate to the *process* of cultural and historical evolution that I wish to trace.

The signifiers of sexual difference in fictional characters were evolving for their authors as well as for readers. With effeminacy and sexual nonconformity simultaneously beckoning and threatening, James went out of his way to affirm that the Anglo-American audience he sought to cultivate "delight[ed] in . . . the masculine" and disapproved of fictional men who appeared to be (in a suggestive phrase) "the reverse of masculine" (1865; *LC* 1: 637). At the level of style, where the expression of gender and sexual valences was at once highly resonant and highly ambiguous, James encouraged his readers to disdain the "sickly and unmasculine tone" of overly elegant writing (1876; *LC* 2: 347), to stick with the traditional view that the "masculine hand" of authorship was superior to the feminine (1887; *LC* 1: 646), and to appreciate a type of prose that displayed "masculine firmness, [a] quiet force of . . . style" (1888; *LC* 2: 534).

This must be one of the great ironies of literary history when one reflects on James's subsequent career and reputation for precious prose. Already in the later part of the 1870s, where my account begins, American reviewers were noticing (and largely praising) James's "finished elegance of style," his "dainty and skillful hand" at exposition, and his "lavish cleverness [as] an almost incessantly witty writer" (*CR* 53; *CH* 58, 71). By the 1890s these terms of praise would begin to seem less than masculine and would be implicated in queerness: stylistically, there would be "too much brilliancy" in *The Tragic Muse*, reviewers then perceived, or too much of what Hemingway would later call "fairy" talk, as James came to resemble the very character, the aesthete Gabriel Nash, that he sought to keep some distance from (*CR* 222). By the end of the century the tables had been completely turned. Henry James, who as an outsetting American author in 1876 had sharply criticized the "advocates of 'art for art'" sponsored by Baudelaire for excessive "fancy" and "embroider[y]" and for a correspondingly "vicious . . . crudity of [moral] sentiment" would be taken to task in 1902 on precisely the same

grounds, only with more serious implications for his character: "Mr. James, together with some of his European neighbors, in forcing his 'art' . . . to such a point of refinement . . . has demonstrated incontestably the radical fallacy of *l'art pour l'art*"; "there is nothing so prone to depravity as unrelieved speculation" (*LC* 2: 156–7, *CR* 384).[7]

This emerging pattern of protestation in favor of things "masculine" and *un*depraved (perhaps a form of protesting too much) must be understood in light of a broader shift in the inflection of terms such as *masculine* and *feminine* or their cognates. In the American context, one finds James in this early period (1879) commending his predecessor Nathaniel Hawthorne for "something plain and masculine and sensible" in his nature, which had infused the literary works most "redolent of the social system" in the ante-bellum United States (*LC* 1: 326, 321). Hawthorne himself had conceded, however, in a well-known passage of the "Custom-House" preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, that the very vocation of an author of romances or novels put him under suspicion of being an "idler" and a "degenerate fellow" in the view of post-Puritan culture, with its distinctly gendered hierarchy of more and less productive forms of labor.[8] Even James's figure for Hawthorne's extraordinary distinction – in the "modest nosegay" of literary talent that America could yet boast of, his blossom had the "rarest and sweetest fragrance" – constituted a type of compliment being gradually overtaken by the worry for "effeminacy" (*LC* 1: 320).

On the cusp of the 1880s, then, the movement was clearly underway to graft on to traditional discourse the association of idleness with aesthetical dandyism and that of degeneracy with both gender and sexual deviance. Even Walt Whitman, it should be noted, had chipped in with *Democratic Vistas* (1870), which called for a robustly native literature that eschewed both the subjects and the stylistics of the eastern seaboard establishment, dominated as it was by "dandies and ennuyees, dapper little gentlemen from abroad . . . with their thin sentiment of parlors, parasols, [and] piano-songs" not to mention their emasculated "whimpering and crying."[9] Whitman's linkage between effeteness and foreignness also shows how negotiations of American masculinity – both as a subject matter of creative writing and as a facet of an author's personality – opened out on to an increasingly international scene, a process that *The Europeans* effectively dates from the time of James's own childhood, in the 1840s. What Hawthorne and James mean by "degeneracy" or "idling" may still have looked back in the general direction of Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin, so to speak, but these interrelated terms more importantly looked ahead to a work such as Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1893; English translation 1895),

which definitively posited the "fatal law" (in Oscar Wilde's words) that linked the artistic temperament with "sexual insanity" or homosexuality.[10]

Thus, in considering *Roderick Hudson*, it is imperative to gauge the apparent sexual significations of James's text – especially the staging of Roderick's masculinity, the motifs of Hellenistic aestheticism and Roman decadence, and the grim resolution of the plot – within the context of the novel's cultural occasion and of James's distinctive situation as a cosmopolitan American author who was still working out the knowledge that he himself had "the tendencies," in E. M. Forster's phrase for masculine desire.[11] As I will show, *Roderick Hudson* establishes a set of concerns for masculine potential, variety, and relationships that will inform James's writings all the way to the so-called major phase, culminating (for my purposes) in *The Ambassadors* (1903).

On the surface, *Roderick Hudson* dramatizes the tension between the male artist's need for "the things that feed the imagination" – which James already associated with Europe, the "undraped paganism" of Greco-Roman antiquity, and the "incomparable fineness" of sensual experience abroad – and the putative need of men (just as men) for "moral . . . sentimental security," associated with the quintessential American matrix of married domesticity and commercial or professional industry, or in Roderick's case, a prospective career in the law (*RH* 159, 258, 80, 53). The novel suggests that to a European or Europeanized perspective, New England must necessarily appear to be an unsuitable environment for *both* the artist and the man, a "horrible" void with virtually nothing to nourish his growth, or as the *femme fatale* Christina Light brutally summarizes: "No society, no pleasures, no beauty, no life" (*RH* 153). Thus Roderick Hudson, although inclined to a sort of Whitmanesque cheerleading on behalf of American art, readily appreciates Rome as the "complete contradiction" of Northampton, Massachusetts – not, coincidentally, Jonathan Edwards' territory – and indulges in "a high aesthetic revel" (*RH* 79) that resembles James's own intoxicated response to the Eternal City in 1869 ("At last – for the first time – I live! . . . I went reeling and moaning thro' the streets, in a fever of enjoyment"; *L* 1: 160).

And yet, owing to James's contrary investments, the repudiation of American austerity in *Roderick Hudson*, and of the corresponding institutional forms that work to constrain masculine expansion, inspires a compensatory plunge into European difference that ends in the hero's destruction. Admittedly, James gives his handsome young sculptor a lovely death, but the current critical inclination is to ask whether Roderick's demise is satisfactorily explained on the model of the post-Romantic *poète maudit* – as suggested in Roderick's evocation of himself as a bundle of "nerves and

senses and imagination" beset by "a restless demon" in a "land of impossible beauty" – or whether there is a different story that must go untold in James's courting of an Anglo-American audience that presupposed "the inevitable desire" to be inevitably heterosexual in nature (*RH* 336, 307, 55). Was a contemporary reader being unusually prescient in describing Rowland Mallet as playing the "fairy godmother" to Roderick's short-lived Cinderella (*CR* 9)?

Several recent readings have claimed that James was consciously alluding to Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), with its embedded thematics (by way of Winckelmann) of Greek love centered on youthful male beauty, and that he was thereby "advertis[ing] with some explicitness" an underlying libidinal component in the novel's male–male friendship or in the operation of the narrative gaze itself. On this view, specifically "erotic desires"[12] lie at the heart of Mallet's loyal spectatorship as the sculptor's career flourishes and then collapses, from his initial infatuation with Roderick's statuette of the naked figure of "Thirst" (allegedly, "a token of male sexual awakening"[13]) to his final solitary vigil beside his friend's dead body, which is broken but still flawless. Yet I find that the eroticism implied in Mallet's cousin's initial, fateful offer to "show [him] a pretty boy" (that is, Roderick's statuette) is both undeniable and yet different in quality and social texture from what is now meant by homoeroticism (*RH* 33).

In the passage describing the statue, the pretty boy who symbolizes "Thirst" wears nothing but a "fillet of wild flowers" around his head; he guzzles from a gourd or "rustic cup"; his stance is "perfectly simple," and in leaning backward to drink, he casually exposes himself to the viewer's gaze. All of his concentration, from under "droop[ing]" eyelids, is reserved for the liquid he greedily consumes. The "absorbed" Rowland Mallet reflects that the sculptor of *Thirst* has aimed to represent the "beauty of natural movement" and nothing more, resulting in a figure that might have stepped out of Greek myth (Hylas, Narcissus, Paris, or Endymion). The statue moves Rowland, as have other works in the Louvre and the Vatican museums, to a renewed appreciation of the physical comeliness of humanity in its pristine state (*RH* 33–4).

Is this natural beauty, in this case embodied in a pastoral boy, of a sort calculated to arouse homoerotic admiration? In the first place, the meanings are contained or constrained by their very conventionality. Even the invocation of the attractive youth of Greek legend should not be overtouted as a signifier of homosexuality. Although the connotations of same-sex love are inescapable, they are also routinized and safely relegated to the distant mists

of antique mythology. Further, the figures that James (or Mallet) selects are more properly associated with sexual polymorphy: Hylas was carried off by nymphs, Paris is overdetermined by his Helen, Endymion was beloved by Selene, and Narcissus was involved either with himself or with his sister, but in any event James's allusion comes before Narcissus' appropriation by Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and in his poetry, as well as by Freud in his powerful theorizing of male homosexuality.[14]

Without question the statuette serves an important function in activating the novel's male–male bond, but there is little reason to assume that James's readers would have leapt at the passage (or that he could have expected them to leap at it) as a code of queerness. The homosexual-Hellenist version of Pater was barely in the system, so to speak, in American cultural perceptions of sculpture in the mid-1870s. Both James and his readers were still working from more antebellum premises where, presumably, one could practice, represent, and invite male–male gazing involving pretty naked boys with a more chaste, less reprobated eroticism in play (as in Hawthorne's depiction of the character of Donatello in *The Marble Faun*). Joy S. Kasson quotes period reviews to show that American sculptors of the nude (especially but not exclusively the female nude) drew high praise for their skill in making "the spiritual reign over the corporeal . . . the appeal to the soul entirely control the appeal to the senses," with the result that the only idea of nudity conveyed by their artwork was that which was "instinctive in every noble mind." Thus, as Kasson summarizes, American ideal sculpture of James's formative years gave viewers "an opportunity to gaze at a . . . nude body under morally sanctioned conditions."[15] To be sure, such framing and sanctioning constitutes a proof of the operations of an erotics in *need of* careful veiling and sanitizing, but there is no reason to conclude that James, in *Roderick Hudson*, is covertly staging the statuette of *Thirst* as a strong homoerotic challenge to audience sensibilities.

By the turn of the century, of course – as in the gentle narrative irony that plays over Lambert Strether's lurking suspicions of beauty in the midst of the visual feast of Paris – James would be taking a more strenuous line on "our English scruples" and on the qualms of "the Anglo-Saxon reader" for not admitting the absolute centrality of the "endless human body" in art (*LC* 2: 367, 539).[16] But the James of this early season sided more with the conventional voices quoted by Kasson, having come of age precisely at the juncture in cultural history in which, for instance, "short white aprons" or "fig leaves were discreetly applied to the genitals of Greek and Roman sculptures" in both American and European museums.[17] In 1873, writing in the *North American Review*, James comments liberally enough on

the French archetype of corporeal beauty, but suggests that (unlike Greek statuary) it includes the quality of gracefulness, which "impl[ies] that the subject [portrayed] is conscious" and makes "modesty immediately desirable and the absence of it vicious" (*LC* 2: 367). Indeed, this antebellum prejudice lingers even in James's mature view, contemporaneous with *The Ambassadors*, that although art "essentially and logically" embraces the naked human form, a tasteful shrouding or muffling becomes "positive and necessary" whenever the represented body in question seems to be imbued with "romantic" energies.[18] It seems only consistent that in Roderick's figure of the thirsty boy, the element of physical grace would be controlled even as it is expressed, with the added safeguard that the subject could not signify as consciously "romantic" by reason of his nonage, if not his rusticity (or so the consensual myth of James's contemporaries would have had it). Again, if this naked sprite guzzling from his gourd resonates with homoeroticism, it is probably not because James consciously put it there, nor is it likely to have been construed as a slightly later gallery of observers would construe it. Rather, one witnesses in *Roderick Hudson* a "young" novelist feeling his way forward in an intricate dialogue, the terms of which were not original but rather culture-wide: the transition from codes of homosociality (which undoubtedly covered for instances of same-sex desire) to Pater-inflected significations of homosexuality as such.

If one acknowledges that *Roderick Hudson* (like James himself at this point) is not overtly "queer," it pays to examine wherein the anticipatory cues to the receptive reader *do* lie, how relatively "intentional" they were, and how they struck readers in James's own time. The first indication that something was a little queer, of course, was that the male characters did not fulfill the American ideal of bourgeois masculinity. Roderick Hudson himself was too vivid in ways that suggested an insufficient or compromised masculinity; his emotional extravagance betrayed him as "a man of inferior will," especially "unmanly and unbearable" for going to pieces over Christina Light. American reviewers duly noted the gender deviance of his behavior, attributing his romantic failures to a lack of "true manliness," conceived as the absence of that "virile force to which [the] feminine nature longs to render due submission." The inclination to histrionics that James associates with artistic genius – or more aptly, with aestheticism of a morbid sort in a *near* genius – becomes all too evident when Roderick misfires as a suitor, alienating readerly sympathy with his unvirile collapse: "What woman could love such a weakling?" (*CR* 10, 5).

If reviewers judged Roderick's passion to be somehow excessive, however, Rowland Mallet's was deemed too meager. He was "tame and uninteresting

in [his] undeviating goodness," "exceedingly monotonous," and his attraction to Mary Garland a mere "suppressed affection" (*CR* 8, 11). In many respects, Mallet initiates the figure that one most commonly thinks of when the phrase "the Jamesian male" is used. A secret sharer or vicarious "observer" rather than an actively engaged "producer," Mallet prefers escaping to Europe, where "the burden of idleness is less heavy," instead of "work[ing] to get reconciled to America" (*RH* 68–9). Here it is worth interjecting that when James revised the novel in 1907, after the Wilde trials had fused aesthetical languor with homosexuality, Mallet's "burden" would become "both the burden and the *obloquy* of idleness"; relatedly, James later decided that the "pretty boy" depicted in Roderick's sculpture *Thirst* should be in fact "remarkably pretty," but these changes merely bear out the picture of an author who teased out the queernesses in his own early writing mainly in retrospect.[19] In the 1870s James was interested in exploring the more patent tension (whatever its subtexts in bodily desire) between "a native sense of beauty," such as Mallet's, and an uncongenial social and moral environment, such as New England (*RH* 234). As is the case with a surprising number of other New Englanders in James's œuvre – Mary Garland herself; the Unitarian minister Babcock in *The American*, who is positively tortured by his "exquisite sense of beauty"; and Gertrude Wentworth in *The Europeans*, to name a few – Mallet's aestheticist bent relentlessly wars with the classic "moral passion" of American Puritanism, a contest that (as I have suggested) will find its fullest expression in Strether's losing battle with the relaxing atmosphere of Paris, where moral caveats seem utterly vanquished by the "visual sense" (*AM* 69; *RH* 157; *A* 126).

Mallet (like Strether later) is "solidly burdened with a conscience," yet he is also given to "expounding aesthetics" (in lieu of artistic creativity of his own), which makes for "an awkward mixture of moral and aesthetic curiosity"; although he strives to incorporate the "confident relish of pleasure" that distinguishes the *flâneur* as a social type whose "leisurely appearance" and visual habits, in Walter Benjamin's terms, were meant to lodge a "protest against . . . industriousness," his consciousness has been formed (or deformed) by the doctrines of utility and duty that are at the core of Protestant capitalism (*RH* 316, 235, 32).[20] Not too surprisingly, then, he seeks "a reflected usefulness" to his own life by promoting Roderick's education and development as an artist (*RH* 53). James is ambivalent toward Mallet's type of manhood or sensibility, criticizing his only "reflected" values, yet remaining sympathetic with the cultural origins of his self-damage. Meanwhile, James assigns the character *other* "reflections" that articulate essentially Jamesian positions: "Since one can't escape life it is

better to take it by the hand"; "All these things [of Rome] are impregnated with life"; "Oh, the exquisite virtue of circumstance . . . [that] beguiles us into testing unappreciated faculties!" (*RH* 229, 234). Mallet means well, but is constitutionally unable to live up to these standards, and James will give the type another more sympathetic trial in the figure of Lambert Strether.

James's portrayals of Roderick and Rowland, in other words, represent a phase in the cultural process of defining proper masculine conduct and emotional bearing, in courtship and in society in general, in preparation for more regulatory interventions that will link the aesthetical, theatrical "weakling" first with effeminacy and then with homosexuality. At the time, however, reviewers did not seem moved to search for larger reasons as to why James offered two "failed" masculinities – one disabled by his own alleged passion, the other "suppressing" his – or why their friendship becomes such a locus of intimacy. More broadly, why *did* James's novels seem determined to "disappoint" the (hetero)romantic reader almost as a matter of course? In accordance with my hypothesis that *Roderick Hudson* marks a very early dialogue between James as a gay author in the making and the discourse of gender and sexuality that would define gayness, perhaps the most remarkable thing about the critical reception is that it found James's story so unremarkable. The only exceptional voice belonged to James's later confidante, Grace Norton, but even her review did not venture beyond the passing comment that Mallet and Hudson forged an "anomalous relation" that not even the vaunted American trait of "pliability" could explain (*CR* 14). If disappointing to the reader who sought a plot revolving around the romantic trials of reasonably well-regulated men and women and ending in a fairy-tale marriage or two, the narrative and characters of *Roderick Hudson* nonetheless seemed familiar antetypes. Roderick, in particular, was the type of the "nervous nineteenth-century Apollo" (*CR* 24), neither his nervousness nor his physical beauty yet fully associated with gay signification.

These contemporary readers came by their complacency or confusion honestly, it must be said. Insistently, James's novel re-places its central, often turbulent masculine friendship in the context of what critics identified as the "perplexing little triangular arrangement" of which the third and mediating term is Mary Garland, a quietly forceful New Englander who becomes Roderick's intended and the secret object of Mallet's "bravely subdued" (read "tepid") romantic interest (*CR* 4; *CH* 36). Furthermore, when the men's relationship eventually ruptures, Roderick attributes his creative powers, as well as Mallet's restrictive "range of . . . vision," to their differing degrees of receptivity to female charms: "Women for you . . . mean

nothing. You have no imagination – no sensibility, nothing to be touched!" (*RH* 335). Roderick's reproach contains an insight into his friend's affective makeup that never gets developed (and which *must* die on the narrative vine), even as this outburst deflects the possible implications for Roderick's own sexuality of what is called the "perfect exclusiveness of his emotions" (*RH* 288). Roderick's interest in women is distant and highly aestheticized, either suspiciously foredoomed by the operation of "infernal coquetry" (as in the case of Christina Light) or suspiciously animated by Mallet's presence as simultaneously a catalyst, a competitor, and an ulterior motive of Roderick's affections, as in the two men's romantic conduct with Mary Garland (*RH* 287). As he confesses to Rowland: "You . . . put me into such a ridiculous good-humour that I felt an extraordinary desire to tell some woman that I adored her" (*RH* 73). From the vantage point of today's reader, this latter "triangular arrangement" seems less "perplexing," fitting rather neatly into the paradigm of displaced same-sex attraction conceptualized in the work of Eve Sedgwick.

"I am so glad I'm a real man," she shrieked. (Robert McAlmon, "Miss Knight," 1925)

In the variant masculinity of its protagonist, *Roderick Hudson* introduced another protogay signifier – a penchant for theatricality, or what James called (even as he personally exhibited) "a great deal of manner" (*TM* 21) – that would increasingly be correlated with an aestheticist tendency in Victorian men and would become a defining feature in the gender profile of James's queer-leaning characters (even in the case of Strether, with his "theatre within"). Partly attributed to Roderick's Southern heritage, his love of artifice encompasses not only art-making (anticipating the Joycean "artificer") and socioaesthetic revelry (that "deep relish for the artificial element in life" that New England culture could not satisfy), but also a flair for self-dramatization and for stagelike recreation of others: like "most men with a turn for the plastic arts," the reader is told, Roderick is an "excellent mimic" (*RH* 79, 38). This feature anticipates the Wildean aesthete who ceaselessly *performs*, his gestural flourishes and general histrionics working in concert with a verbal facility – variously evoked as florid, witty, or paradoxical – that is a source of fascination, irritation, and sometimes fatigue to his audience. Though Wilde, notoriously "flamboyant," would become the default figure for this supposed cue to sexual identity, his literary cousins are numerous, partly because, as Byrne Fone notes, the "outlandish and exotic" queer captivated the lens of straight society while other, less demonstrative gay men simply (and often tactically) eluded it (*GL* 629). Fone is speaking of

the limiting case of the drag queen, as in McAlmon's story "Miss Knight," thus emphasizing that the motives (or at least the imputed motives) for such exotic self-display and for the fictional overrepresentation of the high-visibility queer were complex and interactive. Just as Miss Knight's "shriek" (quoted above) against the damaging constructions and constrictions of the sex/gender system strives to break "the tension of ennui," so, too, does the voyeuristic slumming of McAlmon and his readers for whom s/he is the focal figure (*GL* 630). To speak more broadly, this representational practice and the audience it both inscribes and attracts depend upon the outrageous *élan* of modern sexual polymorphy to combat the *pervasive* mood of anxiety and boredom that is created, in large measure, precisely by the abjection or ghettoization of the abnormal.

Another complication here is that although theatricality promised to render male selfhood more labile and contingent, and thus to open up new possibilities of emotional response and social performance, it also aligned those men who were so gifted (or perhaps so cursed) with the so-called histrionic sex, women. For James, as for other male authors of the time, women were viewed as naturally adapted to acting, and in the present novel, the embodiment of this idea is Christina Light, who can never "forego doing the thing dramatically" (*RH* 205). This type of paramount "actress" will reappear in James in such varied guises as Baroness Eugenia Münster in *The Europeans*, Miriam Rooth in *The Tragic Muse*, and Madame de Vionnet, the enchantress of *The Ambassadors* ("polyglot as a little Jewess . . . [she had] made a clean sweep . . . of every 'part' . . . in the curtained costumed school repertory"; *A* 138). By the same token, as James later suggested, *any* association with acting, the "most self-exhibitional of trades," threatened to feminize men (in the worst sense) by making them "as vain and jealous and touchy" as women were by "nature" (*LL 507*). Roderick Hudson, in other words, already previews the male artist (or artist-type) who appropriates femininity as "emblematic of the modern," as Rita Felski says, inasmuch as femininity, refigured by commodity culture, increasingly "epitomiz[ed] artifice rather than authenticity," or the manly, sincere "voice of the heart."[21]

Roderick's own voice is also important here, though like his theatricality, neither is it yet the loaded social and literary signifier it would become, as it gradually accrued significance in the course of textual-historical development. When Mallet at first must be "contented . . . with listening to Roderick's voice," James not only teases the reader with Rowland's eagerness for a "good look" at Roderick's good looks, but he also suggests how far the quality of a voice can go in characterizing a speaker. Given this narrative ploy, it is no surprise that critics have lavished attention on the significance

of Roderick's "soft and not altogether masculine organ," which presumably sounds even less masculine in the presence of Mary Garland's "full grave voice" (*RH* 36, 55). Gregory Woods takes James's phrasing to mean that Roderick's "genitals lack manly puissance," overlooking the conventionality of such language; when Willa Cather, as late as the 1920s, refers to an operatic contralto's "really superb organ," it seems doubtful that her genitalia are being complimented (*EN* 990). At the same time, Woods helpfully notes that the description of Roderick's voice carries an "aesthetic connotation," for a gentle, quasifeminine musicality in speech would soon be taken as one of the telltale signs of male homosexuality.[22]

As Wayne Koestenbaum's work demonstrates, the voice stands in a richly ambivalent relation to embodiment, being at once profoundly corporeal – an "organ" in its own right to Whitman, James, and Cather; a collaboration of diaphragm, throat, vibrating chords, orbic-flexing mouth, and falsetto-making sinuses – and yet something that floats free of the body, venturing on the air, an agent of far-ranging emotions and physical reciprocations in the listener. In studying how a male homosexual "type" emerged, one can retrace the lineage of the seductive family voice of gayness that arguably began circulating in Anglo-American culture with Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), whose speaker famously invites the beloved to loaf with him on the greensward and "loose the stop from your throat, // Only the lull I like."[23] It is not too much to say that Whitman's homoerotic "humming" resounds, to varying degrees, in the works and lives of all the authors treated in this study – as, for instance, in the "soft and musical" vocal "caress" conveyed by the queer pedagogue in Sherwood Anderson's "Hands" – and also throughout the period's literary production and social fabric more generally (*WO* 31). As Paul Robinson observes, when Whitman's British champion, J. A. Symonds, recounted a youthful infatuation with a chorus boy, a "quintessential ephebe," he essentially claimed to have "fallen in love with Willie's voice."[24] Surely a note of Whitman can be heard, as well, in the "beautiful . . . low, musical voice" of Wilde's Lord Henry Wotton, which awakens Dorian Gray to the knowledge of his suppressed passions (*DG* 41). To follow Koestenbaum, the accents of Whitman – America's "Ancient-of-Days opera queen" – cross over even into the register of Cather's fiction, in which potent divas with superb organs enchant and resurrect a "discarded" homosexuality, "restor[ing] queer embodiment" to their audiences.[25]

As one learns from Edith Wharton's memoirs, Henry James was among those who resonated – quite literally – to Whitman's vibrations: reading *Leaves* aloud, James's "rich and flexible voice . . . filled the hushed room like an organ adagio . . . crooning it in a mood of subdued ecstasy."[26] It is not

inconceivable that Gore Vidal relies on Wharton's testimonial (with its own subdued crooning) when fictionally reimagining James's "beautiful measured voice" and his equal facility for speaking "melodiously" in French.[27] But then, such testimonials abounded from many others who had known James personally. His major-phase typist, Mary Weld, recalled how James "dictated beautifully," declaiming in such a "melodious voice" that she imagined herself "accompanying a singer on the piano" (*LL* 353). Somerset Maugham, although frequently a detractor, claimed that nobody who had known James "in the flesh" could ever read his works "dispassionately," for James "got his voice into every line" with a charm that abundantly atoned for his sins of style or manner.[28]

Is James's voice to be understood, then, as a queer one, or as a marker of sexuality, either in playing its own airs – in prose and in life – or during his duet of sorts with Whitman for Wharton's benefit? Koestenbaum suggests that queer embodiment can be contingent, subsiding when the voice ceases, so is the James who "croons" along with Whitman only provisionally queer? More to the point of my effort to historicize Jamesian "gayness": how should one interpret the tonalities and sexual valences of other fictional men, besides Roderick Hudson, who are endowed with voices described as being not altogether masculine – the "soft, gay-sounding" voice of Felix Young (*The Europeans*) or the "mellifluous" speechifying of Gabriel Nash (*The Tragic Muse*) – or who are even celebrated for making the sweetest "music in the universe" to another man's ear, as Roderick's voice becomes for Rowland Mallet (*EU* 33, *TM* 21, *RH* 344)?

The chronological situation of *Roderick Hudson* is once again instrumental. Very shortly after its publication, as Mary Warner Blanchard shows, American medical journals would begin elaborating a clinical schema for picking out "male sexual perverts," not only by aspects of appearance and gesture but also by pitch and tenor of voice. Homosexual men allegedly betrayed themselves by speaking with an "intonation like a woman's," an "effeminacy of voice."[29] Among continental writers, Koestenbaum cites a letter in which Joris-Karl Huysmans writes to Marc-André Raffalovich (both of whom will appear again in this book) that "sodomy changes the voice, which becomes almost identical" among homosexuals, while the American author Earl Lind recalled that in the incipient "fairy" subculture of New York around 1890, "we women-men easily recognize[d] our own kind" by vocal cues, notably the imitative "warbling of a woman" (*GL* 627, 619).[30] As early as 1882 American journalists were already preparing for the later linkage, in the popular mind, between womanish warbling and queerness by reporting that Wilde, during his visit to the United States, spoke

"without one manly accent" as part of his "affected effeminacy."[31] During the same period, even in Sherwood Anderson's small-town Ohio, "soft feminine voices" (along with "mincing steps") were seen as the hallmark of "sissies" – boys whom Anderson later perceived as younger versions of the transvestites who flirted with workmen on Chicago's North Side in the 1890s (*SAM* 339). By the nineties, not only in Chicago but also in pockets of New York and other urban centers, gay men openly identified themselves by "the timbre of their voices" (among other "feminesque" traits; *GL* 625), while in special social clubs waiters of the "degenerate type" sang bawdy lyrics in "falsetto voices." By the dawn of the Jazz Age simply "call[ing] in effeminate fashion," on city streets, had become sufficient grounds for a man to be detained by the police.[32] As will be discussed further in chapter 6, it is even possible that Hemingway's hypermasculinity and homophobia were motivated, in part, by a wish to counteract the message that some heard in his "soft, high-pitched voice."[33]

Thus a comparatively minor detail of characterization, such as Roderick's delicate vocal melodies, lies on the verge of major sexual significations. Though I would argue that there is no *imperative* homosexual "content" to James's staging of Roderick – not only his voice, but his handsome face and striking attire and gesture – and no necessary miming of, or invitation to, the homoerotic gaze, one does find a kind of powerful prolepsis in action: this is the young male body that will very soon come to occupy the center of élite and middle-class homosexual discourse from Pater to J. R. Ackerley (see *GL* 379–86) to the American author Henry Blake Fuller (*Bertram Cope's Year*, 1919). In other words, James's handling of Roderick is at once prior to and already participatory – not consciously, but not accidentally, contributing to the movement in Anglo-American arts and letters that culminates (for convenience's sake) in Carl Van Vechten's quip in the early 1920s: "A thing of beauty is a boy forever."[34]

One final instructive example of James's cultural situation in 1875 is the late scene (also popular in queer readings) in which Rowland discovers Roderick sprawling upon a divan in his Roman apartment, almost as if he were posing for (or has been posed for) an allegorical portrait of Decadence. A brief review of the scene's descriptive details helps. Whereas Rowland expects to find his sculptor-friend at his labors, Roderick lies "motionless" in a white dressing-gown, while the "moist sweet fragrance" of flowers suffuses the room. He looks "exceedingly pale," but his eyes shine with "an extraordinary brilliancy," his whole aspect resembling that of "a Buddhist in an intellectual swoon" (*RH* 265). James encourages the reader to associate Roderick's strange fit of passion with disembodied ideality or "intellectual

beauty" in Shelley's neoplatonic sense; with an ecstasy that is purely spiritual (specifically, Buddhist); and with lotus-eating both Homeric and Tennysonian – yet another gesture toward self-absence or otherworldliness. Perhaps Tennyson is the closest referent ("All things . . . ripen toward the grave"[35]) inasmuch as Roderick here assumes the position that he will also take in death, after he has "fallen from a great height" in the Alps, if not also in his artistic career (*RH* 348). Whereas this divan scene associates him with death-in-life (he has transcended "temporal matters"), the novel's ending ironically tropes its staging of Roderick's body: once again at the end, it will be Mallet who finds Roderick, or rather his prostrate corpse, "star[ing] upward open-eyed," with a "strangely serene expression of life" on his face. By means of this parallel, the text suggests that even in the midst of his present paroxysm of happiness, Roderick already harbors some "hideous fracture," his death prefigured as well by his pallor and the white shroud he wears in his tomblike room (*RH* 265, 348).

Is that hideous fracture homosexuality? The young man's posture and mood can certainly be assimilated, in a forward-looking way, to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In his narcotized, surfeited state – represented in a setting indebted to Orientalist fantasy – Roderick uncannily anticipates both Dorian and his seducer, Lord Henry. Wilde would mark the queerness of his young aristocrat precisely by invoking the iconography of the languid sensualist, stretched on a "divan of Persian saddle-bags," smoking "opium-tainted cigarette[s]" amid the "heavy scent" of roses, while Dorian "bur[ies] his face in the great cool lilac-blossoms, feverishly drinking in their perfume," as a prelude to his transgressive adventures (*DG* 23–4, 44). Yet again, the remarkable textual correspondence needs to be viewed in light of significant differences in the literary representation of homosexuality between the political culture of the mid-1870s and that of the late 1880s. Although one can read Wilde out of James, so to speak – again, as part of a *culture-wide* elaboration of the languishing male figure and its subtext of sexual decadence – one cannot so easily read Wilde's potent connotations back into the James of *Roderick Hudson*.

One notices, for instance, that Roderick's passion is color-coded as a type of essential purity, and evidently he dies a virgin. Roderick's white gown reminds the reader that he has worn a sort of shroud throughout the novel, from Mallet's first vision of him "clad from head to foot" in white linen to the penultimate view of Roderick as an emaciated neurotic "clad always in white, roam[ing] about like ghost" through the "heavily perfumed air" of a Florentine villa (*RH* 37, 303). Roderick degenerates, to be sure, and his repose on the divan marks a stage in that process, yet the

white rose that figures sensual beauty in this scene betokens the phase of "rose-white boyhood" (as Lord Henry Wotton would say) rather than "rose-red youth" or "fiery-coloured" adulthood; if "sin," such as same-sex love, constitutes "the only real colour-element . . . in modern life," according to the argument in *Dorian Gray*, it does not yet seem to be a prominent part of James's palette in 1875 (*DG* 42, 85, 53). In a way that will be significantly rehearsed especially in Willa Cather's works, Roderick apparently lives and dies in "unspotted" innocence (*RH* 42).

Equally key, whatever the degree of erotic suggestiveness that informs this picture of decadence, the sexuality in play is decidedly heterosexuality, at least according to James's cover story. Roderick ascribes his immobility on the sofa to paralyzing "joy" at the prospect of romantic success: he is "divinely happy" to think that he has won over Christina Light, and if he has "lock[ed] myself up as a dangerous character," as he tells Mallet, the danger is that of scandalizing his mother and Mary Garland with the exultation of his conquest (*RH* 267). Finally, and most significantly, perhaps the least scandalized audience at the spectacle of Roderick's lotus-eating degeneracy, whatever its sexual implications, was James's average reader. For a young artist like Roderick, who epitomizes "detestable egotism" and emotional recklessness, "nothing more appropriately eccentric could be devised" than the very self-indulgent and melodramatic behavior that the novelist devises (*CH* 40, 37). The key point is that Roderick's eccentricity *does* keep within the realm of propriety, owing partly to James's heterosexualizing of motive, but partly to the circumstance that Wilde's *Dorian Gray* (not to mention Fellini's *Satyricon*) had yet to instruct audiences as to what else might be read into such a *tableau vivant*.

As Jonathan Freedman has noted, Roderick has "few descendants" in James's fiction, and as I have been arguing, Roderick's line dies out largely because the character proves a dead end (literally) in James's attempt to portray a sympathetic male figure whose deepest passions run to art and yet who must be posed and advertised as equally motivated by heterosexual desire.[36] But I am also suggesting that *Roderick Hudson* looks forward to an array of Anglo-American texts energized by the dynamics of same-sex desire, and that James's protagonist *necessarily* prefigured a male type – the young, beauty-intoxicated, ill-starred homosexual – that would be embellished by other authors who now belong to the pantheon of gay and lesbian literature, if also by writers who plotted the stereotype in homophobic ways. Inasmuch as this process of articulating a queer prototype involves so many other authors besides James (including not only Anglo-American writers but also Huysmans, James's admired Pierre Loti, and others on the

Continent), the specific influence of *Roderick Hudson* on such creations as Dorian Gray or, say, the equally doomed Paul of Cather's "Paul's Case" should not be overstated. Yet given the close attention that both Wilde and Cather (among a host of others) paid to James's writing, it seems plausible that the image and the fate of Roderick Hudson subtly factored into these later productions.

Roderick's fate, of course, is death, because neither James *nor* his culture could imagine a narrative of homosexual love in which he might not only live, but also survive and thrive. In calling Roderick's death a suicide, Christopher Lane hints that the novel functions as a latent critique of a culture that systematically extinguishes such "anomalies" (Grace Norton's word).[37] If one reads Roderick's "inevitable slip" as a self-destruction *made* inevitable by an intolerant society in which the "inevitable desire" is hetero desire, *Roderick Hudson* can perhaps also be aligned with subsequent American works – such as Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, and Nella Larsen's *Passing* – in which other kinds of difference (across axes of gender and race, as well as sexuality) are similarly punished by ambiguous deaths in which the dominant culture itself seems to be the real villain (*RH* 349, 55). Given the moment in the evolution of homosexual discourse at which *Roderick Hudson* appeared – consider that Pater's challenge to masculine norms came barely a year before its composition – one might say that James's homophile inclinations drew him into the process that was constructing a nexus between a Europeanized (or Hellenized) aestheticism and masculine desire. One might further say that the stifled erotic implications of his text suggestively anticipate the broader cultural regulation of same-sex desire in the offing. Mallet's "indefinable attraction" to the "something tender and divine of unspotted, exuberant, confident youth" is precisely the preparatory *structure* of homosexual amity that will be filled out with sharper content in *The Ambassadors* and in Cather's many stagings of masculine tutelage (*RH* 42).

Particularly crucial to the dynamics of masculinity as represented in James's later works is the suggestion, in this early tragic affair, that a man of Mallet's "conservative instincts" could come to regard another man's voice (Roderick's unmasculine "organ") as making the sweetest of all earthly "music" – soon to be narrowed to a heterosexual cliché – and that even this "most rational of men" could feel the rupture of a lover's loss when the "beautiful fellow" who has "filled his life" and constituted "his occupation" perishes (*RH* 284, 344, 349). Significantly, Mary Garland soon duplicates Mallet's impassioned mourning. The reviewer who maintained that "Mallett [*sic*] might be a male Mary Garland, and Mary Garland a

female Rowland Mallett" meant only to fault James's undifferentiated dialogue, yet the remark strikes a deeper chord than intended (*CR* 7). The distinction to be made is that Mallet can have no share in Mary's "supreme" right to grieve publicly, and indeed in a fashion that unconsciously mimes sexual congress, as she "magnificent[ly]" flings her body on Roderick's and emits a "loud tremendous cry." By contrast, Mallet cannot publish his loss, but conveniently conducts his mourning in an isolated vigil of "seven long hours" beside Roderick's corpse (*RH* 348–9).

In fact, James relies on the "triangular arrangement" among his principals to reroute the masculine desire that thus plays up with special poignancy into the channel of a safe and popularly palatable heterosexuality (*CR* 4). On these terms, the reader is encouraged to understand Mallet's final pose (or self-posing) as the "most patient" of men as the posture of a suitor who may eventually win Mary's hand (*RH* 350). To a later perspective, this patient inertia will look more like a relationship of what Robert Drake calls queer "companionability"[38] – a type of relationship recycled in James not only in "The Beast in the Jungle" (John Marcher–May Bartram) but also in *The Ambassadors* (Strether–Maria Gostrey) and "The Jolly Corner" (Spencer Brydon–Alice Staverton). But at the time of *Roderick Hudson*, readers focused their misgiving instead on James's formulaic resort (as it seemed) to Roderick's death as "a hackneyed expedient for getting rid of a troublesome hero." Readers did not perceive that James had written himself into a corner, but rather that an ending "beautiful, powerful, tragical" would only have been more so if James had not anesthetized "Rowland's anguish," "repress[ing] any grief" on the part of the reader (*CH* 42, 37). There was no whiff of a suspicion that the motive for this authorial detachment might be a hesitation (however unconscious) about either the homosexual resonance or the heterosexual trajectory of the tale.

Does this demonstration serve to write homosexuality *out* of James's first acknowledged novel – to degay or unqueer it, so to speak? On the contrary, my reading sees as potently proleptic the relationship between *Roderick Hudson* – its characterization, plotting, and delineation of romantic affiliations – and later seminal events in the cultural representation of homosexuality: literary works by Wilde and Cather, but also the international melodrama of Wilde's personal punishment itself. *Roderick Hudson* is not "about" homosexuality so much as it is *about* to be about homosexuality; it is thus in the deepest sense a pre-text – a template waiting to be filled out with details both baneful and liberatory – that will gather in new meanings as part of a larger plot, both in the fiction and in the social worlds of late Victorian and modern Anglo-America. And it

is also (but *only*) in this broader historical sense that one is warranted in claiming *Roderick Hudson* as a "gay novel," acknowledging the long and unpredictable afterlife of literary texts under the endless modernizings of culture.

James's subsequent fiction of the 1870s continued to explore the problems of modern manhood and to demonstrate just how widely their accumulating meanings could vary, depending appreciably on the reader's ability – and willingness – to follow up on muted narrative cues. As a transitional work in his movement toward the more complex and cogent writings of the next decade, *The American* (1877) does not warrant extensive consideration. But it does bear noting that James presented a protagonist, in Christopher Newman, pointedly unlike Roderick Hudson, indeed with the dubious distinction of embodying conventional gender performance for the American male, "fill[ing] out the national mould" with an "almost ideal completeness" by showing mettle in war, canniness and "good nature" in commercial dealings, and zeal (if not tremendous acumen) in the business of marrying. Newman was even a "physically . . . fine" specimen, albeit one that does not seem calculated to excite, or even particularly invite, the desiring gaze (*AM* 18). Moreover, as one perceptive reviewer noted, the novel seems to take a "malign delight" in criticizing, rather than celebrating, Newman's attributes (*CR* 62). Both his "aesthetic headache" at the Louvre and his belief that "an undue solicitude for 'culture'" amounts to a sort of "silly dawdling at the station" among "women, foreigners, and other unpractical persons" come across as virtually a preemptive parody of Hemingwayesque manliness (*AM* 17, 67).

For present purposes the most telling feature of *The American* is its rendering of Newman's practical defeat by a family of the European aristocracy – his conspicuous failure to capture a trophy wife abroad – as an intensely physical and publicized suffering that seems in excess of any apparent dramatic requirements. As even some contemporaries noted, not only Newman but the very body of James's text "break[s] down sadly," becoming "lame and impotent" in the end (*AM* 394, 400). Along with readers such as Scott Derrick, that is, I view *The American* as "a distanced and ironic critique of [normative] manhood," and yet also as a critique that James consistently distanced himself from in later commentary, leaving the text to speak for itself – and mainly indirectly – on behalf of unconventional masculinities like his own.[39] Nonetheless, it bears emphasis in passing that the novel performed an important space-clearing operation for James, in both personal and narrative terms. Newman and the gender style he embodied had to be strenuously cudgeled down in order to prepare for a figure that

would only proliferate (as poor Roderick could not) in James's imagination: the gay aesthete adumbrated in that charmingly "importunate anomaly" Felix Young of *The Europeans* (*EU* 88).

> The relations of the sexes [in Hawthorne's period] were neither more nor less than what they usually are in American life, excellent. (Henry James, *Hawthorne*, 1879)

What Scott Derrick convincingly hears as a "hollow-sounding" insistence on "overwhelming heterosexual interests" in *The American* returns in a different guise in *The Europeans*.[40] Although James could not fully hide his distaste for the national stereotype of masculinity expressed in the character of Christopher Newman, he was well aware that many readers disagreed with him, and as an author "scribbling for lucre" and for a larger part of the fiction market, he had to feed that public appetite in order to feed himself. In a well-known letter to William Dean Howells in the spring of 1877, James promised to atone for the "evaporated marriage" of his "impossible couple" in *The American* (Newman and Claire de Cintré) by producing a tale so teeming with radiant couples as to "fairly put your readers[']s eyes out." The middle-class, middle-brow readers of Howells's *Atlantic Monthly*, James implied, had a relish for the "vulgar sop" of happily-ever-after heterosexuality (*L* 11: 104–6), or what Forster would later refer to (but also himself capitulate to) as "the idiotic use of marriage as a finale."[41]

Throughout his preview of *The Europeans* for Howells, James alleviates his sense of impending complicity in the dominant discourse by resorting to camp, already a mode of self-exemption that both facilitated and complicated literary expression for gay authors. "Camp is ironic about prohibition," as Hugh Stevens succinctly says, yet expressive complexities arise because, as a subcultural or borderline idiom, campy ironies do not communicate unless the reader has a kindred sensibility; the "voice" of the author can be heard only if the reader understands its play of significance.[42] Or as Koestenbaum puts it, in terms congenial to the political thrust of Jamesian camp, the auditor's sense of uplift derives from feeling "*chosen*, solicited" to witness "the depletion of cultural monuments" and authorized to fill "degraded artifacts to the brim with [other] meanings" – including, in this case, the monumental cultural artifact of marriage.[43] At the same time, adds still another explicator, Henning Bech, camp must always balance against the pitfall of dehumanizing its targets or fundamentally "threatening their dignity"; its objective, as social critique, is to highlight something "grotesque, yet also a little touching" in normative life, or its solicitation will fail by alienating.[44] If as I am suggesting this nuanced mode of camp

was already the keynote of James's letter to Howells, it seems doubtful that Howells would have detected all the subtler notes of his friend's resistance to the creative task at hand, much as he might have joined James in condescending to popular taste, increasingly associated with the female reader. Yet the extent of James's resistance, as well as his sense of writing under compulsion, can be read both in his proposed *multiplication* of the number of weddings to take place in the new novel (Howells had merely asked for "at least one marriage"[45]) and in his almost flippant invocation of idyll, a forecast of "maidens pair[ing] off with swains" in the midst of "a vaporous rosy cloud" (*L* 11: 106).

This blend of exaggeration and levity appears, as well, in James's sketching of the catalyst or agent who was to instigate the novel's matrimonial frenzy. James vowed to invent a youth "of a Bohemianish pattern" whose superabundant "gayety" would bear out the character name eventually assigned to him, Felix Young, and whose "amatory powers" would be equally "boundless," making him at once a supreme object and a veritable engine of heterosexual desire in the story's antebellum New England: "*All* the women fall in love with him (and he with them . . .)." Yet Felix Young would woo only one woman, James reassured Howells, after which he would drift back to Europe, inferably to the Latin quarter of Paris – "(*with his bride, oh yes!*)" (*L* 11: 106).

The brackets that James places around his projection of a Felix "falling in love" with a circle of palpitating maidens ("and he with them") but then carrying off a solitary bride ("oh yes!") seem confessive, as if betraying afterthoughts, or possibly James simply means to sustain the self-distancing note of frivolity on the subject of marriage. Much more so than in the previous two novels, one suspects, the representation of resistance to gender norms will have the effect of registering an early model of sexual dissidence. At the level of gender performance, the character of Felix fleshed out in *The Europeans* is notably "not engaged in any recognised business," but instead represents the social type of the strolling actor, the musician (he has been a fiddler), or anyone busily "plying a pencil" (as he is first seen) to produce "strange-looking figures," including an author like James himself (*EU* 88, 37). Felix inscribes the artist, that is, who is essentially positioned outside of the very economies – commercial, military, and marital – in which Christopher Newman had sought to define himself as a masculine subject. For the period of the novel's action, the 1840s, Felix is in fact a painter of the avant-garde whose studio features the "gleam of three or four pictures" of nudes, "fantastic and surprising" to the Puritanical Mr. Brand (*EU* 160). By now James had definitely caught up with *Studies*

in the History of the Renaissance, exploiting the historical novel's advantage of hindsight to construct Felix as *anticipating* the Paterian "rehabilitation of . . . the body, the senses," in Anglo-American art.[46]

Also unlike Newman, Felix is not *the* American but rather *an* American by way of Sicily and France, and a diluted one at that. Here, too, one observes a small but meaningful development in James's thinking about his character-type, for whereas the sketch for Howells had conceived of Felix as "com[ing] back" to the United States, suggesting a native or a familiar inhabitant, the novel furnishes him with such a substantial European pedigree and self-styling (as the book's title indicates) that his extended American family feel they are confronting an irreducible "foreigner of some sort" (*L* 11: 106; *EU* 54). But of which sort? The vagueness of the Wentworths' impression of Felix reflects mainly on the provinciality of these earnest relatives, for whom he might as well be – as his future bride Gertrude takes him to be – Prince Camaralzaman of *The Arabian Nights*, newly arrived from the Isles of Khaledan. Yet it is not merely Gertrude Wentworth's limited horizon that makes her fuzzy on the details of Felix's foreignness, nor is it simply her enchantment with this "beautiful young man . . . dropped from the clouds" that inspires her to translate him into a creature of Orientalist fable. Rather, here one encounters one of James's early experiments in obscuring the national-cultural specificity of a certain masculinity in order to liberate it, as much as possible, from systems of sexual regulation that are intricately bound up with national norms and needs. That which falls from the clouds, a "wonderfully handsome" young god materialized as a man, may also be able, under sufficient pressure, to resolve itself *back* into vapor – in James's later works, if not here (*EU* 52).

It is no coincidence, then, on this view, that Felix himself actively resists efforts to classify him, professing to be one of those "vagabonds" who "can't tell" about "their country, their religion, their profession" – a strategic indeterminacy that will soon point toward other dimensions of gender alterity in James (*EU* 54–5). Felix's masculine differentness is further apparent in the quality of his physical beauty, in which a "delicate finish of feature" combines with a "light moustache" to suggest a buoyant androgyny, a "brilliantly healthy nature" (*EU* 38, 94). With a countenance "not at all serious," little appetite for enterprise, and an unfailingly "gay-sounding" voice, the character's transparent narrative task is to rehearse James's impeachment of the "painful view of life" as a "discipline," with "very little . . . for the senses," already prominent in both *Roderick Hudson* and *The American* (especially in the portrait of Reverend Babcock);[47] yet these same attributes had already begun to drift, to James's increasing awareness, into

the zone of Anglo-American discourses on homosexuality (*EU* 38, 92–3, 60).

In all of these respects, although preordained to bristle with sex appeal in the normative sense, Felix Young builds upon the characterization of Roderick Hudson to suggest a first viable prototype of the gay aesthete in James's canon. As foreshadowed in James's epistolary sketch for Howells, Young appears very much under the aspect of camp, which relies on "some mismatch . . . some incredibility between what a thing purports to be and what it is, between surface and essence" – surface being a key operational site for the "camouflage-demanding" nature of gay life, especially in the period of social history that James and his young *bon vivant* are entering.[48] This prescription from Henning Bech seems particularly fitting in Felix's case, and James's overtness to Howells about the in-credibility of the youth's romantic motives – their incongruity with what lies beneath his gleaming heterosexual surface – carries over into the novel proper in Felix's pervasive aroma of devil-may-care aestheticism. For the same reason, the figure of Young becomes subject to narrative controls, or to market controls insinuated into the text through the conduit of editor Howells. If Young's makeup includes that "little [bit] of the Bohemian" that will turn up again in "The Author of 'Beltraffio,'" and that will more clearly begin to connote homosexuality for the Anglo-American audience as the 1880s progress, the dialogue that James supplies in *The Europeans* carefully situates Felix as "not so much of a Bohemian as you think," indeed as capable of "pass[ing] for a gentleman" in dubious European subcultures (*EU* 39, 182).[49] Recall that Felix and his auditors, especially if taken to be genuine antebellum characters, would have associated "Bohemians," in this usage, with gypsies based on the ethnogeographical myth that the Roma had once resided in Bohemia. In other words, Felix's air of the exotic owed something to his very rootlessness or mysterious national-cultural bearings.

Yet this tension, in James's character, between a murky, possibly risqué past and a self-conscious effort to buff up his genteel credentials did not go unnoticed: if reviewers generally found Felix infectiously charming – "the apostle . . . of happiness as a creed" – he also came across (for that very reason) as potentially antisocial; "sinfully positive and joyous," he seemed all too practiced and expert for the cross-cultural errand of "beguil[ing]" his American interlocutors into "the dark ways of European Bohemianism" (*CR* 56, 59, 63). At a minimum, it must have occurred to James's readers (as it does to the suspicious New Englanders in the novel) that a man who has "passed" for a gentleman before might in fact *still* be passing, performing straight and upright manhood rather than embodying it more authentically.

Perhaps most intriguing in this respect, James assigns to Felix's own sister, the shrewd, theatrical Baroness Münster, a serious doubt as to whether his "eternal gaiety" is not actually "an affectation, a *pose*," and his push to "turn American" and marry "properly" merely the clever performance of "a highly successful comedian" – another version of Roderick's "excellent mimic," that is, miming the very norms of the New England that Roderick had fled (*EU* 153, 155).

Thus *The Europeans*, and its felicitous young man, can be placed within an evolving cultural framework of gender and sexuality that would look very different after the turn of the decade. A product of the 1870s, *The Europeans* belongs with *Roderick Hudson* as a work "poised on the threshold of a threshold," in Stevens's phrase, inasmuch as a pathologized homosexual identity, its implication with Anglo-American aestheticism, and its complicated fate within an increasingly strict regulatory environment would be more fully elaborated only in the 1880s. Yet just as James was dimly feeling his way into that social future in *Roderick Hudson*, "explor[ing] the cost of relinquishing same-sex attachment"[50] even before the prohibitive pressure on such attachments became highly systematic, *The Europeans* flirts with a type of masculinity notably at variance with normative designs and desiderata: aesthetical, winningly narcissistic (occasionally "a little irritating" to others), detached from standard modes of manly endeavor, associated with what Pater called "the pride of the human form" (with its homoerotic resonances), and obscurely versed in the "dark ways" of living attributed to decadent European settings (*EU* 154).[51] It is standard Jamesian practice, it should be noted, that such significations must *stay* shrouded, fabrications of rumor rather than tangible facts, indeed all the way to the very late tale "The Jolly Corner" (1908); there it is always *others* who impute to Spencer Brydon a European lifestyle "barely decent," a wandering in "strange paths and worship[ing of] strange gods," a scandalous "surrender to sensations" – the same queerly inflected diction that will factor in the ripened camp consciousness of *The Ambassadors* (*THJ* 322, 324). By extension, in *The Europeans* it is not *necessarily* the case that suggestive speculations and veiled hints about Felix Young's character correspond with the facts of his personal history, and James seems less concerned to delve, verify, or represent those facts than to study (and to stimulate in readers) the processes of attribution by which character is constructed. On this view, what homosexuality there "is" in the Jamesian text generally lies most palpably in the projections – and perhaps in the secreted or disavowed desires – of putatively normal readers, both readers of the text and readers of social signifiers inscribed in the text.

In order to make his *jeu d'esprit* of heterosexual "success" play at all for the intended audience, James had to warrant Young's legitimacy and gentility as a suitor against any suspicion of a lurking tendency toward turpitude. To be sure, contemporary readers were invited to smile at the parochial austerity of antebellum New England, and to congratulate themselves on being "almost inevitably more cultivated . . . more Europeanised in advance, more cosmopolitan" – in a word, more modern – but James (as well as Howells) recognized just how relative and limited that modernness really was (*LC* 1: 442). Any evidence that Felix had ever crossed the line into homosexual escapade or other forms of experiential extravagance would have chilled American readers' sympathy decisively. It was with some relief, then, that reviewers judged the novel's rhetorical tenor (like that of Felix himself) to carry a redemptive "air of gentlemanliness," with only James's "finished elegance of style" to suggest his own kinship with the graceful young man in his narrative (*CR* 60, 53). As the ultimate security, for both the character and the success of the book, Felix Young falls victim to one of the many marriages that James had promised to Howells and to the readers whom Howells both represented and catered to. To satisfy a broad popular audience, that is, the "loose fish" Felix is caught up in the meshes of convention (*EU* 182), ensuring that the novel ends, as one reviewer wrote, "amidst the polyphonous peals of marriage bells" (*CR* 51). Symptomatically, the reviewer's phrase recalls James's initial campiness – his forecast of "maidens" and "swains" coupling with reckless abandon – only to corrupt it with sentimental applause.

As I will show in the next chapter, James would revive, and instrumentally revise, this promising masculine type in Gabriel Nash of *The Tragic Muse*, who successfully *remains* a loose fish – or rather, a "merman wandering free" of the networks of marriage and much else – and who eventually vanishes from the scene of Anglo-American bourgeois life altogether, his sexual ambiguity intact (*TM* 117). "I melt very often," Felix Young informs his fiancée, Gertrude, but then he vows, reassuringly, that "there is always something left of me" – some saving "solidity" (*EU* 67). By contrast, Nash will "melt" from the narrative of normative culture for good, maintaining the kind of "perfectly elastic independence" that was applauded, but necessarily sacrificed, in the characterization of Young (*CH* 52). Most importantly, James knew exactly where he was headed in *The Europeans*, no longer suffering any illusions (as he had in *The American*) about the nature of his story or its value to his development as man and author. Before the year 1878 was out, he had concurred in William James's dismissal of his "empty" novel, implicitly granting that the character of Felix was destined

to be "a failure . . . a shadow," and authorizing friends as being "quite right to hate" the newlywed Gertrude Young: "The offhand marrying at the end was commandé . . . part of the bargain with Howells that . . . there should be distinct matrimony. So I did [hit] it off mechanically in the closing paragraphs" (*CH* 67; *L* 11: 190, 193). Employing the cold, calculating language of keeping deals and mass-producing matrimony, James could not be more blatant about the fact that his heart was not in the least in his story. Thus it may be that when Felix Young, expatriated anew, returns to New England at the very end of the novel to celebrate still other weddings, his "gaiety confess[es] to no change" (*EU* 194) – but eventually it would, in the kindred figure of Gabriel Nash.

2

The elusive queerness of "queer comrades": The Tragic Muse *and "The Author of 'Beltraffio'"*

> The scene [of *The Tragic Muse*] will be in London . . . in a very different monde, considerably the "Aesthetic" . . . It won't be improper; strange to say, considering the elements. (Henry James, *Letters*, 1888)

> Was Gabriel Nash vice? Was Mrs. Dallow virtue?
> (William Dean Howells, review of *The Tragic Muse*, 1890)

This chapter centers on *The Tragic Muse*, James's 1890 novel about the artistic vocation and the fate of art in a debasing material world, taking a special interest in the character of Gabriel Nash, by common consent the premier "Oscar Wilde figure" in the Jamesian canon.[1] In a way that bears watching, Nash himself consistently thwarts the efforts of others to fix the label "aesthete" (or any other) upon him: "Ah, there's one of the formulas! That's walking in one's hat!" (*TM* 27). Nash's point is not that he is *not* an aesthete, since he clearly fits the mold, but rather that the attribution can scarcely be benign, since it participates in a reductive logic of specification that seeks to taxonomize social identities and, if possible, to control them. James's diffuse novel follows the development of two artistic aspirants, Miriam Rooth, who eventually conquers the London stage by exercising the "unscrupulous . . . wanton" willpower of the born artist, and Nicholas Dormer, who violates "innumerable vows and pledges" of family tradition by renouncing a career in Parliament for one in portrait painting (*TM* 240, 298). Gabriel Nash functions as the book's kibbitzer and blithe spirit, championing Paterian sensation over bourgeois banality, beckoning the dormant Dormer to the rewarding life of art, and analyzing the artist's plight in a vulgar, commercialized modernity with all of James's own fervor but little of his periodic despair. As James's closest approximation to the "Wildean aesthete,"[2] Nash will repay study, particularly since that stereotype would soon merge with another – the homosexual – through an intricate process of cultural articulation and social regulation. *The Tragic Muse* bears the markings not only of an author with deeply mixed feelings

about male–male desire, including his own, but also (and therefore) of the novel's provenance midway between the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, featuring Henry Labouchère's infamous rider penalizing "gross indecency" between men, and the 1895 trials that invoked this statute to *re*figure the Oscar Wilde figure forever.

All the same, the Anglo-American reviewers who detected "a clever sketch of Oscar Wilde" in Nash, James's whimsical "apostle of being" and "artistic epicureanism" (phrases showing Nash's kinship with Felix Young of *The Europeans*), could not have meant all that Richard Ellmann, Regenia Gagnier, and Joseph Litvak mean in agreeing that Nash constitutes a "veiled portrait of Wilde himself" (*CR* 238, 221, 224).[3] As Alan Sinfield observes, latter-day criticism runs the risk of viewing Wilde – or even the less vivid John Addington Symonds, whose importance for James I will also explore – as "always-already queer," when in actuality it would take the high visibility, high intensity trials of 1895 to convert the "vaguely disconcerting nexus of effeminacy . . . idleness, immorality, luxury, insouciance, decadence and aestheticism" of the previous two decades into the social type that E. M. Forster memorably evoked as "an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort."[4] If James's novel participates in this process of conversion, it nonetheless antedates its decisive events, which is perhaps why reviewers of *The Tragic Muse* concentrated more on formal issues, such as James's skill in representing Nash's "flitting . . . metaphysical person"; if they made any overt complaint against the character, it was to regret "the inanities indulged in by this modern type of humanity," while sympathizing with an Anglo-American public that was "struggling to grasp" his aesthetical doctrines (*CR* 224, 227, 238). Apparently no one yet perceived the behavior of "Nick's queer comrade" (in the novel's phrase) as signifying just *that* queerness in any cogent, unambiguous sense (*TM* 44).

Yet "queer," I have begun to show, had a restless life in late Victorian usage, being "powerful *because* it is multiple and ambiguous," as Philip Horne notes.[5] In this respect, Nash's queerness may actually have gained salience for being inchoate, not a source of coherent suspicion but a cause of nagging irresolution that *prevented* suspicion from cohering, in a game of interpretation with considerably higher cultural stakes than had been the case with Felix Young or Roderick Hudson. In a way that suggestively mimes the response of Nick Dormer's family and fiancée – the "high, executive" dowager Lady Agnes, two sheltered sisters, and the politically ambitious young widow Julia Dallow (*TM* 31) – the novel's first readers testified to a general uneasiness about Nash, calling him "an unsolved problem," wishing him away as "a superfluous figure altogether," or casting doubt on

his "nebulous, unreliable" moral bearings (*CR* 226, 232, 240). To borrow James's typically rich diction, such readers seemed to concur with Lady Agnes that her son Nick should be "making sure of his seat" in Parliament by marrying Julia Dallow (who controls the ominous-sounding borough of Harsh) rather than pursuing his "nast[y] hankerings" after art, or opening his studio – "that unnatural spot," as one sister puts it – to Nash's frequent incursions (*TM* 54, 364, 367). Without sharing Julia's sense of competition with Nash or her revulsion toward "that horrid man," reviewers clearly sided with her views on the masculine duty to engage in productive labor – "Pray, isn't a gentleman to do anything, to be anything?" – thus siding against Nash's credo of sublime inutility (*TM* 303, 79). This encompasses the "career" he makes out of merely "feeling," his perverse social lexicon *à la* Wilde ("failure" is "having something to show"; "actions" are "all the things I don't do"), and his exclusive pursuit, in one reader's impression, of "loung[ing] and gratify[ing] his sense of the beautiful" (*TM* 123, 26–7; *CR* 233). Lost on such critics was Nash's role in James's running satire on the "ordered void" of Philistine England, for (again like the Dormer women) they seemed distracted by a prevision of "mysterious depths of contamination" lurking beneath Nash's aestheticism or of other types of inversion that his "twaddle of the under-world" might condone (*TM* 325, 385, 26). In a word, there was something fishy about this man whose only professed "trade" was that of "the merman wandering free" (*TM* 117).

A further source of concerned speculation was Nash's nationality, which refracted questions about his ethics that in turn drifted back into anxiety about his sex/gender makeup. Like Felix Young of *The Europeans*, Nash managed to strike practically every "reader," both within the novel and without, as a "foreigner of some sort" – but again the question was, of *which* sort? Reviews in American newspapers, from New York to San Francisco, did not hesitate to name Wilde outright as James's model, and thus to fortify the idea of Nash as Anglo-Irish or more importantly as *not* American; British reviewers, to the contrary, tended not only to avoid Wilde's name but to disown the character of Nash for "talk[ing] exactly like an American novel" or for exhibiting a social forwardness "much more like certain types of Americans" than like a well-bred Englishman (*CR* 226, 230). This maneuvering to place Nash (or rather to displace him) later spilled over into academic criticism, with Ellmann, for instance, basing his claim for the character's probable Irishness (and his further correspondence with Wilde) on such meager data as Nash's "rare variety of English" or eccentric gesticulations.[6] Yet it is important to notice, once again, that Nash's alien status is mainly a product of attribution, an outgrowth of his *alienating*

effect on "normal" observers like Dormer's sister Biddy, for example, and that his performances work against conclusiveness: "[Biddy] *would* have taken [Nash] for a foreigner, but that the words proceeding from his mouth . . . imposed themselves as a rare variety of English" (*TM* 20; emphasis added). The fact that James's later revisions of the novel made Nash appear to be not simply "a foreigner" but "*very* foreign" did not clarify matters so much as it heightened readers' curiosity about the character while at the same time aggravating the task of identifying his origins.[7] In other words, such interpretative exercises miss the larger point, which is that James (like Nash) did not *want* his readers to know too much, or to have unnecessarily precise information on aspects of personal identity, as a defining feature of his sexual/textual politics.

As suggested previously, James persistently explored and experimented with the ways in which deviations from norms of hetero masculinity interacted with deviance from national-cultural norms – both as a factor of social regulation and as a field of opportunity for personal and narrative dissidence. In fact, James's little discussed tale "Collaboration," soon to follow *The Tragic Muse* in 1892, critically dissects the discourse of nationalist xenophobia (in this instance, a symptom of the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War) in what appears to be a veiled counterattack against the homophobia that hounds intimate "collaborations" between artistic men – men such as Nash and Dormer. Like *The Tragic Muse*, this slightly later story also targets "communities fatally unintelligent" about Beauty, taking particular exception to persons so committed to "idiotic nationalities" that they smell scandal when a Frenchman and a German plan to create an opera together. The vehement terms of opprobrium called down upon the two men in question – including "unnatural alliance," "unholy union," "monstrous collaboration," and "perversity" – correspond with the similar, if more lightly treated, repugnance that the Nash–Dormer friendship provokes, suggesting that James may indirectly be writing about the predicament of homosexuality in his protest against the "bigotry" born of nationalism, a more presentable regime of difference and division for fiction to pursue.[8] Here I will argue that the rhetorical project in *The Tragic Muse* is precisely to obscure social identification (by nation, sexuality, even gender) to the point of illegibility, possibly the only strategy available to men (or women) who wished to elude the new sexological order and the sociopolitical formations it primarily served.

I will also suggest a more personal or biographical angle to James's handling of Gabriel Nash. To the degree that the queerness of his "queer comrade" is not quite ours, yet warily anticipates developments in modern

identity politics and social vocabularies, Nash's apparent sexuality chimes with what is known of his author's own erotic inclinations, or what Lynda Zwinger has playfully called "the sexuality Henry James's sex would have had had he had any."[9] Perhaps for this reason James, too, seemed somewhat leery of possible "contamination" in offering the character, leaving Nash (as the *Manchester Guardian* observed) a "shadowy, fantastic [figure] whose rank in the writer's estimation it is hard to fix" (*CR* 225). If Nick Dormer catches "exactly the tone of Mr. Gabriel Nash" in his good-natured, irresolute resistance to normative expectations, the novel itself also tends to be more lyrical than grave in its critique of the "settled equilibrium" of marriage, the patriarchal family, and the stultifying standards of gentlemanly endeavor (*TM* 70, 347). Even more telling, though, is James's insistence on Nash's insubstantiality as a social or even a corporeal presence. Nash seems poorly matched to take on "a much more positive quantity" such as Julia Dallow (*TM* 52), his own trademark being precisely an "unclassified condition, the lack of all position as a name in well-kept books." How could he embody *any* type of sexuality worth bothering or fretting about, the text implies, when he is as "transient" as "vapour or murmuring wind or shifting light" (*TM* 505)? As Christopher Lane has seen, *The Tragic Muse* found James at cross-purposes, mobilizing his merry aesthete as a calculated affront to the heterosexualized order of things while counterplotting an "erasure of homosexual meaning" that finally requires the character to be "expelled . . . as a trope of psychic instability."[10] By the same token, however, the studiously cultivated ethereality and eventual disappearing act of this "queer" young man contained implicit – if impossible – advice for other men of "the Oscar Wilde sort" as a new decade of surveillance and punishment dawned: go in for manner, and try not to matter.

> Peace be to you on Henry James. If you like his work the man himself is nothing in it one way or the other. (Flannery O'Connor, *The Habit of Being*)

For a proper approach to *The Tragic Muse*, one must leave Gabriel Nash momentarily in suspense (his natural state) and attempt to gauge the author's more general stance, in the years surrounding the novel, toward both the fact of homosexual existence and its situation in an evolving discursive regime. Perhaps the first thing to be said, even at this late date, is that James's exposure to homosexuality was strikingly extensive and increasingly tolerant, if only selectively intimate. I am not trying to establish a queer-by-association model, but merely to dispute the periodically recycled claim, following the lead of Ellmann's biased account, that James considered homosexuality a "contemptible way of life."[11] Men considerably more

homophilic than James were turned off by Wilde – examples include Edmund Gosse, Marc-André Raffalovich, and Sherwood Anderson, all to be discussed shortly – or were fearful of being publicly linked with Wilde's milieu, especially after his arrest, which produced a "general shudder" not only among gentlemen in London (as James reported) but throughout all of Anglo-American society. Rather than holding homosexuality in contempt, James held it at arm's length, close enough for careful inspection but not too close for comfort. Or to put it more in terms of private epistemology, in the broad period leading up to 1895, homosexuality constituted a phenomenon somewhere between "the real" and "the romantic" (partaking of both) in his well-known distinction between the modes of cognitive purchase underwriting the novel in English: "The real represents . . . the things we cannot possibly *not* know, sooner or later, in one way or another . . . The romantic stands . . . for the things . . . that reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire" (*LC* 2: 1062–3).

On the one hand, James could not *not* have known a great deal about English sexual politics, for he was acquainted with nearly all of the principals in the sordid drama of Wilde's downfall that began after the 1885 criminal code revisions, starting with Henry Labouchère himself, whose aggressive politics James discussed with his sister Alice and whose journalistic exposés struck James as rudely "star[ing] one in the face" (*N* 84).[12] James was socially familiar both with George Curzon, a former friend of Wilde's at Oxford who publicly humiliated him when *The Picture of Dorian Gray* appeared, and with the important critic W. E. Henley, whose review of *Dorian Gray*, as Richard Dellamora notes, designated it as reading matter that was fit for only "outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraph boys" – a reference to the homosexual scandal known as the Cleveland Street affair (1889–90).[13] As James's correspondence shows, he was especially close to Archibald Philip Primrose, Lord Rosebery, who became embroiled in the Wilde debacle and was attacked (both verbally and with a dog-whip) by Wilde's antagonist, the Marquess of Queensberry, as a homosexual fellow traveler. The figure of Frank Lockwood, the Solicitor-General whose zealous prosecution turned the tide against Wilde, played an instrumental part in James's inspiration for the 1899 story "The Real Right Thing" (*N* 265–6). James also followed closely the movements of "the atrocious Alfred D[ouglas]," as he came to regard Wilde's companion Bosie, and became a genuine friend of Robert Ross, credited with being the first young man to have made conquest of Wilde's same-sex affections (*L* IV: 731). In 1894 James would write to Gosse sympathizing with the plight of "poor tragic Bobby [Ross]," whose confidences about his personal "trouble[s]"

convinced James that England was sliding back into an "ugly age of . . . legal and judicial history" – a foreboding amply confirmed by Wilde's experience the following year.[14]

Among other gay artists and aesthetes, James crossed paths in this period with the sculptor Lord Ronald Gower ("not so handsome as his name"), whom the early gay-archivist George Ives listed in his dossier on the "eminent band of Inverts" in late Victorian culture (*L* 11: 99).[15] James's calendar for the late 1880s also included Violet Paget, who wrote under the pseudonym Vernon Lee and who both delighted him and surprised his acquired biases about gender by proving to have "one of the best minds I know"; "disputatious and paradoxical, but a really superior talker," she was, in fact, a sort of misrecognized female double (*L* 111: 181). To James's chagrin, Lee/Paget had dedicated her novel *Miss Brown* (1884) to him, a work that formed part of what Kathy Alexis Psomiades has well analyzed as her "theory of the aesthetic grounded in the congress between female bodies."[16] As for the Russian Francophile Raffalovich, author of the anti-Wildean study *Uranism* [i.e., Homosexuality] *and Uni-sexuality* (1896), James would later qualify their early acquaintance as "very limited," but Ellmann reports on social conjunctions between the two men during the 1880s, and as late as 1913–14, that James would still be welcoming Raffalovich to Lamb House and thanking him for "honeyed words" in praise of James's writings (*L* IV: 693; *LL* 531).[17] It seems likely that James would have known Raffalovich's verses in *Tuberose and Meadowsweet* (1885), which, as Ed Madden shows, contributed to "a brief flowering of homosexual subcultures in literary London and Oxford."[18] Also in 1885, James hosted Count Robert de Montesquiou, of Huysmans and Proust fame, who came "yearning to see London aestheticism" (*L* 111: 93). Though James was sometimes alienated by this group – they could be "queer, uncanny . . . disagreeable," as he described the composer Theophilus Marzials – he was also intrigued, accepting male and female homosexuality as part of a diverse and vivid Victorian socialscape (*L* 11: 181). [19] Not least in the realm of his acquaintance, of course, was Oscar Wilde himself, familiar to James as society phenom, potential rival, and antipodal creature since 1882.[20]

This extraordinary commerce with cultural arbiters from the highest ranks of government, journalism, and the arts, coupled with James's omnivorous "craving for gossip" (as Gosse termed it), gives warrant to Wendy Graham's claim that the James who began writing *The Tragic Muse* in 1887–8 was "fully attuned to the regulatory strain" impinging on British sexual dissidence.[21] At the same time, it is worth querying the texture of that attunement, especially given the inflationary temptation to recast James as

having run with "a fast European circle of gay men," in the offhand words of a recent biographer.[22] Here Sinfield's warning against anachronistic misconstructions seems even more crucial than with Wilde, for James's manner of engaging the social and personal fact of same-sex passion (by no means a rare manner) was furtive and intermittent, vacillating between detection and deflection, flirtation and flight. Litvak's apt impression of James as having been both "prepared for the Wildean solicitation" of *Dorian Gray* and prepared *against* it – and of *The Tragic Muse* as a kind of "intertextual foreplay" under layers of vagueness – indicates an authorial mind in which "the real" of homosexuality often subsisted by means of circuit and subterfuge.[23]

Moreover, if James never overcame his sense of "fundamental *differentness*" in England, as Edith Wharton claimed, but instead remained as Forster less sympathetically described him – a "well placed" foreigner, who "registered . . . a gratified awe" at "the airs and graces of the great" – rarely has a cultural outsider striven so hard to get in, and to stay in.[24] James's approaches to, or intimations about, homosexuality underwent intense public conditioning, being governed by dictates of genteel decorum as much as by fear of legal sanction – or better, being subject to a nominally "voluntary" code of conduct increasingly reinforced by threat of law and withering scandal. It was completely characteristic of James, for instance, to resort to men's club humor when thanking Gosse for passing on a copy of Symonds's underground treatise *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (1891): to call its plea for the acceptance of homosexuality "a queer place to plant the standard of duty" (his "queer" marking another moment in the process of shifting usage), to imagine the "capital sport" that would ensue if Symonds attracted "a band of the emulous," and then to sign off to Gosse, "Yours – if I may safely say so! – ever, H. J." (*L* III: 398). Yet by 1895, with the first trial of "the wretched O. W." underway, such jokes would suddenly turn deadly serious, and James, returning yet another batch of Symonds's writings on homosexuality to Gosse, would reach for the plain brown wrapper: "These are days in which one's modesty is, in every direction, much exposed, and one should be thankful for every veil that one can hastily snatch up" (*L* IV: 12).

But to add this evidence to the picture of Henry James as a frightened "slave to the proprieties" is to concentrate unduly on a single man's emotional makeup rather than to understand how sensitively James was responding to a system bent on instilling fear and mental bondage in certain kinds of men.[25] As Anglo-American culture turned to the mechanism of scandal to make homosexuality appear as the "darkest of perversions . . . as

awful to imagine as blood on the sun,"[26] James's growing self-consciousness about what might be read into his epistolary endearments, and presumably his other modes of association with men, was widely shared. Also in 1895, for instance, the Cambridge scholar Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, so important to Forster's development, received a letter from one of his male "beloveds" that began with the address: "My . . . (mustn't use the words since the Oscar Wilde trial)."[27] It was, in short, a small but significant act of bravery for Dickinson to bring out, in 1896, what James called his "charming little Greek history-book" (*L* IV: 301), which openly advanced Dickinson's "belief that the highest love is homosexual" (thus Forster's preface of 1956).[28] James's own psychic posture cannot be understood simply by watching his coy game with Wilde, which must be placed alongside his more regular, if equally complex, interactions with men of his own more cautious constitution. As I shall show by retracing the course of the loose triangular relation he formed along with Symonds and Gosse, James's care for what men might "safely say" to one another and his penchant for snatching up veils originated before *The Tragic Muse*.

> It is only the man himself who knows (and he knows very indistinctly) with what forces he has to measure himself . . . [and how to solve] the problem of correlating his dominant passion with the facts of existence. (John Addington Symonds, *Memoirs*)

It is popular to cite "The Author of 'Beltraffio' " (1884/5) as an important node in the growth of James's art theory and sexual politics, and specifically – following the notebook "germ" from which the story evolved – as a melodrama of "hysterical aestheticism" grounded in Symonds's domestic troubles (*N* 57). In Jonathan Freedman's summary, James amplified hearsay from Gosse into a tale of horror "in which a mother lets her child die rather than grow up with a homosexual father."[29] From today's perspective, there can be no question that the character Mark Ambient – or Symonds, as freely translated by James into the author of an "aesthetic war-cry" on behalf of "the gospel of art" (*AB* 303)[30] – connotes "a homosexual father." But interestingly, James himself did not notice this connotation – or did not acknowledge it – until Gosse brought it to his attention. In fact, virtual collaboration between James and Gosse first in composing and then in "reading" the story demonstrates how fiction could serve as a vehicle for gradually confessing, or all but confessing, to a common knowledge of same-sex desire that neither man could fully admit to himself.

Pace biographer Fred Kaplan, that is, James's notebook term for Symonds's works – "hyper-aesthetic" – did not yet function in any straightforward way as "a polite synonym for homoerotic," and the proposition

that James knew of Symonds's "divided life" years before "The Author of 'Beltraffio' " simplifies the elaborate social epistemology of these men and their dealings: the delicate folkways of Victorian homosociality.[31] Symonds "had the tendencies confusedly" (in Forster's phrase[32]), and what he himself called his "tyrannous emotion, curbed and suppressed for the most part,"[33] was not immediately apparent in his physical bearing – "a mild, cultured man, with the Oxford perfume," as James recorded him (*L* 11: 102). Indeed, Symonds had somewhat earlier panicked at the advances of a young grenadier ("a strapping fellow in a scarlet uniform") who had read precisely what Symonds's façade of the "slight nervous man of fashion" was supposed to conceal.[34] When James first met Symonds in 1877, the latter was so secretive about his movements that not even "[his] good friend and doctor, John Beddoe," suspected him of dividing his time between the Royal Institution, where he grudgingly delivered lectures on the Renaissance, and a male brothel near the Regent's Park Barracks.[35]

Symonds's published writings, moreover, stressed the "well-deserved discredit" attaching to "Platonic love" – not surprising when one considers the atmosphere of homophobia that first compromised, and then killed, his chances to gain the Oxford chair in poetry.[36] True, Symonds had tentatively sounded Gosse on his "sympathy with the beauty of men," sending him verses on Greek love in testimony to the "root of Calamus within our souls"; yet in the same breath, Symonds also warned Gosse not to make the morbid inference that he supported "perverted sexual passion" as a present-day practice. Gosse, being reticent and conflicted about what he called the "obstinate twist" of "instinctive abnormality" in his own nature, had cause to take Symonds at his word, as well as to keep speculations about Symonds's sexuality to himself, absent an opening from James.[37] In the same vein, although Symonds described the privately printed *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1883) to James's close friend from Boston, Thomas Sergeant Perry, he again underscored his strictly "philosophical interest" in "that unmentionable custom wh[ich] perplexes every student of Plato," and the two American writers – James and Perry – evidently restricted their epistolary gossip about Symonds to the poor health that beset him and his family.[38]

As for James's own letter of overture to the ailing Symonds in Davos in 1884 – professing to share Symonds's "unspeakably tender" feeling for Italy, and urging that "victims of a common passion should sometimes exchange a look" (*L* 111: 29–31) – this verbal gesture involves the would-be interpreter in the same endlessly circular logic of paradox that so complicates attempts to read James's physical affectionateness with other men (which I shall examine later in chapter 4). The language *seems* highly suggestive, as if

James were mobilizing in "Italy" the very motherland of Eros as a none-too-subtle mediating screen to facilitate a dialogue about *other* unspeakable passions that the two men might share in common. Yet the queer desire that is apparently implied gets filtered in the very process of implication. Recalling the French *littérateur* Urbain Mengin's account of James's large repertoire of tactile expressions of warmth, one might say of his intimate entreaty to Symonds that "he would never have done this if [there were] . . . the slightest suggestion of a pursuit of physical love,"[39] yet even if fitting in certain instances, this logic could not be simply extrapolated to rule out sexual possibility in any given exchange. Perhaps more to the point, as James knew better than anyone, it takes a reader to make meaning or to take one's meaning – in some cases, to supply a meaning that the author may not have known (or may not have let himself know) was even "there." In other words, if this letter to Symonds amounts to "textual cruising," as James Creech claims, it does so in the more attenuated, ambiguous sense delineated by Leo Bersani in his discussion of Proustian cruising.[40] To adapt Proust's phrasing, the "looks" that James here invites are "infinitely unlike the glances we usually direct at a person we . . . know or do not know," and precisely because the object of address is neither a familiar *nor* a complete stranger, but rather a specialized intermediate being whose prospective interest in one must be tested not all at once but in stages, given the general atmosphere of interdiction.[41] Or as Raffalovich versified about the careful signifying and "reading" practice among gay men in Victorian culture, "our speech is tuned, and schooled our glance."[42]

Given the likely state of James's *conscious* awareness, then, it is not surprising that his preparatory notes for "The Author of 'Beltraffio' " do not directly refer to Symonds's homosexuality, but instead project a study of his uncongenial and "very typical" modern marriage, in which *religion* is to serve as the arena of familial and social contest. In a move more subtly rehearsed in both *The Tragic Muse* and "Collaboration," the notebook shows James planning to deploy a female character – based on Symonds's "Calvinistic wife" Catherine – as the voice of societal antagonism toward art, thus making the couple's domestic tension emblematize a cultural economy in which aestheticism is "aggravated, made extravagant and perverse" by the persistent censure of (particularly female) "rigid moralist[s]." Like the oppressively married Symonds, that is, but unlike the unmarried and more temperate James, the figure of Mark Ambient was to be "impregnated – even to *morbidness* – with the spirit of Italy, the love of beauty." But even at that, Ambient's "godless ideas" would be secular rather than sexual in kind – with his "absence of Christian hopes" for an afterlife triggering his

wife's panicky sacrifice of their son – and Ambient's unconventionality was not, in any case, to manifest itself in actual deviance: he would be "perfectly decent in life" (*N* 57–8; emphasis added).

Yet godless ideas, like queer ones, have a force all their own. When James proceeded to write the story, his germinal intuition of the hostility between the love of art and earthly pleasure, on one hand, and the duty to marriage and paternity, on the other, grew into unexpected meanings. Ambient turns out to be not "decent" so much as driven to self-censorship by "an extreme dread of scandal"; "strange oppositions" in his "faded and fatigued countenance" reflect an "active past" in which unspecified adventures in the Far East figure prominently; and even Ambient's loyal sister characterizes a certain strand in his thinking as "well, really – rather queer!" Most acutely, his wife Beatrice – as Catherine Symonds is ironically renamed – fears that some "subtle poison," communicated by physical intimacy, will destroy the moral fiber of their boy, whose pet name "Dolcino" seems to show the father's contagion to be already at work (AB 323, 306, 329).[43] By means of a narrative strategy that would become a staple for him, James gestured both vaguely and ominously toward "blanks" in Ambient's history and self-construction that were left for the reader to fill in (*LC* 11: 1188).

Or more accurately, partial blanks. For the tale introduces a character, in the narrator, who was unforeseen in James's notebook, an American dilettante now *recounting* his youthful pilgrimage to Ambient's country home in Surrey, the visit that had culminated in little Dolcino's demise. It is the narrator, more than Ambient, who provides the best index to James's self-distancing from "hyper-aesthetic" men and his muffled recognition of the way in which beauty worship could shade into homosexuality, perhaps compromising his own "unspeakably tender" passions. As James significantly will not do with Gabriel Nash's aesthetical self-indulgence, in "Beltraffio" he openly condescends to the narrator's "little game of new sensations" in England, his habit of seeing everything – but especially the "languid and angelic" Dolcino – in a precious Pre-Raphaelite frame (AB 303, 342). Indeed, the narrator is patently taken to task for idolizing Ambient's "effort to arrive at a [perfect] surface" in his prose, a shallow artistry of "purest distillation[s]" (AB 332). This critique of the two men's aesthetic rapport is still in the key of James's reviews of the 1870s, which had criticized an array of British and continental "advocates of 'art for art' " for polishing up their style while treating morality as something optional and extrinsic to the artwork – "a coloured fluid kept in a big-labelled bottle in some mysterious intellectual closet" (*LC* 11: 157).

But the story's prime value as a precursor to *The Tragic Muse* lies in its strong suggestion, equally strongly disciplined, that such male–male compacts born of fervid aestheticism form a social space amenable to illicit bonding. The narrator reveals himself as infatuated with Ambient ("my heart beat very fast as I saw his handsome face"); he savors his own exemption from the demands of procreation and paternity ("Children are terrible critics"); and he redirects parental impulses by "nurs[ing]" Ambient's manuscripts and battening on Dolcino's "enchanting little countenance" (AB 305, 325, 327, 340). In fact, the narrator inadvertently betrays that it was his own intrusion into Ambient's private sphere and his bald display of adoration for the older artist that precipitated the family tragedy. Beatrice Ambient, once she had been furnished with this apparent proof of the sort of deviance that resulted from her husband's godless ideas, had in effect killed their young son to "prevent Mark from ever [again] touching" him, thereby removing the angelic boy from the narrator's reach as well: "So I never touched Dolcino" (AB 329, 345).[44]

Thus by every implication of Ambient's being – to borrow a phrase for Olive Chancellor of *The Bostonians* (1886), another queer Jamesian figure under wraps[45] – the character seems to embody the "homosexual father" of Freedman's account. Further, Ambient's relation to his young American disciple asks to be read under the sign of queer tutelage, with little Dolcino representing a tragic "victim to . . . the heavy pressure" that is generated by the head-on collision between homosexuality and heteronormativity (*N* 57–8). Yet when Gosse wrote to compliment the author of "The Author of 'Beltraffio' " for capturing the content of J. A. Symonds's sexual "secret," James affected a naïveté almost worthy of the tale's narrator: "Perhaps I *have* divined the innermost cause of J. A. S.'s discomfort – but I don't think I seize . . . exactly the allusion you refer to. I am therefore devoured with curiosity as to this further revelation. Even a postcard (in covert words) would relieve the suspense of the perhaps-already-too-indiscreet – H. J."[46] As is clear from the shuttling rhetoric and the request for "covert words," James really had no need for any further revelation, but was instead, like Gosse, searching for an opening in the "don't ask, don't tell" policy of Victorian manhood in the hope of pursuing a more frank discussion of male–male desire, that "innermost" among the causes of masculine "discomfort." Like Symonds himself, James and Gosse found themselves caught up in a double bind of disclosure and disclaimer, yet trying to collaborate against the silence and the tacitness that made homosexuality an unspeakable "open secret" – that "conceal[ed] the knowledge of the knowledge" of same-sex desire

(in D. A. Miller's phrase) or that kept it, in Gosse's suitably gothic image, "buried alive and conscious, but deprived of speech."[47]

For a measure of how far James would eventually be able to go in giving *overt* words to the physical facts and the social circulation of same-sex passion, one might briefly look ahead to a letter he would write to his young friend Hugh Walpole in 1914, a letter that seems to rehearse his 1884 appeal to Gosse for more information about Symonds. In the later case, James playfully pleads with Walpole for "more detail" than he had originally supplied in his frisky report on the sexual "immorality" of two of their male friends in Edinburgh, whom Philip Horne helpfully identifies as Raffalovich, by then a Dominican brother, and the poet John Gray (become Father Gray), who had left Wilde for Raffalovich in the early 1890s. In a campy tone that I will soon relate to thematics of masculine friendship in *The Ambassadors*, James writes to Walpole: "When you refer to [the two men's] 'immorality on stone [priory] floors,' and with prayerbooks in their hands so long as the exigencies of the situation permit the manual retention of such sacred volumes, I do so want the picture developed and the proceedings authenticated" (*LL* 531). Here one finds no fussy delicacy about being "too indiscreet," as earlier with Gosse, but rather an utter trust in the recipient's common sense of fun in embellishing gossip, as well as an almost salacious delight in conveying James's own mental "picture" – as lively as any "authenticated" account – of masculine "manual" practices that descend from the sacred to the profane.

But my point is that this is a quite different Henry James, writing in 1914. In the period of "Beltraffio," James's "devouring" curiosity about homosexuality was (like that of many other men) powerfully held in check by "the devouring *publicity*" of modern life, as exemplified for him by Labouchère's brand of journalism (*N* 82, 84). What Miriam Rooth of *The Tragic Muse* calls "showing one's self" in order to learn "the truth that turns one inside out" was all well and good for an actress learning her craft, but in the early 1880s the James who would create her character still struggled with residual inhibitions of his antebellum American upbringing and with the social constraints of Englishness (*TM* 110). In the fulness of time, as I will show, James would relinquish his own "rigid moralist" side, partly by means of ironic (and self-ironic) portraits in the later fiction: a youth at Yale (Pemberton in "The Pupil") who "richly suppose[s] himself to be reacting against Puritanism," or an American in Paris (Lambert Strether) who learns to confront his "odious ascetic suspicion of any form of beauty" (*THJ* 192; *A* 118). But before the mid-1880s James largely mistrusted the "brilliant chiaroscuro

of costume and posture" (in a word, theatricality) in authors such as Swinburne (*LC* 1: 1283), saw in Huysmans "all the signs of complete decadence – elaborate & incurable rot," and sustained a need *not* to see how his own vocabulary for aestheticism shaded into both the vitriolic journalese directed against "mock-hysterical aesthetes" and the evolving medical model of homosexual "morbidity" – a model that Symonds would privately denounce as "ludicrously in error . . . more humane, but . . . not less false, than [the conception of homosexuality as] sin or vice."[48] Ambivalent to begin with about his own love of costume and posture, and culturally admonished to pursue an "absolute straightness in style" (in brother William's phrase), Henry James was in a sense still waiting for a character like Gabriel Nash of *The Tragic Muse* to teach him that in a world dominated by homogeneous heterosexual men, "affectation" was "always the charge against a [colorful] personal manner: if you have any at all people think you have too much" (*L* IV: 384; *TM* 120). By painful coincidence, however, Nash's instruction to his author would come just as masculine stylishness was becoming a grounds for heightened suspicion of masculine desire, as well as for a new scope of criminal prosecution.

In keeping with the need for greater personal circumspection, Gabriel Nash's ontology as a social being is markedly insubstantial and paradoxical. Throughout much of the novel he is – like Wilde's Bunbury in *The Importance of Being Earnest* – "somewhere else at present,"[49] with conjecture placing him in regions of the globe that are redolent with exotic sensualism (Samarcand, Granada, and Cashmere are mentioned) and that conveniently foreclose any inspection of his mysterious doings while abroad. Nash's own travel reports have an air of fantastic remoteness and fabrication: "His Sicily might have been the Sicily of *The Winter's Tale*." As for his periodic descents on London, and his activities while home, not even his friend Nick Dormer has ever "detected the process" of "his means, his profession, his belongings," or even the address of his dwelling, since Nash directs all of his correspondence to a fictitious club, wittily named "the Anonymous, in some improbable square" (*TM* 21, 263, 501, 505, 516).

Furthermore, the very terms in which Dormer praises Nash's distinction – he does not "shade off" into other men but remains as "neat as an outline cut out of paper" – imply that Nash maintains the barest minimum of presence (paper-thin) in the social text. He is also evoked as the fragrant "solitary blossom" without the "worldly branch" or any of the "dangling accidents and conditions" that secure most men in English public and domestic life; however, if this exceptional personal character means that "you know what you've got hold of" in Gabriel Nash, as Nick contends, it

also means that one cannot have hold of Nash for very long. The diplomat Peter Sherringham – Julia Dallow's brother, who is also Dormer's cousin – comes much closer to the truth in his impression that "you never knew where to 'have' Gabriel Nash," for Nash's status as a "solid, sociable fact" is always provisional and qualified by his serene refusal to matter as a social entity, his being "ready to preside with a smile even at a discussion of his own admissibility" (*TM* 53, 60, 375, 509).

It bears emphasizing that Nash, for all his conventional laziness, must *labor* to resist being located and fastened down in the interlocking grid of class, professional, and behavioral markers of Victorian masculinity. Nash is unconditional and immaterial – seemingly "nothing but a mind," as one reviewer of the novel complained (*CR* 240) – because he assiduously acts to avoid embodiments that fall subject to political specification ("I've no *état civil*") and thus also to both public vulnerability and state regulation. Richard Ellmann rightly notes that although Nash "disdains the label of aesthete," he is in fact "a much more attractive representative of the type" than can be found in James's previous fiction.[50] But it is labeling as such that Nash disdains, the "ingenious machinery" of modernity that not only produces a social category such as "aesthete" – or the distinct species of the "homosexual" and the "heterosexual" – but also provides that certain names dare not be spoken without the "heightened colour" of a blush, "an air of hesitation." Both cagier and more buoyant than T. S. Eliot's Prufrock, Nash flaunts himself before the eyes that would fix him in a formulated phrase ("Ah, there's one of the formulas!"), but only because he reserves the right to disappear if they stare too hard (*TM* 27). One should not be fooled, in other words, when Nash advertises his "little system" of comportment as being governed by unprecedented "candour," as a practice of "being just the same to every one," for it is actually *the* manner *par excellence*. Like Miriam Rooth, who is "protected and alienated" from Peter Sherringham's unwelcome advances by her stage costume, Nash carries his theatricality to such an extreme of consistency as to be all impersonal surface and no available depth (*TM* 116, 118, 463). Rather startlingly, James seems to have discerned a point in what he had once considered Wilde's "pointless nomadism," revaluing in the process Wilde's dandyism, too, while conveniently assigning his personal dislike of its "repulsive and fatuous" side to the figure of Julia Dallow (*TM* 115).[51]

For apart from an angelic "facial radiance," Gabriel's chief means of seeming socially "positive and pervasive" while simultaneously having a "baffling effect" on gender taxonomy is his endless chatter, a persiflage that holds the floor by its "conspicuous and aggressive perfection" and its

"mellifluous" musicality (*TM* 41, 263, 510, 20–1). Sinfield's reading of gay Victorian dandies as shrewdly hiding-in-plain-sight – "they *passed* . . . not by playing down what we call camp . . . but by manifesting it exuberantly" – applies very well to the behavior of the protoqueer Nash, with the caveat that his flamboyance is strictly vocal and gestural.[52] Nash's effeminacy is expressed more in personal qualities – "a lady . . . in tact and sympathy," as Miriam calls him – than in physical adornment (*TM* 273). It is as if, in a move meant to be at once sanitizing and saving, James has shorn the figure of the dandy of disagreeable coiffure (Nash has "a mere reminiscence of hair") and divested Nash of inculpatory dress – "I can't afford the uniform (I believe you get it best somewhere in South Audley Street)" – while carefully leaving him only a "great deal of manner" in his mode of self-expression. Yet Nash also seems to possess a variant of Wilde's leisurely "mezzo voice" (as Max Beerbohm recalled it), or what one listener in Wilde's American audiences of 1882 had called an "alluring voice"; and both of these attributes, a theatrical extravagance and a seductive vocality, I have already discussed as evolving "cues" for sex/gender identification and especially for so-called deviance (*TM* 20, 21, 385–6).[53]

In other words, the countervailing burden of the novel is that, in the emerging regulatory climate, a man literally could not be careful enough. Even Nash's casual mention of South Audley Street as the venue of boutiques for aesthetes has two suggestive correlations: it was the home of James's friend Raffalovich, the author of poems in praise of homosexuality, and, more particularly, it is the street in which (or very near which) Nash's fictional contemporary Dorian Gray has his lodgings (*DG* 150, 180). Yet this association with Wilde's duplicitous Dorian returns one's attention to the point that Nash's mannerisms alone, in their lavish ambiguity, foreground questions about his sexual bearings while turning the spotlight on surrounding styles of manhood as well. "The historical positing of the category of 'the homosexual,' " as Lee Edelman writes, "textualize[d] male identity as such, subjecting it to the alienating requirement that it be 'read,' and threatening . . . to strip 'masculinity' of its privileged status as the self-authenticating paradigm of the natural." Though Nash is not so much "the gay man" of *The Tragic Muse*, as he is the gay manqué, still he is sufficiently different to challenge the masculinity of other men to "*perform* its self-evidence" and, perhaps more disconcertingly, he is sufficiently normal to frustrate the efforts of others to pinpoint his variation:[54] "fair and fat" and lacking the "loose, faded uniform" of the *Punch*-style aesthete, Nash signifies "immediately as a gentleman" and thus perversely compounds his effect of deconstructive aggravation (*TM* 20, 385).

Indeed what James's novel most unequivocally conveys – alongside its half-protective, half-provocative fashioning of the Nash character – is contempt for the "unmemorable men" of the English political-professional classes, with their fatal "want of imagination." Treated to a near view of not only Lord Rosebery, but also of John Bright, Charles Dilke, and the "dreary incubus" William Gladstone, James set British statesmen down as "very measurable creatures" with "not a grain of . . . inspiration"; even England's standard man of culture (Gosse excepted) struck James as "dense and puerile," a being "whose central fire doesn't reach . . . to his extremities" (*L* II: 100–1; III: 53, 105, 210, 219). *The Tragic Muse* imports these invidious judgments from James's correspondence, but, more crucially, it penetrates to an unspeakable doubt at the core of "successful" Victorian manhood: what if the construct of the productive (and reproductive) gentleman is just that, an identity manufactured through performance and thereby liable to inauthenticity, to sudden rupture and self-emptying, or perhaps to disturbing inversions? As James Eli Adams writes, in discussing Walter Pater's interventions in the quest for a socially authoritative "masculine charisma": "The discipline of the aspiring gentleman . . . depend[ed] on a fundamentally theatrical strategy of self-presentation," which was, however, "emphatically repudiated" when it veered into dandyism and other suspect gender styles.[55] Working from the opposite direction, Symonds's *A Problem in Modern Ethics* sought to defend "the tribe" of gay men from the common prejudice that they were all "unsexed males" bent on effeminization: "The majority differ in no detail of their outward appearance" from straight men, being "athletic, masculine in habits, frank in manner, passing through society" unsuspected.[56] What Symonds intends to be reassuring to his prospective audience would doubtlessly have had the reverse effect on many, stoking homophobic anxiety by reminding them of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of recognizing and weeding out the queer impostors.

In James's novel this worry for the integrity of one's masculine self-projection visits especially the ambitious diplomat Peter Sherringham. In a way that recalls the nimbus of uneasy making ambiguity floating around the bohemian/gentleman figure in *The Europeans*, Felix Young, Sherringham discovers to his consternation that his rival for Miriam's hand, an actor named Basil Dashwood, is unexpectedly "straight-featured," with an "imperturbable 'good form' " that almost surpasses his own: "[Dashwood] looked remarkably like a gentleman . . . carry[ing] this appearance . . . to a point that was almost a negation of its spirit; . . . it might have been a question whether it could be in good taste to wear any character, even that

particular one, so much on one's sleeve." What Sherringham confronts in Dashwood, in other words, is a pantomime of the very self-styling that Sherringham himself strives to enact, a person whose extreme theatricalization of the *type* of the gentleman raises the specter of its superficiality (a character worn on the sleeve may come off with it) and of its unexpectedly negatable "spirit." In the most alarming sense, Dashwood's portrayal of "The Bourgeois Gentleman," like the impeccable frock coat that serves as Dashwood's "perpetual uniform," seems to be "a miracle of a fit" (*TM* 226).

Pressed on one side by the need to authenticate his own "character" and to distinguish it from Dashwood's uncanny simulation – the latter's façade demonstrating the "shrewd professional acumen of the untalented," as Nina Auerbach notes[57] – Sherringham also becomes embroiled with another "actor" in Gabriel Nash, whose continual hovering about in the London theatre district calls into question Sherringham's kindred enthusiasms for the stage. These masculine mirrorings and the queasy sense of self-estrangement they induce in Sherringham are quite calculated on James's part. It *inheres* in the Victorian gentleman's psyche, the novel suggests, that a "man of emotions controlled by training," like Sherringham, who keeps a steadfast "eye upon Downing Street" and his career chances, should find the irresponsible aesthete Nash an object of "baleful fascination," and should turn to theatergoing itself as a needed "corrective to . . . the humiliation [and] bewilderment" of modern bureaucratic life (*TM* 392, 148, 389, 341). Like Ford Madox Ford, who claimed that British imperial manhood "[took] refuge in . . . official optimism" so as not to be "move[d] . . . beyond bearing,"[58] James uses the character of Sherringham to typify the common "Englishman's habit of not being effusive," his combined envy and fear of Nash-like "volatility," and his regrettable "absence of a little undulation" in both his hairstyle and his personality (*TM* 326, 148, 38).

But James offers really a comprehensive critique of normative men. Political masculinity gets skewered not only in the figure of the "grotesquely limited" Mr. Macgeorge, whom Julia Dallow uses as a competitor to whet Nick's romantic appetite and parliamentary ambitions, but also in Nick's father, Sir Nicholas, a mediocrity turned into a household saint by a timely death. Men of the idle aristocracy are exemplified in Nick's brother Percival, known for "the infallibility of his [hunting] rifle" and his frequently indulged "consolation of killing something"; and the late George Dallow, whom Julia seeks to replace with Dormer, typifies the provincial connoisseur, "too fat and with a congenital thickness of speech," and given to a "tiresome insistence upon purity and homogeneity" in art (*TM* 162, 254, 485). But James reserves his harshest satire for the wealthy bachelor Charles

Carteret, former political adviser to Sir Nicholas, who represents the homosocial structure of power and who "epitomizes the deeply repressed homosexual panic at the heart of English patriarchy" (as John Carlos Rowe writes[59]). "Espousing nothing more reproductive than Sir Nicholas's views" and engendering "nothing but an amiable little family of [personal] eccentricities," Carteret proposes to fund Nick's political future if the young man will only renounce the painter's pencil and brush ("not the weapons of a gentleman") and conform to type: in short, replicate his father, and then himself in a son (*TM* 62, 359).

But what was to be done with young men who were not keen on the fray, or not inclined to wield a manly weapon? Strictly logically, it remains unclear how Nick is "going to be like papa," as his sister says, when "there is no one like your father," as Lady Agnes counters, but it is perfectly clear that these women's maneuverings – working in collusion with Carteret, Julia Dallow, and even the "strenuous shade" of Sir Nicholas himself – register a prodigious investment in the outcome of Dormer's masculinity (*TM* 32, 65). Their anxious campaign to sever Nick's ties to Nash, his aesthetical friend from his Oxford days, and to install him as a political paterfamilias speaks to the growing public demand, as England seemed on the verge of imperial decline, that gentlemen distinguish themselves from "effete and ineffectual" nomads like Nash, with their undecided sexing.[60] Not surprisingly, Nash stands nearly alone at the other end of the rope in this tug-of-war over Dormer's future, trying both to subvert the new vocabularies of medicojuridical censure – it is Nick, not he, who shows "grossness of immorality" for entertaining Carteret's "depraved tastes" – and to thwart Julia's attempt to erect Nick as the proper, resolutely heterosexual English gentleman (*TM* 265, 127).

As many readers have noticed, James's novel is rife with phallic allusiveness, beginning with Nick Dormer's parliamentary designation as Julia's "member":[61] Julia "wants Nick to stand," wants to "bring him in for Harsh," her "nasty little place," a notoriously "tight squeeze" for Liberal candidates; evidently politics, not art, is the realm of easy virtue, for although Dormer is Julia's top choice for the job, "she'll go over for her man . . . the fellow that stands, whoever he is" (*TM* 35–6, 166–7). Yet wordplay of this sort, if seemingly more ribald in a writer such as James, seems liable to Geoffrey Galt Harpham's thoughtful warning about reading Joseph Conrad's scatological prose. In the writings of both men, one might say, sexuality tends to get "sublated . . . and rerouted . . . into stylistic deformations," or into passages in which sexual signifiers disport themselves beyond authorial controls (or authorial cares) in "the chaotic domain of secondary meanings."[62] One

cannot assume, in short, that the campy-critical punning of *The Tragic Muse* is significantly more conscious than were the "homosexual" ramifications of Mark Ambient's "hysterical aestheticism" in "Beltraffio"; rather, it is simply the relative latency or autonomy of narrative effects that warrants attention both as a biographical and a cultural symptom.

As in "Beltraffio," this later work also gives off mixed and muted signals, in spite of (if not because of) James's greater aplomb on its textual surface. On the one side, the apparently (homo)sexual overtones of Nash's vow to save Dormer from a political marriage to Julia – "Baleful woman!... I'll pull you out!" – *seem* to resonate further in his joke that he is "never another man" when it comes to (hetero)romantic contests; in the cryptic hint that his "bloom" of personality is safeguarded because it is "morbid, as if he had been universally inoculated"; and in Nick's surmise that "if a sore spot remained" in Nash's otherwise genial sensibilities, "the hand of a woman would be sure to touch it." Yet the novel contains its own drift, as it were, discreetly keeping the two young men's mutual attraction asexual and satirizing the popular belief that when men like Nash vanish from the venues of polite society, it is to languish in "dusky, untidy" dens of iniquity. If James distances himself from Philistine suspiciousness of male figures such as Nash, he likewise discounts the view that such suspicion might be well grounded, and that "the comic press... [has been] restrained by decorum from touching upon the worst of their aberrations" (*TM* 104, 127, 372, 505).

But if *The Tragic Muse* proliferates in meanings that are possibly inadvertent, excessive, or finally even conflicting – in itself a measure of the complex social dynamics that the novel engages – James's conclusion seems pat enough, anticipating a perspective, in fact, that will shortly be offered by another Wildean creature, Algernon Moncrieff: "in married life three is company and two is none."[63] For the novel predicts Nick's eventual "recapture" for normative life as well as the assimilation of his aberrant "weapons," or his painter's brushes, into the precincts of gentility, all in fulfillment of Nash's prophecy: "[Julia] Dallow will swallow your profession if you'll swallow hers,...and every one, beginning with your wife, will forget there is anything queer about you." Dormer's new line of portrait painting not only furnishes the axis along which this seizure or "swallowing" of him will occur (in the guise of his "perpetual sitter," Julia will dominate his vision), but it also becomes the means for expelling Nash from the text – both the text of the novel and that of "normal" society. While posing for his old friend, Nash comes to feel "infinitely examined and handled," unpleasantly subjected to Nick's "certainty of eye" from a position of "almost

insolent vantage"; tellingly, this conversion of Nash from ironic observer to scrutinized object – this aesthetic fixing of the aesthete – robs him of both his strategic banter and his composure (he grows "silent, restless, gloomy, dim") and forces him into his customary resort of "melt[ing] back" into "the ambient air." As if Nash's bodily evacuation (or evaporation) were not enough, James emphasizes his utter resistance even to figuration – in other words, to cultural surveillance and the regulation that follows – by indulging in the fantasy that Nash's image "gradually fad[es] from the canvas" (*TM* 259, 507–8, 510–11, 515–16).

As for the man who is left with this fading canvas on his hands, Nick Dormer, the ending suggests the failure or insufficiency of his concerted efforts of disavowal – "it represented Gabriel Nash . . . but it doesn't represent . . . anything now" – and of rationalization: his "good sense," he wants to believe, has triumphed over Nash's "perfectly devilish" designs. On the contrary, Nick's new moodiness seems to prove instead Miriam's argument on behalf of candid expression of one's deepest needs and desires: "a demon that's kept under is a shabby little demon." Provoked to "unreasoning resentment" by the reproach of Nash's portrait, Dormer isolates and punishes the picture – "jamm[ing] it into its corner, with its face against the wall" – in order to get on with his marriage to Julia and his presumably tepid career in painting (*TM* 412, 515, 518). The most readily apparent meaning of his actions – that Dormer recognizes how his achievements must now fall short of Nash's grand dreams for him – should not mask the probability that his violence gestures toward more painful losses as well. If, as Sara Blair argues, "the novel's ambivalence about the forms of otherness with which it identifies" terminates when it "ambivalently contracts" in a finale of conservative marital comedy, it would seem that one particular form of otherness, male homosexuality, is decisive in this narrative retrenchment.[64]

> You can't have been a fable – otherwise you would have had a moral . . . I'm not sure you won't have had one. (Nick Dormer to Gabriel Nash, *The Tragic Muse*)

In a suggestive analogy to the evolving iconography of "Oscar Wilde" within the broader cultural narrative of both England and the United States, James's Gabriel Nash marked the spot in Anglo-American fiction that would soon be occupied by gay male characters such as Forster's Risley in *Maurice* (1913/14), who "gambol[s] like a dolphin" and delivers "witty speech[es]" full of "unmanly superlatives"; or Carl Van Vechten's Paul Moody in *The Blind Bow-Boy* (1923), whose "slender, graceful hands . . . wave rather excessively in punctuation of his verbal effects"; or again Evelyn Waugh's Anthony Blanche in *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), who bristles at the discourse

of "degeneracy" and energetically attacks the "obscure and less easily classified libido" of so-called normal masculinity, a combination (Blanche suggests) of voyeurism and homosexual panic.[65] In Nash, that is, James sketched a protogay, protocamp character but smudged those lineaments that were most personally troubling to him, as well as most susceptible to the "complicated and ingenious machinery" of law and order that would soon enmesh Wilde (*TM* 27). As part of this delicate balancing act between homophilic impulses and both emotional and practical misgivings, James seems to have toyed with the hope that Style itself – one's "rendering of the text," as Nash calls it (*TM* 120) – might possibly constitute a world elsewhere, a world removed from the risks that accompanied *both* normative and innovative masculinities, or at least might provide a line of defense against society's new instrumentalities for probing whatever lay behind one's "much exposed" modesty.

As James wrote to Gosse on the eve of the Wilde trials, Pater had dealt with the complications of publicity by cultivating "the mask without the face" – "there isn't in his total superficies a tiny point of vantage for the newspaper to flap its wings on" – but then Pater had been, to James's taste, disappointingly "negative & faintly-grey."[66] Symonds erred on the other side, as James came to feel during that same anxious season around 1895, evincing a "need of taking the public into his *intimissima* confidence" about sexual matters that was "almost insane."[67] For in this new era of "skewed scales and judicial wig," with the "vicious-looking switch" waving in the air – James's metaphorics for the modern literary reviewer, which nonetheless evokes a quite different regime of judgment – the best tactic for queer comrades was to keep the body of their text private by keeping it lively and elusive, "conspicuously . . . draped" in that "amplitude of costume" – or theatricality in its positive, redeemed form – that is called style (*LC* 1: 1232).

Yet style – "that perplexing thing . . . which is [an artist's] very self," as Willa Cather will later say – can betray as well as mask, can call attention to depths as well as obscure by surface dazzle, whether in decorations of persons or of narrative, as James was well aware (*EN* 1328). In the autobiographical *A Small Boy and Others* (1914) James recaptured his youthful self, torn between a liking for fancy attire and a fear of the teasing and censure that this dandiacal tendency could call down in an American culture ill-disposed toward advertising the body as an object of the desiring gaze: "Divided I was, I recall, between the dread and the glory of being . . . greeted, 'Well, Stiffy – !' as a penalty of the least attempt at personal adornment" (*AU* 141). James's dread was, of course, an internalized cognate of a self-fearing

culture, but what is more striking about his ambivalence toward style was his temptation to indulge in, and positively to "glory" in, such display despite the disciplinary rigor of his environment – the close monitoring of even "the least attempt" to be fashionable.

Indeed, working from contemporary descriptions of the mature James's self-carriage and dress – notably, his "conspicuous spats" and an occasional "cravat in a magnificent flowery bow" – Michael Moon contends that in the decade following *The Tragic Muse* he showed "an increasingly public effeminacy," a less inhibited decorativeness.[68] Certainly it seems that James, leaning into his fifties, was by then overcoming the internal conflict and "dread" associated with self-display during his American childhood. In fact, period photographs of James give us a dapper dresser, often gracefully posed, with a penchant for stylish headgear (one viewer compared him with the Mad Hatter[69]) and for polka-dotted bow ties. It is also a familiar fact that in 1900 James shaved off the beard he had maintained for three decades when grizzled hairs began to crop up, and then warned friends not to be dismayed by his "most uncanny & questionable" new appearance;[70] in other letters, he testified further to his self-consciousness, likening pictures of him (including portrait paintings) alternately to Queen Victoria and to a "smooth and anxious clerical gentleman in [a] spotted necktie" (*L* IV: 164). Yet clearly the keynote of these examples is self-irony, a chiding of himself on the vanity he betrayed, and thus another measure of his self-acceptance as a man of style. Thanking Cora Crane (Stephen Crane's widow) for sending along some "strange images" of himself caught eating a doughnut "as if I had swallowed a wasp," James mock-laments: "And I had tried to look so beautiful. I tried too hard doubtless. But don't show [the photograph] to any one as H. J. trying" (*L* IV: 117).

Like this "H. J.," who was increasingly stylish and alert to how masculine styles were being read, neither would Gabriel Nash ever be caught dead "trying" to look beautiful. As Christopher Lane nicely puts it, Nash "lives entirely for . . . the pleasurable art of appearing artless," yet the emphasis here falls heavily on that *appearance*.[71] All the world's a stage, perhaps, but the homosexual man must perfect a specialized version of Miriam Rooth's skill of acting at not acting: a highly artful artlessness whose energies are constantly dedicated to sustaining a mobility of self-representation that will enable the actor to elude the categorical imperatives of social representation. Nash needs his "impenetrable background" to stay impenetrable, his street address to remain shrouded in mystery, and his social position to be unregistered in "well-kept books," by which James refers to the society *Blue Book* or *Who's Who* but also gestures toward the well-kept books of

medicine, law, and social policy that were keeping better track of alleged deviants.

In the last analysis, although the narrative handling of Nash's portrait "deprives it of authority by compelling it to fade," still Nash's image, by the terms of the heterosexualizing economy that required its compulsory erasure, assumes the different but no less potent authority that one associates with the gothic.[72] Not only did the Victorian gothic provide a medium for saying things for which culture "[had] yet to develop another language," as D. A. Miller has said, it was also the field of representation to which things unrepresentable were consigned and *from* which they haunted the daylight world of the normal, periodically staging border raids.[73] In Gabriel Nash, *The Tragic Muse* presented only a "photograph of the ghost" of homosexuality, to borrow Dormer's phrase for his own picture of the aesthete, yet that ghost promised to make ceaseless "disruptive return[s]" from its exile at the "constitutive outside" of the heterosexual domain (*TM* 509).[74] How else is one to read Nash's final speech, delivered in that queerly seductive voice and in accents of "unusual seriousness": "I dare say I'm eternal" (*TM* 511).

3

The Turn of the Screw, *or: The Dispossessed Hearts of Little Gentlemen*

> "I never read [*My Sexual Problem*]. That was . . . Henry James, right? . . . the sequel to *The Turn of the Screw*?"
>
> (Alvy Singer, in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, 1977)

At the risk of understatement, the gothic mode returned with a vengeance in *The Turn of the Screw*, which Henry James published in 1898 but which embellished on a ghost story – a "mere vague, undetailed, faint sketch" – that he had heard in early 1895 (*N* 178). The narrative seed had been planted in the author's mind, that is, just in time for cultivation in the heated atmosphere of the Oscar Wilde trials, a fact that will be instrumental to my treatment of the novella here. Upon the work's stunning début, a typical British review declared that "Mr. James is in a queer mood," for James appeared to have gone out of his way to make the loyal reader of his fiction – as the tale's famous governess would say – "a receptacle of lurid things" (*TS* 348). James's most offensive piece of "putrescence" involved what the reviewer considered a fundamental "misunderstanding of child nature": "Even in colder moments, if we admit the fact of infant depravity . . . we must deny . . . the extent of the corruption as suggested here . . . We have never read a more sickening . . . tale" (*CR* 304). Other British journals chimed in, agreeing that the work's "morbid psychology" and the "weird knowledge" attributed to young Miles and his sister Flora would "outrage many minds far from prudish," for James seemed to imply that sin could be found "nestling in the fairest of all fair places," the consciousness – if not indeed the physical experience – of childhood. Taking a different tack toward the same end, discomfited American reviewers hastened to reassure themselves and their audience that Miles and Flora, just as children, could have been only "dimly conscious" of any foul deeds that transpired between Peter Quint, a former valet at the remote country estate of Bly, and Miss Jessel, the governess's predecessor (*CR* 303, 308, 305).

Yet more sophisticated or "modern" readers, both in England and in the United States, saw little to affront the moral sensibility and instead basked in the tale's gothic extravagance, admiring James's artistic effectiveness in presenting a picture of two exquisite children "holding unholy communion" with the sinister ghosts of Quint and Miss Jessel. According to one delighted Boston reviewer, the "subtle crowning horror" of the work resided not in how this supernatural pair "pervert[ed] in ways inexpressible" the tender souls of Miles and Flora, but rather in how the children themselves seemed to solicit this perversion with "a joy so depraved" (*CR* 308, 307). Members of the guild applauded James's story on similar grounds, with Oscar Wilde, for instance, pronouncing it "most wonderful" just because of its "poisonous" insinuations (although he continued to doubt that James would ever "arrive at a passion"[1]). Even the less gothically inclined Joseph Conrad, after putting down *The Turn of the Screw*, marveled at James's skill in "extract[ing] an intellectual thrill out of the subject."[2]

But what *was* James's subject with its strange power of suggestion, its capacity, among a widely varied transatlantic readership, for "mak[ing] the blood bound through the veins," whether in pleasure or in disgust (*CR* 312)? Notably, neither those readers who relished nor those who reviled the tale were able or willing to say, at least not with any precision. Conrad was forced to admit that the subject "evades one but leaves a kind of phosphorescent trail in one's mind."[3] Wilde remained as vague about the source of the tale's savory toxicity as he had been about the "poisonous influences" coursing through the life of his Dorian Gray, in this respect showing his further affinity with the Henry James who had flirted around the obscure "subtle poison" of aesthetic fraternity in "The Author of 'Beltraffio,' " as I have shown (*DG* 149). If the novella's critics all concurred that *The Turn of the Screw* "darkly, potently hinted" at *some* type of dire violation, the substance was deemed to be "inexpressible" except by terms like "depravity" or "corruption" that fell short of concreteness. One hears, for instance,the assertion that both Quint and Miss Jessel "died in strange ways – how, no one knows," a studied refusal to take up James's several clues; and although the governess purportedly learns "what it is from which the boy [Miles] suffers," the reviewer who makes this intriguing claim never deigns to report the governess's diagnosis to a reading public eager for just such information (*CR* 304, 309–10).

Only a few alert readers discerned that dark, potent hinting formed an integral part of James's method – that in avoiding "unnecessarily ample details," he was "by elimination creating an effect of . . . unimaginable horrors" (*CR* 303, 306). Of course, James's preface to the New York edition (1908)

would dispel any doubt about how self-consciously he sought to induce in readers the same "dreadful liability to impressions" to which the tale's governess confesses, prompting them (like her) to "restlessly read into the facts . . . almost all the meaning they were to receive," until "knowledge gather[s]" into an account of events that possesses an almost uncanny coherence, leaving "no ambiguity in anything" (*TS* 321, 325, 327). "I evoked the worst I could," James put the matter in correspondence (*L* IV: 88), and his method of evocation – as he justifiably gloated in the preface – was one of steady, artful "*adumbration*": the reader's impression of "portentous evil" would be spoiled if the narrative specified any "imputed vice," for specification could only cause the malignancy to "shrink to the compass" of a "particular infamy." Since moral taste and the grounds of shockability were highly variable and subjective, providing for "no eligible *absolute* of the wrong," James's narrative game had been to make the individual reader "*think* the evil . . . for himself" and thus to furnish its constituent features (*LC* 2: 1187–8).

By extension, if "everything" thinkable (and much that was unthinkable) had passed between Quint and Miss Jessel, as the simple housekeeper Mrs. Grose recalls with a shudder, then *nothing* could be discounted with certainty from the roster of their possible crimes (*TS* 331). Moreover, if the tale designedly contained "not an inch of expatiation" on the author's part, but merely a sequence of rhetorical gestures that were "positively all blanks," then those readers who were appalled by the story's "monstrous" content had only their own prurient minds to blame (*LC* 2: 1188). Following Wilde, that is, who sought "to surround Dorian Gray with an atmosphere of moral corruption" so "indeterminate and wonderful" that the reader "who finds [Dorian's specific sins] has brought them" to the text, James washed his hands of all responsibility for outfitting his ghost story with the sordid details of the case, yielding the question of evil particularity first to his contemporary audience, and thence to students of Victorian social history, with its cornucopia of vices.[4]

> I have in the story told you all I can for the money. I am as ignorant as you, and yet not as supposing! (Henry James, to a questioning, speculative reader, 1888)

As the example of Wilde indicates, "blanks" were not uncommon in Anglo-American fictional technique of the period, and they have proven to be as spacious and accommodating as the readerly imagination is large. In the case of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as Alan Sinfield points out, both drug use and venereal disease (and not just homosexuality) are frequently cited as causes of the beautiful young Dorian's degeneration, and Sinfield adds

that the contemporary frenzy over masturbation would be another plausible referent.[5] Philip Horne cautions against the automatic impulse to read same-sex desire into all textual lacunae, since "many other unnamable things, unnamable because of different taboos and interests, creep in under the same umbrella" for Anglo-American readers at the turn of the century.[6] To judge by the topical range in James's work alone, the list of secretive, more or less "lurid things" from which his audience could have selected also encompassed adultery, bigamy, prostitution, incest, business scandal, check forgery, controversial career choice, marrying "low," and (more comically) the manufacture of a "distinctly vulgar article of domestic use" (this article was "to be duly specified" in the completed text of *The Ambassadors*, according to James's notebooks, but in fact it never is; *N* 380.[7]) Given the plentitude and variousness of these transgressions, it is not impossible that, for instance, a father's "homosexual disgrace" (Lionel Croy's) lies at the origin of the plot in James's *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), "propagat[ing] gender and sexuality across" its central intrigue. Yet what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick thus interprets as a "formative fact" that is clearly "spelled out" in James's novel did not prevent Hossein Amini, the screenwriter of the 1997 film adaptation, from setting the scene of Lionel Croy's dissolution in one of London's Chinese opium dens rather than in, say, a male brothel.[8] Indeed, Amini provides a scenario that is equally satisfying inasmuch as it surfaces British imperialism as a related thematic concern of *The Wings of the Dove*.

Taking the argument of James's preface at face value, then, the ghosts in *The Turn of the Screw* and the particulars of their profane communings with the children ought to be approached with the same tact and skepticism that are required in interpreting the shady past of that "poor beautiful dazzling, damning apparition" Lionel Croy (*LC* 2: 1295). Perhaps the best course would be for the reader simply to accept the ominous details in the background of James's story as a "mystification without end," as the governess describes the murky circumstances surrounding Miles's expulsion from school (*TS* 340). Yet by a refinement of narrative technique that surpassed even Wilde's practice – a blend of "allusion . . . indirection" and "fudg[ing]" that later charmed another screenwriter/adapter, Truman Capote – James's text consistently seduces readers into replicating both the governess's compulsive speculation ("thinking the evil") and her *resistance* to playing this game of fill-in-the-blank.[9] One finds the desire for detailed knowledge subject to contradictory stimuli at once enticed and checked by the sense of (as the governess says) "directions in which I must not . . . let myself go" (right before she proceeds to go there). In this fashion the record

of the governess's movement from suspicion to detection to conviction – and these terms of criminal-judicial connotation are used advisedly – both promotes and patterns the acute ambivalence of readers, who confront (as she does) an influx of data that eerily "suit[s] exactly the . . . deadly view" of events that they are "in the very act of forbidding [themselves] to entertain" (*TS* 337). Meanwhile, the most that James would ever say about his own vision of the vile extremity operative in the tale (again, in private letters) was that it involved children "as *exposed* as we can humanly conceive children to be" and suffering some awful degradation of "the helpless plasticity of childhood" – yet these remarks seem calculated to irritate rather than to answer curiosity. Nimbly sidestepping all requests from readers to identify the nature of this "most infernal imaginable evil," the author declared himself content to have conferred "the beauty of the pathetic" upon the human wreckage left in its wake (*L* IV: 84, 88).

> There are depths, depths! The more I go over it, the more I see in it . . . I don't know what I don't see. (The Governess, *The Turn of the Screw*)

Readers situated here around the turn of another century, and schooled in the grammars of preterition and unspeakability that have historically served to indicate homosexuality in narrative, are inclined to hear in the noisier silences of late Victorian fiction the most unnamable of things. In this respect, latter-day critics curiously reproduce the rhetorical protocols of that earlier time period, which enabled the presiding judge in Wilde's decisive trial, for instance, to identify the nature of Wilde's offense simply by alluding to "corruption of the most hideous kind" – precisely (or imprecisely) the language resorted to both in *The Turn of the Screw* and in many reviews of James's novella.[10] Adapting this judicial (and judicious) formula to the work itself, with its elaborate conjuring of things not only too lurid to name but too "hideous" even for admission into consciousness ("God help me if I know *what* [Quint] is!"), one may well suspect James's preface and correspondence of veiling more specific transgressions, with whatever degree of awareness on his part (*TS* 319). Granted, "mysteries of reference are James's stock in trade," as Horne says, any narrative of a sufficient complexity (however adroitly managed) must point toward some types of "depravity" more than others in its combination and description of characters and its disposition of plot.[11]

Here, again, reception history leads the way. In 1921, perhaps taking up the cue supplied in Wilde's detection of a whiff of "poison," Virginia Woolf used her own suggestive diction to imply collusion between author *and* audience in assigning a sexualized burden to *The Turn of the Screw*. In fearing

Peter Quint, Woolf contended, readers were actually "afraid of something unnamed . . . in ourselves," something that nonetheless perversely reveled in James's representation of "beauty and obscenity twined together worm[ing] their way to the depths." That this unnamed "something" was not just anything, for Woolf at least, is evident both in her imagery of coupling ("twining" and worming) and in her reflexive use of a hoary catchphrase for same-sex passion, "unutterable obscenity."[12] Less publicly, E. M. Forster specifically named homosexuality (or "homosex") as the work's disavowed subtext: the "fluster" that James communicated so well to his audience in fact stemmed from his own agitation, as he concertedly "declin[ed] to think about" the queer materials lying at the base of his story line.[13] On this view, James unconsciously inscribed his own precarious, self-occluding psyche – and that of many other closeted or sexually undecided readers – in the governess's giddy struggle to maintain *her* narrative balance by means of an oddly self-conscious self-censorship: "my equilibrium depended on . . . my rigid will . . . to shut my eyes as tight as possible to the truth that what I had to deal with was, revoltingly, *against nature*" (*TS* 392; emphasis added). This interpretation posits an author, in James, who could employ yet another period euphemism for homosexuality – like the reviewer who objected to "something peculiarly against nature" in his tale – without consciously marking or owning that usage (*CR* 308).

If Forster was right about this self-veiling dynamic, which is not beyond James's constitutional intricacy – Evelyn Waugh, too, thought him "unconscious of having raised something more frightening than the ghosts" – then James's claim not to have expatiated "an inch" could still be true, in a narrowly technical sense.[14] Perhaps one encounters here another, only more skillful demonstration (as earlier in "Beltraffio") of James's capacity to transcribe and dramatically develop "the truth . . . at the back of my head" without subjecting that transgressive "truth" to excessive, possibly disabling analysis (*L* IV: 84). Or perhaps it is more fruitful to redirect the question of conscious or unconscious designs introduced by Forster and to concentrate instead on the tale's outward survey of Anglo-American sexual politics – the cultural context in which all queer authors, from Wilde to Woolf to Capote, have had to live and produce. For as these readers seem to suggest in their different ways, *The Turn of the Screw* does not "adumbrate" some nebulous *gestalt* of anything-and-everything; rather, it engages a peculiar cultural project of its season of provenance – that of codifying, regulating, and punishing forms of sexuality *contra naturam*, paying especially close attention to those male–male sexual relations that traversed boundaries of age and social class.

Homosexuality is unmistakably absent; so let's take a closer look. (Henning Bech, *When Men Meet*)

To begin with an example apart from masculine desire, and thus to appreciate the story's full perversity, it cannot be wholly innocuous (as the preface would have it) that the governess hovers around young Flora with something like the "hunger, fierceness, and encroaching desperation – inescapably sexual in origin" that Olive Chancellor seems to exhibit toward *her* pupil, Verena Tarrant, in James's *The Bostonians* (1886).[15] When the governess swoons under the little girl's gaze, "closing my eyes . . . yieldingly . . . as before the excess of something beautiful that shone out of the blue of her own," the very organs of vigilance must shut (all "yieldingly") in order *not* to turn into windows of desire, suggesting the ambivalence that pervades, if it does not mobilize, the modern regulation of homosexuality (*TS* 343). I say *modern*, yet James also captures the historical and cultural origins of such regulation, and indeed with special reference to the complex job responsibilities that belonged to his type of protagonist, a governess. As Mary Poovey summarizes British social essayists of the 1840s, the general period in which the horrific events at Bly unfold: "the governess was . . . meant to police the emergence of undue assertiveness or sexuality in her maturing charges and . . . was expected not to display willfulness or desires herself."[16]

As so often in James, however, the deeper motive of his text lies less in writing sexuality as such, than in querying ties of blood, craft, or service in which sexuality has been rewritten as something else, whether the paternal manipulation of daughters (as in *Washington Square* [1880] and *The Golden Bowl* [1904]), the infatuation of disciples for masters (as in "Beltraffio" and other tales of artists[17]), or the solicitude of tutors, butlers, caretakers, and telegraphists for their prized clients. In this case, when the governess notes the sleeping arrangements that situate Flora beside her "as a matter of course at night," caresses her fairy-tale "hair of gold," or "cover[s] her with kisses" after a single day's acquaintance, the performance of a conventional, contractual duty wanders off into a realm of naturalized alibis for a possibly perverse eroticism (*TS* 300, 302, 305).

Diction, too, can be helpful in reading between the lines of the governess's relations with her precious charges. The word *restless*, for instance, is a standard recurring tag for sexual energies in James, or for sublimated forms of such energy, from the "restless" nature that Gertrude Wentworth shares with the Baroness Eugenia in *The Europeans* (*EU* 46–9, 82) to Maria Gostrey's "distinctly restless" attraction to Strether in *The Ambassadors*

(*A* 341) and to James's self-dramatization as the "restless analyst" of *The American Scene* (1907; *AS* 7ff.). Given this verbal lineage, the "restlessness" that Flora provokes in the governess plausibly captures the aura of the eroticized child that James Kincaid finds permeating Victorian culture (*TS* 300).[18] A related hint, at the level of diction, occurs in the governess's constant "excitement" (*TS* 299, 309), another polite synonym for sexual arousal in period works as diverse as William Dean Howells's *The Landlord at Lion's Head* (1897) and Gertrude Stein's "Melanctha," from *Three Lives* (1905–6).

But equally as troubling as the "excess of something beautiful" that radiates from Flora's innocent blue eye (or is it?) is the "occasional excess of the restless" that the governess discovers in Miles. Compounding her unease, this strain of behavior in the boy strikes her alternately as a "defect" to be remedied and as an almost irresistible call to her own stifled longings. Should she rechannel Miles's restive libido into the reading of fiction (as she does her own) and thereby run the risk of feminizing him, or should she permit herself to be "carried away by the little gentleman" Miles, filling in the blanks of *his* text, as it were ("Oh, *you* know what a boy wants!")? This second impulse, often interpreted as a displacement of the governess's attraction to her employer, Miles's charming but remote uncle in London, eventually inspires the "whimsically" weird fantasy that she and Miles are newlyweds preparing for a night at the inn. As in her zeal to "'form' little Flora" and guard her from the ghost of Miss Jessel, the governess's commitment or pretension to be protecting Miles from Quint suggests the operation of an unusual interest hiding among the usual exercises and tasks of her position (*TS* 326, 301, 371, 394, 300). In a way that recalls the famous quip of the gay conscientious objector Lytton Strachey, when challenged to say how he would save his sister from rape by German soldiers during the First World War, the governess seems prepared to "attempt to interpose" her own body between the ghosts and the children, opening herself to contact from almost any direction.[19]

To enlarge the point, as well as to move toward what Woolf identified as the work's center of gravity, the character of Peter Quint emerges not as some garden-variety bogey in a "bogey-tale" (as James evasively referred to his psychological masterpiece) but as a quite distinct new type of "living, detestable, dangerous presence" in late Victorian society, one whose "secret disorders" were supposed to be manifested in decidedly corporeal and often polymorphous license: the pedophile (*L* IV: 84; *TS* 342, 325). "Young and pretty . . . was the way [Quint] liked everyone," Mrs. Grose recounts, and he had become "too free with everyone" in the absence of other authority

at Bly, doing "what he wished with them all" (*TS* 346). One should note in passing that her euphemistic word to describe Quint's proclivities ("liking" them young and pretty) will reappear in the formula that shadows forth the cause of Miles's disgrace at boarding school: "liking" not everyone, perhaps, but apparently liking some other boys too well.[20]

As for Peter Quint himself, Stanley Renner works from the premise that the governess's romantic object "obviously . . . would be a male figure" in order to advance Quint's "success with women" as a sort of matching piece in James's puzzle.[21] But Mrs. Grose's traumatized constructions ("everyone," "them all") recall instead a man not only indiscriminate with respect to the gender, age, or status of his prey, but completely unbridled (doing "what he wished") in the diverse sexual satisfactions he pursued. To be fair, Renner does mention the "designs [that] the governess fears Quint has on Miles," yet the critical nod toward a homosexual angle here (and perhaps also in the categorizing gesture of "boys like Miles") is not developed. Notably, if Quint liked them *all* young and pretty, he is most intensely associated with the "incredibly beautiful" Miles, the pair having been "perpetually together" on rambles beyond the confines, and thus beyond the oversight, of the manorial regime at Bly. James's preface may restage the story as a kind of *tabula rasa*, awaiting any reader's act of any reading-in, yet this "hound" of a libertine – this ghastly "visitor most concerned with my boy," as the governess refers to Quint – was in fact a *pre*scribed figure for James's contemporaries (whether consciously named or not), and the reader's latitude to "think the evil for himself" was more circumscribed than the preface allows (*TS* 305, 307, 346). The profile of Peter Quint (and to a lesser extent that of Miss Jessel, the governess's alter ego) corresponds with the construct of sexual "deviant" or "pedophile" generated by the schizophrenic Victorian imagination of the bourgeois child – in Kincaid's terms, "that horrible and lovely product" of social engineering. What James himself celebrated as the "rosy candid English children" of the middle classes were still, superficially, "the most completely satisfactory thing the country [of England] produce[d]" (*L* III: 212); but the "stream . . . of clear infancy" – as figured in the poetry of Bronson Alcott, speaking for the Romantic paradigm of the child – had begun to appear increasingly polluted as late Victorian psychology traced adult sexuality back to its primary sources.[22]

The ideological reflex so prevalent in reviews of *The Turn of the Screw* – that edgy insistence on the innocence of "child nature" and its utter incompatibility with "something against nature" – shows the child functioning in Anglo-American culture much as James's "blank" functioned in fictional narrative, as a screen for illicit desires, and not very diffuse ones at that.

Protesting too much about the child's erotic emptiness "created a subversive echo," as Kincaid writes, making "absolutely essential" a beastly Other upon which to cathect the disturbing sensations and impulses of "decent" citizens.[23] This is not to make light of the actual social fact of child sexual exploitation (either then or now), but merely to emphasize the cultural objectives involved in amplifying and demonizing the *type* of pedophile (a process that clearly interacted with the project of constructing "the homosexual"). James's tale offers a textbook example of this social dynamic, as the governess's exaggerated confidence in the children's sanctity – Flora resembles "Raphael's holy infants," while Miles emits a "positive fragrance of purity" – evidently *activates* the exaggerated suspicion that will then dictate the lineaments of their alleged despoilers, Jessel and Quint (*TS* 300, 307). The invocation of Raphael may also imply that unsettling temptations have long been encoded in artistic representations of "holy infants," anticipating Wayne Koestenbaum's claim that the "nude and androgynous cherub," from baroque ceilings to Angel Records labels, presents "an image of the body before it's defined by gender and sexuality – an innocence itself homoerotically charged."[24] As reviewers of *The Turn of the Screw* gushed, promoting the extreme monitoring of such temptations as a kind of model practice for the "devoted governess," James's particular young woman deserved praise for "prob[ing] beneath [the children's] beauty" – beneath their clever *pretense* of innocence – to uncover a veritable "sink of corruption" (*CR* 306, 308). More succinctly: every Miles must have his Quint, every Flora her Miss Jessel.

These are already large claims, which admittedly fly in the face of Shoshana Felman's wise counsel for readers who are intent on pinning down the meaning of James's ghost story. Yet Felman herself nicely glosses one of James's meanings: "sexuality is precisely what rules out simplicity as such," being "essentially the violence of its own non-simplicity."[25] I would contend that the alarming significations of Quint's interest in Miles or Miss Jessel's in Flora – which the governess's muddled yearnings for *both* children mime and compete with – would have reached Victorian readers irrespective of James's formal game, and that familiar critical disputes on the grounds of verisimilitude or narrative "reliability" miss the point. The cultural work performed by *The Turn of the Screw* had little to do with the epistemological soundness or authority of the governess's "portentous clearness" (or portentous hysteria, on another view), for the tale is virtually an allegory of sexual panic, as well as a subtle intervention in *fin-de-siècle* sexual politics (*TS* 322). Moreover, although the gothic is sometimes construed as a mode in which the queer specters in Victorian culture were mobilized in

order to be eased off (as hinted, perhaps, in James's own depreciating labels of "bogey-tale" and "shameless pot-boiler"), period science and "psychical research" hinder this line of reading, suggesting that the tale might have come across with all the due weight of realism (*L* IV: 86). Even as ghosts, Quint and Miss Jessel would have registered as substantial threats to the developing child, haunting many readers' minds in an almost literal sense.

The Turn of the Screw reads best, I would argue, as a fable of jeopardized masculine emergence, the fate of Flora, as a budding "lady," being significant but subsidiary to that of Miles, as a "little gentleman." In this framing, the governess functions as a ruthless enforcer of Anglo-American culture's investment in heteronormativity: a govern-er whose "fierce rigor," however, originates in a personal history of deprivation and self-fragmentation that identifies her, ultimately, as the mere (murderous) handmaiden of patriarchy. Renner, too, perceives that the governess acts at the behest of "a powerful cultural ideal," but the prejudices that are imported with his analytical model of female hysteria persist. Blaming the victim inheres in that model, which explains its routine mystification of how *predisposed* the governess's role is, as suggested in the tale's foregrounding of her internalized posture of servitude. Thus when James is taken to be arguing that "the angel in the house might really be the angel of psychic destruction . . . doing mortal damage to human sexual development and especially . . . [to] boys like Miles," responsibility for the represented tragedy gets charged more to the "angel" (in this instance, the governess) than to the social forces and power arrangements that lock her in that "house" and strap her with the task of moral surveillance.[26]

The self-disguising operations of patriarchy, to which readings of this sort continue to testify, can be seen partly in the behavior of the tale's distant, self-absolving bachelor-uncle in Harley Street, as John Carlos Rowe has shown. But James also suggests something amiss in the governess's own childhood that has subsequently been driven into the shadows.[27] Indeed, the unspecified "eccentric nature" of a Puritanical father and the "slavish idolat[ry]" exacted by her older brothers may well gesture toward the extreme abuse of male authority that is incest (*TS* 342, 355, 340). If that were the case, the governess's tenure at Bly would mark only a later chapter in a long chronicle of dispossession that, in turn, writes itself all over her own fatal "dispossess[ion]" of Miles's emblematic little heart, with which James's story melodramatically concludes. This word ("dispossessed") that so well evokes disfranchisements at once economic and lineal, spiritual and affective, would seem to connote the heavy cost that British society was

ready to pay in order to keep its young gentlemen away from the "wrong path altogether" that a figure like Peter Quint has taken, and at the end of which his ghost menacingly waits (*TS* 325).

Understanding that James's style of allegory is neither as formulaic nor as celestial as that in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, one notices further that the tale's implied relation between "deviant" (Quint) and "child victim" (Miles) finds a larger context in two major sex scandals of the previous decade, the Cleveland Street brothel affair of 1889–90 and the Wilde trials of 1895. In these key episodes in the regulation of male homosexuality, as James well knew, the lever of public opprobrium turned not only on age disparities but also on class distinctions, as well-heeled defendants stood accused of satisfying their "unnatural lust" with working-class adolescents: "our boys," in the parlance of the tabloids. In the Cleveland Street affair, Ed Cohen observes, "the nature of the sexual crimes seem[ed] only of interest insofar as it underscore[d] the inequities of class privilege"; at the same time, however, as Richard Dellamora notes, the proletarian "boys" who aroused sympathy in some quarters met with resentment in others, to the extent that their profiteering in the sex trade had made them forget "the place of a servant in the scale," to borrow an apt phrase from James's governess (*TS* 331).[28] In 1895, in Wilde's legal entanglement, both age and class were again inflammatory aspects of the sexual "crime" on trial. Thus when Wilde sought to defend his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas by means of a popular biblical construction – "such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan"[29] – the move only played into the hands of journalists, prosecutors, and other self-appointed protectors of England's vulnerable "lads," whom Wilde's "depraved will" had allegedly drawn into "vicious courses" of living.[30]

Echoes from an entire decade of London sexual politics resound (down to the very diction of social hysteria) in the parallel universe of *The Turn of the Screw*. In James's tale, too, considerations of hierarchy inflect all personal agency and interpersonal commerce, while the most loaded (partly because the least explicit) site of such negotiations and frictions is sexuality, that famously "dense transfer point for relations of power."[31] To cite Mrs. Grose, it is already bad enough that Miss Jessel – "a lady," in the housekeeper's eyes – had suffered "abasement" by yielding her body to a valet such as Quint, who was so "dreadfully below" her. But any similar traffic between *Miles* and Quint – not only an adult male but "a base menial," as the governess pointedly reminds her little gentleman – would violate an even stronger taboo, constituting the extreme case of combined age, sexual, and

status "incongruity," in the governess's delicate term (*TS* 335). Perhaps it is no accident, then, that the governess's story, or rather Miles's, comes to light through an intermediary named Douglas, recalling Wilde's own dear "Bosie" (Alfred Douglas), or that James's story, which germinated in 1895, culminates in a humiliating tribunal organized around issues of caste. The governess, that is, comes to simulate a prosecutor whose "infatuation" with securing disclosures from Miles ("I should get *all*") renders her "blind with victory"; Miles himself suggests "a gentleman" whose "supreme surrender of the name" of his partner, a lowly valet, leads to his "fall in the world"; and Quint stalks about the manor at Bly like "a sentinel before a prison," an image that may call to mind any of Wilde's stops along the way from Holloway to Reading Gaol (*TS* 398–403). If James's finale rehearses his immediate impression of events in 1895, as recorded in his letters to Edmund Gosse – "But the *fall* [of Wilde] from nearly twenty years of a really unique . . . conspicuity . . . to that sordid prison-cell!" – then one should not be surprised to see what he had called Wilde's "hideous human history" (*L* IV: 10) translated by the governess and the order she serves into something "hideous just because it *was* human," a ghastly embodiment of sexuality to be eradicated at all costs (*TS* 342).

One must be careful, of course, in trying to gauge James's active political sympathies, or to read their inscription in the fiction. As indicated by his own phrasings, James seized upon scandalous downfall partly as a source of colorful drama, the agony of the Wildean "spectacle" making the largest claim on his interest. By the same token, Miles's demise is probably intended to be measured mainly on the nerve endings and heartstrings, and does not evidently seem meant to foster social consciousness in the audience – an objective more tangible in, say, the cultural critique of James's "The Pupil" or *What Maisie Knew*. Yet if we press for signs of a latent queer politics in *The Turn of the Screw*, the most promising would lie just in that "beauty of the pathetic" which James sought as his chief aesthetic effect, while the vulnerable "plasticity of childhood" that makes for this lovely pathos acquires significance as *sexual* plasticity within the broader historical situation of the tale.

Michael Trask has convincingly treated James's work of the late 1890s as resisting a "narrative logic of developmentality" – the notion of obligatory stages that must be surmounted *en route* to an adequate adult heterosexuality – that emerged in the late Victorian period, became codified with the institution of psychoanalysis, and passed into postmodern consciousness as intuitive knowledge:

In their joint effort to represent and manage a threateningly heterogeneous sexual world . . . the reformers, doctors, and legislators who undertook the transformation of sexual heterogeneity into evolutionism relied heavily on the powerful fact of sexual *difference* to underwrite the equation between sexual normalcy and healthy consensus . . . The "experimental" nature of . . . same-gender or cross-class relations was drawn into stark relief as a sexual phase to be gone beyond.[32]

If Miles pays dearly for his reluctance to leave the phase of "plasticity" – to forfeit same-gender, cross-class relations in favour of a more "proper" object choice – the staging of his death, in its pathetic appeal, invites readers to reckon the expense of such a "liberation" or salvation as that conducted by the governess. As James's text suggests, and as Deborah Kerr brilliantly conveys in the screen adaptation *The Innocents* (1963), it is finally the governess, not Quint, who haunts Bly, covering "three miles" an evening in "circling about" the house on police maneuvers (*TS* 327). By the end, the chronic instability of her utterances permits one to read "the loss I was so proud of" – in her meaning, the divestiture of Quint's influence – as rather "the loss that Miles dies of," the throttling of some necessary life source of the child. Likewise, when she excuses the "sternness" of her fatal intervention as meant to be "all for [Miles's] judge, his executioner" – in her meaning, the headmaster who dismissed the boy from school – the confessional mode again seems patent (*TS* 402–3). With Quint as a worthy adversary of her own devising, a quite specific tragedy for cultural continuance results from this "playing out of the rights" over boys like Miles "between obsessions that destroy the field in contest."[33] One might even detect in that "faint and far . . . cry of a child" that belies the bright façade of Bly an accent of what Sedgwick calls the "melancholia – the denied mourning – caused by . . . originary foreclosures of . . . homosexual possibility" (*TS* 300).[34]

It was not natural that men of different characters and tastes should be intimate, and although undergraduates, unlike schoolboys, are officially normal, the dons exercised a certain amount of watchfulness, and felt it right to spoil a love affair when they could. (E. M. Forster, *Maurice*, 1913–14)

Just here it might be countered that the perceptions of modern novelists like Forster and Woolf or of postmodern theorists such as Sedgwick are dubious guides, inasmuch as they look back on Victorian cultural life from the vantage of a century in which sexuality became, in Foucault's dramatic phrase, "more important almost than our life."[35] To take a specialized example of this type of argument, the biographer Leon Edel declined to participate in the governess's quest for the cause of Miles's school expulsion, stating that

it "little matters" what the nature of his offense had been.[36] Elizabeth A. Sheppard extends this view, thoughtfully adding that a variety of politicoallegorical implications ("Miles as a boy . . . anarchist, Flora as infantile 'new woman' ") would have sufficiently alarmed James's readers, yet she curiously rules out homosexuality as being within the scope of possibility: "Quint is not a paederast, nor Miss Jessel a lesbian, so . . . their physical abuse of the children can hardly be . . . the author's intention"; even supposing that Miles regaled his schoolmates with the "details of a vulgar debauch" between a valet and a governess, such "smut" (Sheppard claims) would hardly have been enough to send him packing under a cloud.[37] This last contention draws some support from a period reviewer for the London *Times*, whose regret for the primitiveness of modern boy culture appears tempered by a weary tolerance: "Alas, little boys need no Quint to make them talk in a style that would disgust an Apache" (*CR* 311). On the face of it, then, there need be no sex whatsoever, let alone Forster's "homosex," kicking around in the gothic shadows of *The Turn of the Screw*.

Yet two of James's most interested correspondents suggest otherwise, nor can it be immaterial, given the centrality of psychomedical authority in Victorian sexual politics, that both correspondents were men of science: an American physician with prominent public health credentials, Dr. Louis Waldstein, and a cofounder of the British Society for Psychical Research, Frederic W. H. Myers. Just what sort of "conscious intentions" Waldstein imputed to *The Turn of the Screw* is not known, but James's reply to the doctor establishes their common solicitude for the "hideous . . . exposure" of Miles and Flora (*L* IV: 84). Further, Waldstein's contemporary treatise *The Subconscious Self and its Relation to Education and Health* (1897) may help one to infer at least the general contours of his probing for James's meaning in the tale. In that influential book, Waldstein prescribes that Anglo-American culture should strive "to create numberless impressions of beauty and harmony upon the child, and to exclude everything that is ugly and squalid." As if with a premonition of the governess who watches zealously for "the outbreak . . . of the little natural man" (*TS* 337), Waldstein stresses the causative and predictive value of early nurture, urging that "persons habitually in [the child's] company . . . [must] be chosen with care" and that their "carriage and behavior" should be distinguished by "true . . . refinement." Yet the doctor seems to have had Quint's type of deviant masculinity mainly in mind, for "the child" in question is male (as expected), and the apprehension, that he will "grow to [become] the man who . . . surprise[s] his friends by acts . . . out of harmony." Admittedly, such decorous talk does not specify the unharmonious "acts" that are to be feared,

but Waldstein's final word on the subject narrows the range of reference, even as it invokes the dark side of the logic of developmentality: "strange vagaries of affection and passion, which affect [a man's] whole existence . . . can be traced to . . . small beginnings."[38]

In this respect, the American physician Waldstein followed not only the evasive (if not so elusive) vocabulary of his English counterparts, but also their gradual shift in construing the etiology of male homosexuality. In the early 1890s the dominant interpretation still turned considerably on "self-abuse," with even the progressive J. A. Symonds tracing "sexual inversion" to "vicious habits which injure the nervous organism – like masturbation after the age of puberty."[39] As the decade progressed, antimasturbation crusaders found themselves competing with reformers who targeted the "immorality" of "bad friendships" as the prime breeding ground of "debased" affections between men.[40] Of course, it would be difficult to draw clear lines between these explanatory models, either or both of which can be read into the claim from Edward Carpenter, the prominent socialist and early "gay-rights" activist, that "to introduce sensual and sexual habits [into a boy's life] . . . at an early age, is to arrest growth, both physical and mental."[41] The more urgent point, as the examples of Symonds and Carpenter suggest, is that it was not only social conservatives such as Waldstein who had come under the sway of a "science" that anxiously sought to govern the development, habits, and associations of impressionable boys such as James's little Miles.

An equally salient commentator on *The Turn of the Screw* was Frederic Myers, an acquaintance of both William and Henry James since the early 1880s. Again, one wishes for the contents of his letter to Henry of late 1898, knowing only that James, writing in response, once more took refuge in lamenting the plight of unprotected childhood, and downplaying his expert horror show as "a very mechanical matter" (*L* IV: 88). But the angle of Myers's query, too, can perhaps be guessed from another letter he sent simultaneously to Oliver Lodge, a Liverpool physics professor who was also involved in psychical research. There Myers asserts, matter-of-factly, that Flora feels "lesbian love" for the "harlot-governess" Miss Jessel, and Miles, "pederastic passion for the partially materialized ghost" of Quint, who himself may have died at the hands of another "male victim of his lust."[42] Especially striking, given the wave of repugnance that greeted James's tale in some critical quarters, is Myers's attribution of same-sex passions to the children as well as to Quint. If Myers did indeed dispatch such a reading to Lamb House for James's blessing – not impossible, given his often pushing intimacy with the James brothers – then Henry's claim not even to "*understand* the principal question" posed to him in Myers's letter

would invite comparison with Whitman's famous repudiation of Symonds's queer reading of *Leaves of Grass*.

Speculations aside, however, the *bona fide* menace to society that mainstream Victorians would have sensed or projected in the character of a Quint or a Miss Jessel – in generic terms, the space in which gothicism and naturalism coincide – cannot be appreciated without recalling the empirical earnestness of students of psychical phenomena such as Myers, and the immense prestige accorded to their labors. Taking up the English example, James's brother William had helped to found the American Society for Psychical Research in 1884 (see his "The Confidences of a 'Psychical Researcher' " [1909]), while Henry himself had dipped into *Phantasms of the Living* (1886), coauthored by Myers, before writing *The Turn of the Screw*. Of course, James had studied up in order to write *against* "the mere modern 'psychical' case" of otherworldly visitation, which he felt was regrettably "washed clean of all queerness as by exposure to a flowing laboratory tap, and equipped with credentials vouching for this" (*LC* 11: 1182). But this project only earned him a scolding from the London *Times*, which further confirmed Myers's authority: James's ghosts simply were "not in conformity with the results of science" as registered in "the vast collections of phantasms brought together by the S.P.R." (*CR* 311). Thus when Myers himself, with all the weight of "the S.P.R." behind him, not only takes Quint and Jessel seriously as *sexual* types but classifies them as "partially materialized," his term is not casual but clinical, speaking for a reading constituency that may *not* have discounted the worries of the "good and virtuous" governess as medieval superstition, or have deemed her aggressions groundless. Paradoxically, if James's realist fictions transported audiences to "a land where the vices have no bodies" (as essayist Frank Moore Colby memorably said), his supernatural tale seems to have embodied those vices – "partially," yet quite enough to be felt – and thus linked their theatre of operations at Bly with a social world that was both familiar and fearful to many readers (*CH* 337).

Every gentleman is interested in his good name. (Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1890/1)

I am an Englishman, and I know a gentleman at sight. I should know one drunk, in the gutter, in jail, under the gallows. (Joseph Conrad, *Victory*, 1915)

It remains to be asked why *The Turn of the Screw* – annexing parapsychology, with its primal "queerness" restored, to allegorize the convulsions of British sexual politics – gravitates toward particular characteristics in its portraiture of Quint and Miles. Why should the apparent pedophile and

cultivator of "pederastic passion" be *déclassé*, and yet endowed with such a "tall, active, erect" bearing that he might almost pass for the master of Bly, Miles's uncle in London (*TS* 320)? Why is the boy-at-risk, at least presumably the heir of the estate, insistently styled as a little gentleman-in-the-making and reminded of the rule that "young gentlemen [must] not forget their station" (*TS* 335)? Like Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), James's tale conjures up a thematics of masculine performance in which "gentlemanliness" teeters on the brink of a deep plunge, in which, to quote from Jekyll's confession, the very man who "plod[s] in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, [could] in a moment, like a schoolboy, strip off these lendings and spring headlong into the sea of liberty," sinking rapidly from "undignified" to "monstrous" means of self-gratification.[43]

In Stevenson's text the tokens of "respectability" that both signify and sustain the socioeconomic dominance of aristocratic and professional men resemble superficial costumery more than an integral fund of acquired character. Just as "lendings," these signifiers lend themselves to becoming detached and appropriated, not unlike the waistcoats of the London uncle that seem to suit Quint (better than the ill-fitting garments of Mr. Hyde) and that he brazenly assumes as the uniform of his headlong pursuit of "libert[ies] rather gross" with "everyone" in his domain (*TS* 318). To the degree that this pretender's license calls to mind the usual perquisites of power enjoyed by gentlemen of the better sort, however, Quint's masquerade also figures a radical reversibility in the *opposite* direction on the scale of social and ethical standing. The facility with which the valet usurps and abuses a role so far above him, that is, prompts the corollary fear that a so-called true gentleman of the master class – "some bland old bird (the last you would have thought of)," in Stevenson's phrase – may shed the borrowings of his acculturation in a trice and revert to the naked desires and atavistic indulgences associated, for James as well, with the errant "schoolboy."[44]

In other words, *The Turn of the Screw* advances James's now familiar interest in the unstable, elastic nature of constructs such as "gentleman" or "man of the world," the latter ruthlessly satirized in "The Pupil," for instance (*THJ* 191, 224). On one level, the governess's impression of Quint as "looking like an actor" (like Basil Dashwood of *The Tragic Muse*, one might say), and of Bly's leaf-strewn lawn as "a theatre after a performance," littered with playbills, suggests a poor girl's compensatory imagination, something like Millicent Henning's mental picture in *The Princess Casamassima* of actors in "private life" (*TS* 356; *PC* 104). At the same time, the governess's analogies reinforce the idea of gender styles as fabrications subject to

duplicity, on the one hand, and internal corrosion, on the other. As I have shown, this potential for parodic "negation" is treated largely under the sign of comedy in *The Tragic Muse*, but *The Turn of the Screw* registers that peculiarly Victorian chill that somebody who might be anybody because he is finally "like nobody" (as the governess says of Quint) will enjoy universal mobility within the sphere of genteel patriarchy, his moral emptiness going unremarked if not rewarded (*TS* 320).

"But if he isn't a gentleman," begins Mrs. Grose, contemplating the identity of Bly's male ghost, then "he's a horror," as the governess completes the housekeeper's thought. Besides emphasizing how Victorian men guarded against "carry[ing] a bad name,"[45] as the governess worries that Miles will do, the exchange indicates both the imperative belief that "gentleman" and "horror" must be utterly distinct, and the strain of boundary maintenance that proved them to be instead dangerously miscible or interchangeable, or at least subject to suspicion as such (*TS* 295, 319, 307). When Gerard Manley Hopkins esteems "gentleman" a more valuable pedigree than "Christian"; when Howells cites the restraining force of "*un*gentlemanly" ("that word, which from a woman's tongue always strikes a man like a blow in the face"); or when Gosse writes to Howells, only half-teasingly, that "a quantity of cads have sworn to behave like gentlemen" after reading his tutelary novels: these testimonials simultaneously burnish the ideal and signal a crisis of confidence in social hermeneutics.[46] This wobble of insecurity shows up not only in Mrs. Grose's question about the mysterious interloper who visually ravishes the governess from the tower – "Was he a gentleman?" – but also in her odd relief upon learning that apparently he was not (*TS* 318). Would not the mere fact that a man like Quint had thus invaded the sanctity of Bly and openly signaled his salaciousness brand him as *not* a gentleman? Or alternatively, what can it mean if the plain and simple Mrs. Grose conceives that a gentleman, possibly the master of Bly himself, might covertly prowl the grounds of a rural manor as a matter of course?

Perhaps most significantly, the emphasis on Quint's performance *as* performance strikingly connects him with earlier Jamesian men in ways that further suggest not the disjuncture but the continuity of "deviant" behavior with that deemed tolerably "normal." As I discussed in chapter 1, Felix Young of *The Europeans* "always pass[es] for a gentleman in Bohemia," while the substantially more bohemian Basil Dashwood (see chapter 2) circulates in proper society "look[ing] remarkably like a gentleman" – a category further compromised by having to accommodate the "queer" and queerly evasive Gabriel Nash, whose social sustenance requires the defiance of "formulas" as such. Yet the ability of a Young or a Dashwood to pass

between the regions of propriety and dubiety – or rather, to pass *within* either region – never went so far as to disqualify their masculine style from the reward and imprimatur of marriage.

The figure of Peter Quint, however, casts an eery retrospective light on such mutable gentlemen, even to the point of incorporating certain physical resources of their charm, that late Victorian coin of the realm whose two sides are theatricality and sexuality. Quint's "straight, good features," for example, align him with the "straight-featured" Dashwood, inviting the question of just what kind and degree of malfeasance a "handsome" demeanor ("remarkably" so, to the governess) can first facilitate and then hide – yet another revisiting of Wilde's Dorian (*TS* 320; *TM* 226). Similarly, Felix Young's "expressive mouth" and "excessively arched" eyebrows – instruments of those amatory powers with which he conquers both sexes in New England – return in Quint's "wide," sensual mouth and his eyebrows "arched . . . as if they might move a good deal" (*EU* 183; *TS* 320).[47] In James's handling of these details of physiognomy that are both vital to Quint's gentlemanly performance and increasingly pregnant and ambiguous as social signifiers, one registers the considerable distance that both the author and his audience have come since *Roderick Hudson*, where the sexual meanings of a "remarkably handsome" face with "singularly mobile" features were only beginning to resonate as potentially other than "straight" (*RH* 37). If *The Turn of the Screw* sketches in some "queer whiskers" on that face for good effect, also supplying Quint with the red hair that even readers of the sexually sedative Howells knew how to interpret, James had clearly superadded a distinctly "perverse" erotics to the different masculine embodiments of his earlier fiction (*TS* 320).

At the same time, the figure of Peter Quint prepares for further adaptations and uses of the type in Anglo-American fiction, later male characters that also show the powerful influence of the cultural "hieroglyph" of homosexuality that Wilde had become.[48] Loosely speaking, Quint's lineage may originate in early James and pass through the pages of Stevenson, but it reaches a kind of final synthesis in Joseph Conrad's *Victory*, where a villain who passes for "plain Mr. Jones," a "gentleman at large," has queerness written all over his "handsome but emaciated face," especially in the "devilish" expressivity of his feminine lashes and "beautifully pencilled eyebrows." To draw a crucial distinction, however, whereas Conrad lays great emphasis on the role of *his* spectral homosexual (or "skeleton in a gay dressing-gown") as a highly symptomatic agent of the degeneration of western society, James's tale suggests that the prospect of a diminished cultural future has far less to do with a Peter Quint than with the spiraling homophobic imagination of

his type, and the consequent fears that inspire the destruction of a beautiful, pathetic little gentlemen like Miles.[49]

> Within the sphere of gentlemen there are distinctions of rank . . . but none of class; there are the Big People, and the modest, refined, gentlemanly little people; . . . they preserve a general equality of deportment . . . constitut[ing] that great state within the state – Society. (H. G. Wells, *Kipps: The Story of a Simple Soul*, 1905)

As is suggested by this passage from James's favorite Wells novel, the utility of "gentlemanliness" as a regulatory ideal in sexual behavior was inseparable from its function as a class-disciplinary mechanism. The code of the gentleman asked "equality of deportment" to serve as a principle of communal order in lieu of equality of resources; it fostered the illusion of unity and common interest across a broad span of social stations; and it kept proletarian climbers (like Wells's Artie Kipps) both endlessly striving and endlessly in their place. However, all the prerogatives of privacy and consideration that the bourgeois gentleman, along the length of Wells's suggested continuum, had grown accustomed to sharing with aristocrats during the nineteenth century remained secure only so long as British economic and imperial power seemed robust. With fears of its weakening came a heightened monitoring of masculinities, even as fissures masked by the ethos of "gentlemen all" surfaced and widened.

In *The Turn of the Screw* these pressures aggravate the problem of Miles's maturational "outbreak" – his behavioral and sexual object choices – by placing him in what might be called the double bind of the quint-essential Victorian boy of the genteel classes. On the one hand, patriarchy relegated girls to "the inferior age, sex, and intelligence," as the governess primly observes, prizing a martial Miles over a decorative Flora.[50] Yet the "freedom" of boys like Miles (as it is insistently called) had to be shaped to ensure that it did not become *too* free, like Quint's, just as the relative latitude afforded to these boys – which could imperil personal and social "harmony" through "vagaries of affection," as Waldstein said – required that a strong regulatory frame be placed at their advent to manhood. As the governess chips away at her own first impression of Miles's beatitude – his "only fault" is too much "gentleness," but then his "only defect" is an "excess of the restless" – these contradictory findings indicate the difficult balance Miles must strike to meet ambivalent cultural expectations. Her deduction that Miles had been "too fine and fair for the little horrid, unclean school world" provides only transient relief, for although this view presumes his proper gentility as a future pillar of state, society, and empire, it also raises concern that such personal finesse "made Miles a muff." Without "the spirit to be naughty," the

governess and Mrs. Grose concur, a boy is not much of a boy, but is instead a creature drifting toward effeminacy: passive, sentimental, detached from worldly endeavor. At the same time, that necessary naughtiness must never be of such a degree as to "contaminate" other boys (*TS* 392, 340, 322, 326, 305).

Cases illustrative of these tensions within masculine "education for the world" (*TS* 308), and of homosexuality as a prime source of anxiety, are not hard to find in the annals of English schooling. Another delicate boy who suffered the epithet "muff," for instance, was Charles Dodgson – or Lewis Carroll – who recalled the prevalence of what he tactfully called "annoyance[s] at night" while at Rugby in the 1840s.[51] In more vivid terms, Symonds's memoirs describe Harrow in the 1850s as a scene of "animal lust," in which "every boy of good looks had a female name . . . as some bigger fellow's 'bitch' " and "acts of onanism, mutual masturbation, the sports of naked boys in bed together" proliferated.[52] Yet a more sensitive intertext for James's tale might be found in the youthful experience of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, the Cambridge don whose history book treating Greek love was briefly considered in the previous chapter. What Dickinson had sorely missed while at Charterhouse boarding school, and precisely to alleviate the stuff of "black memories" in that "hothouse of vice," was "one of those passionate friendships or loves which redeem school for many boys"; such a fervent boy-love is arguably a cognate of the "liking" of select fellows that had prompted Miles's expulsion, although typically James does not foreclose the other possibility: that Miles was no "muff" at all, but rather one of the aggressors.[53]

Whatever the cause, these portraits of life in the Victorian long dormitory provide a context for the *societal* fears surrounding pretty young Miles, as do items of sexological discourse, both lexical and conceptual, that crop up in James's tale. For example, the governess's "big word" for the contagion of one particular form of excess – "contaminate" – is probably glossed in Symonds's report of "repulsive" schoolboy "sports": although he himself "remained free . . . from this *contamination*," his exposure to it (he believed) exerted a "powerful influence" on his evolution as a man-desiring man.[54] Likewise, Symonds's view that boys who indulged in sex "permanently injured [their] constitution" – a platitude of both child-rearing manuals and sexual "science" – may well indicate the nature of Miles's egregious, unspeakable offense: he had been "an *injury* to the others." Readers such as Edel and Sheppard, in taking the James of the preface at his word, overlook how his narrative absorbed both a vocabulary and an implied etiology of male homosexuality, connecting his plot with a specific institutional history

in Victorian England. Miles's injurious contamination, it bears repeating, consisted only in having "said things" to "a few [boys] I liked," who "must have *repeated* them . . . to those *they* liked": a daisy chain of endearments that may not have "only one meaning," as a reader of the governess's mentality might think, but that clearly *favors* one meaning over others (*TS* 304, 400–1; emphasis added).

Finally, one would miss something essential to James's political allegory if one were to neglect how Miles, in his thwarted bid for the "gentlemanly" property that comes with "proper" gentlemanliness, has been threatened with dispossession all along, and not simply by the workings of sexual regulation. The drama of his truncated life, *as well as* the part played by sexuality in determining that drama, can be located squarely within imperial history: first, in "the huge, hot, horrible century of English pioneership, the wheel that ground the dust for a million early graves," including those containing the bodies of Miles's (and Flora's) parents; secondly, in the law of primogeniture that forced Miles's father – a younger "military brother" of his London uncle – to pack for India in the first place; and finally, in social attenuation caused, at the center of Empire, by a homosocial élite uninterested in the rising generation (*LC* 1: 1395, 1397). To Miles's great loss and resentment, that uncle in Harley Street – as "a bachelor in the prime of life . . . without the right sort of experience or a grain of patience" for children – keeps literally miles away from the boy (*TS* 296). For all his upper-crust trappings, then, Miles's claim on genteel patriarchal entitlement has been impaired from the start. The governess – or rather, the regulatory apparatus that her figure inscribes and that lays the ghost of homosexuality in this tale – only finishes the job, eliminating in Miles a promising bearer of civilization from a civilization that cannot afford to lose him. "If he *were* innocent," the governess ponders, moments before the circumstances of Miles's death seem to prove otherwise, "what then on earth was *I*?" (*TS* 401). This is a timely and potentially productive doubt, for what if Miles's nominal "crime" – incipient same-sex desire – were grasped as purely a cultural invention, rather than as a theological "evil" or a pathological kind of physical or psychological "deviance"? How on earth, in that case, is one to judge his executioner?

4

Masculinity "changed and queer" in The Ambassadors

Turning from *The Turn of the Screw* to *The Ambassadors* (1903) means returning to the mode of unsensational realism, the thematics of dissident adult masculinity adumbrated in *The Europeans* and *The Tragic Muse*, and the scene of American culture that suffuses the novel even though (or perhaps especially because) it is set entirely in Europe. By this stage in James's career as a fiction writer the general argument for an alternative masculinity had become very familiar, and its implication in homosexuality much clearer, if still necessarily opaque to the reader who failed or refused to peep behind his "verbal hedge" (or verbal hedging) for the "guilty secrets" it was presumed to harbor (*CH* 335). My contention throughout has been that James's consistent and ever more subtly emphatic writing against what seem to be primarily norms of gender identification and enactment cannot help but assail norms of sexuality as well. In a broad sense, this strand reaches an apogee of sorts in *The Ambassadors*.

Ironically, academic criticism is still catching up with a queer reading of Lambert Strether's yearnings that apparently dates from the late 1950s. As recently as 1997 Michiel W. Heyns has remarked on the oddity that despite James's well-known "strongly homoerotic" proclivities, Strether's outpouring to Little Bilham – "Live all you can" – and the experiential regrets this imperative implies have not been "ascribed to an undeclared homosexual side" in the character.[1] Renu Bora imputes "queer pleasures" to the world of the novel – the exchange of "sexually paradoxical" innuendo, the fetishism of textures, the lively market in gossip – but these "glimmers" do not add up to much in the way of homosexual specificity.[2] Hugh Stevens has suggested a parallel between the work's "spirit of camp affirmation" and James's late correspondence to beloved young men (his own Little Bilhams), yet Stevens yields to others the project (which I shall take up) of explicating an "embodied homoerotic thematics" in *The Ambassadors*.[3]

My point here is that academic readers of *The Ambassadors* have all been "scooped," evidently, by the gay college students of mid-century New York

recalled in James McCourt's novel *Time Remaining* (1993). Apparently a knowledge of James's work functioned as no mere intellectual credential among gay undergraduates of that period, but also (and comically) as a pickup line for "get[ting] laid": "you couldn't get anybody to even . . . play you his [Edith] Piaf records until you said something about poor old Hattie Jaques." Besides rechristening (and feminizing) James as "Hattie Jaques" – a corpulent, bawdy British film actress – the students also renamed the homoerotically charged pair at the center of *The Ambassadors*, converting the hunky Chadwick Newsome into "the sexpot . . . Chapstick Nuisance" and Lambert Strether, his aging admirer, into an "old poof" named Lamebrain Stretcher from "Asshole, Mass." (an echo of Louis Wilkinson's much earlier scatological sketch). If James received credit for "some very gay diction" in the midst of his bewildering "Mungo wa-wa," neither James nor "Stretcher" had escaped the "exasperating jelly-mold" of American culture by "go[ing] down-and-out with the gorgeous . . . Chapstick into the Parisian night." For McCourt's young gays, on the eve of the sixties and Stonewall, James failed for the same reason adduced by an earlier generation of author-critics such as E. M. Forster and André Gide (James "knew *squat* about the species" *homo sapiens*), yet now his celibacy could be openly associated with homosexuality: "Poor Hattie, it got to her, not getting laid."[4] Half a century after McCourt's 1950s scholarship is still elaborating this protoqueer reading of *The Ambassadors*, owing to a critical oversight of (or resistance to) the combination of Strether's erotic infatuations, his slipperiness as a heterosexual love object, and his discovery of a "camp" side to his personality with the help of John Little Bilham, the "little" queer figure obscured by Chad Newsome.

The plot confronts James's protagonist, Strether, with much that is queer: a "queer old garden" in Paris, "queer displacement[s] of . . . point of view," impressions "queer beyond words," and an internal tumult that illuminates the "queer quantity" of his past experience, leaving him finally "changed and queer" – a self that has been "steadily unmade," as Ross Posnock puts it, into a very vessel of difference (*A* 118, 317, 235, 110, 209).[5] Yet for all this queerness, homosexuality seems at first glance to be virtually absent from the text, gestured toward, at most, by episodes of visual admiration between men or by physical contacts – a pat on the arm or the knee – that might pass for fraternal, avuncular, or quasipaternal affection. As I will show, there is something almost studious about this textual quiescence, which becomes all the more provoking when one has already encountered what John Carlos Rowe calls the "appearance of explicit [male] homosexual identity" (as explicit as James could be) in works throughout the 1890s, such

as "The Middle Years," "The Death of the Lion," and "The Altar of the Dead."[6]

Undoubtedly, what Stevens terms "queer possibility" is subdued in *The Ambassadors* partly because of James's sensitivity to the prevailing Anglo-American cultural climate and his lack of "optimism about an identity construction predicated on (homo)sexuality."[7] Yet as this parenthetical partition – (homo)sexuality – may suggest, the novel resists the notion of predicating identity upon *any* type of sexuality, as James tries to frame Strether's break with the normative order – the regimes of masculine authority and servitude that characterize post-Puritan, capitalist America – as more narrowly a deviation in *gender* performance, as if this could remain separate or separable from sexual identification by types of desire. Although the story comprehends marriage as an essential prop of the American system – a "strong chain," in Strether's original and alarming conception, "protect[ing] . . . [men] from life" – James restricts himself to the social ramifications of the institution, such as the spiritually impoverished state of the married businessman (*A* 54). To judge by one of James's letters to his young inamorato Hugh Walpole, "marital, sexual, bedroom relations" might even have struck him as lying beyond the reach of representation, at least for authors of their constitution (*L* IV: 552).[8] Yet as I will show, it is precisely homosexuality, the particular "queerness beyond words" for any public author of the period, that enters the narrative space created by Strether's evasion of conventional heteromasculine standards and by the novel's attempted evacuation of sexual discourse as such. As the reader of James has been taught to notice by works from *The Europeans* to *The Tragic Muse*, one way in which James and his fictional creatures evoked an unspeakable sexual interest was through speech that belongs under the heading of camp.

> What is there in the idea of Too late – of some . . . passion or bond . . . formed too late? . . . It's love, it's friendship, it's mutual comprehension – it's whatever one will. (Henry James, Notebook, 1895)

> What then did James mean by sensations, passions or pleasure? (Maxwell Geismar, *Henry James and the Jacobites*, 1963)

As James observed in his preface, the "whole case" of *The Ambassadors* centers on Strether's tutorial effusion to his young painter-friend, John Little Bilham, during a Parisian garden party hosted by the fabled sculptor Gloriani (*LC* 2: 1304): "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to." This famous injunction turns out to be as subtle as it is emphatic – Strether urges

Bilham to act upon the *illusion* of freedom and thus to avoid accumulating regrets – yet the experiential content of this maximized "living" remains open-ended and unspecified: "It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life" (*A* 132). In keeping with the casual flourish of James's early notebook entry ("it's whatever one will") and the equal imprecision of his 1899 scenario for the novel, which refers to Strether's "dumb passion . . . of God knows what," this piece of "melancholy eloquence" addressed to Little Bilham amounts to generic advice, as the details of Strether's own regrets are overwhelmed by his acute sense of "the injury done his character" by "a life . . . not happily concentrated" (*N* 393, *LC* 2: 1305, *N* 375). Yet James's insistence on the pathetic fate of "poor fine . . . missing, striving Strether" inevitably arouses the question of just what Strether has striven for, which sensations, passions, or pleasures (in Geismar's phrase) he believes he has missed, and what the more exact nature of his "injury" might be (*N* 383). Strether feels it is "just simply too late," but too late for what (*A* 131)?

The novel seems to supply an answer in Strether's persistent envy of more successful men and, more pointedly, his apparent envy of their romantic success with women. In the scene at hand, he measures himself against Gloriani, who prowls about like a "glossy male tiger" surrounded by exotic women from his "fabulous" history of conquests, while the sculptor's smile both masks and betrays the "terrible life" of sexuality from which Strether feels himself cut off (*A* 133, 122, 121). Prompted by Little Bilham – his source on Gloriani's voracious appetites and sexual magnetism – Strether also names the "rare youth" Chad Newsome as an enviable man, and evidently for being "marked out by women" (*A* 133, 98). It is, of course, Chad's presumed descent into (hetero)sexual license in the Latin Quarter that motivates Strether's embassy in the first place: his effort, as Mrs. Newsome's delegate, to fetch back the fallen golden boy for the family business, for America, and for the salvific enchainment of marriage. In the course of the novel even Strether's neurasthenic friend Waymarsh becomes animated in the role of romantic squire, escorting Sarah Pocock (Chad's sister and their mother's *second* ambassador, Strether having proved disloyal) on charming excursions around Paris, and leaving Strether to wonder why "*he* had never risen with the lark to attend a brilliant woman to the Marché aux Fleurs" (*A* 268). The implication of this *leitmotif* would seem to be that if Puritanical American culture predisposes the "least likely" men to make "belated uncanny clutches at . . . the ideal," that ideal involves clutching at a member of the opposite sex (*A* 232). If Peter Brooks's gloss accurately fills

the gap in Strether's nebulous setpiece – to live means "to live sexually" – then Strether would be urging Bilham to live with a specifically *hetero*sexual intensity that he himself had lacked.[9]

In the same vein, the novel poses Strether, too, as a man marked out by women. Although one should not overlook the chance that Waymarsh speaks for himself, Strether receives his friend's assurance that he is still "very attractive" at 55, and his taste for the "higher culture" of Europe – understood as a rediscovered aestheticism – enhances his market value for marriage-minded women of his class (*A* 33, 62). Furthermore, as Strether testifies to his first romantic prospect, his confidante Maria Gostrey, he avoids excesses: "I don't get drunk; I don't pursue the ladies; I don't spend money; I don't even write sonnets" (*A* 197). One should note, in passing, that Strether's abstemiousness includes a disinclination to "pursue" or sonneteer women, and that this self-description highlights the ambiguity of period codes of bachelorhood: is this merely gentlemanly discretion, or does it possibly signify an interest in a different direction of sexual pursuit? Strether's tally of virtues, that is, indicates a suitability for domesticity that would make an ideal husband, but the question of whether he desires to exercise those virtues in marriage remains open to interpretation. We should also observe that this list chimes with Strether's familiar note of self-deprecation, his sense of himself as a "perfectly equipped failure" whose native codes of morality make him "portentously solemn," with a quaint "estimate of fun" (*A* 40, 338, 188). But again, the possibility that this austerity may index or cover for a disinterest in conventional romantic "fun," or a constitutional *predisposition* to failure in the guise of a conventional lover, seems refuted by the fact that he constantly moves in a circle of petticoats (to adapt a phrase from *The Wings of the Dove*). A popular, convenient gentleman back home in Massachusetts, in what is "essentially a society of women," Strether is also much sought after abroad, and surprisingly adept, as Bilham teases him, at "get[ting] the ladies to work for him" (*A* 213, 124). It is precisely such teasing – a banter born of an instant mutual affection between Strether and Bilham – that will evolve into a mode of campy exchange in which "the ladies" are relegated to the margins, making space for masculine desire and substantially reinflecting the (sexual) meanings of "living all one can."

Yet the narrative, I am suggesting, almost perversely furnishes evidence for a more normative reading of Strether's sexual resonances, inasmuch as two (and possibly three) women wish to secure him, thus (apparently) vouching for *their* reading of him as a conventional object and subject of desire. The wealthy, "handsome" Mrs. Newsome proposes to Strether

herself, and the discerning Maria Gostrey, who is notably twenty years younger than he, also makes a tacit bid for his domestic company. Even the Countess Marie de Vionnet, with her "celebrated" gift for acquisitions, including the rare Chad, strives to be "sublime" for Strether, and at least one critic has taken her expressions of gratitude to him as containing "an offer of physical recompense": "You see how . . . I want everything. I've wanted you too" (*A* 50, 123, 324).[10] Indeed, the novel-scenario suggests James's own concern that investing Strether with such a potent (hetero)sexual appeal would seem implausible, given other attributes such as his age, his limited achievements by the standards of modern commercial masculinity, and his self-effacing manner. James worries aloud about "represent[ing] every woman in the book . . . as having . . . 'made up' to my hero," yet he also seems committed to both Strether's exposure to "enchantresses" as a vital factor in his personal "revolution" abroad ("above all . . . a charming woman or two") and the reciprocation of these charming women, who will be "favourably affected" (in James's discreet phrase) by Strether (*N* 414, 374).

Suggestively, Strether does not make good on any of these romantic chances. Given that James resorts to the period stereotype of the post-Puritan dominatrix (with its misogynist tinge) in evoking Mrs. Newsome, a moral "iceberg" all the more present and forbidding in her absence, Strether's ultimate disengagement from her seems not only comprehensible but prudent (*A* 298). Yet the novel is still at pains to underscore his *material* recklessness in thus permitting a figurative "great sponge" to erase his "opulent future" with her (*A* 293, 297). Strether's rejection of Maria Gostrey is made to seem even more baffling, for her offer of companionship, tendered in an aesthetically appealing setting (the "cool fusion" of colors in her apartment, the quaint garden "saved from modern ravage"), seems to suit this man, who ends his expedition "as depleted as if he had spent his last sou." James seems quite calculating in having Strether's eye size up a "ripe round melon" during his last interview with Maria, and in gesturing toward the "exquisite service" that she blushingly offers him. "It built him softly round, it roofed him warmly over," and Strether reflects that "it was awkward, it was almost stupid, not to seem to prize such things" (*A* 328, 340–1, 344). As for the physical attraction imputable to his relationship with Marie de Vionnet – which provocatively parallels Chad's indulgences – Strether dismisses the idea of romantic or sexual opportunity by fiat: "It . . . has nothing to do, practically, with either of us." In the end, the oddest thing about the "odd foundation" of his friendship with the countess, as Maria Gostrey observes, is not what Strether "rear[s] on it," but rather what he does not (*A* 291, 331). Again, his gesture of dismissal is

ambiguous and James exploits this ambiguity: it *could* be read with perfect plausibility as mere gentility on Strether's part, or its very insistence on foreclosing sexual possibility could suggest that his sexuality does not run that way. More broadly, the novel invites consideration of how the surface credentials of bachelor respectability and discretion in themselves may very well be exactly the cover for a fundamental inclination to pursue "rare youth[s]" rather than "the ladies."

I would argue that what appears to be James's ambivalence about the construction and experience of Lambert Strether, as a particular exemplar of masculinity and sexual identity, is in fact a delicate balancing act calculated to put on trial the normative biases of American culture at the *fin de siècle*, to interrogate the way in which assumptions about the nature and conduct of gender both pattern and derive from repeated "scenes of engendering" that perform their cultural work in the very act of "vanish[ing] into the quotidian of our existence."[11] Historically, commentary on *The Ambassadors* has shown the efficacy of this process of naturalizing norms of gender and sexuality. An entire critical tradition has been built upon unexamined prejudices about what Maxwell Geismar confidently called "normal human biopsychic behavior," underwriting not only a reductive definition of "the recognized, shared experience of the human race," but also a regulatory perspective that places the figure of Strether under the sign of abjection, of a more or less radical demasculinization.[12] From contemporary reviews to the most recent scholarship, that is, Strether has been arraigned for his "typical thinness of feeling wherever passion is concerned" (1903); deplored as "incapable . . . of carnality" (this from Forster's well-known disparagement of James; 1927); faulted for his "lack of masculine reciprocation" to feminine palpitations (1958); pronounced "the most maidenly" of James's protagonists, Leslie Fiedler's feint toward a homosexuality inferable from effeminacy (1960); criticized for avoiding "more complete commitments of behavior" like marriage (1964); charged with a "distrust" of women and a general "condescension" toward sexuality (1984); and psychoanalyzed as moving through the primal scenery of pastoral France – the trysting ground of Chad and Marie de Vionnet – as if divested of the "accoutrements of masculinity" (1992).[13] These accounts vary considerably in theoretical subtlety and political temper, but as a rule they end up producing similar images of Lambert Strether as a desexed man, and correspondingly a figure of embarrassment, at the very dawn of what Foucault famously theorized as the century of sex. So compromised is Strether's masculinity by his sexual (non)performance, on these readings, that even the body of James's text suffers by association, drawing censure as an "emasculated leisure-class novel."[14]

The strong cultural warrant for this biased "rhetoric of negativity" has meant that attempts to rescue James's protagonist from aspersions of masculine deficiency are routinely thrown on the defensive. One time-honored strategy in *this* school of criticism has sought to salvage esteem for Strether's choices under the rubric of renunciation: in Posnock's distancing gloss, the "self-abnegating logic that renounces an active life for idealist, nostalgic contemplation."[15] A related approach detects a poetics of transcendence in the novel that operates in Strether's favor, a rejection of the clamorings of "the wretched self," the brutal economies of intimacy, or the material and cultural trappings of the novel's historical occasion (*A* 321). To be sure, James himself paved the way for this avenue of critical recourse, speaking of Strether's "renouncement" of Maria Gostrey as evidence that he has surmounted his "old order" of consciousness, and returns to the United States "really so quite other" at the novel's end (*N* 414–15). But it does not follow that Strether's eschewal of a "normal" masculine role in a "normal" male–female relationship concedes the *authority* of the norm as the *sine qua non* of experience. Nor does it appear that his graduation from the "old order" in which such a role or a relation had been conceivable (with Mrs. Newsome, all but consummated) exempts him from the *pressure* of the norm or the emotional and practical consequences of resisting that pressure. Significantly, where critics have aimed to shift the burden of argument upon normative discourse, with its "sophisticated moralisms about Strether's failures," the tendency has been to downplay the character's sense of friction in rubbing the norm the wrong way and to treat his "indifference to sexual liaison" as a more or less negligible aspect of his winsome "aesthetic dandyism."[16] This latter reading (from Richard Poirier) has the value of highlighting Strether's curious affinity with Gabriel Nash of *The Tragic Muse*, despite differences in age, nationality, and expressive style. Yet the deeper basis of this affinity in homosexuality still awaits further clarification in Strether's dealings with Little Bilham, and it is important to note that even at the *end* of Strether's learning curve – when he concedes of his *hetero*sexual chances that "so far as they made his opportunity they made it only for a moment" (*A* 344) – his "indifference" is still not indifferent enough to keep him from feeling "awkward" and "stupid" for seeming to misprize the sacred amenities of heterosexual domesticity.

In this respect *The Ambassadors* both reflects and confronts the power of the modern sex/gender system in its prescriptions and expectations for masculine performance. As I have shown, registered throughout James's fiction is what Thomas Laqueur calls the "radical dimorphism" of the sexes, which began as a postulate in the service of Enlightenment patriarchalism but was by James's time articulated as scientific fact, a truism "solidly

grounded in nature" rather than a political scheme shaped by culture. Further, the enforcement methods by which the sex/gender regime molded its subjects and reproduced itself – what Laqueur calls "the social thuggery that takes a polymorphous perverse infant and bullies it into a heterosexual man or woman"[17] – had intensified in the late Victorian period as the hegemony of that regime came under increasing threat both in the United States and England. A rising women's movement bent on removing the barriers that contained woman's "sphere," hedging it off from public life, civil rights, and the socioeconomic prerogatives enjoyed by men; an increasingly visible homosexual subculture (*made* more visible through the dialectic between criminalization and pathologization, on the one hand, and gay self-identification on the other); a consequent blurring of gender boundaries, so that certain men and women found "no definite place on either side of that incisive line which divides the race into two elemental parts" (a phrase from Henry Blake Fuller, author of the early gay novel *Bertram Cope's Year*[18]); a social universe beset by divorce and recreational sex (the milieu of *What Maisie Knew*); and a falling birthrate among middle-class whites, triggering fears of "race suicide": all of these circumstances conspired to give a sense of urgency to propping up the system of male privilege, sharpening up the very definition of masculinity (or unmasculinity), and making men "anxious to be fathers of families," in the words of James's antagonist Theodore Roosevelt.[19]

As this summary suggests, the matter of gender and sexuality was embedded in a complex and shifting matrix of other social standards of masculinity (or femininity), and this, too, *The Ambassadors* well conveys. By the reigning American ideology, as Martha Banta points out, "*male* equate[d] with 'influence' (sometimes called 'power,' often named 'force'), the ability to stamp one's presence upon society, upon politics and business" – which goes a long way toward explaining Strether's habitual inferiority complex as an obscure editor of a journal of aesthetics funded entirely by Mrs. Newsome.[20] In American capitalist culture, that is, manhood self-evidently meant assuming the roles of husband and paterfamilias, but also meant proving oneself as "an immense man of business," such as Abel Newsome of Woollett (Strether's anxiety about "filling [Abel's] shoes" thus combines a vocational with a sexual valence), or drawing a "large income" that could "look anyone in the face," such as the commercial attorney Waymarsh (*A* 341, 49, 31). By contrast, Strether owes what small social weight he has, as editor of the *Woollett Review*, to Mrs. Newsome, who "magnificently pays for" the enterprise. Strether's masculine pride suffers doubly, for he owes his "one presentable little scrap of identity" to a widow's purse strings,

and thus to another man whose industry filled the purse. When Strether protests to Maria Gostrey that his hands do not "touch the business," he obscures the degree to which the business touches him, making what little authority he can claim derivative (*A* 50–1):

> His name on the green cover [of the *Review*], where he had put it for Mrs. Newsome, expressed him doubtless just enough to make the world . . . ask who he was. He had incurred the ridicule of having to have his explanation explained. He was Lambert Strether because he was on the cover, whereas it should have been, for anything like glory, that he was on the cover because he was Lambert Strether. (*A* 62)

In this gender-political context, replete with sexual identity implications, and with this hapless hero to carry the burden of argument, *The Ambassadors* suggests that the route of becoming a spouse, a father, and a conventional man of power amounts to a bad bargain for masculinity, as "business" itself (in Posnock's phrase) becomes Jamesian shorthand for the "congealed status of the American male, whose submission to compulsory heterosexuality results in psychic desiccation."[21] Indeed, the central opposition Strether must mediate in his embassy pits old-world charm and variety – figured by Madame de Vionnet – against "the special phase of civilization" represented by "the mercantile mandate" of Woollett and its homogenized drones, "all the Mr. Brookses and Mr. Snookses, gregarious specimens of a single type." Thus, the refrain of "saving Chad" comes to mean saving him not *for* but *from* the American way: from being "compressed into the box" of bourgeois marriage and "the advertising-department," from merging into the "monotonous commonness" of "the pushing male crowd" (*N* 408; *A* 249; *AS* 83–4). American masculinity, on that model, is offered only a meager choice between the social disfranchisement of a man such as Jim Pocock or the "overwork . . . prostration" and "strapped down" spirit of the only nominally successful Waymarsh (*A* 30, 199). James's works "move relentlessly toward the *perversity* of family and marital relations," as Rowe has said, and *The Ambassadors* is no exception, for all its genial tenor.[22]

> [In Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1889)] homosexuality is on an equal footing with people who eat the dead. Masturbation is the quickest route to epilepsy, nymphomania and not doing well in school. (John Patrick Shanley, American playwright)

As has been already suggested in general terms, one especially crucial context for interpreting *The Ambassadors* is the profound shift in what might be called the metanarrative of Anglo-American culture both occasioned by and expressed in the emergent discourse of sexuality. Both the more

worldly Henry James and more fastidious author-critics such as William Dean Howells ("Sex in Literature"; 1889) were negotiating with an epochal change in the way that western society explained itself to itself, from the macro level of social structure down to the micro level of the individual life. This was the era in which the established science of biology, the upstart discipline of psychology (of which William James was the chief exponent in both America and England), and the more dubious offshoot of sexology (popularized by Havelock Ellis) collaborated as well as competed to explicate the "sexual instinct" as the germ of personality and the "sex drive" as the instrumental mechanism of community. This was also the era, not coincidentally, in which medicojuridical discourse sought new taxonomies for discriminating between "proper gentlemen" and dangerous "inverts" and new technologies for policing both: a regulatory environment in which key supporting roles went to journalists, scandalmongers, and literary censors (both official and self-appointed), who decided what fare nourished the growth of "healthy-minded men" but not that of politically ambitious "unsexed women" (a civic morality test that James's own *Italian Hours* would later fail in England).[23]

As Christopher Craft writes, summarizing the totalizing, if not always coherent, sexological program associated with the names of Karl-Heinrich Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebing, and Havelock Ellis but reverberating far beyond their "scientific" studies: "By the late nineteenth century . . . sex would not just signify, it would signify everywhere and everyhow; no domain of knowledge or feeling, no recess of culture or subjectivity, would be immune to its ramifying effects, its power of insinuation, its general and diffuse causality."[24] The Victorians were hardly the first generations in western society to appreciate the driving, shaping power of sexuality, or to employ it as a factor in conceptualizing gender roles and drawing gender boundaries; nor, of course, were they the first to stigmatize same-sex desire or to pressure men toward marriage and paternity ("From fairest creatures we desire increase"; "Die single, and thine image dies with thee"). But during James's life span the political and ideological stakes involved in the sex/gender system intensified to an unprecedented degree, as "heterosexuality" graduated from an ancient practice without a technical nomenclature to become a linchpin of cultural regulation – in Gore Vidal's definition, "a weird concept of recent origin but terrible consequences."[25]

With respect to modern sexualities, then, the character of Lambert Strether was present at the creation. The "only logic" that governs (or perhaps covers) his exit from the novel, and thus from any conceivable scenario of heterosexual love, marks his deviation from the script of normative

masculinity at a time when that script was taking on a new specificity and gravity. From a later perspective, when the ubiquitous signification of sex is taken for granted, and the prospect of further "incitement to discourse" induces fatigue, it is hard to recover the novelty or the impact of this late Victorian cultural shift. Reading *The Ambassadors*, or any other text of the same vintage, becomes an exercise in historicizing what James called "the old CONSCIOUSNESS . . . of individuals in whose minds half the things that make ours . . . were non-existent" or else in an early stage of formation, such as the overdetermined discourse of sexuality and the criteria of modern heteromasculinity. Not just the author's mentality, in other words, but that of his entire generation was "intensely otherwise conditioned" and subject to intense reconditioning in ways that the novel subtly resists (*L* IV: 208). It seeks to argue, against the advent of *both* the biased sexological imperative and the Rooseveltian model of robust, procreative manhood (embodied – or parodied – earlier in the character of Newman in *The American*), that a man can qualify as a "real man of action" without dramatic exploits on the battlefield or in the bedroom (as a site of heterosexual tournament), and that "action" itself can occur in disparate venues, even in the privacy of one's imagination.

In an Anglo-American cultural climate where manliness increasingly certified itself by external displays – by "having something to show," in a phrase common to both *The Tragic Muse* and *The Ambassadors* – Strether's process of becoming "changed and queer" is pointedly one of potent but "quiet inwardness," occurring "deep down" and producing what Emily Dickinson called "internal difference, / Where the Meanings, are" (*A* 209, 277).[26] Curiously but not inexplicably, despite the novel's concentration on the perils of seeing New Englandly, James is busy developing a Wildean insight: that the usual distinction between "passion" and "reason" is rendered specious when one notices "the curious hard logic of passion, and the emotional coloured life of the intellect" (*DG* 82). When Philip Rahv, in the 1940s, spoke of "the internal yet astonishingly abundant Jamesian emotion," he suggested a junction at which the author, a character like Strether, and the consenting reader meet to affirm a kind of forceful passage of life that has little to "show" when compared to the demonstrations of mainstream masculinity.[27]

By extension, the novel builds on James's critical endorsements of a fiction interested in the "subtler inward life, the wonderful adventures of the soul," by implying that *adventure* itself (like action) is also an "equivocal quantity," not the exclusive prerogative of "detectives or pirates or other splendid desperadoes," but a domain of experience traversed by "the spirit

engaged with . . . forces of violence," including the social and intrapsychic violence perpetrated by norms of the sex/gender system (*LC* 2: 483, 1309). James's valorization of Strether as a man whose spiritual, aesthetic, and social "adventures" should command readerly interest and *count* as experience, worthwhile both to self and to society, gives point to his early rebuttal of critics like Walter Besant in "The Art of Fiction" (1884). Where Besant had advanced "adventure," meaning the outward-bound pursuits of Anglo-Saxon manhood, as the necessary ingredient of "the story," James countered: "Why [is a story not a story] without adventure, more than without matrimony, or celibacy, or parturition, or cholera, or hydropathy, or Jansenism?" (*LC* 1: 61). In *The Ambassadors* this seemingly random list of narrative possibilities takes focus in a character, Lambert Strether, whose "adventure" comes in learning to relax a "Jansenist" fastidiousness toward the body (courtesy of New England) and to occupy certain spaces associated with femininity and domesticity yet *dis*associated from matrimony and parturition, being characterized instead by a sensual, sociable celibacy with an aura of homoerotic pathos (*A* 281).

Adrienne Rich's canonical phrase "compulsory heterosexuality" remains a useful rubric here, inasmuch as the queer valence of Strether's "conversion" or "revolution" is primarily defined by a thwarting of normative compulsion, and only secondarily by muted erotic manifestations (*A* 192, *LC* 2: 1312). As so often with James, it is not clear to what extent he acknowledged the homosexual implication of his germinal idea – or rather, his foregone conclusion – that Strether would "not in the least" be tempted by the several women who are so "extraordinarily kind" to him (*N* 395, *A* 262). Confessing to "despair" at the probable lukewarm reception of a work without such a love interest, James wrote in a letter immediately after its publication: "[I] said to myself 'What can be expected for a novel with a hero of 55, & properly no heroine at all?' " (*LL* 391). Yet he seems not to have asked – or maybe not to have cared – about any further burden of his plotting, attributing Strether's exemption from the time-honored quest for a proper heroine to the character's age rather than to a possible aversion to heterosexuality and its cultural institutions. For public consumption, at least, James maintained the view that Strether's veering away from marital or sexual opportunities was straightforward psychological realism for "a hero of 55": "the mark of the real never ceases to show in him, and with the real only the real [of representation] consorts" (*N* 414). All this despite the fact that the novel persistently casts doubt on Strether's impression that he is "the most withered of the winter apples," suggesting instead that his rejuvenation abroad burnishes his sex appeal for persons of both genders: "you *are*, at this time of day, youth" (*A* 248, 197).

As with James's allegedly "characteristic prudery,"[28] his predetermined delimiting of character and plot could be referred to biography and construed as the inevitable course of a confirmed bachelor whose family and friends saw him as prime marriage material (potentially "the most . . . loveable and happiest of husbands," in his mother's view) and continually coaxed him to settle down with "some conjugal Elizabeth or other" (in his father's more casual phrase).[29] As early as 1883–4 – the season of "The Author of 'Beltraffio,' " with its picture of an artist's destructive marriage – James described himself as already a "hardened bachelor," hardened against some "twenty" would-be matchmakers (mostly women) whose machinations finally goaded him into an overt challenge to normative presumption. Troping the diction of marital bliss, James refused to "renounc[e] my happy state" by taking on such "complicating appendages" as "a conjugal Mrs. H[enry]" and chastised Anglo-American society for overlooking "the useful, beneficent, civilizing part played in it" by the productive bachelor, a man whose sociality and labor, being uncompromised by the duties of a spouse and a father, were instrumental in "keep[ing] up the tone of humanity" (*L* III: 27, 17).

Yet, as I have suggested, the foreclosure of Strether's sex life was also *culturally* characteristic, gaining its special "Jamesian" connotation only by opening out, as enacted in the novel, to homosexual inclination. More precisely, the contemporary response to *The Ambassadors* tellingly divided between those critics who joined James and Strether in a now superseded conception of "romantic" options discreetly apart from sexuality and those who spoke for the new century in which "passion" would become more or less synonymous with "sex," as Howells had feared. Where a late twentieth-century reader might infer that Marie de Vionnet is the "unarguable romantic relation of [Strether's] life"[30] – a relation inclusive of, if not dominated by, considerations of sexual attraction – many late Victorian reviewers were willing to grant James's conceit that Marie "gratifies some more . . . disinterested, aesthetic, intellectual, social . . . sense" in Strether (*N* 392), just as they were prepared to qualify Strether's chaste involvement with Maria Gostrey as "love at first sight" and to accept his moral adventures *as* adventures, possessing "a vastly keener poignancy than if they were translated . . . into terms of duels and elopements." *Contra* Forster and H. G. Wells ("much of humanity . . . clears out before he begins his story"[31]), this type of reviewer found a "fulness of experience" represented in *The Ambassadors* – if "not precisely life," then "an extremely fascinating . . . analogy" (*CR* 392–4). The most lavish compliment, stressing James's bold adventuring into the depths of consciousness, came from Walpole, who claimed that "like another Columbus, [he] discovered a new continent of

psychology and emotion."[32] Judging by this context of reception, James had allies in gravitating toward a male character whose idea of "living all you can" had nothing to do with typical manly exertions or with heterosexual conquest, and yet whose abstentions, as an introspective born-again bachelor, need not have signaled homosexuality either, since his personal drama (by the rhetorical impulse of the novel) need not have been implicated with sexuality at all.

Meanwhile, Strether's own "typical thinness of . . . passion," as it appeared to reviewers who were not content with his version of the adventure, signified a retrograde response to a modernity *defined* by sexual discourse, thus foregrounding the question of what sort of sexuality Strether must embody (and James represent) if it is so definitely *not* heterosexuality. In complaining that "passion is hardly recognisable through [the] envelopment" of the novel's style – the formal counterpart of Strether's style of consciousness – these reviewers raised the possibility that James's "cocooning and muffling" was just what Forster privately believed it to be: the adumbration of a type of passion that was not *meant* to be recognized, and that fell subject to authorial self-veiling as well.[33] Whatever the motive, James's style had its effect: even much later critics such as Geismar, who divined the author's "increasingly homosexual tendencies" inscribed in "The Beast in the Jungle," derided the sensations, passions, and pleasures evoked in *The Ambassadors* without probing what their concerted disconnection from heterosexuality might mean.[34]

But reading from gaps and negatives is not the only means available to pick up the queer accents in James's favorite novel. Strether's relationships with other men – Waymarsh, Gloriani, Chad, and Little Bilham – furnish more substantive evidence, under the headings of envy and homosocial intimacy. More accurately, Strether's envy operates as a trigger to homosocial intimacy and to the modicum of homosexual desire that is simultaneously indexed and obscured by such intimacy. Indeed one might wonder why a man so beset by the feeling of "ridicule" and so deficient in personal "glory" should bond so assiduously with men whose example – in business and in art, in acquired identity and *savoir faire* – can only aggravate his sense of comparative failure. Delving deeper, one can see how *The Ambassadors*, whatever James's maneuvering around issues of sexuality, presents an implied construction of "the homosexual" that belongs to the same historical moment as Freud's. As Michael Warner glosses the Freudian postulate, homosexual object choice results when "the individual seeks in another some ideal excellence missing from his own ego; . . . this is the type of narcissistic choice made by . . . the male homosexual: the choice of what he

himself would like to be." As Strether transfers his emotional loyalties from Waymarsh to Chad, after a brief interlude with Gloriani, his experience bears out Warner's corrective to the Freudian prejudice – which is to say, the general prejudice of heterosexist culture – that male–male relations, being grounded in narcissism, must be devoid of reciprocity: "the subject [who] chooses another on the basis of a desired ego ideal . . . is *already engaged in a dialogue* with others *and in multiple perspectives of self*."[35] Strether's shifting perspectives of self, the queer displacements of viewpoint that *constitute* his growth abroad, are intricately related to his ongoing, shaping dialogue with other men whose possession of "some power, oddly perverted" (as it strikes him) is most palpable in Chad: "something latent and beyond access, ominous and perhaps enviable" (*A* 99).

But do these other men – Waymarsh, Gloriani, or Chad – figure for Strether "what he himself would like to be," not only as a social entity but also as a sexual identity? If James conceived of Strether as a sort of aging Bartleby who would "prefer not to" when it came to the dominant mode of American masculinity in general, then why should the character's envy be almost perversely directed toward agents of heterosexual capacity – the resuscitated *bon vivant* Waymarsh, who escorts the (rather too) "brilliant" Sarah Pocock to the flower markets; Gloriani, with his "fabulous" history of collecting *femmes du monde* ("they *never* give him up . . . he has some secret"); and "that rare youth" Chad, who epitomizes "the way men marked out by women *were*" (*A* 122, 98). Again, Strether's envy remains circumscribed to the degree that his understanding of sexuality, as such, is foreclosed. Whatever the nature of Waymarsh's dealings with Sarah Pocock, Strether's sense of missing out on their "actual adventure" gets reduced to the same innocent level as his having missed "the time natural in Boston for taking girls to the Museum" (*A* 110, 43). The narrative treats his envy of Gloriani as an "absurdity" to which Bilham responds with "depths of critical reserve" (*A* 133). And Strether's impression of Chad's "romantic privilege" envisions a sanitized kind of romance, as he fends off the idea that the "prime producing cause" of the young man's "famous knowing how to live" could be traced back to some kind of sexual nurture (*A* 65, 102, 312).

Accordingly, if Strether attributes his lost opportunities for female companionship to his "general genius for missing" things, the pleasures regretted are hetero*social* rather than hetero*sexual*, as seen from the texture of the many opportunities that he does not miss (*A* 269). With women, Strether's is at most a "compensatory erotic," in Jonathan Freedman's phrase, where orality is satisfied by indulging in clever gossip, "excellent cigarettes," and meals of "thick-crusted bread" and *omelettes aux tomates* (*A* 78, 71), and

where visual excitement begins and ends with noticing women's attire, the "broad red velvet band" worn by Maria, Marie de Vionnet's "small black fichu . . . of crape or gauze, disposed quaintly round her bosom," or Sarah Pocock's more strident fashion statement in "a splendour of crimson which affected Strether as the sound of a fall through a skylight" (*A* 42, 317, 256).[36] In this last detail, Strether resembles his maker James who, as Marianne Moore observes, took special "pleasure in the 'tender sea-green' or 'rustling rose-color' of a serious best dress," among the many other sensual pleasures that inform the Jamesian world of "things."[37] If Strether cannot live without women (a running joke sustained by Maria, Miss Barrace, and Bilham), he cannot live with them either, and in a way that recalls James's own duplicitous take on marriage in *The Europeans*, critics from F. O. Matthiessen to Fiedler to Georges-Michel Sarotte have dismissed the hetero-relationships of the soft, finicky Strether, including his distant marriage, as purely nominal "tribute[s] to heterosexuality."[38] Typically, Fiedler's statement is the most blunt: "we are told [Strether] has been married before, has a son, but we do not believe it."[39] If Strether cognitively blocks the powerful heterosexual identification that he senses in other men ("latent and beyond access"), this may constitute yet another clue as to his own "ominous" core of desire, homoerotic in nature and for that reason equally inadmissible to consciousness: "the obsession of the other thing is the terror," and the other thing is too terrible to name (*A* 26).

This reading receives further support when one reflects that Strether's envy reaches its peak not in his contemplation of men who exude a straight virility but rather in his fascination with the woman who has *produced* such a specimen of "massive young manhood" as Chad Newsome, Marie de Vionnet, and in his pedagogical friendship with Bilham, the engaging "little artist-man" who also dotes on Chad (*A* 99, 74). Not unlike another homosexually coded character in James, John Marcher of "The Beast in the Jungle," Strether stands awestruck when confronted by the "fine free range of bliss and bale" that signals the "mature, abysmal, pitiful" love that Marie holds for Chad. Like Marcher, who reads the mournful "meaning of [a] stranger's face" as a reproach to his own emotional history ("where had been *his* deep ravage?"), Strether suffers a spasm of "vague inward irony" while scanning the "refined disguised suppressed passion of [Marie's] face" (*A* 323; *THJ* 311). As is distinctly not the case with his envy of other men, Strether's sense of having missed out on Marie's experience has an element of sexual vicariousness, which must remain "vague," however, given that the object of *his* disguised, suppressed passion is Chad as well. At most, Strether will allow that his "high appreciation" of Chad "consecrate[s] her work,"

bringing their erotic investments in the young man into momentary alignment. But that alignment must be disrupted, and a distance reinstated between Strether's interest in Chad and the "strange strength" of "incoherent" feeling that makes Marie at once so enviably reckless and so pathetically vulnerable. Only Strether would find any mystery in the "mysterious forces" that render Marie "a creature so exploited," but that mystification of the power of sexuality secures his own insulation from the psychic repercussions of desiring another man: "it took women, it took women" (*A* 322–3).

Partly because Little Bilham serves so unassumingly and unobtrusively as Chad's envoy – as one of "the ambassadors" of James's title – and partly because, to Strether's infatuated eye, he stands in Chad's shadow, it is easy to overlook how Bilham, too, inspires envy and ultimately desire. In fact, Bilham emerges as the most plausible alter ego for Strether, who proclaims that "life [could] hold nothing better" than the ingredients of Bilham's Parisian existence – art study desultorily pursued, bohemian meetings to debate contemporary aesthetics, and occasional stints as Chad's apartment-sitter, ensconced among the "beautiful and valuable things" that furnished the bachelor paradise – a creation of modern commodity fetishism and, not coincidentally, feminine taste: "[Chad's] place . . . was full of [Marie's] influence" (*A* 74, 281). Unlike Waymarsh, Gloriani, and Chad, Bilham weighs as "little" in the social scale as Strether, with the vital difference that he courts negligibility, ducking the normative expectations of manhood in order to remain "contentedly just the obscure and acute little Bilham he [is]." Thus part of Strether's attraction lies in the fact that he himself is "still in search of something that would work": some identity, like Bilham's, that is not a "specious shell" superimposed over deeper longings and indebted to female authority or financing (*A* 256, 63).

Inasmuch as James structures Strether's quest for a workable sociosexual identity as inseparable from his trials of national identity – his effort to keep within the bounds of his native culture by expanding those bounds – it is instrumental that Bilham manages to appear "more American than anybody" while prosecuting a mode of being "intense" that deviates refreshingly from the usual intensities of American bourgeois masculinity (*A* 83). In the terms of my broader analysis, Bilham extends the character lineage of two other culturally "little" artist-men discussed earlier, the portrait sketcher Felix Young of *The Europeans* and the novelist-turned-aesthete Gabriel Nash of *The Tragic Muse*. Describing himself as "'notoriously' . . . not from Boston," Bilham follows Young in dissociating himself from the experiential austerities of New England, as exemplified by the patriarch Wentworth of *The Europeans* – his life, like his house, "totally devoid of festoons" – and by

Reverend Babcock of *The American*, a man all "spiritual starch" and physical squeamishness who is not blessed so much as cursed with a sense of beauty (*A* 73; *EU* 79; *AM* 70). Attuned to the sensual and the aesthetic, Bilham Americanizes the pose of Wildean detachment enacted by Nash – if both men do not rather *de*nationalize that pose – and it is no accident that both Nash and Bilham gravitate to the metropolis (London or Paris) as the milieu most congenial to their need for tactical "obscurity." Like his predecessor figures, especially Nash, Bilham has no genuine occupation, but "only an occupation declined" without a trace of "alarm, anxiety or remorse," as if he were immune both to the protestant work ethic and to the cult of manly achievement.[40] Bilham "isn't a bit ashamed" to ignore the demand of American industrial and commercial culture that he buckle down and "do something" (*A* 83–4).

Importantly, Bilham's "serenity" about his masculine deficiencies appears also in his facile performance as would-be lover or suitor (*A* 83). When Strether coaxes him toward Jeanne de Vionnet, for instance, Bilham protests that her "pale pink petals" will unfold only for "some great golden sun," whereas he is "but a small farthing candle" – a coy imagery that conveys at once the limited luster of his social position and his meager fund of heterosexual heat (*A* 164). When Strether then advances Mamie Pocock instead, Bilham stares at the prospect of such a relationship "as a delicate appetite stares at an overheaped plate" (*A* 258). The collective humor that plays around the subject of Bilham's appetite advertises it as not just delicate but absent, making doubly strange Strether's matchmaking efforts, which threaten to compromise Bilham's very lifestyle of "small sublime . . . independences" in which the older man had found such an "odd and engaging dignity" (*A* 84).

Superficially, Strether's matchmaking can be attributed to a guilty conscience. Yet in proposing Mamie to Bilham, he proposes a union between a young male alter ego and a female counterpart of himself, a person of "true inwardness" with the ability to be "disinterestedly tender" (*A* 251, 253). The connection becomes more explicit when Bilham notes that "[Mamie] was to *save* our friend [Chad]," and Strether responds, "Ah like me, poor thing" (*A* 260). Strether sympathizes with Mamie's hopeless campaign to attract Chad, just as she undergoes a Strether-like "change of base" – "deep still things had come to pass within her" – upon witnessing the "miracle" of Chad's renovation (*A* 250). In a further calculated parallel, the Strether who had first mistaken Bilham for Chad while gazing up at a Parisian balcony comes upon Mamie waiting on her balcony not for Chad, as Strether expects, but for Bilham. The text could not be more suggestive

about the series of substitutions, orchestrated by Chad, in which Bilham repeats Strether's observation of himself, with Mamie replacing Bilham as the object of scrutiny, while Strether eventually replicates both Bilham's and Mamie's positions of surveillance: "He hung over [Chad's balcony] as he had seen little Bilham hang the day of his first approach, as he had seen Mamie hang over her own the day little Bilham himself might have seen her from below." Mamie and Strether, then, have in common the experience of seeing their initial object of desire, Chad, "somewhat incongruously" displaced by yet another of Chad's lovers, Little Bilham (*A* 281, 249).

In a sense, then, Strether proposes himself to himself in urging Bilham – an atypical, aesthetical, ambivalently American man – to marry Mamie Pocock, whose moral delicacy and habits of self-denial resemble Strether's, while also distinguishing her from the aggressive Newsome women. On another level, however, Strether's avowed purposes are entirely spurious as a guide to his feelings for the institution of marriage and its American cultural situation. Strether's own extravagance gives him away, as when he asserts that "polish[ing] . . . off" Bilham and Mamie would mark an "expiatory" achievement, demonstrating his "fidelity – fundamentally unchanged" – to Woollett values, after "sacrificing so to [the] strange gods" of Europe: "I feel as if my hands were embrued with the blood of monstrous alien altars." Strether's campiness, the keynote of his exchanges with Bilham, notifies the young man that he is free to treat Strether's proposition as not very earnest, indeed to let his "delicate appetite" politely decline the "overheaped plate" of Mamie (*A* 258–9).

This simile extends the party of winking males to include James's narrator, who later compares Mrs. Newsome, famously, to a "particularly large iceberg in a cool blue northern sea" (*A* 298). By means of his witty metaphors, that is, the narrator leagues with Strether and Bilham against the matriarchal order that dominates the American business class, turning out husbands such as Jim Pocock. Bilham's appetite may well be finicky, because the dish being served does not suit his sexual palate, but the word *overheaped* also alludes to the ample body that Mamie tries to disguise in her "matronly" clothes. Although she might never evolve into a domineering woman like Mrs. Newsome or Sarah Pocock, still "Mamie would be fat, too fat, at thirty," with a "flat little voice" and "a hint of the polysyllabic as might make her something of a bore toward middle age" (*A* 250, 252). These are Strether's own impressions, which help to explain why his pitch to Little Bilham betrays itself as half-hearted at best.

"Amused" and laughing throughout, Bilham has his own good reasons to doubt the seriousness of Strether's designs on his future. It is Bilham, after

all, who reminds Strether of his own analysis of what it means for young men to get married after the Woollett fashion, and who corrects Strether's misimpression that Chad's transformation into a cultivated, powerful young man of "capacity" is lost on his sister, the charmless Sarah (deputized as the long arm of Mrs. Newsome's law). Sarah recognizes Chad's new value, Bilham observes, but "she wants him to show it *there*," at home in Woollett, where she could "run the show herself" (*A* 257). According to Strether, Mamie's own brother, Jim, should serve as a warning for Chad – and thus indirectly for Bilham, too – about the fate of masculinity in commercial American culture. Sounding "the note of the home" for which Mrs. Newsome wants Chad – "the home of the business" – Jim Pocock is "extremely awful"; in saying his value "depends on what you want him for," Strether gives the precise measure of such a man's gravely qualified utility: discerning persons "wouldn't want him, at any price" (*A* 245).

This interview between Strether and Bilham occurs on their favorite "deep divan" in their favorite Parisian space, Chad's apartment, thus doubling Strether's first confrontation with Chad upon the "purple divan" of a bar near the Théâtre Français (*A* 253, 94). That meeting had found Strether largely confined to *imagining* a tactile survey of Chad's physical beauty, which to his enchanted vision seemed as "marked as . . . in the rub of a hand . . . marked enough to be touched by a finger" (*A* 97). Even Strether's colloquial expression of awe at Chad's transmutation – "you're . . . I don't know how to call it! – more of a handful" – speaks indirectly of a wish to make a closer physical inspection of this masculine sexpot (to borrow McCourt's diction), with "fine square teeth" and a "strong young grizzled crop" that made him "handsomer than he had ever promised" (*A* 95, 97, 92). Now paired upon a secluded divan with Chad's substitute Bilham, Strether sweeps aside any scruples about rubbing and fingering: he "[lays] an appreciative hand" on his young friend, "pat[s] his companion's knee," and then "[holds] him the faster" as he (ostensibly) presses for a commitment (ostensibly) on behalf of Mamie Pocock (*A* 257).

From one perspective, this description of Strether's physicality could be read as an expression of avuncular interest, devoid of sexual reference, with nothing to distinguish between "the innocent pleasure of handling rounded ivory" and the innocent pleasure of handling Bilham's rounded knee (*A* 326).[41] But if Mary Garland's hand could apply an "eloquent pressure" to Rowland Mallet's arm, signifying romantic attraction in the early *Roderick Hudson*, might not subtle male–male contact of this sort also speak volumes about intimate desires, or (what seems most likely) might it not indissolubly blend *both* motives: innocent solicitude and sexual attraction

(*RH* 344)? As suggested in chapter 2, with respect to "The Author of 'Beltraffio,'" James had a substantial history of eroticizing friendships between men – in that case, the middle-aged artist Mark Ambient and his "young American [disciple] of an aesthetic turn" – while expressing doubts or disclaimers, even to himself, about the fact that he had done so. In that earlier text, too, a moment of physical contact kindles an emotion at once adulatory and sexual in nature, as the narrator/disciple reports "feeling . . . quite transported, when [Ambient] laid his hand on my shoulder."[42]

Without trying to make Strether simply overlap with James, there is nonetheless a biographical basis for correlating the character's attentions to Chad and Bilham – from imagined contact to verbal caresses to actual pattings and fondlings – with James's own manner of communicating deep feelings for other men. After hearing so much about James's fabled fastidiousness, and after so many readings of his fiction that see James himself inscribed in his "repressed" male characters, one is surprised to learn of his comfortable physicality with male friends. As Forster would notice during his visit to Lamb House in 1908, James's tendency to lay an appreciative hand on one's arm or shoulder was a distinguishing trait, or, as another recipient called it, "that gesture so familiar to those who knew him."[43] By extension, any reader of James's mature correspondence will know the epistolary equivalent of his familiar gesture, those "extravagantly tactile expressions of affection" (as Philip Horne writes) for the likes of Walpole, Henrik Andersen, and Jocelyn Persse.[44] Making the strongest case for such letters as evidence of an "unrestrained queer James," Hugh Stevens views their writer as "lavishly construct[ing] a fantasy of absolute devotion" to whichever promising young man was in question.[45]Susan Gunter and Steven Jobe, too, have studied this "most openly erotic" rhetoric that James ever wrote, in his letters to the handsome Irishman, Persse.[46] Like Chad to Strether's perception, Persse struck James as having a "genius for personally, & all so successfully, existing"; like Strether with Chad, James cherished memories of "golden westward walk[s] & talk[s]" with Persse; and James's "desire . . . extreme within me" to enjoy Persse's presence, which made him "reach out . . . with a sort of tender frenzy" of caressing words,[47] could be seen as only a slightly more "out" version of Strether's enthusiasm for Chad, whose appearance constitutes for the older man "quite one of the sensations that count in life . . . act[ing] . . . [with] a crowded rush . . . both vague and multitudinous" (*A* 89).

The question of how much or how little in the way of Eros can be read into these tokens of feeling – whether from fictional characters or from authors, whether enacted in physical gestures or in verbal conjurings – must

always be approached in the context of prohibitions and inhibitions that militated against other means of self-identifying or expressions of same-sex desire. Horne suggests that "James's warm words and gestures of affection register precisely the absence of *sexual* possibility," citing another young friend, Urbain Mengin, who understood James's readiness in "grasping your arm, or . . . patting you on the shoulder, or giving you a hug" as a signal that he was *not* "capable of . . . [physical] surrender."[48] Yet Mengin's subtle point seems to read the other way just as well, or even better: James's semaphores indicate precisely the *presence* of a sexual possibility or a wish for surrender that needs to be waved off, or rechanneled into more disavowable avowals of ardor. There was a certain safety in ambiguity, in other words, so that Symonds's frequent offer of "a comrade's hand-touch" in *his* correspondence – a Whitmanian formula that he used in writing to Whitman himself – often contained an intention to say something more than the words could say.[49]

If anything, a general atmosphere of repression concentrated the force of these passing contacts between men, both physical and verbal, the most memorable instance occurring as part of the genesis of Forster's long-withheld "homosexual" novel, *Maurice* (composed 1913–14, published 1971). As Forster remembered: "George Merrill [Edward Carpenter's lover] . . . touched my backside – gently . . . It was as much psychological as physical. It seemed to go straight through the small of my back into my ideas . . . At that precise moment I had conceived."[50] Forster prided himself on having a clearer sexual identity and thus a more forthright expressivity than James, Symonds, and the other Victorian hand-touchers – "my ability to write fuck may preserve me from too close contact with HJ [Henry James]" – but a more piquant lesson lies in the fact that Forster's *published* novels could not "write fuck," or treat the circulation of same-sex desire, much more explicitly than James's had.[51] As I will show in the next two chapters, post-Victorian American authors such as Willa Cather and Sherwood Anderson also faced the modern challenge of "mak[ing] the material body into a signifying body," in Peter Brooks's phrase, while at the same time keeping signifiers from materializing the homosexual body in a period of pronounced intolerance, which may, of course, inhabit authors themselves.[52] As in James's life and work, especially the hands will become a surcharged yet ambiguous site of narrative negotiation with queerness for Anderson, Cather, and even Hemingway.

Just because touching is "as much psychological as physical," and censorship or self-censorship is always in play, there may well be more erotic transmission going on in Strether's interaction with Bilham than the bare

facts of brushing hands or clasped knees convey. Is it mere coincidence that Strether's favorite phrase – and James's favorite image – for the sounding of new depths of experience is "touching bottom" (*A* 303, 316)? Significantly, Bilham does not object to being stroked by Strether; on the contrary, he "[springs] up" only when Strether's pressure to marry Mamie becomes unduly earnest, making him "too nervous" to sit still (*A* 260). As Bilham's consent seems to imply, he should not be classified as a case of "sexual anesthesia,"[53] since the text bears out only his *hetero*sexual torpor (figured as a lack of warmth or of appetite), which in itself might hint that his romantic energies are committed elsewhere. In fact, his relationship with Strether provides evidence that the young man is perfectly capable of fervor and devotion where the object is another man: "Little Bilham's . . . happy laugh . . . seemed to say that if *pretending . . . to be able to care* for Mamie would be of use, he was all there for the job. 'I'll do anything in the world for you!'" (*A* 259; emphasis added). Bilham keeps up the frequent note of camp in their conversations, as the two men reinforce their own intimacy in the shared pretense that a conventional male–female pairing lies in the offing.

Inasmuch as both men tacitly concede the insincerity of their compact, Strether himself is guilty of only pretending to be able to care for the "blessed law" of homestyle heterosexuality, the American system of gender and marital "symmetry" (*A* 291). Indeed, as soon as he has extracted Bilham's hollow promise to take on the "job" of courtship, "Strether relapse[s] into the sense – which had for him . . . most of comfort – that he was free to believe in anything that from hour to hour kept him going" (*A* 262). The transient convenience of his belief in Bilham's future with Mamie becomes baldly apparent in Strether's subsequent session with Maria Gostrey. When Maria asks whether the young couple are "already engaged," Strether admits that Bilham has accompanied Mamie to Switzerland mainly "for *me*." If Strether had earlier shared with Bilham his radically new conviction that Chad "needn't marry at all," he now confesses to Maria that "it won't matter a grain" to him if Bilham does not wed Mamie. Thus, Strether's project to offer up Bilham as a sacrifice to the household gods of Woollett emerges as a complete charade, as the language of reciprocal devotion is reserved for male friendship: "He'll do anything for me; just as I will . . . for him" (*A* 290–1, 257).

Thus Nicolas Buchele's claim that "Strether mildly fancies Little Bilham but falls in love with Chad . . . the real thing" underestimates the strength of the current flowing between Strether and Bilham.[54] Strether's tender regard appears one last time, as he assesses his friend's deceit that Chad's affair with

Marie de Vionnet has been a "virtuous attachment." Strether excuses this fiction (in which, after all, he has participated) as only a "technical lie," because it becomes technically true once the definition of "virtue" is stripped of its Puritanical context. As Strether says, adopting Bilham's campy riff on the term and revealing the magnitude of his own pleasure in Chad's personal magnificence, "the virtue [of the attachment] came out for me hugely" (*A* 330). Yet again, Strether's tone is ironic, deflationary. At last he confronts the fact that Chad's renovation, which has "quintupled" his value as a male commodity by cultivating at once his manners and his erotic appeal, cannot be explained apart from the "deep, deep truth" of a very active exercise of heterosexuality: "they were expert, familiar, frequent . . . they knew how to do it, he vaguely felt" (*A* 337, 313, 307). Moreover, Strether must accept that his own actions in defiance of his mission to enchain Chad in an American marriage have "absolutely aided and intensified [the] intimacy" between Chad and Marie, making Strether himself (to the Woollett view) little better than a panderer, "a common priceless ground for them to meet upon." Not coincidentally, in executing this triangulating role, Strether again doubles Bilham, whom Waymarsh had censoriously recognized, in talking with Strether, as the "door-keeper for your precious pair" (*A* 319, 74).

Unable to sustain the myth that Chad's infatuation with Marie is as "disinterested, aesthetic, [and] intellectual" as his own, and prevented both by nature and by culture from realizing a passion for Chad as "abysmal" as Marie's, Strether is bound to see Chad's virtue as somewhat less "hugely" in evidence, and to suffer a process of romantic disenchantment that betrays Chad as "none the less only Chad," a suave, fetching young man with no more imagination than his mother and, as "the son of his father," likely to sink back into the existential abyss of the married New England businessman (*A* 322, 341). With this discovery, which, as all of Strether's discoveries, is of a "supreme queerness," it is open to Little Bilham – whom the scenario projected as "acuter, more 'intellectual' and aesthetic, than Chad," and the novel confirms as more "light, bright and alert" – to emerge as "the real thing" in Strether's theatre of envy and desire, as he reevaluates what the real thing should be in the performance of modern masculinity (*A* 322; *N* 393; *A* 69).

In this novel relative positions in the tutelary relationship of classical pederasty have been reversed; whereas originally Strether had strained to command authority with Bilham ("live all you can") and then felt "humiliate[d]" at having to learn his new mode of masculinity from someone "so much his junior," the elder man finally yields up all personal pride (*A* 256). As Chad stands on the brink of proving himself an infamous "brute" by abandoning

Marie and Paris in order to "boss the advertising" (but inferably little else) in America, Bilham's conduct has only enlarged Strether's consciousness, "show[ing] me what's expected of a gentleman" (*A* 336, 214, 330). Disparities of age importantly temper the sexual implications of their intimacy, yet the "responsive wisdom" and "kindness almost paternal" with which the younger man treats the older man subtly corrects for this difference in ways that reopen the affective case (*A* 261, 110). In this respect, the bond between Strether, with his famous "double consciousness," and Bilham, in whose company all "contrarieties" are simply "dropped," seems the strongest candidate for the type of "bond . . . formed too late" that James's notebook envisioned but could not name, something more than friendship, but less than (expressible) love, a "mutual comprehension" between two men that had to suffice in a sociopolitical environment that imposed definite limits on queer identification and exchange, making "whatever one will" a category of utopian desire (*A* 18, 83).

> If the imagination is to . . . transform experience, it has to . . . conceive of alternatives, perhaps to the very life you are living at that moment. (Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision")

In the qualities of American Puritanism, especially that suspicion of sexuality that disappointed Forster, Gide, and even the more sympathetic Virginia Woolf ("[James's] characters . . . are already half-way out of the body"), James found not only a naturalistic warrant for Strether's "natural modesty" but also a staging ground to push back against heteronormative pressures in a modernity defined by, if not synonymous with, sexual discourse (*A* 329).[55] Viewed from the special angle of vision that James encourages, that is, the same traits that make Strether a failure "as men go" mark his success in bearing the book's argument, its dissent from the dominant model of manhood and compulsory heterosexuality and its delicate evocation of queer pleasures. Equally profoundly, the novel suggests that the cultural forces which Strether resists in realizing his alterity, including a calculated blindness to the circulation of same-sex desire, operate within the very consciousness – the burdened "double" consciousness – of the subject himself.

Readers who cannot grant James his *donnée* – the anticorporeal bias of his New Englanders – are also likely to overlook the seriocomic intertextuality that informs Strether's moral "collapse" and connects it with the thematics of British sexual dissidence. In the guise of the Wentworths, Reverend Babcock, and other early characters, James had advanced the proposition that one's sense of deviance depends entirely on where the cultural

boundaries of the normal are set, and that if these boundaries are stringent enough, one does not have to venture too far afield to be seized with compunction. Inasmuch as Strether, too, labors under the "penal form" of post-Puritan consciousness – the "old tradition . . . which even so many years of life had but little worn away" – it takes only a relatively minor violation to make him feel as guilty of antisocial behavior as Wilde's Dorian Gray (*A* 316). Predictably, this trait of conscientious self-judgment appears most vividly after Strether has discovered that the relationship he has fostered between Chad and Marie is, after all, carnal in nature – adulterous, in fact. By this point, however, Strether has already imbibed the "lesson of a certain moral ease" that Paris teaches, learning that lesson from the same Little Bilham who eventually (almost) rewrites the meaning of "virtue" for him. Strether waits in vain for signs that the cosmic economy of transgression and retribution will activate itself:

> Sternness alone now wouldn't be sinister. An instinct in him cast about for some form of discipline . . . [that] would give a sense – which the spirit required, rather ached and sighed in the absence of – that somebody was paying something somewhere and somehow, that they were . . . not all floating together on the silver stream of impunity . . . [Instead] what struck him . . . was the ease of it . . . only idling, lounging . . . drinking lemonade and consuming ices . . . He almost wondered if he didn't *look* demoralised and disreputable; he had the fanciful vision, as he sat and smoked, of some accidental . . . return of the Pococks, who . . . would catch this view of him. They would have distinctly, on his appearance, every ground for scandal. (*A* 315–16)

The passage wittily refers to the iconography of the languishing late Victorian male deviant: an affront to social welfare in his physical and moral posture of lassitude, his association with debauchery, and his indifference to dominant-culture "form[s] of discipline." James sports with the exaggerated exercise of Strether's imagination (lemonade and ices as the stuff of dissipation?), yet the diction of "sinister" pleasures and potential "scandal" evokes an evident intertext in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and in Wilde's own fate. More broadly, and more strikingly, Strether's concern that his disreputable demoralization will show in his "appearance" follows a motif about specifically *sexual* deviance that James would have known not only from Wilde's novel – "Sin is a thing that writes itself across a man's face" – but also from Symonds's *A Problem in Modern Ethics*, which attacked the "vulgar error" that homosexuals "carry their lusts written in their faces" (*DG* 182–3).[56] As usual, James prefers the comic touch to either the melodramatic irony of Wilde or the earnest polemics of Symonds, but his handling of Strether's dissolution – "as much in the swim as anybody else" (*A* 316) – participates, indirectly, in a critique of the regulatory tenet

that a man's "sexual sensibility" was "written immodestly on his face and body."[57]

Inevitably, James walks a fine line. The rhetorical masterstroke of *The Ambassadors* is to mobilize an exemplar of male abnormality – the "absurd," "ridiculous," but highly amiable Lambert Strether – whose details of personal history and contours of character reflect a very careful balance. His many years of vocational incoherence conveniently explain why Strether has never "battled with his passions," yet every phase of his European sojourn suggests passions that have been battled down, as it were: the passions of the epicure, the aesthete, and even the sensualist that shade into the modern identity category of the homosexual. Although Strether is *almost* too old to be invested with romantic potency, and therefore already stands at a distance from sexual discourse, he keeps vibrant enough to be a source of "excitement" to at least three women and two appealing young men (*A* 340–1). As a product of his time and culture, Strether is too "awkward" in body matters to pursue what Forster might call the "fun" of carnality, yet ultimately he is less amazed at living a world of sexual possibility than he is at recognizing the "labours" of his imagination in dressing that possibility in vagueness, as a girl muffles the naked body of a doll (*N* 226, 414; *A* 313). And if *homo*sexual possibility remains shrouded – for Strether, certainly, if perhaps less so for James – it nonetheless functions as the abiding subtext of the entire plot, particularly determining the series of choices that return Strether to America.

> So late, so unexpectedly, but with what equipment and how fully, [Strether] *lives* indeed; . . . absorbed, excited, "mad," he controls, betrays, is betrayed, is loved, loves. (John Berryman, "The World of Henry James," 1945)

The ending of *The Ambassadors* finds Strether both figuratively and literally in quest of new premises for his masculinity. Although James playfully reproached his Bilham-like companion Hugh Walpole for seeking an outright thematic "statement" in the novel, the ending does seem to offer the moral that to purchase one's liberty from the new dictates of heterosexual performance and to pursue instead an "unaffiliated, uncompromised manhood" (in Leland Person's phrase) is to become an unaccommodated man in the extreme.[58] Strether "shan't starve," perhaps, but the text noticeably dwells on his "absence of an assured future" as the penalty for his apostasy (*A* 286–7). In retrospect, the inhospitality of normative culture to a man of Strether's construction (or reconstruction), whatever its provisional amenities, is neatly emblematized in his own Parisian quarters – "all indoor chill" and exuding the dour "presence of Waymarsh," Woollett's secret agent – and even in Maria Gostrey's apartment, where Strether's "fear

of . . . misappliance" and professed lack of a "real harmony" with his situation suggest that even the most amenable of settings will not do, so long as a desiring or a designing woman is also in the picture (*A* 70, 80, 341). In fact, both in letters and in his preface to the novel, James confessed to his own complicity in neutralizing Maria's romantic chances and, by implication, in fostering Strether's habit of holding himself aloof from heterosexual possibility. Given her duties as a Jamesian *ficelle*, or narrative facilitator, Maria's connection with Strether is only a "false connexion carry[ing] itself . . . as a real one": "She is really (poor thing!) functional, convenient . . . more that than (for S[trether] at least) something nearer and dearer: a luxury of his luck rather than a need of his soul" (*LC* 2: 1319; *LL* 397).

What Strether's soul needs, for a real harmony or connection – the thinly veiled object of his "dumb passion of desire . . . of God knows what" – is the presence of charming young masculinity (*N* 393). Although Strether, again approximating James, owes his personal improvement to women as much as Chad does, that marks the limit of their imaginable "service" to him (*A* 332). Importantly, he belongs to an increasingly visible *type* of American manhood, as described in a contemporary journal: "able to enjoy to the full the esoteric attractions of womankind – the sympathetic intelligence, the grace, the wit," yet "holding himself in the innermost sanctuary of his heart."[59] If Marie de Vionnet evokes superlatives, that is, she captivates Strether mostly as the person who has produced the "miracle" of Chad by means of an *articulate* passion of desire that he can only "dumbly," vaguely, and ineffectively mimic. As this displacement suggests, Strether is most emotionally responsive to Chad or to Bilham, not unlike the author who constantly sought to "add the deeper note to our harmony"[60] with his own beautiful young men: "[Strether and Chad] had never been so alone together . . . They had remained on the balcony, where . . . the midnight air was delicious; and they leaned back . . . against the balustrade, all in harmony with the chairs and the flower-pots, the cigarettes and the starlight" (*A* 282–4).

The aura of male–male romance is unmistakable here (the scene will be replayed often in Cather), although, again, libidinal activity gets diffused, and in the process confused, by the very mechanics of masculine envy and symbolic substitution that point toward queer identification and motivation in the first place. While waiting for Chad to return to his apartment, Strether had felt "in possession as he never yet had been," and yet this emotion suggests more of a romantic-vicarious connection with Bilham than with Chad, as emphasized in the reminder (already quoted) that Strether

"hung over [Chad's balcony] as he had seen little Bilham hang the day of his first approach" (*A* 281). Recalling that earlier scene, though, the reader will also recall that Strether had been lured to make his first approach by the possibility that Bilham was *not* Bilham but "perhaps Chad altered" and that, in any event, Strether's "rejoicing" at the time had less to do with Bilham *or* with Chad than with the prospect of his own ascent to recover the state of feeling that both young men emblematize, "youth [itself] in the surrender to the balcony" (*A* 69–70). Thus Strether may come to be intensely "alone together" with Chad on the balcony – that prime Jamesian site for staging desire and power as aspects of vision, as readers from Leo Bersani to Tom Lutz to Jonathan Levin have variously explicated[61] – but the cumulative effect of his shifting consciousness and the "queer" displacements of narrative perspective is to call into question whether the "other" with whom Strether harmonizes is really Chad, or instead Chad as now a surrogate for Bilham (a neat reversal of their usual relation), or even Chad as a simulacrum for the Strether who might have been: the most available embodiment, just then, of the "queer concrete presence" that he had conjured up "at the witching hour" to represent "the substance of his loss" (*A* 281–2).

In other words, one witnesses a continual dispersion rather than a concentration of the novel's sexual/textual energies, as well as a repeated tendency for Strether's homoerotic envy and cultivation of young male friends to shade into an even more charged relationship with the charming youthful self that he never realized and presently mourns (a kind of substitution powerfully troped by Cather in *The Professor's House*, as I will soon show). Indeed, no scene illustrates this blurry fusion of homoeroticism, autoeroticism, and queer melancholy better than the "hour full of strange suggestions . . . [and] recognitions" that Strether passes alone in Chad's apartment, a surcharged "affair of the senses." Although the diction that identifies this "hour" as destined to become "one of . . . the particular handful that most had counted" distantly echoes the enticing "more of a handful" that Chad embodies, its Paterian flavor suggests that Strether's desire has been largely reinvested in an *auto*erotics of intense sensation (*A* 281–2). More than anything, Strether now recalls Gabriel Nash in *The Tragic Muse*, who also espoused Pater's doctrine that the "happy moments of consciousness" were so few and transient that "we must save as many as possible from the dark gulf" (*TM* 26). At the same time, James deliberately reworks the topos of the old bachelor in "fireside chastity" that permeated antebellum fiction and advice literature, or what he wistfully evoked elsewhere as "the prose, as mild and easy as an Indian summer . . . of Herman Melville . . . and

'Ik Marvel' " that flourished in periodicals of the 1850s – "Ik Marvel" being the pen-name of Donald Grant Mitchell, author of the best-selling *Reveries of a Bachelor* (*LC* 1: 683).

Indeed as Vincent J. Bertolini suggests, the "sexual doubleness" involved in mid-century representations of revery-prone bachelors anticipates the Jamesian man of the postbellum urban/cosmopolitan world: "Though this process produced a determinate type of sexual identity, the homosexual man . . . subject to . . . discrimination and violence, it also provided . . . the rudimentary materials for a distinctively gay culture." This reconfigured figure of the bachelor may be, as Bertolini writes, "a new phenomenon of heteromasculinity," yet his tendency "to revel in either solitude or masculine company" speaks to "a freedom that makes the boundaries of his 'straight' identity slip suggestively."[62] For Strether, "freedom [is] what was most in the place and the hour" in his solitary enjoyment of Chad's apartment (*A* 281). If Strether's entire adventure abroad amounts to belatedly "snatching a little super-sensual hour," this scene ranks as a highlight (*N* 393). And although Christopher Lane is surely right to contest Sheldon Novick's suggestion that "sensualism and sexuality are homologous," even identical, neither are they discontinuous.[63] As a matter of late Victorian genteel rhetoric, "sensual" often stood for "sexual," as in Symonds's insistence that he was no "depraved sensualist" despite a "hunger after sensual pleasure" with other men.[64] As a matter of late Victorian genteel social life, with its "slimy inhibitions" of the body (as Amy Lowell would say), sensualism – including "adventures" like those of Strether's eye, hand, palate, and "monstrous" imagination – could carry a substantial, if also substantially displaced, sexual charge (*A* 299).[65]

The abode that most nearly approximates Strether's ideal, then, is Chad's, with its "perched privacy," its vista on cosmopolitan life, its "soft circle" of bachelor domesticity and revery: a space of delights infused with the taste of femininity but, for Strether at least, resolutely discontinuous from heteroromantic liaison and marital attachment (*A* 281). Perhaps by the same token, such a habitat *is* ideal, too good to be true. It is a testimonial to James's analytical integrity that Strether must sustain his quest on native ground, in America, where social realities both formative and formidable abide, as if to say that he will need to seek new premises for his "changed and queer" masculinity not in utopia, but in what William Wordsworth (in a passage surely familiar to James) called "the very world which is the world / Of all of us, the place in which, in the end, / We find our happiness, or not at all."[66] Strether's determination "not, out of the whole affair, to have got anything for myself" is disingenuous (though not fully consciously) to the extent

that he buys out of the heightened heterosexual economy of modernity and masculine "success," proclaiming "disinterestedness" to get or to take *himself* out of the bargain. What Maria Gostrey both compliments and laments as Strether's "horrible sharp eye," finally sees that "freedom" from the heterosexual imperative can be purchased only at a high cost, and that the dominant culture ensures such freedom is never truly free but contingent. "It's you who would make me wrong," Strether informs Maria, the woman who represents his last chance at a stake in "normal" passions and pleasures; and on his own rigorous terms, Strether is "right." Strether's newly felt internal difference means that he goes home "to a great difference" in American culture. If one reads Strether's sense of his prospects there as more broadly emblematic of James's forecast for queer masculinity in the twentieth century, the last note of the novel may not be so much that of wan resignation as of qualified hope and acceptance of the work that lies ahead: "there will always be something" (*A* 344–5).

5

Gratifying "the eternal boy in us all": Willa Cather, Henry James, and Oscar Wilde

To begin with a broad brush stroke, Willa Cather shared with Henry James a conflicted, often submerged, and highly self-referential interest in dramatizing the fate of masculinities against the grain, including, by projection, the masculinity distinctively embodied in Cather herself. It is common knowledge, but nonetheless striking, that many of Cather's peers, early and late, remarked on her renegade gender style, and not strictly as a factor of "butch" attire – the succession of smartly unfeminine hats, ties, and shirtwaists familiar from portraits of the author – but also in those less mediated (and more ambiguous) corporeal signifiers of putative queerness that I have been tracing, such as the quality of a "look," the relative firmness of a hand, or the confident "physical nonchalance" that *seemed* to index masculinity (and just what else?) in the otherwise female, even feminine, Willa Cather.[1]

Like beauty, however, gender and sexuality have always been in the eye of the beholder – in the eyes of many different beholders, differently empowered and clustered in unstable factions – besides being subject, semiotically, to changes of costumes and props. On this ground alone, one is admonished not to automatically construe Cather's evident gender signifiers as sexual markers (thereby rehearsing the often homophobic moves of the period's sex/gender system) and not to overread the data on her in anachronistic ways. Cather's lesbianism, like James's homosexuality, is not news, being half a century old in the criticism and a matter of such consensus that even critics disgruntled with queer readings of her work will grant that "Cather was homosexual in her feelings" (if "celibate in her actions," like the going construction of James).[2] But as in the previous chapters addressing James, it will be important to keep Cather and her writings, as evolving phenomena, situated in the context of her times and prevailing cultural climate.

To borrow from Laura Doan's research, one cannot take Cather's self-fashioning as conclusive proof either of her lesbianism or of a contemporary view of her *as* lesbian. As Doan shows, it was not until the Radclyffe Hall obscenity trial in 1928 that masculine trappings became "inextricably

connected" with lesbianism, as Hall's image began circulating from London to Houston, Texas, as mass-market "photographic evidence of the specimen invert" (much as coverage of the 1895 trials translated Oscar Wilde into *the* male homosexual for an international audience). Prior to that, the elements of so-called mannishness in Cather (or in Hall) would have "meant passing neither as a man nor as a lesbian," since "the whole point . . . was that no one knew for sure" about the gender or sexual identity of others, and the possibility of "misreading [was] an inescapable part of the risk and pleasure of the game."[3] Thus when Hugh Walpole, the British author whom I have several times invoked as a young confidante of James, met Cather in 1920 and "hugely" admired her "masculine, humorous, capable" bearing, the observation is both suggestive (soon to mean more than it then meant) and inconclusive.[4] This same problem of sex/gender hermeneutics arises with respect to an earlier impression of Cather, when a woman friend recorded "the author of 'Paul's Case' " (published in 1905) as being "stocky in build" with "a marked directness of aspect" and a "distinctly" handsome (that is, distinctly not "pretty") face. After this catalog of fairly "masculine" attributes, especially Cather's signature look of "a person [not] easily . . . diverted from [a] chosen course," one is perhaps startled when she is summarized as representing "altogether a fine healthy specimen of young womanhood."[5] In fact, these two anecdotes ask to be conjoined: on the one hand, what is taken as a naturally robust femininity in a literary novice around age 30 (in 1905) settles into a competent masculinity when she passes 45 (notably unmarried) and rests upon hard-earned laurels in a male-dominated marketplace. At the same time, the nineteenth-century schema that afforded "young womanhood" (perhaps to a greater degree than young manhood) a certain latitude in gender style, as well as in same-sex affective ties, gives way to a postwar society that saw such liberties as less innocent, more rampant, and more freighted with consequences for the welfare of the state and the perpetuation of Anglo-American politicoeconomic dominion.

As in my consideration of the shifting cultural views of James, Wilde, and other suspect (male) masculinities, the important point here lies in the steady *tendency* toward reading gender ambiguity as deviance (passing as a man or as a woman) and reading such deviance, in turn, as strong circumstantial evidence of homosexuality. Not surprisingly, given what I have shown of the sexual valences that were increasingly being read into Jamesian or Wildean prose (into style in general), Cather's mixed signals of personality and body – whether conceived as a provocative androgyny, prototransvestism, or "simply" gender confusion – also showed up, to then current perceptions, in her writing. Although one influential critic certified

Cather as "feminine" (or in other words, sensitive and intuitive) in her mode of characterization and her fictive presentation of "intense crises," he was more struck by the (masculine) "vein of hardness, as of iron or flint, that runs through her [represented] world" and by her (masculine) unflinching "sense of fact" in facing such a world – as opposed to the sentimental romanticizing that this critic, like James and Cather herself, pinned on women's fiction.[6] In 1925 it was a female interviewer's turn, in *Century Magazine*, to compliment Cather on a superficial femininity (her "lovely" blouse and scarf, an "actress's manner") before assuring readers that Cather was not in the least femininely superficial: "one meets in the woman" the same straightforwardness that in her work "avoids all womanish skimming of surfaces" and achieves "a manlike quality" of penetration and formal control.[7] In short, Cather had become nominated as yet another object lesson in the critical/journalistic enterprise, born of fascination and anxiety, of reading between the authorial person and the literary persona, and of straining to stabilize the sexual ramifications of both by drawing sharp lines between masculine and feminine *écriture* or (more broadly) style.

But this is to reenvision a Cather – resolute, authoritative, and "manlike" where it counts – at the *end* of a thirty-year process of personal and professional evolution that can conveniently be dated from 1895, when she was 21 and struggling toward basic premises of self-constitution and ethics as a fledgling writer. This was the year in which Cather famously (or infamously) crowed over Wilde's downfall in apocalyptic terms ("the destruction of the most . . . dangerous school of art that has ever voiced itself in the English tongue . . . the beginning of a national expiation"), and it was also the year, not coincidentally, as I will show, in which she hyperbolically endorsed James as the "one English speaking author . . . sticking for perfection," a "mighty master of language and keen student of . . . motives" whom one "could read . . . forever for the mere beauty of his sentences" (*WP* 1: 153; *SP* 905). It is now conventional, following the lead of Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler, to understand Cather's growth both as an author and as a variegated "self" as having been motivated by a drastic "effeminophobia" – with the figure of Wilde as prime mover – that expressed itself by experimental identification with androgynous or nominally gay characters in the early tales (the popular example being Paul of "Paul's Case") and with qualifiedly queer characters in novels of the 1910s and 1920s.[8]

This chapter will argue that scholarship has not yet fully gauged the role played by James in Cather's project of self-articulation, nor the ways in which the masculinities and same-sex intimacies portrayed by Cather (subtleties of body language will again speak volumes) engage much the

same sexual dynamics that have been seen to inform James's mature fiction, such as *The Ambassadors*. More precisely, James served in Cather's imaginary as an essential foil to what she saw as Wilde's hyperaestheticism at the expense of both moral sincerity and masculine integrity – this latter forfeiture affecting her most forcefully, given her own quest to acquire (or simulate) male privilege and authority. In the face of growing aspersions against James's gender style, as expressed in writing and in life, and corollary insinuations about his sexuality, Cather championed James as the paragon of a redemptive aestheticism just masculine *enough* and replete with a lavish but chaste sensualism. From 1895, in her formative reviewing and journalism, to 1925 in *The Professor's House*, Cather calls upon James to mediate her intense negotiations with the figure of Wilde – just as Wilde conditions her stagings and uses of James – as a *leitmotif* in her development as an authorial-sexual identity.

In elaborating this specialized case of queer triangulation, I will mainly pursue the narrative handling of a number of male characters in Cather's work, as well as a few exemplars of female masculinity, showing how Cather extends the Jamesian line of inquiry into modern masculinities and sexual politics. As I will demonstrate, Cather's fictional men, such as the gay suicide Paul of "Paul's Case," the maritally successful aesthete Carl Linstrum of *O Pioneers!*, the sexual misfit Claude Wheeler of *One of Ours*, and the (almost) gay couple of *The Professor's House* – Godfrey St. Peter and Tom Outland – are continually shadowed by and partially defined by female masculinities such as Jemima ("Jimmy") Broadwood of "Flavia and her Artists" (1905) and Alexandra ("Alex") Bergson of *O Pioneers!* Judith Halberstam has argued that female masculinity of this period should be considered as "a specific gender with its own cultural history," "vernaculars," and modes of self-carriage, rather than as a style that derives from or "mimics male masculinity"; Cather's example, in both her fiction and her lived experience, suggests the complicated tensions involved in realizing that gender-apart given that "masculine" had been so "naturally" fused on to the figure of the biological male, and seemed to name so many of the desiderata of self-evolution and cultural power associated with that figure.[9] These tensions also partly explain Cather's repeated recourse to the character-defining potentialities of *male* femininities, such as the hapless Will Maidenwood ("Flavia and Her Artists"), the contrasting figures of benign and pernicious effeminacy in the Pulitzer Prize-winning *One of Ours*, and the foppish Horace ("Lily") Langtry of *The Professor's House*.

As this array of gender hybrids suggests, Cather's bold attempt to embody a type of successful (counter)masculinity *or* of successful (counter)

femininity, and to represent such a type in relations of effectual love – especially same-sex bonds – confronted many obstacles and involved many detours and screening mechanisms. One time-honored challenge – a variation on James's celebrated or deplored imaginings of female consciousness – was the difficult task of writing across the conventional gender line in the first place, of trying to mobilize (real, male) masculinity in fiction at all. This is not to imply that Cather enjoyed an essentialist ease in portraying women, and one might say that she was compelled to cross certain fantasmatic boundaries whether evoking male *or* female characters. In a comment from the late 1930s that strikes present-day readers as surprisingly obtuse, Lionel Trilling charged Cather with nothing less than "a *personal* failure of . . . talent" because her fictional women were "never truly lovers" of men but were instead maternal or sororal presences. It never occurred to Trilling (or to his mainstream audience), for whom "truly dramatic relations" were heterosexual by default, that Cather's "failures" – or rather, the role displacements of her characters – might be intended to enter a caveat against traditional romantic protocols or to gesture toward alternative forms of social being and desire.[10] Similarly, another critic, in the early 1920s, chalked up Cather's "infrequent communication of emotion" as "point[ing] to a central limitation" in her work, without bothering to ask how such sentimental restraint (a trait conspicuously lauded in male-authored texts of modernism) might express, in its very inexpressiveness, a central limitation in society.[11] As Michael Warner succinctly puts it, "especially in America, . . . normal probably outranks all other social aspirations," and such critical responses speak for and to an audience that was presumably puzzled and alienated by a female author who did not gush or try to pluck the heartstrings of her female characters.[12]

Yet arguably the harder artistic challenge for Cather, from a normative standpoint, was to render satisfactory male characters, partly because she was socialized "as a girl" (when all was said and done) but more seriously because patriarchal culture places a slightly higher premium on the exemplary representation of manly men than it does on that of womanly women. It is well known that Cather's *other* mentor besides James, Sarah Orne Jewett, deprecated the kind of stories that resulted "when a woman writes in the man's character," dismissing such efforts as "something of a masquerade."[13] Cather herself would contend, but only *after* her excursions across the gender line in works through the mid-1920s, that it was "presumptuous and silly for a woman to write about a male character," while in the same breath excusing one such male creature (in *One of Ours*) as being based on a nephew whom Cather knew "better than I know myself."[14] The

very phrasing in which Cather adduces this exception seems telling, and it will be part of my argument that earnest, purposive "masquerade" in the guise of ambiguous male characters (which criticism now places under the rubric of parody) is the keynote of the fictional practice whereby Cather sought to enhance her self-knowledge and to probe for avenues of escape (for others, as well) from modern regimes of sexual regulation.

As in James's case – recall the tradition of sniping at Strether's unmasculinity – Cather's success in creating and imaginatively inhabiting a different modality of gender in her fiction registers in critical reactions *against* her men as failures. Just as Trilling missed more full-blooded "lovers" among Cather's women, so, too, her male characters seemed for many to fall short of the mark of "true" manliness. They were seen as "antipathetic to the environment" not because of anything in that social environment but because of a litany of personal liabilities – they were "sensitive, artistic . . . [and] deficient in force if not weaklings" – that suggestively relate them as literary characters to the distant ancestral figure of James's Roderick Hudson.[15] When readers of our own period, both queer and antiqueer, describe this recurrent Catherian male type as a "narrow-chested . . . passive [romantic] partner" or as "gentle, recessive . . . not sexual," the taint of masculine insufficiency lingers in the air.[16] Admittedly, as I will show, Cather's honest ambivalence about the construction of her most salient characters contributed to such critical readings, yet on another level, the naturalized blindness of the normative eye is clearly in play. During the decades of Cather's heyday, as in comedian Lily Tomlin's 1950s America (and in pockets of our own postmodern culture), nobody was gay, but merely "shy."

A further cost of reading Cather through the skewed lens of the normal, I will show, is that one misses something queer about even her fictional marriages (that ostensibly straightest of institutions) that grows directly out of her conception of these different or "failed" characters of both genders. The ideal union, as rescripted by Cather in the 1910s before being rejected as utopian in her fiction of the 1920s, combines a less than "masculine" man with a more than "feminine" woman in ways that defy the restrictive sex/gender categorizations of modernity. My primary case in point will be *O Pioneers!* – with its symphonic celebration of impending matrimony between a little painter-man (*à la* James's Bilham) and the agri-business mogul Alexandra Bergson – but numerous other examples drawn from Cather's writing fit the mold, also.[17]

Before turning to Cather's most instrumental texts and characters, however, a few more words are in order about her positioning (and constant repositioning) with respect to Beauty, the body, and the life of the senses,

especially as these factor in scenarios of sexual development in life and in literature. Cather was deeply divided about body matters – by which I mean to suggest an *animating* ambivalence – and it is stunning to see how closely her responses to sensuality in art – different from but never far from the discourse of sexuality – echo those of her compatriot, James. Like the young James who had scolded Swinburne and Baudelaire ("a sort of Hawthorne reversed") for overlooking how morality inhered in "the essential richness of [literary] inspiration," Cather turned to Walt Whitman, whose "spiritual perceptions" extracted "the beautiful from the gross," to show the errancy of European aestheticism in going for "perverted . . . effects" (*LC* 2: 157; *WP* 1: 280–2). In the same vein, if George du Maurier's *Trilby* struck Cather as "unquestionably the great book of the year" in 1895, this was owing to the author's talent in "paint[ing] with emotion" while keeping the narrative discreetly "free from the fleshly and sensual . . . the grossness of passion" (*WP* 1: 131–4). The gender implications of such judgments become even clearer in Cather's response to Robert Louis Stevenson (second only to James in her early pantheon), for she applauded the supposedly tight correspondence among Stevenson's chaste exposition, the kind of masculinity he valorized, and the sexual (or rather asexual) proclivities of his fictional men.

Just as Stevenson's good, Anglo-Saxon "quiet style" of writing never succumbed to "Oriental profuseness" (not even under the Samoan sun), his protagonists impressed Cather as strong, silent types, neither "showy or dashing" nor, on the other hand, sicklied over with the pale cast of *fin-de-siècle* hypercultivation that could be seen in "little Harvard men" (*WP* 1: 136). Most importantly, the stylistic purity and reserve demonstrated both by Stevenson and his characters kept the story line clear of the standard romantic plot. Like James, who had earlier noted Stevenson's "sardonic view of matrimony" and blithe "absence of care for things feminine," Cather vibrated to the Scot's atmosphere of homosocial adventuring – his veering away from the socioliterary history that had left the love story hopelessly "entwined with . . . [and] distorted by" a sentimentality that seemed hopelessly heterosexual in its teleology (*LC* 1: 1247, 1233; *WP* 1: 136–7). Here at last was a masculinity that managed to be romantic without being – or romantic precisely for not being – *that* kind of romantic. At the same time, James's perception that men rather than women "fall most in love with" Stevenson's writings is only superficially qualified by the enthusiasm of the female Cather, a reading subject whose gendering is best captured by her remark that *Treasure Island* "gratifies the eternal boy in us all." As Cather's fiction moves to articulate a space of personal freedom from

prevailing sexual imperatives, it is to boyhood or early youth – that "transcendently lovable part" of life (in James's phrase) in which girls appeared largely "superfluous" – that she gradually turns (*LC* 1: 1233, 1235; *WP* 1: 267).

Thus far it seems that Cather's writing should both begin and end in unyielding disapproval of specifically Wildean sensualism, distancing the connotative homosexuality that Anglo-American culture had grafted on to the Wildean image. Not only do Cather's declarations peg her as a native of the United States; she also speaks in the same mode of ethical critique that led even studious British critics (like Stephen Spender) to cast James erroneously as "a New Englander" perennially wrestling with that region's "puritan . . . code of morals."[18] Cather's sensibility also opened on to what she called "frank and joyous hedonism," that attraction to the plush, seductive materialist side of aestheticism that James, too, had shown (*WP* 1: 136). As I have shown, James could tease continental authors who pretended to be "Oriental[s] come astray" and who wrote as if ensconced in "the perfumed dusk of a Turkish divan," but he also deployed the element of sensuous exoticism (minus any "morbid efflorescence") to signal sexual difference in his male characters (*LC* 2: 380, 364). Taking recourse to many of James's favorite European authors, Cather showed a similar and surprising indulgence toward those who delighted in "white flesh and rare fabrics and . . . lustrous fruits," somewhat belying or softening her remonstrations concerning the moral urgencies of art (*WP* 2: 733).

As with Jamesian sensuality, that is, it takes some noticing, but in Cather one encounters a decidedly material girl (or woman) and one of "the most sensuous of writers," as Rebecca West observed[19] – a person whose neo-Paterian desire to "luxuriate" in sense impressions was instantly detected, as well, by Stephen Tennant, the British author and high society eccentric often nominated as the original of Sebastian Flyte, in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. Tennant, an admirer turned intimate friend of Cather's, understood how the muting of emotional undercurrents that threatened to erupt in her fiction reflected "a curious 'purity' . . . a self-discipline on a gargantuan scale" that was commensurate with her much less obvious aesthetic-libidinal energies.[20] This insight refines Warner's claim for the American obsession with normalcy, suggesting that it is implicated with a consciousness all the more keenly attuned to the body's "disruptive and aberrant . . . rhythms" and the psychocultural workings of desire.[21] It was just this tension in Cather, Tennant perceived, that informed her semierotic response to the pageantry of "colour & Beauty & zest" found in Roman Catholicism – the very sensual stimuli that American Puritanical

culture (as in James's fictional Massachusetts) had suppressed as a condition of its formation.[22]

In this light one may profitably revisit the extreme terms of Cather's initiatory interlude with Wilde in 1895. Although Cather claimed at the time that "it matter[ed] not what form" the artist's personal transgressions had taken – in other words, that homosexuality was neither more nor less egregious than any other excess – the specificity of Wilde's "sin" insinuated itself into her ethical-aesthetic framework, which sought to abstract a value of "sincerity" with no necessary reference to the body (*WP* 1: 154). For Cather – as for James, J. A. Symonds, and other more prudent souls whom Wilde's performances put on the line – there was a clear nexus between Wilde's programmatic *insincerity*, especially his flair for epigrams and paradoxical wit, and his literal challenge (in every sense) to late Victorian sexual politics. To her perception, Wilde stood for – and more importantly fell for – exactly the calculated affront to homophobic culture that queer criticism now ascribes to his writings.

If Cather's consequent need to disidentify with this colorful, modern Lucifer named Oscar Wilde spawned some of her most vitriolic prose, she was at least democratic enough to attack Wilde's minions as well, reviling the midwestern version of the decadent *Yellow Book*, for instance, for publishing "the most maudlin and disgusting rot that ever degraded the English language" and for serving up such offal on the "exquisite . . . dainty paper" of a feminized art sensibility (*WP* 1: 155). The implicit linkage, in turn, between these visceral strictures against exclusively male artists and Cather's assault on effeminacy in general, irrespective of authorial gender, becomes manifest in her strenuous review of the popular "Ouida" (Marie Louise de la Ramée). If, as Cather declared, "Ouida is [Max] Nordau's 'degenerate' incarnate" – in fact, Nordau's influential *Degeneration* targeted Wilde as a quintessential symptom of civilization's decline – that was because this female writer, too, failed to offer "one sane, normal . . . man or woman" in her fiction, which filled Cather "with the same . . . disgust that Oscar Wilde's books do" (*WP* 1: 276).

In a word, when Cather contrasted James with Wilde, with the imitative aesthetes of Harvard or Chicago, *or* with female miscreants such as Ouida, her every judgment of style – the exalted "English language" or "tongue," whether mastered by James or debased by others – constituted a moral judgment that was complexly implicated in Anglo-American sexual politics, and her every act of aggression, even as she strove for a tone of magisterial calm, was both confessive and defensive. The cruelest irony of Cather's relation to Wilde was that (not unlike James's) it was built upon

a violently disavowed recognition of a kindred spirit – an affinity that, as I will relate, fueled a whole sequence of fictional maneuvers to reestablish their difference. Which of these two authors, Cather or Wilde, proposed that "the body had its moments of spirituality" and that "the senses could refine," while "the intellect could degrade"? Whose protagonist wishes to usher in a "new scheme of life that would . . . find in the spiritualizing of the senses its highest realization"? Which writer yearned for a state of social organization and of personal identity in which "the soul can feel as the senses do," so that those "five avenues" of access to the splendor of living and the beauty of art would neither lead one into dissolution nor be "starved" amid the famine of Philistine prudery? The answer to this last question is Willa Cather, but the very proximity of her position to that enunciated in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (the source of all prior quotations) suggests how her revulsion toward Wilde's work as being "full of insanity" was in fact an exercise in refusal and boundary-drawing (*DG* 83, 161; *WP* 1: 266, 154).

Cather's long quarrel with Wilde's deviance, then – in the body of his texts, in the text of his body – was conducted in front of a mirror, even as she conceded, with customary shrewdness, the fundamental "*unfairness* of the contest in which beings whose realest life is in thought or endeavor" – two of them named James and Cather, another named Wilde – are "kept always under the shackles of their physical body" (*SP* 969–70; emphasis added). As the invocation of Nordau confirms, Cather's fear of how the "overwrought senses" might *un*shackle the body and "end in madness" – a thinly veiled fear of the queer – was interfused with an almost millennial anxiety about the new cosmopolitan world represented by *both* Wilde and James. Artistic "atrocities," she believed – along with the corporeal atrocities they perversely insisted on conflating themselves with – grew "naturally enough out of the artificial . . . hurried, hectic life of the end of the century" (*WP* 1: 154–5). In this sense, what this chapter will delineate as the qualified truce that Cather eventually worked out with respect to Wilde's queerness – and thus also with respect to her own – required not only mobilizing James and keeping *his* queerness within bounds, but coming to terms with modernity itself.

In the last analysis, James functioned as Cather's compromise model of the artistic vocation, full of wit, style, and sensualism and yet just manly enough (with some propping up by Cather herself[23]) to ward off the related dangers of becoming a "female writer," with the onerous baggage of that category, or of succumbing to the tempting extravagances represented by Wilde. As with James, Cather ripened toward a partial but significant *rapprochement* with a more aestheticist, less masculinist position (*à la* Wilde), opening the door to a progressive sympathy for gay and transgendered

subjectivities, if a less than optimistic forecast of their social future. It is easy enough critical sport to satirize queer readings for seeing Cather's own "latent lesbian agony" encoded in the "silent, hopeless longing" of such figures as Claude Wheeler and Godfrey St. Peter, but this sort of rhetoric does not nullify the linkage between Cather's fiercely defended personal-professional difference and the cultural predicament of man-loving men.[24] The most telling development of all, in this regard, is that Cather would finally turn not to James to describe the queerness of that queer monster, the artist,[25] but rather to the very work she had once deemed "insane" as a founding motive of her career, Wilde's *Dorian Gray*.

People can't help what they dream. (Willa Cather, "Flavia and her Artists")

At first glance, "Flavia and her Artists" (1905) seems a straightforward satire of a New York society matron – "Aggressive, Superficial, Insincere" – whose life consists of collecting famous names and faces for her "sanatorium of the arts" on the Hudson River (*CS* 21, 19). A burgher's wife and one of the premier "Tuft Hunters" of America, Flavia Hamilton might well be modeled on the figure of Mrs. Weeks Wimbush in "The Death of the Lion" (1894), James's critique of the "insidious forces" of modern celebrity culture and his send-up of "an age . . . in which one gets lost among the genders and the pronouns."[26] Cather, too, indulges in gender-bending puns, as when one of Flavia's guests observes that "a man isn't going to see his wife make a guy [i.e., a fool] of herself forever" – in other words, that Flavia's husband must eventually reassert his patriarchal ("guy") authority over her silly, feminine ways (*CS* 20). Thus the issue of what constitutes a forceful masculinity, and who may or may not possess it, stands at the center of this story, and it is meaningful that Cather's parlor talk turns on such debates as the appropriate threshold of emotional display in men – real men "can't be very demonstrative" – and the compatibility of brainpower with the female condition. Cather puts in question the unquestioned typical male view that "a really intellectual woman" could only be an abomination, indeed a castrative Medusa "transmut[ing] us all into stone"(*CS* 26, 14).

Within this seriocomedy of confusions and contentions, two characters emerge – Jemima Broadwood and Will Maidenwood – whose opposition is inscribed in their surnames, and who provide a valuable index to Cather's early sex/gender politics in transition. In its orchestrated confrontation between Jemima (or "Jimmy") and Maidenwood, "Flavia" suggests an author who is striving toward the conception of a cross-gendered character who can exploit the potentialities for selfhood in a modernity where gender pronouns are in flux – for expansion as a particular type of wo/man, artist,

and sexual subjectivity – yet who is unable to shape such a character without rhetorical recourse to Oscar Wilde as a generic whipping-boy. The tale, that is, compliments the confident social masculinity of Jemima/"Jimmy" – Flavia's cousin and a gifted comedienne – while ridiculing the effeminacy of Maidenwood, professionally identified as "the editor of [the journal] *Woman*." Cather also supplies a "handsome" girl named Imogen, through whose doting eyes the reader sees the character "Jimmy," and yet the author intrudes to regulate Imogen's perception, describing "Jimmy" not as an attractively virile woman but rather as "a nice, clean, pink-and-white boy," "all aglow" with residual youth (*CS* 4, 7, 8). Already in this figure, Cather introduces themes that will recur in her fiction well into the 1920s: the evocation of masculinity as a trope for the vibrant freedom that is culturally unavailable to women; the association of boyhood – from Cather's own boyhood to such fictive embodiments as Claude Wheeler and Tom Outland – with conditions in which that freedom is uncompromised by the demands of sexuality; and the possibilities as well as the limits of cross-identification as a means of approximating male social advantage.

As a nickname conferred by fellow actors, "Jimmy" alludes to the artifice involved in *all* gender constitution – the constructedness of femininity and masculinity, but also the potential for mutability or "give" in these binarized categories. When Imogen admires in Jimmy "one of those faces to which the rouge never seems to stick," Cather distinguishes the character in several ways. Jimmy's "bucolic" naturalness distances her from the loose morals of the stereotypical nineteenth-century actress – a type to which James, for example, assigned the scatological name Fanny Rover in *The Tragic Muse* (*CS* 9–10). In a broader sense, the rouge that will not "stick" suggests Jimmy's immunity from the cosmetic obsessions ascribed to *fin-de-siècle* femininity – the commodification of women as creatures of "vanity, hypersensitivity, and . . . love of . . . ornamentation" that prompted ambivalence in Cather.[27] Jimmy further shows her dissent from such typecasting by sporting a boy's short-cropped hair (recalling Cather's adolescent self-styling as "Will" or "William Cather, Jr."[28]), a look that Imogen pointedly exempts from any aspersion of "freakishness" (*CS* 7–8).

This preoccupation with Jimmy's "fresh, boyish countenance" and "frank *savoir-faire*" (*CS* 7–8) interacts interestingly with Cather's earlier view, as a theatre critic, that actresses "keep their youth because they keep their emotions" (meaning their dramatic expressivity), whereas women who fall into domestic routine, social conformity, and reproductive labor age quickly: "When a woman sinks entirely into the conventional mould, when she begins to dissimulate . . . and to teach her daughters to dissimulate, then

she grows old . . . Nobody is old who is capable of great emotions." Cather stood by this provocative claim even in reviewing Lillie Langtry, the fabled "Jersey Lily" of the Victorian stage, whose association with Wilde (as I will show shortly) otherwise contaminated her as an artist. Now vesting this capacity for "encourag[ing] feeling . . . instead of checking it" in the boylike Jimmy, Cather signals an important transfer of political interest from the plight of "conventional" women to the vehicle of cross-dressing writ large – a different "dissimulation" – as a possible means of escaping the existential cul-de-sac of biological and social gender (*WP* 1: 65).

More precisely, this experimental "Jimmy" sought to redeem "feeling of every kind" by resituating feeling within the precincts of masculinity, thus pointing out an avenue away from the impasse associated with Cather's hostility to "feminine" sentimentalism. I have already noted how Cather's literary judgments hinged on the management of textual emotion, with praise going to the type of author who "kept her sentimentality under control" (such as Charlotte Brontë) and condescension to the writer whose "mawkish sentimentality" carried her away (once again, Ouida; *WP* 1: 275–7). Cather's principle of discrimination is roughly the same as that which informed James's wariness about "the famous 'tender sentiment' " in fiction and his preference for "asperity" and "masculine conclusion" even in female authors such as Edith Wharton (*LC* 1: 646, 155). Positioned apart, like James, Cather perceived that textual sentimentality was never neutral, but colluded in the furtherance of normative values. Reconfiguring the woman actress of unchecked feeling as the "boy" actor Jimmy, always "fresh and encouraging," Cather sought to recuperate sentimental discourse by regendering the subject. The heterosexual plot thickens, in other words, when it is mimed in an affectionate friendship between differently gendered persons, here Jimmy and Imogen, who happen to be biologically of the same sex. On this qualified basis, Cather could begin to open a narrative space for "very tender" feelings – Jimmy's for Imogen – and for "pleasure[s]" of unabashed admiration – Imogen's for Jimmy – that were, strictly defined, homosexual in nature (*CS* 17, 28, 8).

Highlighting a privileged bodily locus of implied queerness in Cather, Imogen takes particular pleasure in holding and studying Jimmy's "large, well-shaped hand" (*CS* 8). Cather's hand fetish has already attracted critical attention, as in Jonathan Goldberg's idea, which I revise here, that this member is "not necessarily attached to a body of either gender" in her fiction; yet a cataloging of instances will secure the point that Cather took the discourse of hand signals, so to speak, which extended from James through Wilde to Sherwood Anderson, to entirely new levels.[29] Jimmy's hands belong to

the same family as the "strong ones" that indicate the manlike competency of Alexandra Bergson in *O Pioneers!*, the "strong and warm and good" hands that fuse such competency with maternal nurture in Ántonia Shimerda of *My Ántonia*, as well as, significantly, the "warm, broad, flexible" hands of the sympathetic Czech farmer in Cather's late tale "Neighbour Rosicky" (*EN* 150, 910; *CS* 259). As a rule, when Cather valorizes a female figure by bestowing this comely, capable hand, she either steers away from details that reimplicate the hand in conventional femininity, stressing instead its size and strength (Jimmy, Alexandra), or foregrounds the latent willpower that salvages the hand from being *merely* motherly or sisterly (Ántonia). Correspondingly, when "attaching" this signifier to an endorsed male character, Cather attributes (or restores) to the hand qualities that soften and feminize it, as suggested in the "flexible" significations of Anton Rosicky's "gypsy hand," which is "alive and quick and light in its communications . . . like quick-silver," without being at all "nervous" (*CS* 259). Thematically, this overcharged hand *attenuates* the gender binary in Cather, investing female bodies with capacities of (masculine) skill and authority, while distinguishing male bodies for their nuanced (feminine) expressiveness, so blessedly different from run-of-the-mill men with their "stupid lump[s]" of fists or their hands of the "red, stumpy kind" (*CS* 259; *EN* 1023).

Already in "Flavia and her Artists," in Jimmy Broadwood's case, it is hard to know whether to call this symbolically loaded body part androgynous, transgendered, bisexual, or unisexual, but the important point is that this omnipresent Catherian hand, whatever the designs of authorial manipulation, *inevitably* intersects with the evolving Anglo-American literary inventory of the queer body. Initially, Cather's conscious objective was to prosecute the gender argument, and indeed she seems to have resisted, almost perversely, the queer ramifications of her bodies and their constituent parts, as if defying readers to read her texts as meaning what they seemed to mean under the mounting pressure of sexological premises. How could Cather *not* have known, even in 1900, that to describe Stephen Crane's hands as "singularly fine; long, white, and delicately shaped, with thin nervous fingers," and to compare them with "pictures of Aubrey Beardsley's hands," implied a dubious unmasculinity (*SP* 933); it was Beardsley, after all, who produced what James called the "disconcerting" illustrations of androgyny in *The Yellow Book*, a quarterly of Anglo-American decadence that was widely (and erroneously) reported to have been in Wilde's own hands at the time of his arrest in 1895 (*LC* 2: 1226).[30] On the evidence of "Paul's Case" – a special favorite of Cather's – she understood quite well how "nervous trembling . . . fingers" and hands that "shudder[ed]" at

another person's touch could be used to profile homosexuality (*CS* 170–1). Yet for both the personal and political reasons already discussed, her project seemed dedicated to *countering* the overdetermined nexus of bodily beauty and sexuality, as if a "singular elegance about the hands" of Father Jean Latour in Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* were not necessarily somewhat queer by the late 1920s.[31]

As I will show, this complex manual semiotics reaches its apotheosis in the famously evoked hand of Tom Outland, which inspires the queer rhapsody (importantly, an owned queerness) of *The Professor's House*: "What a hand!" (*PH* 103). As that later novel will suggest, the richly ambiguous hand prototyped in "Flavia" is also the true artist's hand, an agent of measured theatricality and narrative expression that is "fastidious and bold . . . select[ing] and plac[ing]" the materials offered up by a profligate "Nature" that (contra Darwin) makes "no selection" but rather abounds in unnatural "substitutions." For Cather, as for James, the hand of the artist conferred form on this unruly, thrilling, and threatening polymorphy, and "it was that which made the difference" (*PH* 61).

How very much was at stake in 1905, then, in the contrast between Broadwood's self-possessed handshake and the delicate fingers of Will Maidenwood. As implied in Cather's name game, the shameful effeminacy of Maiden-wood and the masculine distinction of Broad-wood fit together as pieces of the same psychic economy, rehearsing her pitting of Wilde against the manly Stevenson, the "virile" Rudyard Kipling, and even "the great Georges" – George Eliot and George Sand – who had proved themselves "anything but women" (*EN* 1303; *WP* 1: 277). Heightening the contrast, Jimmy's candid "rudeness" about Flavia's "infirmary for the arts" opposes Maidenwood's temporizings in the "smoothest of voices." Maidenwood is a bundle of "sensitive nerves," growing pale and "faint after hurting his finger in an obdurate window." Thus the character instantiates the passive parlor creatures that Cather had earlier attacked from the bully pulpit of her journalism – "all nerves and inherited tendencies" of degeneracy – whose life's lesson would be what "every sentimentalist" (male or female) must learn: "In the end, the nerves get even" (*CS* 9, 6, 12–13; *WP* 1: 268, 699). Maidenwood is therefore "the editor of *Woman*" in the punning sense that his body and social style constitute a redaction of femininity in its weakest and most pathetic construction, the designation further alluding to Wilde's one-time editorship of *The Woman's World* (1887–9).

Equally key is Cather's concerted effort to keep "Jimmy" away from *sexual* implication, "more than ever like a nice, clean boy on his holiday," indeed an endless holiday from maturity that keeps the "boy" virginal

behind his "neatly knotted" necktie. The "white rosebud" that graces Jimmy's lapel contrasts sharply with its incriminating double, the "flippantly red carnation" that signifies homosexuality in "Paul's Case" (*CS* 17, 171), another Wildean marker that crops up throughout period fiction, indicating same-sex desire among schoolgirls, for example, in Katherine Mansfield's " Carnation" (1917).[32] Jimmy marks a textual site where queerness might eventually be inscribed, but not by an author whose political thrust still ran mainly along the gender axis and whose maneuvering around Wilde (and around the Wilde within) continued unabated. As for the innocent Imogen, she has no place in Jimmy's orbit, a verdict announced by Flavia's husband, whose "nerveless" hands attest to his cynical (masculine) objectivity: "What should [Imogen] do here . . . so girt about with illusions that she still casts a shadow in the sun[?] You've been very tender of her, haven't you? . . . What a good fellow you are, anyway, Jimmy" (*CS* 10, 28).[33]

Married nightingales seldom sing. (Willa Cather, *Nebraska State Journal*)

On the argument of *O Pioneers!*, a nineteenth-century love story in the service of twentieth-century cultural politics, the only viable form of modern union is homosexual, if mainly in the sense that two quasi-masculinities (or quasi-femininities) converge in a relation of perfect equality and mutuality. In this instance, one of the two "men" is Alexandra Bergson, who first appears in "a man's long ulster" ("as if it . . . belonged to her") and who marches "like a young soldier" through every adversity to become the largest landlord on the Nebraska Divide. The other body in play is authentically male, biologically, yet Carl Linstrum is introduced as "thin, frail," with a "delicate pallor" and a "mouth too sensitive for a boy's." Importantly, it is the "vast hardness" of the land that accounts for Carl's expression of bitterness, for whereas Alexandra has inherited the willpower and shrewdness by which her father's father "proved himself a man," Carl carries on a family tradition of male incompetence. Already Cather foresees a match made in heaven (*EN* 140–9).

Linstrum claims attention first, for the character interestingly belongs to the lineage of Will Maidenwood, yet enjoys a markedly different fate. At one level, Marilee Lindemann rightly sees Linstrum's body language as forecasting his "frustrations" in typical male roles.[34] Yet if his tendency to "shrink into himself" as if "afraid of being hurt" connects him with Maidenwood, and his physical traits link him with Paul of "Paul's Case," how does one account for his more favorable narrative deserts (*EN* 194)? Carl is neither a disparaged denizen of genteel drawing-rooms nor a gay

suicide, but rather the prospective spouse of Cather's celebrated heroine. If America is a "fortunate country" – both as a land and as a polity – to embrace a woman of Alexandra's make, as the text asserts, why should this kind of man participate in that good fortune and contribute to its unfolding (*EN* 290)?

In creating Linstrum, I would argue, Cather began to grant new virtues to Wildean masculinity. As I have noted, a stereotypical effeminacy circulated in her early fiction, whether under the aspect of comical but malicious ridicule ("Flavia") or of tragic annihilation ("Paul's Case"). The morphological features and psychological coordinates of this gender style return, in spades, in the portrait of Linstrum. Carl shares Maidenwood's bloodless complexion and nerves, and has even deeper similarities with Paul, whose "high, cramped shoulders and . . . narrow chest" anticipate Carl's "narrow-chested" torso and "high, sharp shoulders." Carl's sensitive mouth replays the "pale lips . . . continually twitching" that expressed Paul's queer excitability. Or to turn again to the favorite bodily register of difference or deviance in Cather, Paul's trembling fingers provide a forecast of Carl's "white, nervous hand" (*CS* 170–1; *EN* 142, 194, 227). As John P. Anders remarks, Cather describes Linstrum by "images of gender ambiguity embellished with homosexual overtones," yet it must be added that these homosexual overtones are still kept under.[35]

According to Eve Sedgwick, the wild spree of gay identification recorded in "Paul's Case" had suggested Cather's opening of a small window of sympathy for the "feminine love of artifice" that she otherwise reviled in Wilde.[36] But Paul's suicide signaled a dead-end for any immediate project of rethinking gender or gay potentiality along those lines. If Paul's type lives on, it is importantly reformed in Linstrum's renovated masculinity, while the still-deprecated side of Wilde gets apportioned to, and troped in, the unlikely figure of Frank Shabata, the cuckolded, murderous husband, for whom Cather reserves (in Anders's claim) her "strongest Wildean treatment."[37] More aptly, Shabata represents another hybrid in dialogue with the hybridized Linstrum, a means of contrasting destructive and productive gender combinations after the methodology of "Flavia." Cather sees both old dangers and new possibilities in the "feminine" side of masculinity, and if she fashions a man in Carl to suit Alexandra by virtue of his "understanding" and self-distancing from conventional male power, she also (more stringently than in "Flavia") demonizes another man, Shabata, to highlight Linstrum's virtues.

In Shabata's guise as a bohemian poseur, that is, Cather criticizes the excesses of Anglo-American dandyism. This young "buck of the beer-gardens"

has many attributes of offensive self-display: a silk top hat, longish "yellow curls," a pseudoaristocratic hauteur, and a "melancholy and romantic" way with a "cambric handkerchief." Shabata also indulges in idle leisure purchased by the labor of his mother's hands ("and this fellow wearing gloves and rings!"; *EN* 208). Given Cather's fondness for Du Maurier, the character may also refer obliquely to the evil Jewish mesmerist Svengali, who "blossom[s] out into beautiful and costly clothes . . . so that people would turn round and stare at him in the street – a thing he loved."[38] But the main prop involved in Shabata's preening, a "little wisp of a yellow cane," is also a portent of his masculine deficiency. Nursing a general resentment toward life, Shabata becomes a "bully" who pushes his wife, Marie, into adultery. Cather's take on his manhood seems summarized when Marie and Alexandra later find the yellow cane of his courting days hidden in an attic: "Isn't it foolish? Poor Frank!" (*EN* 208, 233). Still, one should not overlook how Frank's inner poverty registers his incompatibility with the roles dictated by adult male heterosexuality. It is not implausible that "poor Frank," reconstructed as a sexually misguided masculinity, serves also as an agent of authorial ambivalence, and that his brutality lies less in putting an end to the illicit liaison of the "couple that is endlessly spoken" in fiction – the heterosexual pair in the garden, or in this case Marie and Emil Bergson – than in destroying the *other* kind of "couple who cannot speak" their love that shadows this familiar pair.[39]

Meanwhile Alexandra's "bigoted" brothers call down a vocabulary of shame upon the gender violation of both Alexandra herself, for her "conceited . . . meddl[ing] in business," and Carl, a "wandering" "loafer" who "never was much account." To their provincial view, Linstrum's painting and his "urban appearance" – a pointed beard, arresting yellow shoes – tag him as a shiftless bohemian (*EN* 193, 221, 189–90).

But Linstrum distinguishes himself by his readiness to be "astonish[ed]" rather than intimidated by the business acumen that makes Alexandra "always a triumphant kind of person." In describing Alexandra as "surrounded by little men," Carl clearly speaks for Cather, and his distinction lies in his willingness to be counted among them. On the other hand, he resigns himself to gender-role ritualism, planning to prove his fitness for marriage by wresting gold from the Alaskan wilderness: "I must make the usual effort . . . [and] have something to show for myself" (*EN* 203, 227).

As the diction indicates, Cather here revisits the Jamesian interrogation of gender ideology. In *The Ambassadors*, I have shown, Strether learns to recalibrate his conceptions of success by following the lead of another "little man," Little Bilham. More interestingly, when Alexandra corrects

Carl's poor self-estimate – "you show it for yourself" – she resituates the evidentiary basis of his "showing" from externality to personality, from the materialistic to the affective, in a way that recalls James's Gabriel Nash of *The Tragic Muse* (*EN* 203). The Nebraska prairie lacks the camp of Victorian London, but Alexandra's inversion of values rehearses James's aesthete, for whom failure was "having something to show" in the theatre of worldly competition (*TM* 123). Not far behind the figure of Nash stood Wilde, of course, proclaiming "cultivated idleness" to be "the proper occupation for man" – his tart response, as Lawrence Danson shows, to the ethos of capitalist muscular Christianity.[40] This is not to say that the reader ever sees Linstrum draped over a divan among his watercolors, but with Alexandra's support he learns not to participate in the "identification of masculinity with middle-class norms of industry, rationality, and self-restraint."[41]

According to *O Pioneers!*, proper relations between a man and a woman – perhaps between any two persons – begin in qualities apart from sex appeal. "It's by understanding me . . . that you've helped me," Alexandra informs Carl, whose understanding thus seems undifferentiated from the "sympathy" that Alexandra extends, for instance, to the character "Crazy Ivar" (*EN* 162–3, 183). On this level, Cather may invoke the critique that, just as the rhetoric surrounding Alexandra's material conquest smacks of the "transcendent, disembodied subjectivity of liberalism," so the bodies of her exemplary couple dematerialize, leaving behind only subdued civic emotions.[42] On another level, this derogation of embodied passions or impassioned bodies is *programmatic*, however one may judge its narrative effects. For Cather recognized sexuality as inescapably a field of power, complicit with rigid gender assignments and inequities of cultural standing that generated varying forms of individual and communal destructiveness. Moreover, she had a keen sense of the political responsibilities of the popular novel. If she abhorred the "sex consciousness that is abominable" in women's domestic fiction, this owed as much to its domesticating function as to her alienation from the normative plots for which that sex consciousness provided the glue. In its cultural work, such writing collaborated with the institutional trajectory of the contemporary boy's book and girl's book, with their "hateful distinction" in subject matter. By a wicked irony, the system perpetuated itself not only by making "the limits of a woman's world . . . her social duties," but by making one of those duties a woman's policing of her daughter's reading. What all mothers and daughters should study instead, Cather suggested, were the monitory examples of Flaubert's Emma Bovary and Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier, destroyed owing to the combination of domestic containment and a lack of

"the faculty of observation, comparison, reasoning about things" (*WP* 1: 276, 66; *WP* 11: 698).

Clearly, Alexandra Bergson requires a very particular mate. The "understanding" of "friends," precisely because it is *not* a sexy attribute, must precondition Carl's fitness as her lover. Perhaps too didactically, Emil and Marie's case illustrates where improperly tempered sexuality leads. If Carl's sensitive lips make speeches of (feminized) sympathy, his happy fate passes comment on the dismal fate of Marie, with her "coaxing little red mouth." Marie herself registers the difference in urging Emil to "behave like Mr. Linstrum," who is too "school-teachery" for sexual intensity (*EN* 143, 212–14). Julie Abraham's argument for Marie and Emil's "homosexual positioning," that is, should not obscure the lessons that Cather's readers were supposed to learn by reading this relationship straight.[43]

My intention is not to write Cather, as a lesbian author, out of her own text. To the degree that Emil and Marie do project a shadow story of unspeakable desires, besides adultery, their passion enjoys a considerable narrative sympathy. Although Cather endorses Carl and Alexandra's seasoned comradeship as a model for modern intimacy – its "heterosexuality" modulated by the mixed gendering of both characters – her prose invites identification with the plight of Emil and Marie. Thus although the narrator lectures on behalf of Alexandra's "impervious calm," there is no condescension to the "heart" that masochistically feeds on tumult, "its strings . . . scream[ing] to the touch of pain" (*EN* 247). Likewise, Emil's "heart" seems generalized and even generic, not an organ that palpitates only to the heterosexual plot: "The heart, when it is too much alive, aches for that brown earth, and ecstasy has no fear of death" (*EN* 265). As in her writings on Wilde, Cather still suspects the proclivities of the senses, yet there is tolerance for those who accede to illicit desire. Beyond this, if Carl's revision of his masculinity requires Alexandra's guidance, she requires him to show how her judgment of others colludes in a faulty political analysis that historically blames the victim: under the burden of her transgressive desire, "maybe [Marie] was cut to pieces, too" (*EN* 287).

These instances of a productive mutuality suggest that one's reading of *O Pioneers!* benefits from resisting (as the work does) the stultifying binaries of post-Victorian science and social organization. The novel adumbrates an almost unisex relationship, articulating the basis of equity that should characterize any couple, whatever the genderings or sexualities in play. On this view, gender only marks the starting point from which a character (or a reader) must evolve, the cultural trappings that he or she must shed. Not only is the queer not vacated from the novel, as some have argued, but

it is precisely centered in Alexandra and Carl's relationship. There is little reason to suspect that Cather overlooked her own romanticism; rather, she seeks to capitalize upon any inclination in her readers to change and grow in the ways and means of desire. Her idealism, that is, both contains and expresses her sex/gender politics. Linstrum maintains that there are "only two or three human stories," endlessly repeating themselves, but Cather annexes the most familiar story, that of heterosexual union, to argue for something new under the sun (*EN* 196).

How did you ever dare to write a portrait of a lady? Fancy any woman's attempting a portrait of a gentleman! Wouldn't there be a storm of ridicule! (Constance Fenimore Woolson to Henry James, 1882)

One of Ours marks Cather's most ambitious, intriguing, and finally frustrating attempt at imaging a happy compromise in gender style and testing the representational limits of homosexual feeling. Interviewing former soldiers of the Great War, poring over the letters of a cousin killed at Cantigny, projecting herself into the minds of young men whom she came to know "better than I know myself," Cather seems to have set herself the question: what might the unprecedented cataclysm of civilization's "ruin and new birth" offer in the way of a more specialized sort of world renewal, a chance to crack open the molds of the American sex/gender system (*EN* 1243)? How might the transatlantic transport into brotherly bonds among men whose disparate class backgrounds *substituted for* the difference of biological sex extricate queer masculinity from a social environment in which it had no future? Ultimately, a chorus of male author-critics including Edmund Wilson, Sinclair Lewis, and Ernest Hemingway judged that Cather had no business adventuring into the trenches, inasmuch as her gender both disqualified her from authority in that terrain and moved her to an unwarranted idealism. Instructively, they drew an analogy between this womanish "disability" of "secondhand" reportage and the vicariousness born of (or attributed to) Henry James's similar deficit in immediate masculine experience, whether dealing with the intensities of war or those of heterosexual love.[44]

Strangely, Cather's final disposition of her protagonist, Claude Wheeler, implies her concurrence with these male voices, or at least a capitulation to traditional assumptions about gender and narrative, as, by the end of the book, the line of myth-making mothers reclaims a fallen hero in the form of yet another "eternal boy." In Wheeler's romantic friendship with the soldier-violinist David Gerhardt, Cather dances closer than ever to the

edge of homosexual representation, only to contain and disperse that movement, leaving merely the muted concession that men who were unsuited to American normative culture and not lucky enough to be delivered from it by world trauma or battle death, were inclined toward silent decay or suicide. But this is to get ahead of Cather's story.

Cather's vehicle of inquiry, Wheeler, is another distinctive hybrid resulting from her quarrel with cultural polarities of gender: "a manly looking boy" with "catapult shoulders" and (as Lewis was moved to verify) "a thoroughly normal body,"[45] yet one whose "shyness and weakness" is written all over his face, whose energies dissipate in the conservative American heartland, and whose sensitivity about his "sissy name" foreshadows a self-masculinizing campaign in war-torn France (*EN* 1135, 1073, 856, 1121). Since I am concerned to move the character expediently toward this site of foreign conversion within that *locus classicus* of manly love, the army, I will begin with the scene that is by critical consensus the book's emotional center: Cather's soliloquy, through the medium of Claude's consciousness, on the "captives" or abject "children of the moon" who languish in the prisonhouse of straight, materialist culture (*EN* 1100).

Bathing in a farm tank, Claude reflects on his abysmal and significantly sexless marriage, the result of a desperate bid on the part of this youth who "don't seem to fit in right" (as he and his community agree) to "put him[self] right . . . and make him[self] fit into the life about him"; if Cather shows considerably less sympathy with Claude's wife Enid, it is noteworthy that she, too, "grew up under the shadow of being 'different' " (*EN* 1050, 1055, 1038). Claude has married to refute his obscure queerness, taking the most sanctioned step of validating his normalcy and asking his society, in return, to make good on its ideological promise that marriage will provide a sense of "usefulness and content" in the otherwise "luminous vagueness" lying ahead (*EN* 1056, 1054).

In describing Claude's epiphany, Cather surprisingly (and doubtless unwittingly) refurbishes the imagery she had earlier used to evoke the redemptive possibilities of another man gone astray, Oscar Wilde. As Christopher Nealon writes, Cather uses Claude's "gorgeous physicality to eroticize his shame," recalling the Wilde whom she named the "most shamed" of men in 1895 and whose physicality (if not gorgeous) furnished the insignia of modern homosexuality.[46] Yet Wilde also had the artist's incorruptible "soul," Cather had then written, imagining him in Reading Gaol as "thrill[ing] with . . . rapturous appreciation" to "a great sunset . . . flam[ing]" through the "prison windows" (*WP* 1: 266). How suggestive that *One of Ours* recycles this figure during Claude's glimpse into his own closet and those of

other misfits: "into those prisons the moon shone," he thinks, illuminating the "unappeased longings" that burdened creatures of difference and yet distinguished them as a "finer race" than persons who lived in the light of common ("normal") day. Like the "enraptured" Wilde of a quarter-century before, Claude feels his "revelation . . . possess[ing] him, making his whole body sensitive, like a tightly strung bow" (*EN* 1099–100). Claude's electrified body tropes the queer body that Cather, like her culture, had stereotypically assigned to the gay aesthete. Following on Linstrum's heels, the character marks another effort to rehabilitate the type disparaged in "Flavia" or pitied (but nonetheless destroyed) in "Paul's Case," or, from another angle, to reincorporate the Jimmys and Tonys of earlier fiction in a viable male figure. Meanwhile, the "tightly strung bow" of Claude's body possibly alludes, subtextually, to the musician Gerhardt, whose hands of "delicacy and precision and power" may or may not play airs upon it (*EN* 1264).

If Claude has hitherto measured himself (and Cather has measured him for the reader) against the good-humored brutality of a father's "rugged masculinity" and the attenuated commercial masculinity of an elder brother, Gerhardt represents the cultivated cosmopolite of James's eastern seaboard – linguistically gifted, languid and aesthetical yet still virile – that Claude has never had a fighting chance to become (*EN* 963). Gerhardt's *different* masculine difference may also carry a residue of his actual model, the celebrated Russian-Jewish violinist David Hochstein, whom Cather met through Jan Hambourg, the Canadian-Jewish violinist who had married her beloved Isabelle McClung; it was with the Hambourgs that Cather had toured the battlefields of France while researching the novel. But more immediately, Gerhardt substitutes for, while masculinizing, another figure of artistic distinction, a musically talented girl who had served as Claude's "aesthetic proxy" in a rural community where boys were not supposed to have or display "fine feelings" for beauty, despite the proximity of "Lovely Creek" (*EN* 1032–3). In fact, Claude's attunement to the "loveliness" of nature both at home and in France, instead of displacing his aestheticism into a more neutral, less compromising realm of sensual pleasure, has the effect of feminizing him, and thus drawing him back into the range of homosexual implication. As Michael North persuasively argues, the charge from Hemingway or Edmund Wilson that *One of Ours* betrays "a woman's battle envy" on its author's part disguises a deeper, unspoken anxiety: in Claude Wheeler one witnesses "a man's envy of muslin dresses and pretty flowers," which is then reformed in the figure of David Gerhardt to intimate "the possibility that masculinity and the aesthetic might not be utterly at odds."[47]

The next chapter will delve into the ramifications of this insight for Hemingway's own writings, but here one notices how Cather, too, feels called upon to resist the tendency of her own dramatic argument. The desire to distinguish and celebrate Claude's sensitive masculinity, especially as it evolves in the direction of Gerhardt's, entails not only the need to extricate that gender style from its implication with the female body (the original embodiment of the "aesthetic proxy") but more crucially the need to differentiate Claude from *other* sensitive men who have in a sense failed to make that separation: a parasitical preacher who is devoid of "manly qualities," an "effeminate drug clerk" who idles over free verse, and a troopship doctor who resembles a girlish "schoolboy," his dainty hands and "pink complexion" seeming strange in a man from Canada, "the land of big men and rough" (*EN* 982, 1063). (Like a figure in Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* yet to be discussed, the doctor keeps the "raw surface" of his being far from the homophobic "terrors" of the mainland; *EN* 1183.) As I will elaborate further below, these efforts to delineate Claude as a different but still manly man run a distinct risk, as his character threatens to collapse into its doubles, both male and female.[48]

The time is ripe, though, for a closer look at the novel's exemplar of those "splendid friendships" (as Cather elsewhere calls them) that men of all sorts forged in barracks and bunkers under the discipline of military organization and the pressures of war.[49] Approximating Jamesian protocols, Cather both implies and disavows (or implies by disavowing) a homosexual attraction between Claude and Gerhardt. On one hand, their intimacy unfolds in pastoral settings superscribed with both antique and Whitmanian evocations of same-sex love, as the pair wander through trees resembling "Grecian lyres" before lying down together "on the dry, springy heather" (*EN* 1212, 1254). Further, the stage directions frequently call for that ambiguous fondling of shoulders and arms already encountered in James, even as the two soldiers remark that "every doughboy has a girl already," leaving them "the only men in the Company who haven't got engaged" (*EN* 1278, 1282). On the other hand, Cather works to ensure that this splendid friendship remains on the side of good "chums" (*EN* 1098), never letting homosexuality constitute the missing content of the "something very revolutionary" that happens within and between the men to supply what they "vaguely felt the lack of" back in the States.[50]

In particular, the novel insistently correlates homosexuality (or perhaps sexuality as such) with death, putrefaction, and physical pollution (a correlation hardly peculiar to Cather, as Klaus Theweleit's work has shown).[51] In fact, Claude's "sharp disgust of sensuality" registers as a morbid fear of

decadence in the broadest sense; he seeks a "way out of the world" that won't give his "pleasant, warm body over to [the] filthiness" of moldering in the grave (*EN* 988, 981–2). The rusty barbed wire on the family farm that "poison[s] and disfigure[s]" him, sending him into the arms of a femininity (mis)construed as pure and purifying (his wife Enid) prefigures the barbed wire and poison gas of the European theatre of war, where Claude's self-renovation issues in an independent but no less haunted masculinity (*EN* 1053, 1217). In a macabre scene that (*pace* Hemingway) shows Cather all too vividly recreating the horrors of war, Claude and Gerhardt struggle over heaps of "soft bodies" that wriggle beneath their feet, while the air fills with the "squirting sounds" of gases "swelling in the liquefying entrails" (*EN* 1286, 1288). Even in the act of warranting his manhood as the classic soldier-in-action, which Cather's script requires, Claude falls subject to a figuration that weirdly punishes his phallic assertiveness: a shell detonates nearby to induce the traumatic fantasy that he is "swelling to an enormous size under intolerable pressure, and then bursting . . . shrink[ing] and tingl[ing]." The wages of sin (or homo/sexuality) being death, the explosion buries Claude's transgressive body "under a great weight of earth" (*EN* 1248).

Surely the grisliest instance of this monitory nexus among desire, death, and decomposition occurs in Cather's perverse rewriting of the bathing-boys scene, a motif that looks back to countless examples in nineteenth-century Anglo-American art, and, as Paul Fussell has shown, that flourishes as an ulterior encoding of homoerotic affection during the Great War.[52] If Claude's difference had vibrated somatically while he soaked in a farm tank, that difference *seems* to find an associative venue for articulation when he joins other "more or less naked" doughboys cavorting in a "picturesquely situated" shellhole that has filled with rain. Yet *this* Whitmanian gesture toward loving comrades is no sooner made than it turns horrific. Upon entering the pool with Gerhardt, Claude feels his foot strike a German helmet, and the two quickly scramble apart. Inadvertently Claude has "opened up a graveyard," another soldier explains, while the "exhaust" of (yet more) decomposing corpses percolates through the water (*EN* 1223–4).

But one best perceives the lengths to which Cather would go to contain the sexual overtones of masculine friendship in her strategy of cathecting queerness on to the overdetermined *real* homosexual in the text – a "very handsome" German sniper who dies (none too subtly) impaled on Claude's bayonet (*EN* 1275). Evacuating same-sex desire from Claude and Gerhardt's intimacy requires a juxtaposition with an explicitly gay (and conveniently

foreign) relationship. By the 1920s the codifying of anatomy, style, and self-adornment that began after James's *Roderick Hudson* had since crystallized in what André Gide derisively called the "signs of that effeminacy which experts manage to discover in everything connected with inverts" (*GL* 412). If anything, Cather overloads the German officer with a surfeit of these signs: hands as "white as if he were going to a ball," nails "pink and smooth," and the paraphernalia of love tokens and material compensation that men such as Wilde and J. R. Ackerley, and not least the police, had established as the incriminating currency of gay gift exchange. If expensive cigarette cases were part of "Wilde's payment to [young] male prostitutes" and subsequently became "the most durable material trace of [his] illegal sexual practice" during the 1895 trials, Cather prominently places a gold cigarette-case among the German's effects.[53] If Ackerley sought to win the heart of another young man at Cambridge with a present of "gold and platinum cuff-links," this dead officer's wares include a platinum wristwatch pointedly "despised as effeminate" by the American soldiers (*GL* 380; *EN* 1276, 1170).

As if to leave no doubt about the character's sexual bearings, Cather associates the dead German with a "gorgeous silk dressing gown" – the telltale garb of the stereotypical "queer" all the way from the Long Beach, California, sex scandal of 1914 ("pariahs with the wrist watch" favored "silk kimonos," according to contemporary accounts) to Joseph Conrad's *Victory* in 1915 (where such a gown is first the costume, then the death shroud, of the gynophobic villain "Mr. Jones") to Evelyn Waugh's diatribe against the Wilde revival of the late 1920s: "If [Wilde] lay a long time on a sofa in a silk-dressing gown – that was [supposedly] Art, too."[54] After all these semaphores of queerness, one can only wonder why Cather's American soldiers (with the possible exception of Gerhardt) set their "romantic hope[s]" on discovering a woman's image in the German's locket and are therefore startled to find instead the photograph of "a young man, pale as snow, with blurred forget-me-not eyes." As if to mark decisively the boundary between healthful chumhood and the actively romantic coupling that it threatens to shade into, Cather emphasizes the fine "inlay work" on the dead officer's gun, thus tacitly inscribing homosexuality on the very weapon that has destroyed (and differentiated) an intense bond between two soldiers on the American side (*EN* 1170).

Clearly, Cather mobilizes a flagrant gayness intended to siphon off any aspersions against her protagonists and to disinfect the general vicinity of their friendship. I would agree with North that "Cather takes pains to tell her readers, as explicitly as she dares, that the relationship . . . is not a

physical one";[55] and one may go a step further to say that it is precisely Cather's movement toward an unprecedented explicitness that brings her narrative "daring" up against a perhaps unforeseen limit. As if sensing that her gambit might produce just the opposite of its intended effect, leading readers to notice an *analogy* in this queer German love and to find Claude guilty by association, Cather contradictorily arranges for the pallid, dreamy youth of the locket to be written off as "probably a kid brother" to the dead man, and shifts the reader's gaze to David Gerhardt, who is simply "very much pleased" with Claude's valorous deed (now only subtextually: killing off the queer; *EN* 1275–6).

If the stage now appears set for Cather's two handsome young men to go out in a blaze of glory that should burn off any remaining trace of gay possibility, her narrative strains and ultimately fails to disentangle their relationship, or Claude's masculinity, from its defining contexts. In their last scene together, Claude, now a commanding officer, sends David on a treacherous reconnaissance, watching his friend go with the "deepest stab of despair he had ever known" – a conventional figure that nonetheless recalls the bayoneted German homosexual. This perverse signification persists in Cather's handling of Claude's death. The bullet that he takes "through his heart" constitutes just the sort of martial-romantic cliché objected to by Wilson and Hemingway, but its function as a token of military self-sacrifice is less interesting than the way in which it engages the other leading cliché associated with a shattered heart (*EN* 1289–93). At one level, the scene stays safely within the frame of the novel's gender argument: Claude transcends the "waste of power" and "arrested action" that Cather has linked with American materialism, the marriage imperative (as designedly distinct from sexuality), and a patriarchal discipline that Claude's new "mastery of men" is meant to redeem rather than to repeat (*EN* 1035, 1292). Yet in bringing this gender critique to its extreme, both logically and dramatically, Cather again calls up the substratum of fervent same-sex bonding associated with *all* military life, from the Theban band down to the trenches of the Argonne, and that arguably attracted her, as an author, to this alternative space for difference in the first place.

Although mortally wounded, Claude feels "no weakness," only pride at Gerhardt's prospective applause for his "unconquerable" performance (*EN* 1292). With David thus construed as the audience *necessary* to make Claude's masculinization signify, Claude at last realizes the "something splendid" he has long sought for (*EN* 1029). Moreover, this splendidly vague "something," brought into being through love for another man who has "something out of the ordinary" about him, takes on a more erotized tinge

when one notices how it corresponds with other suggestive vaguenesses in Cather's work. Most significantly, the process whereby Claude, with another man as the abiding psychic referent, feels "something . . . released that had been struggling for a long while" prepares for the character of Godfrey St. Peter in *The Professor's House*, who will also harbor "something very precious" (and more overtly homoerotic) that can only be disburdened by a kind of death (*EN* 1190; *PH* 258).

The "unconquerable" performance that confirms Claude's masculinity, then, marks the conquering of his body as a vehicle of same-sex desire, a prerequisite of his apotheosis into a purely narrativized body, "safe, safe" from any conceivable corruption (*EN* 1297). If Claude's fear that he would "go to pieces" if he could not flee the incarceration of American manhood is now resolved, the phrase echoes in the graphic vision of Gerhardt's being "blown to pieces" elsewhere on the front (the same phrase Cather used in describing Hochstein's death; *EN* 1062, 1292).[56] Although Claude's men (along with Cather) loyally support his belief that Gerhardt will survive to praise him, this key witness to his triumph has literally disintegrated, obliterating from the text the other body that might have joined with Claude's to incorporate the suppressed fantasy of their communion.

It is consistent with the narrative drift of Claude's "predestination," if not sadly ironic, that the novel ends by thoroughly disembodying him, returning the character to the custody of myth-making mothers, especially the aptly named Evangeline Wheeler, as well as to the native cultural environment he had tried so hard to escape (*EN* 1119). As Cather concludes, "by the banks of Lovely Creek, where it began, Claude Wheeler's story still goes on" – sanitized and situated in that endless present tense that is the common property of reflexive patriotism, religious solace, and, importantly, maternal love for the eternal boy (*EN* 1295). The irony only deepens: the same Claude who had once deprecated his mother's "childlike" credulousness about the Bible and Milton (faith being the "natural fragrance" of the female mind) has now landed right back in her (narrative) hands, which fittingly have "nothing to do with sense" but rather emblematize the "groping fingers of the spirit" (*EN* 962, 1041, 1140). Cather cannot rescue her epic from homosexual implication without rehearsing Mrs. Wheeler's sentimental rhetoric, infusing Claude's ascent into uncorporeality with an idealistic fervor meant to make it "true" for Cather's own audience. In the process, the particularized, embodied, and queer-leaning "Claude" (Cather's original title for the book) gets reappropriated, in the bleakest sense, as "One of Ours" – a lunar dreamer fetched back into the captivity of culture. As suggested in the Pulitzer Prize citation for the novel, there was room for only one kind

of soldier to represent "the wholesome atmosphere of American life, and the highest standard of American . . . manhood."[57]

The reader is left with only the slightest clue as to Cather's uncomfortable alertness to her complicity here, but it makes an important segue to *The Professor's House*, in which another beautiful soldier dies only to haunt the story as a palpable gay presence. Many of the young men who do *not* share Claude and David's good fortune to die with their "beautiful beliefs" intact, Cather concedes, return stateside to find "desolating disappointment," and not a few become "slayers of themselves" (*EN* 1296–7) – anticipating, curiously enough, the bleak circumstances of the returning veteran in Hemingway's own "Soldier's Home" (1925). Perhaps one is justified in reading this last concession as also the self-confession of an author who still could not imagine a realm within the actualities of modernity, where the boots of loving men-in-arms (or their female counterparts) did not have to tramp across a landscape of death.

Now how bad could it be: sexuality? (k. d. lang, "All You Can Eat")

Deservedly, *The Professor's House* has become the darling text of Cather scholarship under the rubric of gender, gay, and lesbian studies. My intention here is to "read it backward," as Lindemann passingly recommends, in two senses: to concentrate on the third "book" of the novel, entitled "The Professor," for its ambiguous dispositions of the protagonist's existential dilemmas and errant desires; and then, to use that reading for purposes of another sort of backward reading, asking how Cather's mature politics of gender and sexuality reflect on Anglo-American cultural developments after the foundational era of James and Wilde. Lindemann helpfully suggests that Cather's "allegory of male authority and misogyny in masculinist culture" – centered on Godfrey St. Peter – culminates in a "critique along the axis of sexuality" of the institutional forces that have shaped and constrained the Professor's affective possibilities.[58] Reviewed through this lens, St. Peter's belated probings of his life premises – as he approaches, Stretherlike, his mid-fifties – indicate a depth of alienation that shows not just the pathetic but also the sympathetic side of his fate, his social construction, and Cather's handling of his character. Sedgwick errs, I believe, in seeing the Professor's self-inquiry mainly as a screen for the refraction of "lesbian truths" (a dubious concept, in any case). As an ample fictional figure in his own right, St. Peter instantiates a (male) masculinity of considerable complexity, irritation, and pathos, and Cather would not have devoted a whole "beautiful and difficult" novel (in Sedgwick's phrase) to simply caricaturing the type of the narcissistic husband.[59]

I also seek to reverse the directional flow of Julie Abraham's reading, while agreeing with her that a "conflict between homo- and heterosexuality [lies] at the core of all the [novel's] betrayals." Abraham describes St. Peter's *self*-betrayal as a mishandling of the opportunities presented by the "ambiguous sexuality" of his beloved Tom Outland: the Professor seeks to "induct" Tom into his own style of "heterosexual middle-class adulthood" (more importantly, St. Peter regards Tom as having luckily eluded this fate through death); then, St. Peter "sends Tom back to . . . the authoritative history" of bloody, theocratic Europe, fixing him there as "the Professor's boy – at the cost of his life" (actually, the text suggests that "Outland made up his [own] mind," after drawing up a will, to pack for "death and glory" in Flanders; *PH* 235, 31). At the close of the novel, as Abraham nicely says, the "sexual possibility of male relationships . . . remains suspended for both Tom and the Professor in the realm of implication" – implied without being realized, that is, but also implicated in a conservative history that brackets off *other* histories (both class-inflected or native narratives) in which larger "questions of social justice" arise.[60]

Here I will contend that the novel ends in a *productive* suspense, and that St. Peter possesses a quantum of queer resources all along. The more interesting problem is that he consistently misinterprets his desires (with Cather's partial complicity) in ways that refuse their queerness by refusing embodiment itself, a spiraling away from sexual discourse already encountered in James as well as in early Cather, and soon to appear again, in yet a different guise, in the works of Anderson and Hemingway. The Professor decorporealizes the least tremor of homoeroticism, rewriting it as the pure sex, so to speak, of the mind or the imagination. Yet it will be instructive to spotlight St. Peter's ambiguous sexuality (rather than simply Tom's), to see what happens when St. Peter is placed in the tributary position of "the boy's Professor," and to consider how Outland – as an object of desire enshrined in memory – initiates a process of *counter*induction, away from the heterosexual paradigm, that almost brings the Professor to suicide. In trying to mimic Tom's escape from the "trap" of success, the rules of "town and State," the devirilizing role as "the instrument of [an exacting] woman," and the burdens of paternity, St. Peter curiously enacts a veiled replay of the Victorian gay-suicide plot – a double suicide, if one conceives of Tom's plunge into the Foreign Legion (*à la* Claude Wheeler) as a sort of glorified self-destruction (*PH* 236–7).

As I shall show, Outland's name all but vanishes toward the end of the novel, as the focus shifts to St. Peter's last thoughts and actions, but Tom continues both as the abiding presence in the text entitled "The Professor" and as the secret author of the Professor's texts (both his writings and

his life). Whatever Cather's prior evasions, *The Professor's House* identifies homosexual love (as much as culturally possible) as the mysterious something "precious" that dies out during St. Peter's late "moment of acute, agonized strangulation." To view the Professor's grave sense of inner "misfortunes" and psychic "hurt" as *only* a familiar mode of male self-pity would be to miss both the deeper nature of his damage and the cultural origins of his compromised situation. The "fortitude" with which he finally looks toward the future – the vista of "apathy" and isolation that sprawls before him – is perforce a grim one, but by the same token it gives a precise measure of the costs incurred by queer subjectivity under a very particular historical formation (*PH* 258, 250).

As both contemporary criticism and latter-day queer theory have noticed, Cather's address of the representational challenges involved in same-sex intimacy (or sexuality in general) frequently yields relationships of *substitution*. The gendering of characters, the assignment of familial or quasifamilial roles, and the sexual tenor of certain affections – all of these become sites of instability or exchange, and thus also of queer opportunity, however much owned or disowned by the author herself. In treating *The Professor's House*, it is mandatory to take up Outland's observation that "nature's full of… substitutions," which strike him as "sad, even in botany" (*PH* 165). If not reducible to Cather's own view, Tom's statement serves to foreground her persistent and urgent questions: What qualifies a relation as either "natural" or "against nature" (that hallowed disciplinary formula)? What trials attend identities or relationships at variance, especially when they engage in a politics of enlarging the "natural" to include them, or perhaps of *de*categorizing the category altogether? What kind of "nature" can it be, epistemologically speaking, that is so abundantly "full" of unnatural phenomena?[61]

Outland's oddly comical allusion to botany turns serious in the Professor's important figuration of the "new creature" that sexuality "graft[s]" on to boys in adolescence, involving them in the "cruel biological necessities" of dating and mating. In other words, the full bearing of Tom's remark emerges only at the very end, as a chastened St. Peter confronts, unsentimentally, the "sadnesses of nature" entailed in his (unnatural) drift into a lifetime of heterosexual performance (*PH* 242, 13, 256). In retracing the motions of his consciousness in crisis, one learns that Catherian substitutions do not rule out a return of the same (the substituted for) under another guise. In the final natural/unnatural switch of the novel, "another boy" appears to supplant Outland in the Professor's emotional and erotic life: namely, his own sexually "unmodified" self, a sort of upscale Huck Finn who went missing when he had assumed the "penalties and

responsibilities" of mature heteromasculinity. To his own mind, the steps of St. Peter's (d)evolution could not be clearer: the destiny of the Kansas boy "at the root of the matter," was supposed to have remained forever "primitive" and "solitary" (that is, unmarried). Yet when his nature became "modified by sex," that boy became submerged in the "secondary social man, the lover," whose only remaining "fervour" – after performing the lock-step duties of a spouse, a father, and a wage-earner – is the love he holds for his scholarly books. In fact, heterosexuality itself, rather than sex in its taboo subvarieties, seems to be rendered "almost unnatural" in this scenario, as Jonathan Goldberg observes, and one might note also how the obtrusion of "Lillian Ornsley," his wife's birth-name, marks the Professor's fleeting concession that *both* genders sacrifice in the process of normative development (*PH* 239–41).[62]

If, as St. Peter speculates, the quality of adult experience depends upon how well the sexualized creature "rub[s] on together" with its presexual "twin," then the Professor should not be shocked when *his* twin returns in full force, after being banished from a life "ordered from the outside" (*PH* 239–42). That "outside," for Cather, is the rigorous cultural system of demands for a married, reproductive manhood (or womanhood), as earlier represented in James's *The Ambassadors*. Without positing too dense an intertextuality, St. Peter's exhaustion correlates with that of the "dog-tired," "distinctly fagged-out" Strether, before the restorative vapors of Paris (*A* 32, 61). Abraham excusably places the musing St. Peter "in old age,"[63] for although he is only 52 the text compares his absorption with decline to the mood of a grandfather "well on in his eighties" (*PH* 242). Simply put, both Strether and St. Peter come to feel prematurely depleted by the imperatives, or at least the pressures, of gender normativity.

Does Outland, then, serve in a remedial capacity for the Professor, as Little Bilham had done for Strether? How can what St. Peter suggestively calls the "Desire under all desires" – so hostile to compulsory heterosexuality – be anything but queer, despite Cather's wariness (like James's) about the ruthless binaries of modern sexual discourse (*PH* 241)? In *The Professor's House* the case against normal (as Warner might say) has gained in power and nuance, but that intensification still involves a hesitancy to give queer bodies, as such, full play. Yet by pressing the text for its withholdings – both Cather's text and the one produced by the Professor while darkly "consider[ing] his estate" – one discovers both that Outland is written all over St. Peter's reconstruction of his "other boy," which figures the lost or forfeited queer self, and that Tom ghost-writes the novel's conclusion (*PH* 242).

Although structurally "The Professor" supersedes "Tom Outland's Story," Outland's story, in a larger sense, still dictates to the Professor's self-narrative in key details, and their intense but foreclosed relationship reverberates behind his somber review of his family and professional life. If Tom is nominally downplayed or written out of the text(s), it is because his actual death had only concluded and sacralized a process of disembodiment begun much earlier – begun, in fact, the moment his "fine-looking" body first came under St. Peter's fascinated gaze. On the surface, that is, the novel wants no confusions either about or between the Professor's "two romances": that with Tom, construed as "of the mind – of the imagination," and that romance "of the heart" which caused him, once upon a time, to fall "very much in love" with Lillian. On this level, it is imperatively Outland's "many-sided mind," rather than any corporeal allure, that causes St. Peter's writing hand to cramp suspiciously – to grow "self-conscious . . . stiff and clumsy" – while composing his introduction to Tom's Blue Mesa diary, or in other words, while handling "Tom Outland's Story" (*PH* 95, 233–4, 150).

By 1925 this academicized version of the subdued masculine romance was nothing new in Cather. In *My Ántonia*, a series of tutorials with the scholar Gaston Cleric (another "enfeebled" male figure) had shown Jim Burden literature's power of "waking new desires in men" – desires quickly subsumed under the aegis of a "mental awakening," a passage into "the world of ideas" rather than the world of the body. Yet as has been shown in considering James and his cohort, male bodies, and their new possibilities of alignment, seemed to insinuate themselves even despite personal and cultural resistances. Patterned by Victorian homophile fiction (written by *either* James or Wilde), Cather's scenes of homosocial epicureanism inevitably veer toward a suggestion of *substitutive* appetites. When Jim Burden buys "with great care" an armchair for Cleric, a good "bottle of Bénédictine," and his teacher's favorite cigarettes, one sees a clear anticipation of St. Peter's romantic dinners with Outland over a "bottle of sparkling Asti," and their idyllic evenings of "read[ing] Lucretius" together (*EN* 872–76; *PH* 155).

But noticing this connection also shows how *The Professor's House* marks an advance in Cather's fictional practice. As the narrator of *My Ántonia*, Burden had reported Cleric's death from pneumonia and "the difference it made in my life," but this difference was never quantified or profitably linked with other clues about Burden's mismatch with the enforcements of straight, adult masculinity (*EN* 909). By contrast, the "difference" that Tom's death makes for St. Peter suffuses the entire plot of *The Professor's*

House, provoking his crisis of sexual identity. Notably, that crisis occurs while he communes in memory with an Outland remembered as all "kindling imagination," his "superabundance of heat" purely mental in origin and effect – first seeming to indicate a mere replay of the masculine friendship in *My Ántonia*. But such immaterial things (the novel's subtext says) neither burn nor cause to burn, suggesting that one must look elsewhere, namely to the recalcitrant body, for the source of the Professor's agitation (*PH* 238, 234).

Where Claude Wheeler's body had evaporated from *One of Ours*, in Outland, Cather allows a "well built" male body to become and to *remain* the occasion of a distinct erotics, as St. Peter retreats to the "shadowy crypt" of his study to resurrect – literally, to recompose – that handsome body: the "very fair forehead," the "resolute" eyes, the "manly, mature voice," above all, the hands (*PH* 94–6). The description of Outland's hand is overly familiar by now, but in light of the history I have been tracing of the hand's complex sex/gender signification in Cather and in Anglo-American literature generally, it will be useful to reproduce the passage. St. Peter attends only peripherally to the turquoises held by Tom as his gaze travels to the real object of value and allurement: "the muscular, many-lined palm, the long, strong fingers with soft ends, the straight little finger, the flexible, beautifully shaped thumb that curved back from the rest of the hand as if it were its own master. What a hand!" (*PH* 103).

The palm verifies both Outland's competent virility (being "muscular") and his rich expressivity; it is itself a complex "many-lined" text, a palm-reader's delight whose lines branch out to intertwine with every other personal narrative in the novel. The fingers reaffirm masculinity ("long, strong"), yet their "straight" authority "ends" in softness; this (feminizing) detail can only be a memory born of *tactile* experience, something the Professor could not know without having enjoyed Tom's touch, not even discoverable from a handshake. Completing the picture, the thumb vouches for Tom's independence and self-mastery, yet again its gender implications seem qualified, and its sexual valences enhanced, by the superfluous emphasis on its "flexibility." This minute survey shows that for all St. Peter's tendencies to idealize and disavow, the thought of the dead Outland's evanescence into merely "a glittering idea" produces panic – a recurring need to reembody the young man for sensual veneration (*PH* 94).

As a charged site of homoerotic generativity, Tom's hand – or, more broadly, Tom's handiwork – pervades Cather's ending. In the "plain account" of Outland's diary that the Professor's own hand must elaborate,

St. Peter (as if inscribing the novel's reader) strains to hear "the vibration in a voice when the speaker tries to conceal his emotion": Tom's life manual plainly contains a secret (*PH* 238). That concealed emotion, in turn, vibrates secretly in the Professor's morbid meditation on the shaping "mistake" of his own youth, which had detoured him into the path of marriage, family, and profession (*PH* 251). In thus conjuring up the homosexual as the homotextual, Cather embellishes on a thematics previously seen not only in her own writing (the Dante–Virgil model that authorizes the Burden–Cleric friendship) but also in James's, which gravitated (as John Carlos Rowe suggests) toward using a "shared interest in literature," art, or opera to explore the possibilities and limits of a displaced erotics in a masculine "passion" conceived as "perfectly *textual*."[64] *The Professor's House* answers James, not to mention Cather's earlier authorial self, by showing the futility of such a project. No amount of narrative "austerity" or substitution can prevent one man's text from communicating "ardour" to another man's emotional being, sometimes with life-shaking results (*PH* 238). The perfectly textual, that is, insists on realizing itself in the imperfectly mastered text of the desiring body.

On this view, a space of interaction and contact emerges in which Tom's capable, beautiful, and (as Goldberg also recognizes) "sexual hand" engages with two other hands, attached to two different but also sexually implicated bodies.[65] The first obviously belongs to St. Peter. Tom's ghostly touch can be read in the way that St. Peter's once "deft hand" is immobilized as a "dark hand lying clenched on his writing-table," while he gloomily anticipates the cessation of his "leisurely bachelor" solitude: "He loved his family . . . but just now he couldn't live with them . . . Especially not with Lillian!" Lillian's hand – once taken and cherished in matrimony but now only parenthetically "(a beautiful hand)" – will all too soon reintervene in his affairs, discharging what the Professor figures as the "shafts" of her "intense and positive" nature. St. Peter's dusky, inert fist thus marks a site of contest between Lillian's perceived manipulation and Tom's no less pressing imaginary caress. In this respect, Lillian's "jealous" acuity about the grounds of Tom's appeal to her husband triumphs over his own obtuseness. It was "largely because of Outland" as a *kinetic body* that St. Peter drafted the breakthrough volumes of his Spanish colonial history, and if his hand now lies passively knotted upon the writing table, Tom's absence as a physical body is as much to blame as Lillian's impending presence. Not coincidentally, the "clench" produced at this dense intersection of the Professor's two "romances" – a bodily symptom of his sexual ambiguity – foreshadows the

hand that will possess "no will to resist" his own drift toward death by asphyxiation (*PH* 111: 150–1, 250, 258).

Outland as transcendent object of desire, then, palpably operates behind the scenes during St. Peter's "hour of desperation," in which the roots of his cruel misogyny and his chafing under the duties of manhood are exposed (*PH* 250). Abstracted by death, Tom's "fine long hand" will never suffer the fate of becoming "the instrument of a woman," but is free to traffic forever in "the symbols of ideas." Unlike the Professor, Tom never sullies his hands (or the rest of his body) in the materialism and reproductive imperatives upon which a familial social organization depends, nor will Tom be condemned to write texts ("useless letters") that belie an ulterior or anterior self at odds with that cultural formation (*PH* 236–7). As with Claude Wheeler in *One of Ours*, Outland seems exquisitely frozen at the age of "quickened possibilities" and translated into "an unprecedented image, formed to resist erosion by time" (phrases conveniently borrowed from James's own eulogy to Rupert Brooke; *LC* 1: 749–50). Thus the Professor's question about the future that Outland avoids is purely rhetorical: "What change would have come in his blue eye, in his fine long hand?" (*PH* 236). In a word, Tom is better off dead, liberated from the claims of compulsory heterosexuality and reserved for the Professor's private idealization. In the visitations of Tom's abjected body, however, and in the pressure of his hand on the springs of St. Peter's physical desire, Cather bears out her own insight, that in writing *The Professor's House* she had at last discovered irony. It is also substantially the *self*-irony of an author who had vaporized the body, and eternalized the "boy," in every previous work.

Perhaps it is no accident, then, that alongside the genre of the gorgeous soldier elegy, *The Professor's House* also reinvokes an imagery of Wildean languor and aesthetical dreamery in St. Peter's slide into decadence, which precedes, if it does not precipitate, his sexual crisis. The text offers numerous clues as to the Professor's refined, exacting taste, from his appraisal of his daughters (he prefers the boyish one's "slender, undeveloped figure") to his disdain for the "depressing and unnecessary ugliness" of the decor in a colleague's home (*PH* 27, 123).[66] But a closer approach to Wildean motifs occurs during his summer of communing with Tom's memory and savoring his freedom from family and work routines. Cather emphasizes that this fateful (and nearly fatal) season of revery – this time of mourning, I am suggesting, for a thwarted gay identity – entails an uncustomary lapse in the "positive fashion" of St. Peter's mind. Internalized codes of discipline

give way to "half-awake loafing" and the "cultivating . . . [of] dissipation," the very state of mind and body that fosters his "new friendship" with an old self (the hidden referent being Outland), then darkens with the news of his family's forthcoming return, before degenerating into a near-suicidal lassitude (*PH* 239).

Yet why should these textual details instantiate Wilde – or, more broadly, the milieu of British homosexuality? The answer lies partly in how Englishness functions in the novel, being affixed to the character of Professor Horace Langtry, St. Peter's longtime campus foe. In Cather's calculated handling, Langtry wears "English clothes" and is "very English in his tone and manners," while showing an interest in the company of "football-playing farmer boy[s]" that perhaps gestures toward the cross-class liaisons characteristic of English homosexuality. Langtry has other, now-familiar queer markings in the form of "round pink cheeks" and generally feminine features, which earn him the nickname of "Lily" (*PH* 41, 44). Cather goes out of her way, that is, to make sure readers do not miss her allusion to Lillie Langtry, the "brazen sham" of an actress who was implicated with that "abortive son of England" Oscar Wilde in offering a "malicious lie upon human nature" entitled *Lady Windermere's Fan*. Thirty years after making these caustic remarks in her journalistic reviewing, Cather still has the playwright who was "not a normal Englishman" lurking in the vicinity of her character "Madame Langtry" in *The Professor's House* (*WP* 1: 472, 92, 154; *PH* 43). In this light, it is a slight but perhaps significant detail that the Professor mentally refers to "English law" during his flirtation with suicide. Although a native of the Midwest, St. Peter's compunction about the "grave social misdemeanor" of suicide, as he wavers between "lift[ing] his hand" to turn off the gas of his stove and letting the gas resolve his life crisis for good, takes this form: "How far was a man required to exert himself against accident . . . under English law"? (*PH* 258, 252). On the face of it, "English" here means something like "Anglo-Saxon," as in Cather's early defenses of the "English" language or tongue against the depredations of aestheticism. Yet it is also possible that in his last instant of consciousness, the Professor in effect situates *his* trials – of heterosexual commitment, of homosexual desire – within the purview of same juridical system that sentenced Wilde to hard labor in 1895. However casually or inadvertently, Cather places her dramatic test case under the same "English law" – "always . . . disinclined to accept human nature," in E. M. Forster's phrase – as that which ramifies throughout James from "Beltraffio" to *The Tragic Muse* to *The Turn of the Screw*.[67]

St. Peter's passivity under the gas was not suicidal, he later claims, but merely his ancient habit of "let[ting] chance take its way" – a phrasing that calls to mind the fantastic "stroke of chance" that brought Tom Outland into his life (*PH* 258, 233–4). Given the triangle produced by the Professor's two romances, it is fitting that his wife Lillian should author the chance that "saves" him for the performance of old duties. From aboard her ocean liner – a vessel that both tropes and overwhelms the "little brig, *L'Espoir*" of St. Peter's homosocial fantasy – Lillian contacts the housekeeper whose "strong arm" literally "drag[s]" the half-dead Professor back into his life (*PH* 89, 250). If this strong-arming appears to warrant an invidious view of Lillian St. Peter, one should notice Cather's suggestion that this woman who recalls her husband to the only spiritual posture possible in a complex modernity – "One must go on living, Godfrey" – suffers equally from the "old wound" of culture that is marriage (*PH* 78).

What is it that perishes in St. Peter's instant of "acute, agonized strangulation"? What is the "precious" something that he relinquishes, and needs help in relinquishing? Importantly, nothing really promises to change in the character of his unspoken contract with his wife and family. They will simply resume their scripted roles, while "the advent of a young [baby] Marsellus"– standing in for the grandchild that Tom Outland would have produced for him – signals the perpetuation of the very cultural system responsible for St. Peter's alienation. For his part, the Professor plans to go through the motions much as before, with an apathetic, mechanical "fortitude." In other words, his vivid sense that he is no longer "the same man" must refer to some *other* order of being than the heterosexual-familial. By the same token, St. Peter's resolve to accept "the bloomless side of life," to endure the future "without joy, without passionate griefs," alludes only tangentially to his experience as a "secondary social man" (*PH* 249, 257–8). The Professor's change, figured as an inner dying, involves the simultaneous recognition and expulsion of the full meaning of "precious" Tom and the way in which the "great catastrophe" of the war has been a very personal one, making St. Peter, in a sense, a "virtual widow" (*PH* 236). Like St. Peter, as well as through St. Peter, Cather at last relaxed the grip of a "fastidious" authorial hand by "letting something go" that was not easily "relinquished" – a story of same-sex love and its troubled modern situation (*PH* 258).

It is not clear whether Willa Cather ever stopped arguing against the "unfair" contest between persons whose lives were devoted to art and "the shackles of their physical body," queer or otherwise. What the record does confirm is that when she went searching for a parable to represent this

tension – the "free creature" who lives most vitally in "impersonations" but who is "shut up in the closet" of the quotidian, material world – she turned, surprisingly, not to any work by Henry James but rather to "Wilde's story, 'The Portrait of Dorian Grey' " (*EN* 1328). This was in 1932, when Cather was nearing age 60, and decades after her surcharged vilification of Wildean "insanity." Well past the need of any literary or experiential tutorials, Jamesian or otherwise, Cather could also make her peace with Oscar Wilde, being by then very much her own man.

6

"The other half is the man": the queer modern triangle of Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and Henry James

Among the more overt targets of Ernest Hemingway's neglected parody *The Torrents of Spring* (1926) are his former mentors Gertrude Stein and Sherwood Anderson.[1] Less obviously, but not coincidentally, the work marks Hemingway's first notable public engagement with Henry James, both as master and as man – or rather, as something less than a man. In *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), drafted before but published after *Torrents*, James's alleged sexual damage – or what his autobiography obscurely called an "obscure hurt" – constitutes an historical parallel for Jake Barnes's impairment, with the implied distinction that Barnes had come by his disabling wound through active service in the military, unlike the *already* unmasculine James (*AU* 415). More privately, Hemingway went on to demean the drawing-room "fairies" who languished about in James's *The Awkward Age* (1899), to scorn his predecessor under the sign of emasculation (James had "no balls") and effeminacy (one of the "male old women"), to dismiss most of James's writing as "snobbish, difficultly written shit" – and to covet his transatlantic fame (*SL* 266, 673, 703). Only after Hemingway won the Nobel Prize in 1954 could he publicly concede that James ought to have received the honor, too.[2] Yet like the other modern writers under survey here, Hemingway continued to feel James's monumental presence up until the end of his career, as seen from the continued skirmishing with James in *True at First Light* (composed 1953–4) and *A Moveable Feast* (composed 1957–8).[3]

This chapter revisits the formative phase (1925–35) of this telling confluence between sex/gender anxiety and anxiety of influence, an exemplary instance of modern straight masculinity (as it seems) reading Victorian gay masculinity. At the same time, Stein's perception that the "future feeling" James "felt the method of the twentieth century," while Hemingway "look[ed] like a modern . . . [but] smell[ed] of the museums," may queer considerably more than the notion of chronological sequence in the formal history of American prose (*ABT* 739, 873).[4] James's reading of Hemingway,

as it were, lies embedded in Hemingway's reading of James, and especially within the thematic orbit of sex/gender politics. Stated another way, just as Hemingway (although certainly not he alone) shaped his masculinity in reaction against Jamesian interiority, aestheticism, homoeroticism, and subtle sociability, so does the Jamesian critique of overdetermined manhood ("active," externalized, commercial, hetero) anticipate an Ernest Hemingway, with his dire performance pressures and his violent energies.

In this respect, I want to keep in play Stein's trenchant constructionism, which helped her to understand how the young Ernest's "truly sensitive capacity for emotion" succumbed to shame under the spotlight of celebrity, forcing him to adopt, "as a shield, a big Kansas City–boy brutality." Hemingway's "really gentle and fine" side could not survive the conditioning of the market, which set its performance expectations and levied its taxes according to an author's gender, while his "agonizing shyness" almost demanded the compensatory swagger of the manly man.[5] To put this devolution in terms of James's fiction (and thus rather schematically), Hemingway had the makings of a Little Bilham (*The Ambassadors*), but developed instead into a sort of Christopher Newman (*The American*), courting associations with femininity and sexual changings (Hemingway's own word), but then warding them off, and indulging his "unresolved androgynous inclinations" only very late in life.[6] Stein suggested that the evolved figure of "Papa" Hemingway posed for and was posed *by* Anglo-American culture neither more nor less than Oscar Wilde, only differently, which explained why his theatre of hypermasculinity (boxing, bullfighting, big-game hunting) failed to produce either "real brutality" or "real literature."[7] On the contrary, Sherwood Anderson added, the self-conscious posturing of a work such as Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa* (1935) suggested a "queer bird" seeking a straight path by means of Rooseveltian rituals of "guts and dung," but losing his way ("the whole world of men he can't get at all") and making a "mess" of himself in the process. Yet Anderson, too, recognized "Hemingway" as more of a cultural construction than an individual personality: "they really did destroy him" (*SA* 169).[8]

The question of which force bears the most blame for such destruction – the "enormous publicity business" of modernity, as Stein called it and as James satirized it in his mature fiction; the gender and sexual prejudices inscribed in that "business"; or Hemingway's own ruthless careerism – almost dissolves in the fact that these forces were interlocking and collaborative, and perhaps only the consequence matters.[9] The "real story" of the "real Hem," as Stein put it, would never get told, and therein (for both Stein and Anderson) lay the true shame: that story "would be for another audience

than the audience Hemingway now has but it would be very wonderful" (*ABT* 872–3).[10] Almost as if troping James's *The American*, Stein would make Hemingway emblematic of a national defect in the creative realization of gender: "He went the way so many other Americans have gone . . . [and] are still going . . . He is skillful, yes, but that is the writer; the other half is the man."[11]

Yet Stein drew another moral from the strenuous public displays that misrepresented, then disfigured the "other half" of Hemingway: his "wonderful" story, she implied, the real one for another audience, might well have been (in his own scandalized words) "some fag story, which proved [him] . . . conclusively very queer indeed" (*SL* 387). In *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway retaliated by attributing to Stein an almost visceral repugnance toward male–male love, but apparently the joke (an earnest one) was on him (*MF* 20). Stein would later confide: "Homosexuals . . . do all the good things in all the arts, and when I ran down the male ones to Hemingway it was because I thought he was a secret one."[12] The keenness of Stein's tactic ("come out, wherever you are") is rather beside the point, for as with James, claiming Hemingway "conclusively" for the closet is less interesting than asking how that closet was structured and maintained – how it worked, in this case, to keep a male author candidly tantalized by the idea of going "outside all tribal law," in matters of sex, from ever getting there.[13] Like Eve Sedgwick's conception of John Marcher, in James's "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903), Stein's Hemingway was "not a homosexual man" so much as he was a man confined to "the closet of imagining *a* homosexual secret"; what required "liberat[ing] in the first place" was his "potential for homosexual desire," but that release, owing to his collusion with powerful norms, could never occur.[14] If Hemingway, on Stein's view, seemed fated to pass a lifetime as "a secret one" – "very queer indeed" behind his tough-guy exterior – the beauty of the system was that he kept the secret not to himself, but from himself, and that he had all the help in the world in doing so.

In order to treat Hemingway's relation to James in its full symptomatic complexity this chapter invokes several contemporary observers besides Stein and Anderson, notably F. Scott Fitzgerald and the then popular, now recuperated gay author Glenway Wescott – memorialized in *The Sun Also Rises* as the "rising new novelist" who flirts with a disgusted Jake Barnes in the *bal musette* scene (*SAR* 21).[15] As a more aggravated example of how James's queerness troubled (and again, proleptically "read") the literary, social, and psychic stance of modern masculinity, I also consider the experience of the important cultural critic Van Wyck Brooks, whose biographical treatise of 1925 fashioned the "Henry James" familiar to Hemingway and his cohort,

while also influencing the British reception of James in such authors as Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood. This caucus of modern male writers huddled almost obsessively over the Jamesian corpus as part of their own self-definitional trials at the fraught intersections of gender, sexual, and national (or "racial") identity.

To be sure, one must draw some distinctions, recognizing how concertedly Brooks tried to avoid seeing James's gayness as a relevant factor in reading the alternative masculinities modeled in his work. Even Hemingway, or perhaps especially Hemingway, as a facet of his ambivalent homophobia, found "fairies" in the Jamesian picture, while Anderson, who conventionally viewed homosexuality as a "terrible problem," approached James with something like a gay reading practice (*SAM* 340). Well ahead of the critical curve, Wescott published the "secret" motive of James's late fiction as being "the anarchist's excitement about the rupture of conventions" and discovered at least one "homosexual man" in the thick of James's plots (Prince Amerigo of *The Golden Bowl*), thus coming about as close to outing the author as was conceivable in the early 1930s.[16] More discreetly, Spender added that it was "difficult not to conclude . . . that [James's] *The Pupil* is a fantasy about homosexuality."[17]

Yet all of these authors – along with Fitzgerald, who fostered the idea of a Jamesian "impotence" that shaded into effeminacy, and thence into same-sex desire – remained as subject to the strictures on sexual difference and its public articulation, whether dissident or conformist, as did Van Wyck Brooks.[18] In this sense, Brooks's engagement with James, which culminated in psychosis, only somatized the *counter*pressure of the Jamesian challenge to modern masculinities as these men wrestled with private desires and normative injunctions – a pressure sustained, as I will suggest, by Gertrude Stein, perhaps the most canny and resilient "masculinity" in this genealogy. The extremity of Brooks's ordeal, that is, should not prevent one from seeing its tacit "moral" for Hemingway and for the gender style that he enacted for his generation: there was a high price to be paid for resisting the lesson of the Master.

> Anyway I think you'll think [*The Torrents of Spring*] is funny . . . you being the middle weight champion and as such not having a glass jaw. (Hemingway to Sherwood Anderson, 1926)

> Funny is again used in the sense of diverting and disturbing. (Gertrude Stein, "Henry James," *Four in America*, 1932–33)

Contemporary reviews set the tone for the critical understanding of *Torrents* as a burst of youthful hijinks with little thematic content: sly

perhaps, but not malicious, and besides, Hemingway's victims had it coming. In fact, the book signaled all the important preoccupations that would organize his "serious" fictions to follow, marking Hemingway's first disciplinary intervention against adolescent or unmanly emotionalism (associated with Anderson), ethnic and sexual difference (literally embodied in Stein), and élite, expatriate effeminacy – the position in Anglo-American literary culture increasingly assigned to the figure of Henry James. In this early work Hemingway was feeling out James, like a prize-fighter his opponent, and yet that testing was part and parcel of his more brazen confrontation with immediate rivals Anderson and Stein.

Torrents, that is, expertly "[made] a bum" out of Anderson for his "pretensious [*sic*] fake" of a novel, *Dark Laughter* (1925), while strongly hinting that Stein – both as Hemingway's literary foster mother and as a Jewish decadent – stood next in line to receive the rough stuff (*SL* 183, 174). The book's section headings alone tells a story. If the first heading, "Red and Black Laughter," announced a satirical design on the romantic racialism of *Dark Laughter*, the last – "The Passing of a Great Race and the Making and Marring of Americans" – yoked together Madison Grant's infamous anti-immigration tract of 1916 with Stein's just released saga of German-Jewish families in the United States, *The Making of Americans* (1925; composed 1903–11). It was Hemingway, then, who initiated the long, cagey quarrel with Stein that flashed into open warfare in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), which lauded Anderson's sensitivity as true courage while branding Hemingway "yellow"; in response, *Green Hills of Africa* sought to denigrate "some female" whose work of jealous "malice" (rhymes with "Alice") had maligned both the artistic talent and the masculine credentials of "Poor old Papa" Hemingway (*ABT* 872; *SL* 387).[19]

"Imagination is racial experience," Hemingway would declare in his unpublished parody of Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and race, in the broadest sense, also forms a focal point of *Torrents*.[20] On this score, the book is "funny" (and serious) indeed, offering a send up of white authorial fantasies of the redemptive, primitive African or American Indian – a strain of idealizing pervasive in modernism, and found not only in *Dark Laughter* but also in Stein's "Melanctha" (composed 1905–6) and in the characterization of the piano-playing "negro prodigy" Blind d'Arnault of Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918; *EN* 832). Hemingway, too, frequently yielded to this temptation, from the portrait of the "noble-looking" black boxer in *Sun* all the way to the very late *True at First Light*, which can be read as a Kiplingesque sort of "going fantee" in Africa itself (*SAR* 71).[21] If the discourse of race or ethnicity appears slightly subsidiary to the sex/gender discourse in Hemingway, the category markers of difference continually inflect one

another: Stein, as I have already shown, emerges as an objectionable *compound*, the Jewish lesbian.

In the first paragraph of *Torrents* an Andersonian naïf addresses the disparate milieux of sexuality in the industrial backwaters of the American Midwest, on the one hand, and the fast, queer salon-world of modern Paris, on the other: "Yogi Johnson stood looking out of the window of a big pump-factory in Michigan . . . His breath made little fairy tracings on the cold window-pane . . . that reminded him of the gay city" (*T* 3). Gay "Paree," in Hemingway's extended joke, had been a grim scene of sexual humiliation for Yogi Johnson, causing his regression to the sort of boyish sensualism so fondly evoked in such Anderson stories as "I'm a Fool" and "I Want to Know Why": "Well, Yogi thought, women are gone . . . but I still have my love of horses" (*T* 52). Granting Michael Reynolds's point that Anderson's fictional men (like Anderson himself) indulged in the very "maundering Whitmanianism" that Hemingway convicts them of, much more was at stake in the latter's spoofing.[22] In part, Hemingway believed that Anderson, who had once written "very beautifully" and "best of all about adolescence," had started "slopping" in the formal control of his fiction – one of many terms (as Frances Kerr shows) that connoted a dreaded, feminized flaccidity for male modernists (*SL* 206).[23] Relatedly, Hemingway strove to eradicate or to conceal in himself Anderson's "sweetness" and "genius for . . . direct emotion" (as these qualities are described and celebrated in Stein's *Autobiography*) in order for the persona of "Papa" to cohere and for the pursuit of the title "[literary] champion of the world" to commence (*ABT* 874; *SL* 673). By promoting an ethos of tough love among fellow authors such as Anderson and Fitzgerald – "Why the hell should we have to pull our punches?" – Hemingway also bullied the wimp within (*SL* 204, 205).

To contextualize the personal-cultural work of *Torrents, Sun* (then in draft form) offers a useful figure for this kind of self-policing when Jake Barnes finds it "awfully easy to be hard-boiled about everything in the daytime," while reserving the contemplation of his vulnerabilities for the privacy of the night (*SAR* 34). Henceforth, with the growing popularity of his work, Hemingway himself would live in the glare of high noon, so to speak, and public scrutiny of his gender performance would be intense. As if to mark the juncture where personal met *public* policing, the poet Allen Tate chose exactly this night-time scene in *Sun* to task Hemingway for "betray[ing] the interior machinery of his hard-boiled attitude" and revealing the hidden "history of his sentimentality."[24] Astutely, Hemingway complained about Tate's attempted manipulation to his editor, Maxwell Perkins – "Mr. Tate

feels so badly that I'm not as hard-boiled as he had publicly announced" – and, suggestively, he related his own genius for "direct emotion" (as it then was) to his experience of being wounded on the Italian front in 1918 (*SL* 240). Still, the pressure to purge himself of "sentimentality" registered, and Hemingway's scrupulous self-regulation of sex/gender valences must be seen as coeval with his very first ventures into cultural visibility. The sympathetic contract with his readership would have to be renegotiated, too. If readers "went any deeper inside [*The Sun Also Rises*] they couldn't read because they would be crying all the time," Hemingway boasted to Perkins, but that sort of design upon his audience's emotions steadily diminished over the course of the 1920s (*SL* 226). After *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), as Rena Sanderson points out, the "he-man of exaggerated virility and masculine expertise" took center stage, muscling aside the lad of easy tears.[25]

As Tate's example indicates, the reviewing community conspired with Hemingway in this makeover, either praising him as a peerless kudu killer and a reveler in "Peninsular [bulls'] testicle feasts" (*criadillas*) or alternatively (like Tate) peeping under Hemingway's khakis or cape to discover an insufficient manliness. In the latter vein, the damning evidence produced by the critics included yet more "sentimentality disguised as bravado"; a fascination with "abnormalities" ("Lesbianism . . . castration") that belonged to authorial adolescence and the American cultural adolescence of the early twenties; a penchant for "sophomoric" antics and "boyish" reasoning; and most importantly (as Stein and Anderson had been among the first to discern) a "very sensitive" intelligence that was caught up in romanticized violence, suggesting not the writer's conviction of his own "red-blooded masculinity" but rather his lack of a "serene confidence that he [was] a full-sized man."[26] Hemingway defiantly prided himself on ignoring reviews, which he believed "poison[ed]" and "destroy[ed]" other male authors such as Fitzgerald: "believ[ing] the critics . . . made them impotent" (*SL* 276).[27] But as his correspondence proves, nothing could be farther from the truth. Hemingway listened closely and reacted strongly (if often ambivalently) to the critics, so that by the time his career culminated with *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), the writer who had started out by "pulling no punches" had attained a fitting public image as an ultra-masculine fighter, to the approbation of at least certain reviewers: "Like . . . the Manassa Mauler [i.e., Jack Dempsey] battering big Jess Willard, a book by Papa [Hemingway] is front-page news."[28]

Gertrude Stein shrewdly forecast this transition, and the young Hemingway of the 1920s, one may be sure, heard her lecture on the perils of the

popular artist under mass-market commercialism. Reflecting on her own struggles with public recognition, Stein's *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937) cited the risks involved when readers were permitted "deeper inside" not only an author's texts but his or her self-constitution:

> It is funny about money. And it is funny about identity. You are you because your little dog knows you, but when your public knows you . . . you are not the same you . . . As long as the outside does not put a value on you it remains outside but . . . if the outside puts a value on you then all your inside gets to be outside . . . I used to tell all the men who were being successful young how bad this was for them. (*EA* 46–8)

As Stein must have stressed to Hemingway, the market's unresisted incursion into the space of personality replaced intimate procedures of self-appraisal with gross cash value, leaving the writer largely at the mercy of the cult of "image," with its technologies for circulating that now adulterated commodity, the modern author. For James, whose important currency designated "identity" reappears in Stein's analysis, the *actor* more than any other type of artist had figured as the "producer whose production is her own person" and who was thus most exposed to those degradations of "modernness" – not least a "colossal, deafening newspaperism" – that spectacularized the artist, jeopardized the principle of "quiet growth," so essential to artistic maturation, and reduced the "real producer" to shallow "humbuggery" (it is Gabriel Nash of *The Tragic Muse* who offers this view, with campy delight; *TM* 375–6, 484). By the period of Stein's "autobiographies" in the 1930s, apparently *no* type of cultural producer, not even the would-be solitary novelist, could escape this fate once popular success had set in.

Both James and Stein allowed for the artist's capacity to play the "image" market to advantage, either by making "an income out of the photographers" (as James wrote, and as Stein and Hemingway might well have done) or by supplying the media with "floods of unscrupulous romance" and capitalizing on all the "marvellous publicity" (*TM* 494). Yet such a move required the artist never to forget that popularity came at a price, demanding continual concessions to normativity. Although sex/gender norms were not alone in governing the transaction between "you" and "your public," the institutions of heterosexism and patriarchy certainly foregrounded these norms, as the narratives (and life narratives) of James, Stein, Cather, and above all Wilde attest. In urging "successful young" men such as Hemingway to weigh the cost of fame, that is, Stein urged him to study in particular what was gained and what was lost by agreeing to act the part of "he-man" and expert in all things manly for an eager Anglo-American

audience: "After all if nobody refuses what you offer there must be something the matter" (*EA* 47).

Yet if "Miss Stein" had so instructed (to adapt a chapter heading from *A Moveable Feast*), not all young men could accept or implement her teaching. As I have started to show in *Torrents*, Hemingway resorted instead to a raillery that sought to diffuse Stein's challenge, but that ultimately served the difference- and dissidence-containing functions of the cultural system she analyzed. His parody of "deviant" gender styles became not only a means of defining an exemplary public manhood ("Papa") but also a way of resisting insight into the parodic character of that very construction. If gender, in Judith Butler's terms, is a "repeated stylization of the body . . . that congeal[s] . . . to produce the appearance of substance," with certain styles coming into dominance through "felicitous self-naturalization," one might say that Hemingway cooperated admirably in playing the paragon of (apparent) substantiality that seemed most "naturally" to fill out the category *masculinity*.[29]

Yet the actual positions in contest were more complicated than such a summary might suggest. Insofar as Hemingway's "gentle and fine" side warred with cultural prescriptions, it also weakened his bid to outman a competitor such as Sherwood Anderson. Moreover, although Anderson deplored and teased his young antagonist's liabilities of gender performance ("I hauled out big fish," he reports to Stein from the Gulf of Mexico; "Hemingway . . . would have loved seeing them suffer"), neither he nor any other mainstream male author was immune from environmental conditioning – the interpenetration of "inside" man and "outside" market. Thus in 1927 one finds Anderson chafing under the same labels that Hemingway used to criticize (and Stein to extol) his sensitive masculinity: even in his view, there was regrettably "too much talk . . . of the sweet, naïve S[herwood] A[nderson] – adolescence etc." Anderson notably *joined* Hemingway in calling for a "body-punching criticism" among authors as a corrective to artistic "softness" (*SA* 312, 174). As Ezra Pound made explicit in demeaning the gay author Wescott – "what Hemingway did, nobody could improve on . . . Tough realism. Not like Glenway Wescott. He's soft" – the fiber of literary manhood was felt to be threatened not merely by the feminine in conventional forms (women writers, editors, and critics) but also by the effeminacy of the queer, which indicated that biological gender alone could not guarantee heteromanliness.[30] In fact, Hemingway mobilizes the Wescott character in *Sun* (Roger Prentiss) precisely in keeping with the terms of Pound's dismissive comparison, as well as with Fitzgerald's evocation of Wescott in person as "an effeminate Oxford fairy."[31]

Given the internal divisions and the external influences working on *both* Hemingway and Anderson – not to mention their shared experience of military and sporting life, or their many marriages – one cannot simply restage them as representing oppositional masculinities. Anderson's own store of manly credentials meant that Hemingway's objective in *Torrents* – distancing parts of himself by distancing his mentor – would be no easy task. Indeed he only fully realized this objective after Anderson's death in 1941, remembering Sherwood (in 1953) as "wet and sort of mushy" with "very beautiful bastard Italian eyes" – eyes that perhaps link Anderson to the Italian aristocrat with "beautiful manners" who had sexually propositioned the wounded young Hemingway in a Milan hospital (yet another instance of the violated body as a site of convergence for emotional, vocational, and sexual identity matters: *SL* 862; *MF* 19–20). If Hemingway could never relegate Anderson to the ranks of the desexed "male old women," like James, or "withered old maid[s]," like André Gide, Anderson nonetheless went down in Hemingway's book as yet another man who could not keep his sex or gender straight – a "jolly but tortured bowl of puss [*sic*] turning into a woman in front of your eyes" (*SL* 862).[32]

Given what Frances Kerr calls the "barely camouflaged paranoia about being feminine" among male modernists, Hemingway's misspelling of the word *pus* ("puss") performs a sort of double duty as a signifier.[33] The intended "pus" (not unlike James's "difficultly written shit") belongs to an imagery of excretion that indicates *not* the man-making wound but rather those breaches in the female body notionally connected with the unregulated flow of unclean, ill-formed matter (*SL* 266). The spelling "puss," in turn, identifies one of those breaches – a usage (as "pussy") that Hemingway later foregrounds in what Charles Caramello justly calls "the homophobic account . . . that blots his *Moveable Feast*."[34] For in that memoir, "pussy" functions as Stein's term of endearment for Alice B. Toklas (whom Hemingway studiously avoids naming *as* Toklas), and the text exploits this term or nickname to call attention to the evident irony of a woman's anatomy that only another woman can experience in sexual pleasure: "Then Miss Stein's voice came pleading and begging [to Toklas], saying, 'Don't, pussy . . . Please don't, pussy' " (*MF* 118).[35] Equally pertinent here, with another male author's gendering on the line, namely Anderson's, is the slang metonymy that makes "pussy" a slur intended to shame "an effeminate man or boy."[36] Whatever it was that formed the content of the "tortured bowl" bearing the name of Sherwood Anderson, it possessed the scary magic to change into its opposite – to become inverted or queer – right in front of one's eyes.

By an almost predictable symmetry, *Torrents* also features Gertrude Stein, a woman who would eventually turn into a man right in front of Hemingway's eyes. As the hapless Yogi Johnson ponders how to restore his heterosexual appetite, he conjures up a map of Paris – the same "gay city" responsible for disabling his masculinity – that in a sense highlights the address 27 rue de Fleurus, the site of Stein and Toklas's famous salon. In the terms of Johnson's dithery free association: "Where did it all lead? Would it help him to want a woman? . . . En route. Huysmans wrote that. It would be interesting to read French . . . There is a street in Paris named after Huysmans. Right around the corner from where Gertrude Stein lived. Ah, there was a woman! Where were her experiments in words leading her? What was at the bottom of it?" (*T* 74–5). In this passage Hemingway situates Stein "right around the corner" from Joris-Karl Huysmans, the author of *En route* but more significantly of the scandalous *A rebours* (1884). As Stephen Calloway relates, *A rebours* was "hailed as the 'Breviary of Decadence' . . . on both sides of the English Channel," while its protagonist, Des Esseintes, stood for the "very quintessence" of queer luxury.[37] The work had also been attacked on the same grounds – as noted earlier, James recoiled from Huysmans's "incurable rot" in due proportion to his covert attraction – and the book's linkage with homosexuality was firmly established when Wilde, in the dock, acknowledged *A rebours* as the unidentified panoramic survey of "the sins of all the world" in which Dorian Gray discovers the "prefiguring type of himself" (*DG* 155–8).[38] As Hemingway would not have known (but seems almost to have intuited), Huysmans's *En route* was among the books that Wilde petitioned for while confined in Reading Gaol ("vital for the preservation of my mental balance"), only to have the request vetoed by the prison warden.[39]

Hemingway did not need such particulars in order to exploit the associations that had grown up around Huysmans's name and to use them to score points against Stein. By implication, Stein's "experiments in words" constituted the new decadent breviary of the postwar generation, leading her (and susceptible readers) into an idle, narcissistic aestheticism that came trailing clouds of sexual deviance, or as he later charged: "She [Stein] wanted to know the gay part of how the world was going, never the real" (*MF* 25). Here Yogi Johnson's pun ("What was at the *bottom* of it?") reinforces the suggestion of a lurking deviance, for Stein's *The Making of Americans* – which Hemingway knew well from copying the manuscript and correcting proofs – aspired to be an encompassing poetics of the "bottom nature" of all human types, a radically democratic compendium of the "many ways of being and of loving," not just those ways that conformed to the

prejudices of heterosexist culture, but also those experienced and exhibited "in pairs of women, in pairs of men" (*MOA* 248, 505, 221). At the bottom of Stein's narrative "experiments," Hemingway hinted, was Stein's bottom, making him probably the first reader to interpret her ambitious novel as the "spectacularly anal text" that literary scholars now take it to be. As Lisa Ruddick writes: "The notable feature of each character [in *The Making of Americans*] is . . . not membership in the class male or female . . . but instead the sort of 'bottom' the person has, as if Stein were unconsciously marginalizing genital sexual difference in favor of a weird and indistinct notion of anal identity."[40]

Hemingway's jest at Stein's expense is meant to intensify as the reader grasps that her "bottom" will be off-limits to the desperate Yogi Johnson, while his mental juxtapositions – "Would it help him to want a woman? . . . Ah, there was a woman!" – comment indirectly and ironically on Stein's lesbianism. Like Anderson's volatile masculinity, Stein's emphatic femininity (as it could seem only to a deficient mind like Yogi Johnson's, the text implies) is perfectly ripe for degeneration and regendering. In this respect, *Torrents* virtually predicts Hemingway's future course of interaction with Stein's masculinity, including episodes such as the drastic cutting of her "lovely, thick, alive immigrant hair" that would change her, in his eyes, from the ethnic earth mother depicted in Picasso's famous portrait into a domineering "Roman emperor" (*MF* 14, 119),[41] and the onset of what Hemingway called "the old menopause," which would almost biochemically induce Stein's critical politics to shift to "the idea that anybody who was any good [in the arts] must be queer" (*SL* 384).

Indeed, the Hemingway of *Torrents* seems already to foresee the Stein who would become, in his words, so "patriotically goofily complete . . . stoppage of all sense lesbian" that she "opted for fags and fags alone" in the conduct of her patronage, trying to recruit even Hemingway (of all men) for her queer nation of the arts: "Patriotism is a hell of a vice" (*SL* 384, 388). By the 1920s, writes Andrew Elfenbein, "the link between homosexuality and genius was familiar," and the idea of this linkage circulated especially within intellectual élites in urban centers such as New York and Paris.[42] In the early 1930s Hemingway himself would demonstrate the idea's currency by assailing "those interested parties who are continually proving that Leonardo da Vinci, Shakespeare, etc. were fags."[43] Yet when Stein apparently advanced this commonplace ("anybody who was any good must be queer"), Hemingway blamed her views on female biology – or more precisely, on the "change of life" that definitively removed Stein's body from the orbit of reproductive heterosexuality (*SL* 736). With the aging-out of

her body and the adoption of a mannish hairstyle ("a turning point in all sorts of things") would come the end of all hope that Stein (or her anatomy) might be salvaged for straightness (*SL* 650). Admittedly, *Torrents* foreruns these developments by several years, and the Stein represented in this early text could still be managed by means of a sportive rhetoric, but the broad contours of the two authors' hostile relationship were already mapped out.

Notably, that aggravated version of Gertrude Stein beginning to appear on Hemingway's horizon – unsexed, post-menopausal, and imperiously gay – belongs to essentially the same category of magisterial "male old women" as Henry James, the third principal in *The Torrents of Spring*. I have characterized Stein and Anderson as Hemingway's patent adversaries in the book, and they themselves certainly saw it that way. "One is always naturally antagonistic to one's parents," as Stein said of her own relation to James, but when she and Anderson felt themselves so deftly thumbed and gouged in public print by this young monster "formed by the two of them," it made them "a little ashamed of the work of their minds" (*ABT* 739, 872). Yet one should not neglect the more subdued ridicule that Hemingway's *Torrents* directs at James, the very tenor of which acknowledges this important predecessor in Anglo-American fiction as a far more formidable quantity to be reckoned with.

Hemingway was not alone in this wary estimate of James's prestige, of course. Recall Willa Cather's ardent testimonials to James as the "mighty master" of English prose, and even E. M. Forster's awed impression of this "lord" of late Victorian culture, and it seems apparent why a friend of Stein's would have written to her in 1903: "Your literature must be as good as Henry James's – or I shall be disappointed."[44] But owing to the usual curricular construction of James, which ends with "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903) or "The Jolly Corner" (1908), one perhaps forgets that this prodigious force in Anglo-American letters had just passed from the scene when the Jazz Age dawned. Hemingway bridled at reviews citing his debts to Anderson and Stein, but it was not lost upon him that Allen Tate had attacked *The Sun Also Rises* precisely because other reviewers were approaching the novel in "that cautiously critical spirit which the followers of Henry James so notoriously maintain toward the master."[45] As Hemingway also knew, his collaborator Ford Madox Ford had granted James literary "immortality" for "reunit[ing] the stream of Anglo-Saxon imagination with the broad stream of international culture" (1913), an opinion seconded by T. S. Eliot in "On Henry James" (1918) and then by Ezra Pound in *Instigations* (1920).[46] As Virginia Woolf (yet another fault-finding critic of *Sun*) summarized the prevalent mood, with the added compliment of her Jamesian diction,

the Master had become "a portentous figure looming large and undefined in the consciousness" of all modern authors, who must accordingly "do homage" to his memory and example. There will be cause to revisit Woolf's rather ominous imagery in considering the emotional fate of Van Wyck Brooks, who felt "the weighted pressures of the James cult" more keenly than others, but for now Woolf's categorical observation will suffice: "To some an oppression, to others an obsession," Henry James was "undeniably present to all."[47]

For his part, Hemingway would long toy with (albeit always in the distancing mode of the "funny") the "strange coincidence" that his youthful exposure to battlefield trauma – "something quite irreplaceable that [other authors] had missed" – had come "after the death of Henry James" (*SL* 768).[48] Such a conjunction gives a quasioedipal spin to Hemingway's self-positioning (as in Stein's construction of her own case), yet *this* modernist offspring of James suggestively went out of his way to arrive at his "coincidence": James had in fact died more than two years before Hemingway's wartime service as an ambulance driver. Woolf's point, of course, is that Hemingway (or Stein) was far from unique in feeling the anxiety of a Jamesian influence, but it is worth noting that other male authors availed themselves of very different avenues of response. T. S. Eliot, for instance, ushered the Master safely into the past with the sanguine remark that "Henry James has been dead for some time," when it had been a matter of only two years.[49] In other words, the circumstances of James's extinction seem to have played a more special role in Hemingway's scenario of his own maturation. By extension, the question of James's posthumous vitality also became psychically implicated in the severe wounding to which Hemingway ascribed his masculine authority – an authority complicated, moreover, by the fact that he *also* dated the discovery of a new emotional tenderness from that same momentous event: "I have not been at all hard boiled since July 8 1918" (*SL* 240). As a further key to the gravity of what was at stake in Hemingway's ambivalence, one notes that masculine making consistently appears under the fearful figure of castration for him ("something quite irreplaceable") – a motif that would profoundly shape his stories of men, women, and romance in a fallen world.

As a corollary of these psychodynamics, sexual "impotence" and the "inability to write" became highly intertwined symptoms for Hemingway.[50] Not only did this association form the basis for his disparagement of Gide and James, and inform his criticism of well-known critics – "camp following eunochs [*sic*] of literature . . . all virtuous and sterile" – but it also cropped up in moments of self-portraiture (*SL* 162). As is clear even in *A Moveable*

Feast, Hemingway often repaired to Stein's queer domestic space (near rue de Huysmans) partly to see which of the two authors was the bigger man, performatively speaking, but more importantly to gain *relief* from the "severe discipline" of writing, which, if unalleviated, would "make [him] impotent to do it" (*MF* 12–13). At some level, Hemingway recognized how the strict regimen intended to distinguish the gendering of his work (hard, straight, true, firm, real) from the profligate, compromising fluencies of Stein and James operated within a delicate economy – an economy in which straining one's literary-libidinal resources could lead to emasculation, or an incapacity to "do it."[51] This discomfiting recognition generated much of the malicious "joking" of Anderson, Stein, and others, but it also inspired self-satire, as in this comment on an illustration for *Sun*: "Bloomshield's drawing . . . looks very much like a writer . . . saddened by the loss or atrophy of certain non-replaceable parts. It is a pity it couldn't have been Barnes instead of Hemingway" (*SL* 223). As the record demonstrates, jokes of this sort set the pattern for the author's depressive tendencies. By the same measure, Hemingway's need to deprive James and other competitors of their "balls" was just as defensive a move as his negotiation with the moist, mushy masculinity he attributed to Anderson, but that also appeared in the "slightly wet," sentimental well of the self (*SL* 666). In terms of his authorial persona, Hemingway was at pains to resemble the "valorous bullfighter . . . plentifully equipped" with *cojones*, and to this end, some version of the "cowardly bullfighter," in which "they are said to be absent," was always useful:[52] "Mr. Henry James[,] I would . . . hit him once where he had no balls" (*SL* 673).

It is no "strange coincidence," then, that Henry James – and a dying James at that – factors in the foundational text *The Torrents of Spring*. Again, one needs to look beyond the text's persistent ribaldry for what it disguises or disavows – a self-interested inquiry into masculine formation (or degradation) in which some now familiar elements recur. It amuses Hemingway to assign the story of James's deathbed scene to Mandy, a "buxom" waitress at Brown's Beanery, or in other words, a figure of female seduction in a setting far removed from Jamesian fictional venues (in terms of class, nationality, and social refinement) that annexes excretory discourse through the humor of flatulence (*T* 35). Mandy's sentimental indulgence ("I feel very strongly about Henry James") sexually arouses a customer who has significantly missed the "irreplaceable" experience of soldiering in the Great War. Hemingway permeates the scene with hetero desire and male performance anxiety in order to realize the comic payoff of Mandy's incongruent anecdote, for the dying "James" seems as prissy as the desiccated

André Gide ("nurse . . . spare my blushes") owing largely to his mitigated lifestyle as an expatriate bachelor: "Henry James. That chap who had gone away from his own land to live in England among Englishmen . . . Why had he done it? . . . . Wasn't America good enough for him?" (*T* 38–9).

In fairness, the text chides such chauvinist intolerance, yet even through the filters of satire and parody one finds a decided distaste for James's effete, sedentary life "among Englishmen" such as the homophile Edmund Gosse (explicitly named). This is not to say that Hemingway had the full sexual subtext of that friendship or of its triangulations with the figure of J. A. Symonds, which I have studied in chapter 2; it is merely to note that Hemingway's radar for reading gayness from style ("[James's] men all . . . talk and think like fairies") was clearly switched on already by the mid-1920s (*SL* 266). The text's answer to "why had he done it?" – why had James gravitated to the England of Gosse and Symonds, which was also the England of Wilde – seems to lie in certain natural affinities among those unnatural men who went in for parlor sports, hypercultivation, and (at a minimum) latent homosexuality.

Yet it is important to see that Hemingway's fictional address of James, and the more blatant diatribe found in his correspondence, only completed the late Victorian phrase, supplying a name ("fairy") for the type of Jamesian masculinity that earlier reviewers had also deemed "artificial" and dandiacal – a type evincing the gender style of "strolling mummer[s]" rather than that of red-blooded Anglo-Saxon men. Similarly, in judging James a "male old woman," Hemingway was merely embellishing a critical line of the 1890s that had viewed James as growing dangerously "careless of his literary person," turning into a Wildean flourisher of "flashy" epigrams and dealing in subjects of a distinct "effeminacy," such as "matchmaking and . . . silken embroideries" (*CR* 381–2). Thus Allen Tate's public pressure on Hemingway's own sentimentality (subtextually: his feminine side) had precedents in Victorian criticism, while Hemingway's disdain for James's unmasculinity begins to appear less than original. In this respect, Hemingway's importance lies less in what he said about James than in how he said it, with casual tacitness in his fiction and casual overtness in his letters, thereby indicating how things deemed typically "Jamesian" – mannered smartness, boudoir intrigue, and the interior decorating of bourgeois homes and souls – had been simply absorbed into the catalog of modern homosexuality, or matched with subcultural tastes and proclivities coded *gay*.

But one did not have to read James or musty reviews of James to come into contact with tokens of this post-Victorian gayness. As I suggested earlier, Hemingway agreed with Pound and Fitzgerald that a living remnant

of this gender style survived in their fellow American writer Glenway Wescott, the nominal "Oxford fairy" whose fictional counterpart flatters Jake Barnes in "some sort of English accent"; if "the whole show" of continental sexual diversity nauseates Barnes, it is this mannered voice of gayness that most makes him want to "throw up" (*SAR* 21). Yet perspective is everything. For Margaret Anderson, the editor of the highly respected *Little Review*, Wescott's "clipped and distinguished speech" was *not* a marker of deviance, but rather the tribute of a one-time poor Wisconsin farmboy for whom literature had been the only source of sustenance in a cultural wasteland: "[Glenway] loved the English language and had trained himself to speak it beautifully."[53] Interestingly, one discerns a common ground of both her admiration and Hemingway's revulsion when one learns from Wescott's own writing just how much his intonations of speech and prose rhythms owed to none other than Henry James: "[In] the corner of the orchard where sick but beloved snow-apple-trees ripened over a dark hog-wallow; . . . there, seated in a high hard-wheeled three-seated second-hand automobile . . . one of my sisters and I read books by Henry James, and wept." This openly sentimental response to James's "vast double-deckers" had acquainted Wescott with his personal "effeminacy" (his word), which later had to be toned down and "reconditioned" for everyday life in conventional homophobic society.[54] Yet as I have shown using the example of James's aesthete Gabriel Nash, whose conspicuously "perfect" speech linked him with the transgressive Wilde (see chapter 2), no man could "recondition" himself entirely out of social history, especially with the advent of the new "semiotics of inversion" (linguistic, sartorial, and gestural) that regulated masculine embodiment and expression after 1895.[55] For Hemingway, Wescott's veneer of Victorian *élan* disguised nothing and succeeded only in *confirming* his lineage with Nash, Wilde, and other "fairies" both fictional and real – in highlighting certain stylistic continuities that homosexualized the Jamesian milieu in retrospect.

By means of the living artifact Wescott, that is, as well as through a passing acquaintance with other gay artists such as Gide, Jean Cocteau, and Ronald Firbank (another resented favorite of Stein's), Hemingway effectively read queerness *back* into James – meaning both the fiction and the "blushing" biographical bachelor who wrote it. To this extent, the "high-spirited nonsense" of *The Torrents of Spring* (as reviewers lightly judged it) was nonsense neither in matter nor in method. For all the sparring with Anderson and Stein, Hemingway had sized up "Mr. Henry James" as the literary champion to beat, while imagining the terms of their bout as an opposition between a straight, quasimartial vigor – in both living and

writing – and a shameful masculine inadequacy tantamount to gayness. More generally, the body or the subjectivity that was expatriated from the realm of heterosexuality, so to speak, formed a chief concern of this first extended piece of fiction by Hemingway – whether adumbrated in Sherwood Anderson's middle-American sentimentalism, or manifested in the "fairy tracings" and wayward erogenous zones of Gertrude Stein and the denizens of her Parisian salon, or reconstructed from the precious, effeminate affectation (as it seemed to Hemingway) of Henry James's Victorian London.

God knows Ernest was getting hit with James from all sides. (Michael Reynolds, "Hemingway's Bones")

According to Michael Reynolds, his most thorough biographer, Hemingway "read more Henry James than we have credited him with," under the "excellent tutelage" of the odd couple Ezra Pound and Gertrude Stein.[56] Linda Wagner-Martin even finds it "plausible" to interpret *The Sun Also Rises* as a "recasting" of *The Ambassadors*, with Jake Barnes in the place of Lambert Strether, renovating the latter's famous injunction to "live all you can" while criticizing Strether's (or James's) "passivity."[57] Undeniably, Hemingway was "getting hit" with James before the mid-1920s, and not only in the form of public encomiums from the arbiters of modern taste, but also in the more private applause coming from Stein, her brother Leo, and especially Alice B. Toklas – a self-proclaimed "great admirer" who had gone so far as to write to urge James that *The Awkward Age* (the text overrun by "fairies") would make "a very remarkable play" (*ABT* 659). James also invaded Hemingway's domestic sphere after 1921, being a favorite author of two of his wives in succession, Hadley Richardson and Pauline Pfeiffer; in *A Moveable Feast* Hemingway would still be distancing himself from Hadley's critical standards ("her idea of a good writer was Henry James"), and it was Pauline who read *The Awkward Age* aloud to him in December 1927 ("it seems to me to be the shit") during his recuperation from a serious eye injury as well as a case of hemorrhoids (*MF* 156; *SL* 266).

Yet was getting hit with James, in the years before 1928, the same thing as actually *reading* James? Or might one speculate that an ambitious but untried young author would have shied away from the so-called "Master" exactly because of all the hype?[58] Whatever the facts, Hemingway's radical gesture of "know[ing] nothing about James" before this time (the very end of 1927) makes a strong bid for critical attention. James had already assumed a detailed biographical presence for Hemingway,[59] but his early invocations of James as "quite a writer" (in *Torrents*) and as "a good writer"

(in *Sun*) seem to represent not an informed view (either sincere or ironic) so much as a gross measure of his predecessor's hefty reputation. Meanwhile, Hemingway's *anecdotal* take on his illustrious forebear in American fiction shows an interest at once deeper and more specialized (*T* 39; *SAR* 116).

Being relatively unfamiliar with James's work, that is, did not prevent Hemingway from knowing what was supposedly "generally known" about his manhood – namely, that a youthful injury incurred while helping to fight a fire at a Newport horse barn had sexually incapacitated James (*SL* 209). The biographical consensus now concurs with what James's autobiography clearly suggests, that the "horrid . . . obscure hurt" he suffered around the outbreak of the Civil War was nothing so lurid as castration, but rather a sprained back, the result of pumping an ancient fire engine for "twenty odious minutes" while "jammed into the acute angle between two high fences" (*AU* 414–15). Shortly, I will want to consider how the so-called general knowledge (or more accurately, the disinformation) about James's sexual impotence *became* "generally known" among Anglo-American male authors, besides Hemingway, and how this powerful rumor interacted with James's iconic pressure on these young writers in his guise as "the Master." For now, it should be noticed how this "knowledge" informs the scene in *Sun* in which Barnes and his writer friend Bill Gorton prepare for a fishing excursion in Spain, bantering about a "hurt" of Barnes's that is equally as obscure – and equally as central, in narrative terms – as James's. While it is hardly news among scholars that James is the "Henry" they discuss, whose genital or sexual damage is invoked to parallel Barnes's, the importance of this unmanned "James" to Hemingway's breakthrough novel and to the general cultural conversation about Jamesian sexuality remains seriously underestimated.

For all their seemingly aimless bonhomie, Barnes and Gorton suggestively fixate in their exchanges on such topics as gender inversion ("Caffeine puts a man on her horse and a woman in his grave"), unmanliness by way of ethnic stereotype (the emotional Jew, Robert Cohn, emblematizes the "pitiful"), the complicating institution of marriage (Gorton deforms a popular wedding song), and the bodily mechanics of sex, with byplay about a woman's "jam" and a man's "joystick" (*SAR* 114–16). According to one review, Hemingway intended to set this "healthily and naturally masculine" pastoral chumming against a diseased urban modernity, represented by the "neurotic triangle" of Cohn, Brett Ashley, and her fiancé (*CR* 50). But these chummy exchanges also point toward and test the limitations of "Irony and Pity" as a means of coping "when you're feeling [shitty]" (the rhyming word was elided for editor Perkins's sake) in a social order whose systematic suspicion constrained both the expressivity of men (pity

uncontrolled by irony) and the acceptable range of male–male intimacies. When Gorton declares his "fondness" for Barnes, his riff bristles with all the defensive-aggressive humor already observed in *Torrents*, only now the mockery is directed at sexological discourse, with its overreaching theories and its tendency to find the prime motive of history (both individual and collective) in same-sex desire: "I'm fonder of you than anybody on earth. I couldn't tell you that in New York. It'd mean I was a faggot. That was what the Civil War was about. Abraham Lincoln was a faggot . . . in love with General Grant. So was Jefferson Davis . . . Sex explains it all. The Colonel's Lady and Judy O'Grady are Lesbians under their skin" (*SAR* 116).

Oddly anticipating the campy speeches in Terrence McNally's recent play *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (see the introduction above), Gorton's verbal sport – or rather Hemingway's – turns on an updating and indeed a queering of Rudyard Kipling's lyric "The Ladies," in which a cockney soldier concludes his romantic researches with the finding that "the Colonel's Lady an' Judy O'Grady / Are *sisters* [not "Lesbians"] under their skins!"[60] Yet Gorton's sharp-edged humor here (or Hemingway's) betrays uneasiness about the psychosexual complexity of life after Kipling, both as a matter of sexological speculation (by Havelock Ellis, for example, or by certain psychologists whom Hemingway called the "discards from Freud") and as a matter of irrefutable embodiment in persons familiar to the author (such as Glenway Wescott; *SL* 751). Gorton resembles the Hemingway who delved into Ellis's writing on sexual difference with relish, yet who made sure to treat it publicly as "a running joke" ("you'll find your case analyzed on page . . ."). [61] Meanwhile, the capital-*L* "Lesbian" who was most responsible for inspiring this lively tirade in *Sun* was clearly Gertrude Stein, whose "splendid bombast" ("You are all a lost generation") served as the novel's epigraph and generated its main argument (*SL* 229).

But whether as a postulate of science or as an observable feature of contemporary society, same-sex love emerges here as pervasive, the nominal engine of all experience and the germ of all narrative. If "sex explain[ed] it all," and "sex" was synonymous with *homosexuality*, then not only the grand public dramas of the past (such as the Civil War) but the most personal minutiae of the present and future stood in bondage to the queer. Outside the space of the homosocial idyl something as subjective as "talking like a fairy" (to put Hemingway's scornful phrase to better effect) could call into question a man's sexing, while expressing warmth for another man could "mean [one] was a faggot"; a semantic fuzziness leaves it unclear whether Gorton's worry is primarily for surveillance and scandal (expressing fondness would be taken to mean one was gay) or, more disconcertingly, for the implications of speech for sexual identity (expressing fondness would

make one a "faggot," or confirm one as such). Yet Hemingway's punch line lies in the irony that male sexual orientation has been rendered irrelevant, since modern women, unlike their Victorian "sisters," secretly reserve their bodies (or bottoms) for other women. The Stein of *Torrents* – the particular lesbian under Hemingway's skin – had become epidemic. Like his creator, Gorton could laugh at, but could not laugh off, the prospect of a world in which, for both genders, heterosexuality was only skin deep (dark laughter indeed).

But Stein was not the only figure to make a repeat performance in *The Sun Also Rises*. The Barnes–Gorton relationship also alludes to Sherwood Anderson's extraordinary tale "The Man Who Became a Woman" (1923). In fact, Hemingway essentially steals (to deliver in a more sarcastic "adult" register) what the narrator of Anderson's story says about his youthful infatuation for another boy: "I got to love Tom Means . . . although I wouldn't have dared to say so . . . A man . . . don't dare own up he loves another man . . . [Men] are afraid to admit such feelings to themselves even . . . It may be taken to mean something it don't need to at all."[62] If Hemingway intended *Sun* as a "gesture of farewell" to Anderson, this was hardly the way to make a clean break.[63] Both authors' texts, that is, regret the loss of a cultural space for the enactment and acceptance of what Anderson movingly (yet also defensively) called "the idea that love could grow as between man and man, a thing outside sex . . . founded upon brotherhood, realization of self in another man, your own curious loneliness . . . in him too" (*SAM* 286).

In other words, the nostalgia that informs both texts – more "sentimental" in Anderson, more caustic in Hemingway – attempts to fence out the possible implication of gay genital expression ("a thing outside sex"), along with meanings that "don't need to [mean] at all" what they otherwise might mean if permitted to. Like Hemingway – as well as Cather and even like Stein – Anderson resented the encroachment of "the great Sigmund Freud passion," with its "inclination to suspect" homosexuality in all same-gender friendships of any intensity or duration (*SAM* 473). Both Hemingway and Anderson were reacting, in effect, against Freud's finding that "all human beings are capable of making a homosexual object choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious."[64] Or in the terms of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's familiar continuum, both authors seek to cordon off buddying or "brotherhood" from male–male desire, so that the "potential unbrokenness" between the homosocial and the homosexual cannot even be envisioned.[65]

As I have shown using Cather's example, this resistance to sexual implication was not limited to *male* American authors, and the point can

be extended to include a gay *British* writer such as James's friend Hugh Walpole. In 1920 Walpole commended the theme of "male friendship" in fiction but warned of the risks inherent in this "dangerous . . . subject": "So many people see [a same-gender relationship] only as homosexual, which is the last thing it generally is."[66] The comment may be slightly evasive, but it also expresses a veiled objectivity about how homophobia and sexual panic conspire to curtail same-sex indulgence. In any event, none of these various authorial caveats (whether American or British) against a proliferating sexual discourse could quite explain why "so many people see" queerness as the rule in *other* same-sex friendships when it was purportedly "the last thing" imaginable in their own. In Anderson, as I have shown earlier, homosexual possibility is attenuated by a calculated naïveté, yet his haziness also *covers for* a greater sensitivity to "other," more dissident masculinities. Hemingway, on the other hand, stifles the drift of male bonding into gay meaning by the strategy of brusque address. If Gorton and Barnes speak the unspeakable extravagantly ("faggots"), it is precisely to banish it from the field of interpretation, both for themselves and for readers.

In *Sun*, then, one encounters a work energized by an ambivalent, contestatory history with Gertrude Stein and partially indebted to the same Anderson whose writing Hemingway had disparaged in *Torrents*. So one is not unprepared to find the figure of Henry James mobilized again as well, in this very segment centered on masculine camaraderie, potency, and desire. The outright naming of James in manuscript drew an objection from editor Perkins, and Hemingway's self-defense gives an inkling of why he might have linked James with "Barnes' mutilation": "Henry James . . . left no descendants . . . nor any wife, and therefore . . . he is as dead as he will ever be." Ostensibly an argument that James's death made him fair game – "as historical a name as Byron" – the remark also circumscribes the concept of literary posterity, and the question of who may or may not become a member of the writers' hall of fame (*SL* 209). A male author's long-range reputation, it is implied, hinges appreciably upon his degree of heterosexual investiture. "Mutilation" could thus have a more far-reaching figurative resonance: as a nonreproductive bachelor whose "great knowledge of drawing-rooms" originated in a great dread of bedrooms (again, the note of *Torrents*), James could not be more beastly dead (*SL* 266).

Yet as this instance attests, James remained very much alive to Hemingway, not at all "historical." Tellingly, Hemingway's license, in *Sun*, with the occasion of James's famous accident obeys the need to infantilize James ("I heard it was a tricycle"), and then makes an in-joke about his apparent masculine incompetency: the accident occurred while "riding horseback"

(James was in fact rather adept at riding; *SAR* 115–16). Aesthetic rather than athletic, this version of "Henry James" might as well be the "man on her horse" of Bill Gorton's gender-switching patter. Both by his queer nature and his early unmanning, James seemed almost predestined to write an overrefined prose, and to offer a fictional universe populated by femmy "fairies": how much more aggravating, then, for Hemingway, to have to witness James's perversely growing fame.

> The other things . . . are all fixed up. We've . . . made Henry James Henry, made Roger Prescott [Glenway Wescott] into Roger Prentiss and unfitted the bulls for a reproductive function. (Hemingway to Maxwell Perkins, editor of *The Sun Also Rises*)

My experience in teaching *The Sun Also Rises* suggests that Perkins's intervention achieved its goal: even for many graduate students, the identity of the afflicted, unmanly "Henry" has now become lost in a clutter of other period references. In the mid-1920s, however, with the Master only recently deceased, the reference was not at all mysterious. Leon Edel went so far as to stake his claim for Hemingway as the "creator of the legend that James was impotent" on the Barnes–Gorton exchange.[67] But in fact the broad trend that permitted Glenway Wescott, by the early 1930s, to subsume James under the succinct conjunction "expatriation and castration" had begun more than a decade earlier, when Van Wyck Brooks published part of *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* (1925) in the important journal *Dial* in May 1923.[68]

Brooks warrants close attention in this section, for his Henry James became the Henry James of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Anderson, and other male authors struggling to position themselves in the shadow of the Master's prestige and stylistic presence, which were so densely interwoven with evolving sex/gender norms. "I read the James book," Fitzgerald notified Brooks in June 1925, and "so did . . . Ernest Hemminway [*sic*]" – a fact independently verified in *Sun*, which rehearses Brooks's primary thesis, no doubt with the example of James in view: "Nobody that ever left their own country ever wrote anything worth printing . . . You get precious . . . [with] fake European standards" (*SAR* 115).[69] Yet if Brooks laid the groundwork for linking James's removal to Europe and his "preciousness," on the one hand, with his "castration" or demasculinization, on the other, it bears noting that *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* makes only passing mention of the "accident" or "invalidism" that Hemingway and others found so compelling.[70] As I will shortly show, Brooks had his own constitutional reasons

for soft-pedaling this event in James's life. The key point for now is that the project of making "expatriation and castration" (or cognates such as feminization and sexual inversion) appear all but synonymous in James's case was a *group* project among Anglo-American authors, for which Brooks's study merely served as the catalyst.

Apart from Hemingway's contributions, one might pursue what Fitzgerald meant by complaining to Brooks about his sin of biographical omission – "why didn't you touch more on James [*sic*] impotence (physical) and its influence [on his work]?" – or by implying that both James's foreign relocation and his "feminine" impress on the Anglo-American novel had roots in a sexual identity less than straight. Elaborating a subtext in Brooks's book, Fitzgerald tried to imagine how different modern literary history would look if James had not expatriated but had instead been held back by a "poignant emotional love affair with an American girl on American soil"; that Fitzgerald wrote this passage under the sign of farce is clear enough from his concession that such an Americanized, heterosexualized James, with "the picaresque past of Huck Finn," was inconceivable.[71] Alternatively, one might examine Wescott's distinctive line of interpreting his beloved, Anglicized James also in light of physical impotence – a rhetorical movement that carries Wescott from James's "rumored" inability to produce children and his *fortunate* expatriation to the insight that homosexuality explained a good deal about James's life and work, especially his anarchistic enthusiasm for "the rupture of . . . inhibitions."[72]

But it is Stephen Spender who provides the most revealing evidence of how the James-as-castrato legend came to dominate transatlantic discourse. Writing to Christopher Isherwood in 1933, Spender spoofed the idea, initially suggesting that his forthcoming book on James would be about boy love ("his friendships with Boston lads between the ages of 7 and 17") and then purporting to have found that James was castrated at age 40 "by an accident which happened to one of the earliest central heating radiators." Confidentially, that is, Spender joked away all such speculation, while associating the famous accident with a sedentary, middle-aged, and slightly chilly Henry James; the book's cover, he further pretended for Isherwood's sake, would feature the culprit in the plot, "a trellis of hot pipes with little jets of steam peeping out."[73] Yet when the book appeared, Spender bowed to consensus, duly citing Wescott's theories and borrowing yet another hypothesis (unsupported in James's account) that the Master's privates had been "very severely scalded." This might well explain the "attitude to sex" in James's writing, Spender agreed, as well as some of the grimmer endings in his works: "Castration . . . is supposed to preoccupy the mind with ideas of suicide and death."[74]

To judge by Fitzgerald, Wescott, and Spender, then, the anomalous view of James's sexuality at this time belonged not to those who read him as a queer, damaged expatriate but rather to a lesser author like Gamaliel Bradford, whose appreciation of James in *American Portraits* (1922) had in fact provoked Brooks's attack in *The Pilgrimage*. According to Bradford, James's "love-letters would have been one of the curiosities of literature," given his *stylistic* queerness (decidedly in the old sense of the word), but then: "Who can say? Unless some woman still lives who has some of his letters."[75] (This lament for the missing proof of James's *heterosexuality* is humorously, but tellingly, reversed in a recent anthology that includes his work in the "hidden tradition" of gay writing yet resists the biographical claim: "Failing the discovery of love letters to a young man . . . [James's] homosexuality must remain theoretical";[76] the further humor, in turn, of this reluctance to call James's gayness anything more than theoretical becomes clear from perusing Susan Gunter and Steven Jobe's excellent compilation of James's "love letters" to younger men.[77]) For the avant-garde male modernists – gay or straight, American or British, impotence theory or no – James increasingly appeared under the auspices of queerness, implying a distinct name – homosexuality – for those "thicker traces of another sort" that James's intimate friends such as Constance Woolson had detected in his nature and in his work (*L* III: 559).

Next to Hemingway, however, it was Sherwood Anderson who became Van Wyck Brooks's key interlocutor on the question of James. The first serialized portion of Brooks's *The Pilgrimage* proved so seductive to Anderson ("you have a kind of power over my mind, Van Wyck") that he embarked on several "solid weeks of James reading" in 1923. Anderson came to sympathize with James as a man who "did not dare love" (hinting perhaps at a love that dared not speak its name), but still he found the experience of reading James emotionally privative, writing to Brooks: "I really can't care much for any character after he gets through with it; he, in short, takes my love from me, too" (*SA* 102). At the same time, Anderson strongly urged Brooks, in developing his book's thesis in further installments, to factor in the "struggling side of James" and treat him not like a "judge trying a criminal" but rather as a "sympathetic friend or lover": "Can we understand at all, ever, where we do not love? . . . Give yourself wholly to James" (*SA* 104).

The recurrence of the word *love* here, with its linkage to *understanding*, is extremely striking. As suggested earlier, there is no need to romanticize Anderson's sexual politics (as Stein sometimes did, both genuinely and strategically). If Hemingway honed his masculinity by grinding against Jamesian effeminacy, Anderson similarly wrinkled his nose up at a "very

womanish" portrayal of Oscar Wilde on Broadway (1938), objecting especially to the play's suggestion that "perversion has in it some beauty and meaning that is not in the natural flow of life" (*SA* 418). Furthermore, even Anderson's sensitive-male characters issue self-protective disclaimers ("I'm not any fairy"[78]) that also echo in the author's memoirs ("[my friend] Luther was no fairy"), which unabashedly associate his encounters with urban homosexuality or transvestism with a sort of gothic horror: "a kind of door opened, as though I looked down . . . into a dark pit, a place of monstrous shapes, a world of strange unhealth" (*SAM* 285, 340).

Yet again, Anderson's resistance to seeing same-sex desire as such (as opposed to fraternal or sororal bonds "based on natural loneliness") mainly reflected a wish to harbor human relationships from the incursions of the modern sex police. Anderson's well-known story "Hands," which features an effeminate schoolteacher run out of town (indeed nearly lynched) for allegedly fondling schoolboys, resolutely argues against homophobia, perhaps because Anderson himself had flourished as a journeyman printer under "sudden caresses" bestowed by older men whose guidance he remembered, positively, as "a kind of love making."[79] If to his view homosexuality remained a "terrible problem," Anderson openly welcomed what might be called early gay pride readings of his work, as when an elderly gay man paid him this compliment: "I myself often read ["Hands"] . . . aloud to young men among us . . . It is an effort to bring a little nobility into our relationships." Surely one personal strength that Stein valued in Anderson (and missed in Hemingway) was the capacity to trace his homophobia to its foundations, uncovering, as it were, the sexual invert within: "Why, I was myself, unconsciously, one of them. The thing was in me too and the fear I had expressed was a sure sign of its presence" (*SAM* 285–6, 340, 473).

Suggestively, Anderson's admonition to Brooks to "give yourself wholly to James," especially before writing critically about him, resembles the argument put forth in the tale "Hands" for broadly circulating the account of *its* queer character: "Sympathetically set forth [his story] would tap many strange, beautiful qualities in obscure men" (*WO* 29). A queer reader before the fact, Anderson coaxed Brooks toward what would now be called an "identificatory standpoint" receptive to the "sentimentally attaching power" of the Jamesian text, with its subdued eroticism,[80] encouraging Brooks to recognize "the access to 'perverse' energies that [James's] writing frequently affords."[81] By further implication, the reader/author who went into James's texts looking *not* for strange beauties in obscure masculinities but only for heterosexual success stories, was likely to find precisely what

Brooks ultimately found, a host of characters who seemed disappointingly averse to normal (straight) emotions, "shadow-like passionless women and fish-blooded men" (a variant, one might add, on Lionel Trilling's response to Willa Cather, discussed in chapter 5).[82]

Anderson's mediation failed miserably, that is, and not only did Brooks not yield to James's queerness, but he assailed it. For Brooks, too, was edgy about the feminized aura that had gathered around a form of cultural authority that should have been, just *as* authority, the province of men; and he only later realized what Hemingway would never fully accept: that he was "quarreling with myself" *by way of* quarreling with the Master.[83] As James Hoopes remarks, Brooks's "strenuous, lifelong insistence" that literature be rooted in native soil and express American practicality – the main basis of his attack on James – was also a rearguard "defense of his masculinity," obstructing his appreciation of other gay writers as well, including those whom he admired, such as Walt Whitman and J. A. Symonds.[84] For instance, Brooks labored to refute what he called the "crass misunderstandings" that had grown up around Symonds's "passion for ideal [male] beauty" (a sorry project given what is now known of the English author's brave, if cautious, gay advocacy), and Brooks was accordingly "greatly perplexed" by Symonds's famous attempt to enlist Whitman in support of Greek love.[85]

Leaning not on the Whitman of manly comrade love but on the masculinist, nationalist Whitman of *Democratic Vistas*, Brooks argued that James's deviance began with imitating the "spare, withdrawn" (read effeminate) aesthetes of Europe. Inevitably, James's long sojourn in modern London, the capital of Anglo-American decadence and the scene of Wilde's disgrace, had led to "the gradual decomposition . . . of his sense of human values," and his "sterilizing" influence on the next generation of writers could be seen in the work of those American exiles in Paris (naming Stein would have been superfluous) who pursued "the so-called expatriate religion of art." Given the organizing terms of this narrative of James's degeneration and his incomparable agency in a much broader cultural decline – not coincidentally, the very terms of Hemingway's vignettes involving James – one readily grasps Brooks's difficulty in keeping homosexuality out of the picture. Brooks all but identifies queerness as the origin of "the style that was the man Henry James had become" – decorative, sensualist, ceaselessly hedging – unconsciously isolating the queerest of his works (*The Tragic Muse*, "The Altar of the Dead") as evidence of how James's aberrant personal "texture" had "infected the creatures of his fancy," making them behave "in violation of the nature of things."[86] As in Anderson's more conscious and conspicuous appeal to "the natural flow

of life," and its fundamental opposition to Wildean perversion, Brooks implied more than he knew in setting James and his characters "against nature." Put otherwise, the strain of sexual dissidence in the Master's voice vibrated in Brooks's mind, even as he sought to neutralize and castigate it as a debased expatriate cosmopolitanism.

As Hemingway proved in other dire ways, taking on Jamesian gay masculinity could exact penalties, especially when such a confrontation involved aggressions toward unacknowledged parts of the self. In the words of his own later account, Brooks became so "drugged" with his protagonist Henry James that he feared he would "never be sane again" until released from the grip of his book project. Describing the deliverance that came with the publication of *The Pilgrimage*, Brooks interestingly genders the body of his metaphor: "Henry James . . . came alive . . . inside of me," and "the infant monster, kicking . . . hard at the walls of my psyche" entered the world.[87] In the natural flow of life, postpartum depression followed. "Pursued . . . with nightmares in which Henry James turned great luminous menacing eyes upon me" – as it were, Woolf's hauntingly "portentous" James run amok – Brooks was especially beset by the fantasy of being buried alive by a decree of Parliament (not coincidentally, the law-making assembly of the American-turned-British subject Henry James). When consulted on the case, Carl Gustav Jung diagnosed the patient as beyond help, and Brooks passed the remainder of the 1920s in a sequence of American and English hospitals, or what he called "houses of the dead" (including one annexed by Harrow, where the schoolboy Symonds first encountered the homosexuality that Brooks refused to see.[88]) To insist upon the workings of ironic retribution here would perhaps smack of gothic fatalism, yet the gothic intensity of Brooks's breakdown measured the psychic costs of denial in engaging Henry James under the sign of gender, sexuality, and nation. Hemingway and others, one might say, got off easy.

> I have to . . . deny myself . . . many of the little comforts like toilet paper, semicolons, and soles to my shoes . . . [Otherwise] people begin to shout that old Hem is just a fairy after all and no He man ha ha. (Hemingway to Fitzgerald, 1927)

As Brooks's case is only the most dramatic to confirm, it will not do to construe Hemingway's anxious masculinity as too exceptional. Fitzgerald fretted that *The Great Gatsby* would show the "feminine" influence of James (as reviewers later claimed it did) rather than the virile influence of Dostoevsky.[89] Ezra Pound (as Kerr quotes him) was obsessed with keeping a "hardness of edge" in creative writing in order to remasculinize the "perpetual

mother's meeting" of a "Eunuchated" American culture.[90] Less invidiously but in the same vein, Stephen Spender, who presciently noted a "hint of the androgynyous" in Hemingway's work, cited "the often feminine presence of a second Henry James" throughout the entire Jamesian canon, as if inscribing a man who had "lived the life of . . . his Rowlands" (referring to Rowland Mallet of *Roderick Hudson*) and his Lambert Strethers – passive observers rather than real men of action.[91] Even Anderson, although less fearful both of James and of things feminine, reacted to Hemingway's "completely patronizing" challenge to him as a man and an author in the challenger's own masculinist idiom: judging as "a pretty good middle weight" himself, Anderson predicted that Hemingway would never "make the heavy weight class" (*SAM* 464).

From another direction, but equally symptomatically, the critic Edmund Wilson felt moved to a public defense of Hemingway's manhood against the most punishing pugilist of all, Gertrude Stein; after being "waspish" toward Pound, Wilson wrote, she had beat up on Hemingway "pretty hard" in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which retailed the "endlessly amusing" gossip (in the gay city of Paris) about Hemingway's debility and "yellow" cowardice (*ABT* 875).[92] Even Glenway Wescott, whose own masculinity had been ridiculed in *The Sun Also Rises*, perceived Stein's treatment of Hemingway as "odious," while her ally and ideal man Anderson found that his "great joy" in reading *The Autobiography* was tempered by Stein's move (figuratively, either savage or castrative or both) to take "such big patches of skin off Hemmy with [her] delicately held knife" (*SA* 295).

Yet as this turbulent body of response further indicates, Hemingway had elected himself, or had agreed to his election, as the primary icon-cum-target of insistently straight hypermasculinity in Anglo-American culture. As such, he had also become the foremost victim of the post-Victorian practice of reading (and self-reading) that assumed a tight fit between person and persona, collapsing masculine and artistic authenticity or inauthenticity in the process. In calling Anderson's work a "pretensious fake," Wescott's work a "literary fake," or James's work "an enormous fake," Hemingway *self-evidently* implied an author whose manhood, too, was artificial, a man who was perhaps *both* "a phony and a buggar [*sic*]" (*SL* 195, 266, 413). By the same token, when Hemingway became rattled by Virginia Woolf's "imputation that I faked" in *The Sun Also Rises*, the insult fell into essentially the same category as charges that his boxer's crouch was an imitation of Anderson's (thus Stein), that his bullfighting enthusiasm was "all simulation" (Margaret Anderson), and that his masculinity *in toto* was as "phony as a rubber check"

(Zelda Fitzgerald). The sting in these formulas of detraction must have been all the worse for their having come from women (*SL* 265, *ABT* 873, *SL* 388).[93]

The best index to how the modern regulation of gender and sexuality worked, that is, came in the form of Hemingway's brittle susceptibility when the tables were turned, and his own masculine prose, as well as his own pose, was pronounced "fake." Finding no quarter in which to laugh off such imputations as groundless or irrelevant ("no He man ha ha"), Hemingway self-consciously redoubled his manly displays, battling swordfish in the gulfstream ("poor fragile old Hem posing as a fisherman"), hunting in Africa (where "Gertrude's feathered friends," he predicted, would quickly perish), and boxing against all comers, including an unfortunate, inebriated Wallace Stevens: "Gertrude Stein ought to give all these people who pick fights with poor old papa at least their money [back]" (*SL* 388, 403, 439). In accordance with the harsh binary logic of the modern gender system, which was extended and compounded in the equation of effeminacy with homosexuality, Hemingway's internalized fear of being no "He man" (all kidding aside) harbored the deeper fear that his audience would proceed to deduce the very worst about him: "old Hem is just a fairy," no different from the noxious male creatures that he reviled in James's fiction or found embodied in literary competitors such as Glenway Wescott.

As always, Stein emerges as the keenest analyst of what went wrong for Hemingwayesque masculinity and its manifestation in Hemingway's art. Owing largely to a more stable patriarchy, "nineteenth-century men were confident," she observed in *Everybody's Autobiography*, and thus Victorian male authors were able to "invent all kinds . . . of men" in their fiction (a generalization that holds even for the putatively "feminized" James). With the weakening of patriarchal privilege, though, male modernists became defensive, "hold[ing] on to themselves" in their fictional representations and trying to make themselves appear "more beautiful more intriguing more everything" (*EA* 3–4). Hemingway exemplified the "more everything" category – staging a campaign, at once quixotic and pathetic, to recover lost ground for modern men by main force – whereas Anderson's "perfect freshness" derived from his relative indifference to being "small in the world's eyes."[94] In other words, Stein promoted much the same type of masculinity that was complimented and revalued throughout James's work; it was also of the kind that Willa Cather advanced in her writings, including what Hemingway saw as the pitiful simulacrum of manhood, cribbed from Hollywood movies, that had betrayed Cather in the prize-winning novel *One of Ours*: "Poor woman she had to get her war experience from

somewhere" (*SL* 105). In the long run, as both Stein and Anderson intuited, Hemingway himself would be betrayed by the constant exertion and self-vigilance required in playing the big, strong, straight man for "the world's eyes." In that regard, perhaps a poignant symbolism can be read in Hemingway's unsuccessful struggle with a piece of fiction entitled "The Faker"; as D. T. Max writes, it was to be "the story of a man returning from . . . war pretending to be a hero . . . [but] he never finished it."[95]

Farewell is about the best word I know in English. (Hemingway, *Selected Letters*, 1932)

If nobody refuses what you offer there must be something the matter. (Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, 1937)

In his impressive study *Libidinal Currents*, Joseph A. Boone sums up the recent trend in American literary and cultural studies that has seen "concepts of canonicity . . . fiercely debated . . . resulting in the dethroning of certain authors (farewell Hemingway) and the rise of hitherto neglected ones," such as Djuna Barnes.[96] Although Boone's incisive readings contribute much to this pivotal recovery project, one senses that he may be premature in bidding Hemingway, in particular, a fond farewell. Nor is it the first time that Papa Hemingway has been shown the door without his having taken it. Indeed, more than half a century after Fitzgerald agreed with Stein's assessment that his friend's work was bound for "the museums," and long after Alice B. Toklas also dismissed that work as "hopelessly 1890," Hemingway is not only not being "refused," he is being positively embraced.[97]

In 1999, to honor of the centennial of Hemingway's birth – only coincidentally the anniversary of James's publication of *The Awkward Age* – the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, mounted a major exhibition dedicated to Hemingway, with Yale University Press publishing the exhibition's photographs of this "emphatically virile . . . American legend."[98] Popular magazines from *People* to *Cigar Aficionado* featured Hemingway on their covers. Meanwhile, Hemingway's offspring (the lucky Henry James did not have any) have continued to flood the market with spurious posthumous "novels," such as *True at First Light*, as well as with a line of "Hemingway" furniture.[99] At the risk of reproducing what James Kincaid calls the "narratives of fierce causality" that marked and marred Victorian conceptions of sexual identity, it is perhaps worth noting that the Hemingway descendant who testified most candidly to the author's self-damage and its ramifications for others around him was his transgendered son Gregory/Gloria,

whose difficult life ended recently in the women's section of a Miami jail.[100]

More to the point of Boone's argument are the results of a poll conducted, also in 1999, by the newsletter of the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, which is conceived as the avant-garde multiculturalist teaching anthology of our time. Having asked their sizeable constituency of college educators to name the twentieth-century works in English most essential to the millennial curriculum, the newsletter's editors reported that two Hemingway novels, *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*, were voted into the "top twenty-five" list, thus tying the American author with James Joyce and Virginia Woolf for second place; the only writer who placed three works in the top echelon (and here one may imagine Hemingway spinning in his grave) was William Faulkner.[101] To all appearances, then, whether in academe or in popular mass media, the figure of "Hemingway" does not plan on departing anytime soon, leaving us to confront the troubling implication that perhaps Anglo-American culture itself has become the "museum" of Stein's prediction. (Although the year 1999 was also the birth centennial of the gay American poet Hart Crane, author of *The Bridge*, his image was nowhere to be found on the cover of *People* or elsewhere.)

As for the *other* Hemingway, the "other half" of the man that did not really factor into these recent festivities and celebrations, a diary entry from the 1950s – involving sexual role-playing with his fourth wife, Mary – provides a remarkable glimpse into the possibilities, both personal and artistic, that Stein had once seen, before the overdetermined masculinist persona of "Papa" was superimposed:

> [Mary] loves me to be her girls [*sic*], which I love to be, not being absolutely stupid. Mary has never had one lesbian impulse but has always wanted to be a boy. Since I have never cared for any man and dislike any tactile contact with men except the normal Spanish abrazo, I loved feeling the embrace of Mary, which came to me as something outside all tribal law.[102]

Although the armor of negation remains firmly in place for Hemingway ("never . . . never"), this fantasy of sexual inversion, resulting in something bordering on same-sex intimacy, leads one to wonder just how far outside of tribal law this brave, manly man might have ventured, if only his "inside" had not become "outside" all too soon.[103]

Coda: "Nobody is alike Henry James": Stein, James, and queer futurity

> Now in the case of Henry James listen in the case of Henry James all of them . . . listened as if they did or indeed as if they did not hear. Indeed not . . . or if they all . . . did listen and did hear . . . all of this was not queer not at all not at all queer . . . Let us think carefully about all this. (Gertrude Stein, *Four in America*, 1932–34)

> Of course James was the precursor alright.
>
> (Alice B. Toklas, *Letters*, 1947)

In a suggestive parallel, Henry James – both the body of his writings and the modern cultural construct that goes by that name – served as an important mediating term not just in Ernest Hemingway's marriages but also in the more stable and successful union between Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas ("Little Alice B. is the wife for me").[1] Like Hemingway's first two wives, Toklas brought "an undiminished chronically young enthusiasm for H.J." to her new relationship with Stein in 1907 – an enthusiasm that led not to Stein's policing of James's presence, however, but to the couple's joint subscription to the New York edition of his works, possibly their earliest aesthetic-romantic bond.[2] Toklas's appreciation of James remained undiminished, and more than a decade after Stein's passing, in 1946, she kept their three-way relation imaginatively intact, expressing "great pleasure" in joining the "overwhelming company" of James and Stein by publishing her own writing, on French fashion, in the *Atlantic Monthly* for June 1958.[3] Moreover, throughout her long marriage to Stein, as Brenda Wineapple observes, Toklas held up James's narrative model as the most ideal for "doing justice" to the sociosexual complexities of Stein's family and their expatriate circle of friends and enemies. In so doing, Toklas reclaimed the invidious, self-destructive thesis of Van Wyck Brooks, as well as its subtler emanations in Hemingway and the other members of their anxious confraternity.[4]

In the nature of things, Stein's exposure to James could not be as uncomplicated as Toklas's, and, as noted in the previous chapter, she experienced her own version – like Hemingway, Sherwood Anderson, and even Willa Cather – of the obligatory modernist confrontation with the "Master" of Anglo-American letters. Stein "always liked to use [James's] word – the *precursor* – in speaking of him" (as Toklas testified), singling James out for praise as "the only nineteenth-century writer who being an American felt the method of the twentieth century" and who, being also Europeanized by virtue of immersions and saturations abroad, commanded literary art like "a general" (*ABT* 739; *FA* 139); metaphorically, at least, Stein granted this expert strategist on the battlefield of the novel in English precisely the military experience that Hemingway in effect denied him. Yet as Charles Caramello has demonstrated, Stein carefully hedged her testimonials to James's "future feeling" – it was, in her words, "a dim feeling," "a slight inkling" of the narrative form that she herself would perfect – and Stein's adulation always contained an element of self-promotion, "an aggrandizement of James as specifically *her* 'forerunner.' "[5]

This customary move – just as shrewdly strategic as the mobilizings conducted by James, her "general" precursor – assumes a more personal accent in the opening chapter of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which proceeds from "Toklas's" confession of her youthful infatuation as "a great admirer of Henry James" to her epoch-making encounter with the "first class" genius Gertrude Stein: "a bell within me rang and . . . my new full life began" (*ABT* 659–61). In Stein's handling, that is, Toklas's maturation, both aesthetic and amatory (if indeed the two can be distinguished), required the shift of her great "admiration" from one first-class genius to another. Yet if Stein surpassed James both in Toklas's affections and in her canons of taste, this did not hinge upon Toklas's coming to admire James any less; if anything, the way in which Stein represents her companion's aesthetic evolution and erotic awakening ("a bell within me rang") vouches for the queer lineage that links James with Stein even as it effects a transfer of authority between them.

More broadly, Stein's rhetorical maneuvering around James does not erase him from the text of her own development, both as an author and as a modern, female masculinity, but instead acknowledges and equalizes their negotiations, protecting against the presumption of a genealogical "descent" or a generational "influence." Stein also seeks to clarify her inevitable divergence from James. As Caramello nicely summarizes, her various writings on her illustrious predecessor traverse the field of formal literary mastery to

imply their "shared unconventional sexuality, nationality, and expatriation," while "stak[ing] her claim to succession on the aesthetic consequences" of their differences in biological gender and lived homosexuality, as well as her inevitably different mode of engaging a complex modernity that James, perforce, could only richly predict.[6]

With the language of "difference" in the air – a foundational term in all of the literary works, regulatory codes, self-identity projects, and tactics of sexual dissidence treated in this book – I would like to conclude by turning to Stein's most important address of James's distinction, her "life history of Henry James who was a general," in the posthumously published *Four in America* (*FA* 146). Probably it is no accident that this piece shows the "Stein style at its Steiniest," as *Time* magazine put it, at once declaring her stylistic independence and challenging the reader's grasping imagination in a prose no less teasing than James's at its Jamesiest; yet like all of her work, it will repay the exercise of one's faculty of attention.[7] James's queer sort of authority in modern literature, Stein suggests, derives partly from his technical virtuosity and versatility, to be sure, but more importantly from his willingness to put that mastery in the service of an almost impersonal candor about a deeply personal emotion and vision of life – to risk original utterance in a social order of increasing control and conformity, and to wait patiently for the audience of the future to arrive.

> That is not an audience because will everybody listen. Is it an audience because will anybody listen . . . If you have vitality enough of knowing enough of what you mean, somebody and sometime and sometimes a great many will have to realise that you know what you mean, and so they will agree that you mean what you know, what you know you mean, which is as near as anybody can come to understanding any one. (Gertrude Stein, *Four in America*)

Stein's essay "Henry James" anticipates her concern, enunciated in *Everybody's Autobiography*, with the delicate tenor of author–audience relations in a commodifying, commercializing, and celebrity-hungry modern age. I have discussed how Stein brought these concerns to bear on Hemingway's case, but the inquiry takes another direction when the masculinity in question is a queer one, whether embodied in a male author like James or a female author like Cather or Stein herself. Is anybody out there? What does it take – how many listeners, and what kind of listening – to constitute an audience? To what extent does *being* an author depend upon having an audience of listeners or readers who "understand" as a necessary preliminary to a progressive reading practice – a cognate of the specialized

"understanding" that one has seen promoted in such varied texts as James's *The Ambassadors*, Cather's *O Pioneers!*, and Anderson's admonitions to the biographizing Van Wyck Brooks.

As always, Stein's comments are partly self-referential – a wondering aloud, inextricable from her reflections on the fate of "Papa" Hemingway, about how far her own voice would carry in Anglo-American culture, even with the indisputable "vitality" of her personality and literary production. Both Stein's worrying of the question and her coy self-assertiveness register an awareness of her exotic positioning as an ethnic and sexual subject, for if exponents of the Eliotic-Leavisite "great tradition" embraced or at least made space for James, they promised to extend "little welcome to a Jewish-American lesbian."[8] Within the orbit of popular appeal, too, Stein maintained a canny humor about her belated fame, interpreting the "extraordinary welcome" she received on her American valedictory tour of 1934/5 as owing not to the "books of mine that they do understand like [*The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*] but the books of mine that they did not understand" (*EA* 6). After the fashion of Oscar Wilde, that is, Stein recognized a secret and perverse motive of curiosity among her mainstream readers – the aura of intrigue associated with things other and extravagant – that went unaccounted for on the explanatory model of modernist "difficulty" and that offered itself as a potential medium for a broader "understanding" of her work in all its dissident originality.

The other clear implication of the passage quoted above is that Stein herself exemplifies the "somebody . . . sometime" who is incisive and prescient enough to see and hear in Henry James what was lost upon a T. S. Eliot or an F. R. Leavis, both James's affinity with her own situation at the margins, and the queer subtext in his writings that "a great many" would some day be able to comprehend. Indirectly, Stein also suggests the particular nature of the blind spot in the vision of that tedious "village explainer" Ezra Pound – "excellent if you were a village, but if you were not, not" (*ABT* 856) – who cited Gabriel Nash's "outbursts in *The Tragic Muse*, [and] the whole of 'The Turn of the Screw'" as evidence of James's resistance to "the domination of modern life," yet who abstracted that resistance as being "wholly exempt" from any "political connotations."[9] By contrast, Stein's James – "knowing enough" of his meanings, and communicating them with a conviction in the rightness of that knowledge – has everything to gain, and nothing to lose, by being ahead of the historical curve in both the stylistics and the sexual politics of his writings. Eventually even the culture that romanticized an Ernest Hemingway would "realise" what Henry James was about.

But what *was* James about, and what did his narrative choices (the Steinian author has both agency and accountability) have to do with his politics? An answer evolves from Stein's conception of two separate kinds of writing, as announced in her opening query: "What is the difference between Shakespeare's plays and Shakespeare's sonnets?" (*FA* 119). This difference between literary products, it emerges, turns on a radical difference in the postures that an author may adopt toward the text, on the one hand, and toward the public that will read or hear it, on the other – if, indeed, the public does not *already* intervene in the work of composition: "Do you know who hears you or who is to hear what you are writing and how does that affect you or does it affect you?" (*FA* 121). What Stein terms "writing what you are writing" (elsewhere called "really writing" or "entity writing"[10]) represents the activity of a deep interiority that neither knows nor wants to know "who hears or . . . is to hear" and that thus remains virtually unaffected by cultural standards or expectations of performance. The plays of Shakespeare fall into this category, having been as nearly hermetic and self-commensurate in their production, and as prior to market forces, as it is possible for an artifact of human consciousness to be.

Shakespeare's sonnets illustrate the contrary case of "writing what you are going to be writing" in the sense that they looked ahead to, and were preconditioned by, the scene of reception and evaluation – popular, critical, and commercial. In this kind of writing, a preimagination of the public life of the text already inhabits the writer, subtly or unsubtly distorting its composition. As I have argued throughout this book, much of this intrusive shaping – those cultural designs upon the authorial subject that demand accommodation, contestation, or disavowal – emanates from the sex/gender system, especially in the era that can be conveniently dated from the sensational punishment of Oscar Wilde. Although it would be a mistake to reduce Stein's disquisition in *Four in America* to *only* a statement about the nexus between artistic expression and the power dynamics of gender and sexuality, it would be equally errant to pretend that those dynamics were not inevitably, and centrally, addressed in her campy but always purposive polemic.

To secure the point, it can be recalled that Hemingway typified, for Stein, an extreme version of the male artist subject to the temptation and thus to the discipline of the "outside" value placed upon his work, until all of it became, in effect, writing that he was "going to be writing" and none of it, the more unmediated manifestation of "the other half . . . the man" in his internal diversity. If Henry James, by contrast, "saw he could write both ways at once" and "selected both," not only did this capacity align him with

Shakespeare (and with that other universal genius, Gertrude Stein), but his extraordinary distinction was in *not* forfeiting a self resistantly "queer" to normative pressures, and possessing the integrity of its difference: "Henry James was not the same thing" (*FA* 138).

At its roots in authorial subjectivity, however, "the difference between Shakespeare's plays and Shakespeare's sonnets," as well as the difference between "both ways" of writing in James's fiction, amounts to no difference in another, perhaps more important sense. If the sonnets were public documents from the moment of inception, and the plays came from a deeply private space of composition, Stein attributed Shakespeare's work in both genres to a homosexuality that had the good fortune to predate the heyday of the psychoanalytic "cure," the consolidation of homophobia and sexual panic as instrumentalities of social management, and the cultural forgetting of how masculine desire could be perfectly compatible with the "strongest manly character":[11] "We are surrounded by homosexuals, they do all the good things in all the arts . . . If Shakespeare had had a psychiatrist then we would never have had *the plays or sonnets*" (*DS* 56; emphasis added). To adapt Hemingway's formulation, then, Stein was clearly among "those interested parties" who were "continually proving" that Shakespeare, James, and other brilliant writers were "fags," except that, for her, the self-evidence of their texts ruled out the need for continual proof.[12]

Science well they never are right about anything. (Gertrude Stein, *The Geographical History of America*, 1935–36)

Behind Stein's ruminations on modes of writing and the cultural shaping of art and artists, the central thrust of the argument in "Henry James" is to destabilize the régime of discrimination by which modern subjects (in both the civil and the psychological sense) are sorted into "erotically determined essence[s]" and thereby situated within taxonomies of gender and sexuality as part of what Leo Bersani calls "the profoundly biased cultural education we receive in sameness and difference."[13] That skewed indoctrination accounts, in part, for the limited success of late Victorian homophile projects – those of John Addington Symonds, Edward Carpenter, and Havelock Ellis, for example – which were co-opted by the clinical discourse of stigmatization they contested, and "never seriously emancipated [themselves] from the modes of thought of the medical and natural sciences."[14] Stein's analytical gift originated in the early discovery of how inadequately these modes of thought applied to *her* "essence" or to that of

a James or a Shakespeare – how they would need to be scrapped in favor of an epistemology inclusive of the "many ways of having queerness in many men and women" (*MOA* 194).

As a further dividend of Stein's insight, her alternative model of knowledge and representation gravitated toward *anti*essentialism, and Lisa Ruddick convincingly cites *The Making of Americans* as the occasion of her "lasting break with science" and its categorical imperatives.[15] If that work embarks with the aspiration to catalog the "bottom nature[s]" of all conceivable types of human being – to bring even the "minutest . . . subtle variations . . . into ordered recognition" and to bind the "many ways of thinking of every one" in a totalizing "description of all of them" – such positivist confidence eventually deteriorates in the text and is replaced by a decidedly modernist suspicion that "perhaps not any one really is a whole one inside them" but rather "every one is in pieces," and can thus appear only "in fragments" to intended systematizations of the self (*MOA* 248, 284, 290, 519). In a word, Stein sought to "kill what was not [already] dead" in nineteenth-century thinking:[16] "objective history; science as 'truth'; and character, or the integrated subject."[17]

By the time of *Four in America*, Stein was prepared to drive at the heart of the modern regulatory schema, with lasting implications for a queer reading practice and a strong admonition – more honored in the breach than the observance – not to assume simple connections between authorial biography (such as the "life history of Henry James") and the literary text. To think about writers in relation to their work only in the received dualisms of the sex/gender system, Stein suggests, is to stay complicit with the prejudicial grammar of difference. Accordingly, in "Henry James" one finds find the positivist "knowing" that both generates and is sustained by those constraining and harmful binaries dismissed in a sing-song rhyme: "What did Henry James do, neither he nor I knew." Further, the protocols of reductive stereotypy that support social categorization are refuted: "nobody is alike Henry James," and even "Henry James [is] not the same thing." And in a way that amplifies the critique of such works as James's *The Tragic Muse* and *The Ambassadors* and Cather's *O Pioneers!* – the critique generally advanced by both the person and the writings of Wilde – normative measures of "success" and meaning in life come in for challenge as well. Kept from the actual experience of war by his "obscure hurt," Henry James nonetheless became "general" of the novel; and although "not married in any way," he became a (re)producer of culture *par excellence* (*FA* 138, 149, 141).

Now think about what does or does not make any difference. (Gertrude Stein, *Four in America*)

To Stein's taste, however, even this program of subversion participated too much in the cultural logic it meant to defeat, that of a dominant sex/gender dyad made up – as Webster's dictionary still informs us – of "two individuals (as husband and wife) maintaining a sociologically significant relationship."[18] The naturalized vocabulary of difference, with its built-in constraints upon gay identity, experience, and expression, would have to be denaturalized by recourse to self-contradiction and other deconstructive uses of language. Thus James's marital status – and by clear extension, James's sexuality – is said to be "of great importance," and then again "of no importance." A certain kind of "clarity is of no importance" either, as Stein playfully mocks Victorian earnestness and emphasis of declaration: "I wish to make it perfectly clear that this is neither here nor there" (*FA* 143, 127, 153).

But Stein's campiest send-up and strongest put-down of the insidious sex/gender binaries of modernity occurs in the embedded "narrative of Henry James told by one who listened to some one else telling about some one entirely different from Henry James" (*FA* 155). Working from the triangle of the James–Toklas–Stein relationship that inaugurates *The Autobiography*, Caramello identifies the first teller here ("one who listened") as being Stein, the second ("some one telling") as Toklas, and the "some one" told about as being once again Stein, only in this case the Stein who is cleverly and disingenuously conceived of as having "never heard" of James before her romance with the Master's devotee Toklas. This early Gertrude Stein achieves self-definition, as it were, as the complete antithesis of Henry James: "Really she was entirely a different kind of human being . . . lead[ing] an entirely different kind of life . . . She was not at all at all resembling to Henry James." As the note of overinsistence is meant to suggest, this is the voice of an epistemology aimed at the maintenance of neat boundaries in a world where differences – perhaps especially in the gendering and sexing of bodies and minds – tend to collapse. Indeed, as this mini-narrative then proceeds to relate of "Stein": "She lived alone and in the country and so did Henry James. She was heavy set and seductive and so was Henry James . . . Her speech was delicate and witty and . . . slow and troubling and so was that of Henry James." In this short passage, Stein confronts the very epitomes of the post-Victorian paradigm – those pseudoscientific accounts of "fierce causality," to borrow again from James Kincaid, that were based on dichotomies of biological gender and on sexual identities

crudely derived from "what one does with one's genitals."[19] In the process Stein also questions the founding dualism that distinguishes bodily conduct from imagination, consciousness, and desire, and that not coincidentally underwrote the historic, injurious translation of "homosexual" from "an adjective describing an act" to "a noun descriptive of a human being."[20] In recommending a sort of indifference to the discourse of difference ("So there you are," she concludes, troping Lambert Strether), Stein implies that the same solvent, liberative tendency was also a feature of James's modernness and future-feeling sexual politics.

In the last analysis Stein builds upon the example of Jamesian subtlety, complexity, and diversity to argue for new modes of "understanding" and "connection" between authors, between authors and readers, between readers and texts, and ultimately between individual persons trying as best they can to live all they can. Not by pernicious categories and violent methods of discrimination will one ever discover the "rhythm of personality" or "the emotion of writing" in James's works, but rather by "being called to kindle" to their seductive, witty, and troubling vitality. If "Henry James was very ready to have it happen for him," so must readers be very ready for his writings to happen to them: "I will try you will try. Oh yes . . . we will try." Stein's final testimony is that James will abide in cultural history for saying things on behalf of difference – different gender styles and sexualities, above all – at a time when saying such things was both most necessary and most difficult: "Nobody has forgotten Henry James even if I have but I have not . . . Forget who said what was easily said and come back to remember Henry James."

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1 David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 62.
2 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* New York and London: Routledge, 1993, p. 230.
3 Halperin, *Saint Foucault*, pp. 64–6.
4 Marilee Lindemann, "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Witch?: Queer Studies in American Literature," *American Literary History* 12, no. 4 (winter 2000), 761, 763.
5 Marjorie Garber, *Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life*, New York and London: Routledge, 2000, p. 355.
6 Leo Bersani, *Homos*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
7 Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 8–9.
8 Marilee Lindemann, *Willa Cather: Queering America*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, pp. 43, 47.
9 *OED*, 2nd edn, vol. XII, p. 1014.
10 Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor (An Inside Narrative)*, ed. Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, p. 88; Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1953, p. 45; Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome*, New York: Scribner's, 1939, p. 73; James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler, New York: Vintage, 1986/1993, p. 127; Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," in Edward Connery Lathem (ed.), *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969, p. 224; Amy Lowell, "The Sisters," in *Complete Poetical Works of Amy Lowell*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955, p. 460.
11 George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World*, New York: Basic Books, 1994, p. 14.
12 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, New York: Bantam, 1985, p. 8.
13 Bersani, *Homos*, p. 51.
14 Alfred Habegger, " 'What Maisie Knew': Henry James's *Bildungsroman* of the Artist as Queer Moralist," in Gert Buelens (ed.), *Enacting History in Henry*

James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 93–4.

15 *OED*, vol. XII, p. 1014.

16 Chauncey, *Gay New York*, pp. 14–16. For a broader, earlier cultural history of the relation between "effeminacy" and "homosexual" discourse, see George E. Haggerty, *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, especially chapter 2.

17 Sharon R. Ullman, *Sex Seen: The Emergence of Modern Sexuality in America*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997, p. 69.

18 Blair Niles, *Strange Brother*, London: GMP Publishers, 1991.

19 Hugh Stevens, *Henry James and Sexuality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 12.

20 Christopher Isherwood, *Christopher and his Kind, 1929–1939*, New York: North Point/Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1976, p. 2.

21 Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1945, p. 32.

22 Robert McAlmon and Kay Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together, 1920–1930*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968, p. 110.

23 Ullman, *Sex Seen*, p. 63.

24 William Carlos Williams quoted in Robert E. Knoll (ed.), *McAlmon and the Lost Generation: A Self-Portrait*, Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1962, p. 221.

25 Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1990, pp. 15, 26; John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (1891), in Chris White (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality: A Sourcebook*, New York and London: Routledge, 1999, p. 74.

26 Hall, *Well of Loneliness*, pp. 35, 20, 23.

27 E. M. Forster, *Maurice*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1971, p. 33; Waugh, *Brideshead*, p. 203.

28 *Sherwood Anderson's Love Letters to Eleanor Copenhaver Anderson*, ed. Charles E. Modlin, Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989, pp. 306–7.

29 F. W. Dupee, *Henry James* (1951), New York: William Morrow, 1974, p. 139.

30 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Shame and Performativity: Henry James's New York Edition Prefaces," in David McWhirter (ed.), *Henry James's New York Edition: The Construction of Authorship*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995, p. 210.

31 See Gary Schmidgall (ed.), *Intimate with Walt: Selections from Whitman's Conversations with Horace Traubel, 1882–1892*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001, pp. 84–6, 139–40.

32 John Brenkman, "Extreme Criticism," in Judith Butler, John Guillory, and Kendall Thomas (eds.), *What's Left of Theory: New Work on the Politics of Literary Theory*, New York and London: Routledge, 2000, p. 120.

33 Tim Dean's *Beyond Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) demonstrates the state of productive contention within the realm of queer theory as (high) theory; working from the "conviction that [Lacanian] psychoanalysis *is* a queer theory," he disputes its interpretation in Butler and

Lee Edelman: "by assimilating the category of sexuality to imaginary and symbolic formations, [their] accounts paradoxically produce queer bodies bearing egos but devoid of subjective desire," "completely rhetoricalized . . . suave bodies [that] are queer indeed, though not in any way liberated or liberating"; Dean pursues instead "a theory of rhetoric, sexuality, and embodiment that is both immoderately antifoundationalist *and* antirhetoricalist"; ibid., pp. 215, 187, 177–8.

34 *The Letters of Henry James*, vol. 11, ed. Percy Lubbock, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920, p. 245.

35 Terrence McNally, *Love! Valour! Compassion! and A Perfect Ganesh: Two Plays*, Harmondsworth: Penguin/Plume, 1995, pp. 53, 57–8.

36 Henning Bech, *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity*, trans. Teresa Mesquit and Tim Davies, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 174.

37 McNally, *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, pp. 69–70, 73, 101.

38 Lee J. Siegel, "The Gay Science: Queer Theory, Literature, and the Sexualization of Everything," *New Republic*, 9 November 1998, 30–42; Joan Acocella, *Willa Cather and the Politics of Criticism*, Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Siegel's literary text consists of "organic connections," so that "isolat[ing]" a motif such as homosexuality constitutes interpretive violence. James's "identity as an artist" is conceived as magisterial and yet vulnerable to being "erase[d]" by the queer readings that his "enigmatic sexuality" courts. Homosexuality is present in "The Beast in the Jungle" only "because [Eve] Sedgwick sees it there," while James's "fairly uncomplicated" masculine friendship in "The Pupil" gets manipulated by Michael Moon into a case of same-sex desire. On the contrary, Siegel claims, "Beast" is simply about a "May–December romance that never was" (based on "what I see on the printed page"), while "The Pupil" cannot be about homosexuality because of "what James seems to have meant it to be about," an asexual mutual-support pact (36–41 passim). For Moon's actual argument, see *A Small Boy and Others: Imitation and Initiation in American Culture from Henry James to Andy Warhol*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998, pp. 24–8.

39 Edmund Wilson speculated that the "impenetrability" of Stein's work should be attributed less to Cubist aesthetics than to cultural strictures against fiction about homosexuality, such as *QED*'s account of "the tangled relations of three Lesbian American girls." *The Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Young, 1952, pp. 581–2; for William H. Gass, *QED* has "no other subject than the . . . character of its author's sexuality and the moral price she must pay if she wishes to indulge it." "Gertrude Stein: her Escape from Protective Language," in *Fiction and the Figures of Life*, Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1971, p. 88.

40 McNally, *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, p. 58.

41 Ibid., pp. 114–15.

42 Ibid., p. 114.

43 Robert Phelps and Jerry Rosco (eds.), *Continual Lessons: The Journals of Glenway Wescott, 1937–1955*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990, p. 52.

44 Ernest Hemingway, "Explanatory Glossary," *Death in the Afternoon*, quoted in Nancy R. Comley and Robert Scholes, *Hemingway's Genders: Rereading the Hemingway Text*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 107.
45 *Staying on Alone: Letters of Alice B. Toklas*, ed. Edward Burns, New York: Liveright, 1973, pp. 86, 84.
46 Louis Wilkinson, *Seven Friends*, ed. Anthony Naylor, Thame, Oxon: Mandrade Press, 1992, pp. 27–8.
47 Louis Umfreville Wilkinson, "The Better End: Conclusion of a chapter from the unpublished novel, What Percy Knew, by H*nr* J*m*s," in Mark Mitchell and David Leavitt (eds.), *Pages Passed from Hand to Hand: The Hidden Tradition of Homosexual Literature in English from 1748 to 1914*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997; all subsequent quotations are from pp. 389–91. As an interesting measure of change with respect to "queer" publishing, one notes that Wilkinson's own audience was necessarily "select" when he wrote the parody in 1912, but it grew considerably in 1969 when the piece appeared in a limited edition, and it is now featured in a mass-market trade anthology.
48 Adeline R. Tintner, *Henry James's Legacy: The Afterlife of his Figure and Fiction*, Baton Rouge, LO: Louisiana State University Press, 1998, pp. 84–5.
49 Fred Kaplan, *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius*, New York: William Morrow, 1992, p. 539.
50 David Leeming, *Stephen Spender: A Life in Modernism*, New York: Henry Holt, 1999, pp. 65–66.
51 Alan Sinfield, *Gay and After*, London: Serpent's Tail, 1998, p. 98.
52 On James's romantic friendship with the soldier-poet Rupert Brooke, see my "Iron Henry, or James Goes to War," *Arizona Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (winter 1997), 39–59; on his erotic response to the person as well as the "enchanted physique" of Jocelyn Persse, later of the Royal Welsh Fussiliers, see Susan E. Gunter and Steven H. Jobe, *Dearly Beloved Friends: Henry James's Letters to Younger Men*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000.
53 Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole: A Biography*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952, p. 135. In 1915 Walpole reported to James on his acquaintance with a British journalist in Petrograd who held that "because the Russians don't play football . . . they must be homosexualists"; Walpole's correction – "they *never* are" – adverts coyly to his own field research. See chapter 2 for a discussion of the James–Walpole correspondence concerning Marc-André Raffalovich's life with John Gray in Scotland.
54 For a strong argument against the "missionary positions" that reductively "monosexual[ize]" artists such as Spender, see Garber, *Bisexuality*, pp. 355–64.
55 Stephen Spender, *The Destructive Element: A Study of Modern Writers and Beliefs*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936, pp. 34–5; David Leeming, based on his October 1987 interview with Spender; email to the author, 12/14/99.
56 Christopher Isherwood, *Lost Years: A Memoir 1945–1951*, ed. Katherine Bucknell, New York: HarperCollins, 2000, p. 103.
57 David Plante, *The Ghost of Henry James* (1970), quoted in Tintner, *Henry James's Legacy*, p. 125.
58 Stevens, *Henry James and Sexuality*, p. 70.

1 INDISCREET ANATOMIES AND PROTOGAY AESTHETES IN *RODERICK HUDSON* AND *THE EUROPEANS*

1 Robert Drake, *The Gay Canon*, New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1998, p. 178.
2 Stevens, *James and Sexuality*, p. 115.
3 Christopher Lane, *The Burdens of Intimacy: Psychoanalysis and Victorian Masculinity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, pp. 151–2.
4 Stevens, *James and Sexuality*, p. 70.
5 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Random House, 1978, p. 43.
6 Henry James, *The Princess Casamassima*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986, pp. 104–5, 71.
7 The gender work of James's evolving theorizings of the powerful bachelor-artist is well treated in Katherine V. Snyder, *Bachelorhood, Manhood, and the Novel, 1850–1925*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, chapter 3.
8 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ed. Sculley Bradley *et al*., New York: W. W. Norton, 1961, pp. 11–12.
9 Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, in Nina Baym *et al*. (eds.), *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 4th edn, volume 1, New York: W. W. Norton, 1994, p. 2172.
10 *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis, New York: Henry Holt, 2000, pp. 656, 658.
11 E. M. Forster, *Commonplace Book*, ed. Philip Gardner, London: Scolar Press, 1985, p. 224.
12 Scott S. Derrick, *Monumental Anxieties: Homoerotic Desire and Feminine Influence in Nineteenth-Century US Literature*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997, pp. 88–89. Wendy Graham also sees a "thinly veiled romantic relationship" and "illicit passion" behind Mallet's economic arrangement with Hudson; *Henry James's Thwarted Love*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999, pp. 103, 105.
13 Gregory Woods, "The Art of Friendship in *Roderick Hudson*," in John R. Bradley (ed.), *Henry James and Homo-Erotic Desire*, Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1998, p. 73.
14 See Michael Warner, "Homo-Narcissism; or, Heterosexuality," in Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (eds.), *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 4th edn, New York: Longman, 1998, pp. 625–40.
15 Joy S. Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives: Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 59, 138.
16 Henry James, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends*, 2 vols., London: Thames, 1903, volume 11, p. 82.
17 John Esten, *John Singer Sargent: The Male Nudes*, New York: Universe, 1999, preface by Donna Hassler, p. 17.
18 On James's relation to the cultural principle that "libidinal exposure" in art must be "formally contextualized, or otherwise controlled," see John Carlos

Rowe, "Hawthorne's Ghost in James's Italy: Sculptural Form, Romantic Narrative, and the Function of Sexuality in *The Marble Faun*, 'Adina,' and *William Wetmore Story and His Friends*," in Robert K. Martin and Leland S. Person (eds.), *Roman Holidays: American Writers and Artists in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002, pp. 83–5.

19 Henry James, *Roderick Hudson*, New York: Harper & Row, 1960, pp. 64, 30.
20 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 446, 453.
21 Felski, *Gender of Modernity*, p. 94.
22 Woods, "Art of Friendship," p. 72.
23 Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, ed. John Hollander, New York: Vintage/Library of America, 1992, p. 30.
24 Paul Robinson, *Gay Lives: Homosexual Autobiography from John Addington Symonds to Paul Monette*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 11.
25 Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*, New York: Poseidon Press, 1993, pp. 42–3.
26 Edith Wharton, *A Backward Glance*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985, pp. 185–6.
27 Gore Vidal's *Empire* quoted in Tintner, *James's Legacy*, pp. 130–1.
28 Somerset Maugham quoted in Tintner, *James's Legacy*, p. 100.
29 Mary Warner Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde's America: Counterculture in the Gilded Age*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 12–13.
30 Joris-Karl Huysmans quoted in Koestenbaum, *Queen's Throat*, p. 14.
31 Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde's America*, p. 10.
32 Period sources quoted in Chauncey, *Gay New York*, pp. 55, 39, 187.
33 Ernest Hemingway's friend A. E. Hotchner quoted in *People Online*, 7/26/99.
34 Carl Van Vechten, *The Blind Bow-Boy*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923, p. 117.
35 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "The Lotos-Eaters," in M. H. Abrams *et al*. (eds.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, volume 11, New York: W. W. Norton, 1962, p. 725.
36 Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990, p. 141.
37 Lane, *Burdens of Intimacy*, p. 151.
38 Drake, *Gay Canon*, p. 178.
39 Derrick, *Monumental Anxieties*, p. 84.
40 Ibid., p. 93.
41 E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1954, p. 38.
42 Stevens, *James and Sexuality*, p. 166.
43 Koestenbaum, *Queen's Throat*, p. 117.
44 Bech, *When Men Meet*, pp. 124–5.
45 Leon Edel (ed.), *Henry James' The Europeans: A Facsimile of the Manuscript*, New York: Howard Fertig, 1979, p. xi.

46 Walter Pater quoted in James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 151.
47 On the character of Babcock, see John Carlos Rowe, *The Other Henry James*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998, pp. 62–3, 67. The puritanical Babcock comically mistakes Newman for an aesthete, offering him a sententious lecture on the "immense seriousness of Art"; to the degree that Babcock's attack on Newman's "immorality" verges on farce, the character indicates James's steady movement (if circuitous path) toward aestheticist discourse (*AM* 72).
48 Bech, *When Men Meet*, pp. 124, 127.
49 Henry James, "The Author of 'Beltraffio,' " *English Illustrated Magazine*, June–July 1884, p. 564.
50 Stevens, *James and Sexuality*, pp. 68, 67.
51 Pater quoted in Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints*, p. 191.

2 THE ELUSIVE QUEERNESS OF ''QUEER COMRADES''

1 See Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986, p. 103; Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988, p. 179; Freedman, *Professions of Taste*, p. 183.
2 David McWhirter, "Restaging the Hurt: Henry James and the Artist as Masochist," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 33, no. 4 (winter 1991), 466.
3 Joseph Litvak, *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992, p. 276.
4 Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 2–3; Forster, *Maurice*, p. 159.
5 Philip Horne, "Henry James: The Master and the 'Queer Affair' of 'The Pupil,' " *Critical Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (autumn 1995), 81.
6 Richard Ellmann, "Henry James Amongst the Aesthetes," in Bradley, *James and Homo-Erotic Desire*, p. 36.
7 Henry James, *The Tragic Muse*, volume VII, New York Edition, New York: Scribner's, 1907, pp. 22–3; emphasis added.
8 Henry James, "Collaboration," in Mark Mitchell and D. Leavitt (eds.), *Pages Passed from Hand to Hand*: *The Hidden Tradition of Homosexual Literature in English from 1748 to 1914*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997, pp. 227, 235, 237–8.
9 Lynda Zwinger, "Bodies that Don't Matter: The Queering of 'Henry James,' " *Modern Fiction Studies* 41, nos. 3–4 (fall-winter 1995), 658. Zwinger incisively warns against reductive readings of the fiction as the "repository of James's own unacted sex acts"; instead, his work both "anatomizes the key structures of sexuality *per se* – how it is constructed, policed, exchanged, perpetuated" and gravitates toward stress points at which the norms of the bourgeois Anglo-American family (e.g., the Dormers) are "vulnerable to deviation and perversion" (p. 667).

10 Lane, *Burdens of Intimacy*, pp. 159, 163. Sara Blair argues that the novel's exploration of self-renovative opportunities in modern cosmopolitanism brings on an "involuntary movement of defense" and that its subversive energies are "ultimately redirected, so as to protect James's project of culture-building against both provincial Anglo-Saxonism and incursion by more virulently transgressive forces," among them "decadents, anarchists, homosexuals, aliens and Jews"; *Henry James and the Writing of Race and Nation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 134.

11 Nicolas Buchele, "Renunciations in James's Late Novels," in Bradley, *James and Homo-Erotic Desire*, p. 148.

12 *The Diary of Alice James*, ed. Leon Edel, New York: Dodd, Mead, *c.* 1964, pp. 98–9.

13 Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990, pp. 195, 208.

14 James's letter to Gosse quoted in Ann Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape, 1849–1928*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 358.

15 George Ives quoted in John Stokes, *Oscar Wilde: Myths, Miracles, and Imitations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 86.

16 Psomiades, "Still Burning," p. 21. As Psomiades points out, James's well-known caveat against the "basely erotic preoccupation" of Vernon Lee's novel (*L* III: 86) hints that she herself is "the source of the perverse eroticism" that is ostensibly under critique (p. 27). Lee would return the favor in the story "Lady Tal" (1892), in which a "dainty but frugal bachelor" described as a "Henry James, of a lesser magnitude," bears all the markings of the closet, his sexual passion redirected into a "passion for investigating" the lives of others (*CH* 240–2).

17 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 282.

18 Ed Madden, "Say it with Flowers: The Poetry of Marc-André Raffalovich," *College Literature* 24, no. 1 (Feb. 1997), 11–27.

19 Marzial's *Gallery of Pigeons* (1874) bears a queer subtext.

20 For various views on the James–Wilde relation, see Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, especially pp. 178–79; Freedman, *Professions of Taste*, chapter 4; and Stevens, *James and Sexuality*, pp. 126–34.

21 Evan Charteris (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse*, London: William Heinemann, 1931, p. 178; Graham, *James's Thwarted Love*, p. 179.

22 The casual comment on James's "circle" of "fast" gay men comes from Sheldon M. Novick, whose *Henry James: The Young Master*, New York: Random House, 1996, skillfully exploited a misguided critical and popular obsession with genital proof of James's homosexuality by suggesting a youthful affair between James and "his lover" Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (an identification allegedly "hinted" by James's writings, but unsupported, as is their "secret act," by any persuasive new evidence), pp. 109–10; shortly after the book's publication, Novick conceded that the passages which, in his view, "obliquely referred" to James's sexual fondling of Holmes "might be just James' fantasy" (*Slate* online magazine, 11 December 1996–29 January 1997); in a less public fashion, Novick retreated even further from his speculation about the James–Holmes interlude,

calling it "no more than an interpretation" ("James Family Listserve," 12/19/96, 8/28/96).

23 Litvak, *Caught in the Act*, p. 274.

24 Edith Wharton, *The Uncollected Critical Writings*, (ed.) Frederick Wegener, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 142; E. M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest*, New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1964, p. 122.

25 James Creech, *Closet Writing/Gay Reading: The Case of Melville's Pierre*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 97.

26 Oliver Marlow Wilkinson, introduction to Louis Wilkinson, *Seven Friends*, (ed.) Anthony Naylor, Thame, Oxon: Mandrade Press, 1992, p. 13.

27 Robinson, *Gay Lives*, p. 36.

28 E. M. Forster, "Preface" to G. Lowes Dickinson, *The Greek View of Life*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1960; see also chapter 3, section 10, "Friendship," for representative passages that James would have read describing homosexuality in ancient Greece.

29 Freedman, *Professions of Taste*, p. 172.

30 As Phyllis Grosskurth, editor of Symonds's memoirs, observes, "many people have the vague but mistaken impression that [Symonds] was associated with the aesthetes of the *fin de siècle* . . . an association . . . [that] would have been an anathema to him"; "Introduction," *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, London: Hutchinson, 1984, p. 13.

31 Kaplan, *James: Imagination of Genius*, pp. 301–2.

32 Forster, *Commonplace Book*, p. 224.

33 *Memoirs of Symonds*, p. 24.

34 Symonds quoted in Morris B. Kaplan, "Who's Afraid of John Saul?: Urban Culture and the Politics of Desire in Late Victorian London," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5, no. 3 (1999), 269.

35 *Memoirs of Symonds*, pp. 254–6.

36 Symonds quoted in Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p. 157; on his ill-fated campaign for the Oxford poetry chair, see pp. 158–64.

37 Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, pp. 182, 322; Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p. 23.

38 Herbert M. Schueller and Robert L. Peters (eds.), *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, volume II, *1869–1884*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968, pp. 896, 934; Virginia Harlow, *Thomas Sergeant Perry: A Biography*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1950, p. 313. In March 1888 Symonds consulted Perry on the history of *paiderastia* in preparation for *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (1891), another work that he vowed to keep "in obscurity"; Schueller and Peters (eds.), *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, volume III, *1885–1893*, p. 302. I have found no evidence that Perry ever received *Greek Ethics* or *Modern Ethics*, but again the hazy operations of the Victorian men's lending library work against certainty. It seems vital to understanding the tensions involved in confidential communication that not even Gosse saw *Greek Ethics* until the end of 1889 (eight years after its printing), and that (contra Edel) Gosse did not share *Modern Ethics* with James until January 1893, two years after he had seen Symonds's proofs for the work; *Letters of Symonds*, volume

III, p. 436; Leon Edel, *Henry James: A Life*, New York: Harper & Row, 1985, p. 438.

39 Urbain Mengin quoted in Horne, "Master and the 'Queer Affair' of 'The Pupil,' " p. 90, n. 5.

40 Creech, *Closet Writing/Gay Reading*, p. 97: "Almost every word has homosexual resonance if not outright reference but reveals absolutely nothing compromising to an unaware reader." Creech justly credits David Bergman for one of the first readings of the expressive-protective maneuvers of Jamesian camp; *Gaiety Transfigured: Gay Self-Representation in American Literature*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.

41 Marcel Proust quoted in Bersani, *Homos*, p. 148.

42 Marc-André Raffalovich, "The World Well Lost IV," in White, *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality*, p. 262.

43 As Symonds had only daughters, the fact that his fictional counterpart has only a son reveals James's dramatic intuition at work: patriarchal culture believes it has somewhat more at stake, and more anxiously, in the proper molding of Dolcino. James's sense of the gothic intensity of this social interest is underlined here by the conjunction of "poison" and the character name Beatrice, borrowed from Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale, "Rappaccini's Daughter."

44 James's belated recognitions show also in his suggestive revisions; the narrator's matter-of-fact "So I never touched Dolcino" becomes "So I never laid a longing hand on Dolcino"; the simple "*Beltraffio*" (AB 355) becomes "the black 'Beltraffio,' " a more dangerous-sounding manual of alterity; and Beatrice's "long, slender hands" (AB 311), which intervene so destructively in this quarrel over an emergent masculinity, become the "slightly too osseous hands" of death itself; for these later variants, see Henry James, *Stories of Writers and Artists*, ed. F. O. Matthiessen, New York: New Directions, *c.* 1903, pp. 86, 94, 58.

45 See Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, chapter 7.

46 *Selected Letters of Henry James to Edmund Gosse, 1882–1915: A Literary Friendship*, ed. Rayburn S. Moore, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988, p. 32.

47 D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 205–6; Gosse quoted in Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, p. 320.

48 James's 1884 letter concerning Huysmans is found in Harlow, *Thomas Sergeant Perry*, p. 317; the newspaper phrase "mock-hysterical aesthetes" is quoted in Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 156; Symonds's comment to Havelock Ellis is from *Letters of Symonds*, volume III, p. 710.

49 Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in *Plays*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, p. 303.

50 Ellmann, "James Amongst the Aesthetes," p. 36.

51 The phrase "pointless nomadism" is Ellmann's, in *Oscar Wilde*, p. 179.

52 Sinfield, *Wilde Century*, p. 3.

53 Max Beerbohm quoted in Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 38; Warner Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde's America*, p. 2.

54 Lee Edelman, *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory*, New York and London: Routledge, 1994, p. 12.
55 Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints*, pp. 192, 186.
56 John Addington Symonds, "A Problem in Modern Ethics," in White, *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality*, p. 73.
57 Nina Auerbach, *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 133.
58 Ford Madox Ford, *The Spirit of the People* (1907), excerpted in Judy Giles and Tim Middleton (eds.), *Writing Englishness, 1900–1950: An Introductory Sourcebook on National Identity*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995, p. 46.
59 Rowe, *Other Henry James*, p. 94.
60 Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p. 199.
61 McWhirter, "Staging the Hurt," p. 465.
62 Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *One of Us: The Mastery of Joseph Conrad*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp. 176–80.
63 Wilde, *Importance of Being Earnest*, p. 260.
64 Blair, *James and the Writing of Race and Nation*, p. 155.
65 Forster, *Maurice*, p. 30–3; Van Vechten, *Blind Bow-Boy*, p. 57; Waugh, *Brideshead*. Like James's Nash, Blanche points to the mutually constitutive relation between sexual normativity and national-cultural loyalty, resisting "attempt[s] . . . to make an Englishman of him" and becoming "a nomad of no nationality." More concertedly than James, and reflecting perhaps a waning of the cultural animus toward the "effeminate" aesthete, Waugh utilizes Blanche to criticize men who exorcise same-sex passion by scapegoating gays and who reproduce "cretinous, porcine sons" for the further (de)generation of the race; pp. 46–50.
66 *Selected Letters of James to Gosse*, ed. Moore, p. 120.
67 Kaplan, *Imagination of Genius*, pp. 403–4.
68 Moon, *Small Boy and Others*, pp. 37–8.
69 Alice Boughton, "A Note by his Photographer," in *Homage to Henry James, 1843–1926*, Mamaroneck, NY: Paul P. Appel, 1971, p. 126.
70 Kaplan, *Imagination of Genius*, p. 304.
71 Lane, *Burdens of Intimacy*, p. 154.
72 Ibid., p. 161.
73 Miller, *Novel and the Police*, p. 148.
74 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, pp. 9–10.

3 *THE TURN OF THE SCREW*, OR: THE DISPOSSESSED HEARTS OF LITTLE GENTLEMEN

1 Oscar Wilde quoted in Philip Sicker, *Love and the Quest for Identity in the Fiction of Henry James*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 8.
2 *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, volume 11, *1898–1902*, ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 111.

3 Ibid., p. 122.
4 Wilde quoted in Sinfield, *Wilde Century*, p. 101; and in Joseph Bristow, "Wilde, Dorian Gray, and Gross Indecency," in J. Bristow (ed.), *Sexual Sameness: Textual Differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992, p. 53.
5 Sinfield, *Wilde Century*, pp. 101–2.
6 Horne, "James: The Master and the 'Queer Affair' of 'The Pupil,' " 80.
7 James's resistance to specification cleared the way for such far-reaching allegorical readings of *The Ambassadors* as James Baldwin's: the Newsome family factory in Massachusetts, which at "an unbelievable human expense, produces unnameable objects," figured a materialist white American society heedless of the "human product" in view, except that it should not involve that "different human species," the African-American. It is probably no coincidence that Baldwin's diction, drawn from the vocabulary of racism ("unnameable objects," "a different . . . species"), applies as well to the late Victorian construction and modern social condition of homosexuality; "White Man's Guilt," in *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948–1985*, New York: St. Martin's Press/Marek, 1985, pp. 413–14.
8 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994, p. 78.
9 Truman Capote quoted in Gerald Clarke, *Capote: A Biography*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998, pp. 334, 437.
10 Lawrence Danson, *Wilde's Intentions: The Artist in his Criticism*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1997, p. 30.
11 Horne, "James: The Master and the 'Queer Affair' of 'The Pupil,' " 79.
12 Virginia Woolf, "The Ghost Stories," in Leon Edel (ed.), *Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962, pp. 53–4.
13 Forster, *Commonplace Book*, pp. 17–18.
14 Evelyn Waugh, *A Literary Chronicle: 1920–1950*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1952, p. 292.
15 Castle, *Apparitional Lesbian*, p. 155.
16 Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 128.
17 James's artist/disciple tales are thoughtfully analyzed in Leland Person, "Homo-Erotic Desire in the Tales of Writers and Artists," in Bradley, *James and Homo-Erotic Desire*, pp. 111–23.
18 James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 4–5.
19 Lytton Strachey quoted in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "The Beast in the Closet: James and the Writing of Homosexual Panic," in *Epistemology of the Closet*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990, p. 212.
20 In the Jamesian gothic generally, both specters who "like" and likable specters bear watching, as again in *The Jolly Corner*, when Spencer Brydon jealously challenges Alice Staverton's interest in his ghastly alter ego: "You 'like' that horror – ?" (*THJ* 339).

21 Stanley Renner, " 'Red Hair, Very Red, Close-Curling': Sexual Hysteria, Physiognomical Bogeymen, and the 'Ghosts' in *The Turn of the Screw*," in Peter G. Beidler (ed.), *Henry James: The Turn of the Screw*, Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1995, pp. 227, 229.
22 A. Bronson Alcott, "Sonnet XIV," in John Hollander (ed.), *American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century*, volume 1, New York: Library of America, 1993, p. 226.
23 Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, pp. 4–5.
24 Koestenbaum, *Queen's Throat*, p. 54.
25 Shoshana Felman, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation," *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, pp. 109–11.
26 Renner, "Sexual Hysteria," pp. 225, 238–9.
27 John Carlos Rowe, *The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, pp. 127–46.
28 Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side*, pp. 123; Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p. 207. An excellent treatment of the Wilde connection in this story is Neill Matheson's "Talking Horrors: James, Euphemism, and the Specter of Wilde," *American Literature* 71, no. 4 (December 1999), 709–50.
29 Wilde quoted in Danson, *Wilde's Intentions*, p. 89.
30 Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side*, pp. 184, 198.
31 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, volume 1, p. 103.
32 Michael Trask, "Getting into it with James: Substitution and Erotic Reversal in *The Awkward Age*," *American Literature* 69, no. 1 (March 1997), 109–10.
33 Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, p. 81.
34 Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, p. 80. In the late essay "Within the Rim," one of the quotidian things that especially binds James to a war-threatened England is "the call of child-voices muffled in the comforting air" (*LL* 550, n. 2).
35 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 156.
36 Edel, *James: The Treacherous Years*, p. 198.
37 E. A. Sheppard, *Henry James and The Turn of the Screw*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 99–100.
38 Louis Waldstein, MD, *The Subconscious Self and its Relation to Education and Health*, New York: Scribner's, 1897, pp. 46–7.
39 Schueller and Peters, *Letters of Symonds*, volume III, *1885–1893*, p. 709.
40 Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, p. 169.
41 Ibid., p. 106.
42 Peter G. Beidler, "The Governess and the Ghosts," *PMLA* 100, no. 1 (1985), 96–7.
43 Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, p. 86.
44 Ibid., p. 7.
45 In one of Wilde's famous prison letters, to the Home Secretary, a moving concern for the "honour of his name" as a gentleman is only very partially attenuated by his ironic miscalculation of the fate of his "name" as an artist: "[The petitioner] knows only too well that . . . his name [is] blotted from the

scroll of English Literature never to be replaced"; *Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 657–8.

46 Hopkins quoted in David Kalstone, *Becoming a Poet* (ed.) Robert Hemenway, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1989, p. 241; William Dean Howells, *April Hopes*, in Don L. Cook (ed.), *Novels 1886–1888*, New York: Library of America, 1989, p. 427; Charteris, *Life and Letters of Gosse*, p. 155.

47 Again, Mary Warner Blanchard's research is useful: American medical authority had begun as early as the 1880s to list among the morphological signs of male homosexuality eyebrows that were "delicate and arched . . . of the sort coveted by women," as well as "a very sensual mouth," details that show up (almost verbatim) in the profile of Quint; *Wilde's America*, pp. 10, 12.

48 Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side*, p. 207.

49 Joseph Conrad, *Victory*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996, pp. 139, 136, 135, 144, 147, 366.

50 Sheppard notes the gendered meanings of the children's names; *Henry James and The Turn of the Screw*, p. 29.

51 Michael Bakewell attributes Dodgson's "arrested sexual development" to his early encounters with schoolboy homosexuality; *Lewis Carroll: A Biography*, London: Heinemann, 1996, pp. 28–9; see also Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, pp. 196–7.

52 *Memoirs of Symonds*, ed. Grosskurth, pp. 94–5.

53 Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson quoted in Robinson, *Gay Lives*, p. 29.

54 *Memoirs of Symonds*, pp. 94–5.

4 MASCULINITY ''CHANGED AND QUEER'' IN *THE AMBASSADORS*

1 Michiel W. Heyns, "The Double Narrative of 'The Beast in the Jungle,' " in Gert Buelens (ed.), *Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 121, 125, n. 11.

2 Renu Bora, "Outing Texture," in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (ed.), *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997, pp. 95, 118, 123.

3 Stevens, *James and Sexuality*, p. 166.

4 James McCourt, *Time Remaining*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993, pp. 229–38.

5 Ross Posnock, *The Trial of Curiosity: Henry James, William James, and the Challenge of Modernity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 242.

6 Rowe, *Other Henry James*, p. 106.

7 Stevens, *James and Sexuality*, pp. 115–16, 125–6.

8 As Philip Horne notes, James's admonitions may refer not only to Walpole's experiential deficit as a "romantic, homosexual young man" but also to the prospect of censorship (*LL* 493, n. 3).

9 Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 114.

10 Alan W. Bellringer, *The Ambassadors*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1984, p. 127.
11 Evelyne Ender, *Sexing the Mind: Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Hysteria*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 3.
12 Maxwell Geismar, *Henry James and the Jacobites*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963, p. 8.
13 Respectively: Edward Garnett, *Speaker* [England] n.s. 9 (14 November 1903), pp. 146–7 (*CR* 400); Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 111; Richard Chase, "James' *Ambassadors*," in C. Shapiro (ed.), *Twelve Original Essays on Great American Novels*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1958, p. 136; Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, New York: Stein & Day, 1960, revised edn, 1966/1975, p. 307; Laurence B. Holland, *The Expense of Vision: Essays on the Craft of Henry James*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964/1982, p. 281; Carren Kaston, *Imagination and Desire in the Novels of Henry James*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984, pp. 102–7; Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992, p. 166.
14 Geismar, *Henry James and the Jacobites*, p. 278.
15 Posnock, *Trial of Curiosity*, p. 242.
16 Richard Poirier, *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1967, p. 143.
17 Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 240, 243.
18 Kenneth Scambray, *A Varied Harvest: The Life and Works of Henry Blake Fuller*, Pittsburgh, PN: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987, p. 24.
19 Theodore Roosevelt quoted in Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 202. The rubric in England was "race degeneracy"; see Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, London: Pimlico, 1968, chapter 8, "The Organization of Morality."
20 Martha Banta, "Being a 'Begonia' in a Man's World," in John Carlos Rowe (ed.), *New Essays on The Education of Henry Adams*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 51.
21 Posnock, *Trial of Curiosity*, p. 204.
22 Rowe, *Theoretical Dimensions*, p. 89.
23 For background, see Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality and its Discontents: Meanings, Myths and Modern Sexualities*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. On the suppression of *Italian Hours* in 1909, see Hynes, *Edwardian Turn of Mind*, pp. 301–2: in England, the newly theorized "sexual instinct" was also known as the "racial instinct," meaning the dominant group motive of self-preservation.
24 Christopher Craft, *Another Kind of Love: Male Homosexual Desire in English Discourse, 1850–1920*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994, pp. 27–8.
25 Gore Vidal, "Foreword," in Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, New York: Dutton, 1995, p. vii.

26 Emily Dickinson, no. 258, in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson, Boston: Little, Brown, *c.* 1960, p. 118.
27 Philip Rahv, "Attitudes Toward Henry James," in F. W. Dupee (ed.), *The Question of Henry James*, London: Allan Wingate, 1947, p. 285.
28 Ender, *Sexing the Mind*, p. 87.
29 Mary James's letter to Henry James quoted in Susan M. Griffin, "The Jamesian Body: Two Oral Tales," *Victorians Institute Journal*, p. 130; Henry James, Sr., quoted in Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973/1987, p. 109.
30 Kaston, *Imagination and Desire*, p. 106.
31 H. G. Wells, *Boon, The Mind of the Race, The Wild Asses of the Devil, and The Last Trump*, New York: Doran, 1915, p. 113.
32 Hugh Walpole, *The English Novel: Some Notes on its Evolution. The Rede Lecture, 1925*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/Folcroft Library Editions, 1970, p. 27.
33 *Selected Letters of E. M. Forster*, volume 11, ed. Mary Lago and P. N. Furbank, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 299.
34 Geismar, *Henry James and the Jacobites*, p. 264.
35 Warner, "Homo-Narcissism," pp. 627–8 (emphasis added).
36 Freedman, *Professions of Taste*, p. 193.
37 Marianne Moore, *The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore*, ed. Patricia C. Willis, New York: Viking, 1986, p. 317.
38 Georges-Michel Sarotte, *Like a Brother, Like a Lover: Male Homosexuality in the American Novel and Theater from Herman Melville to James Baldwin*, Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1978, p. 203.
39 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, p. 307.
40 In James's recollection of his early family life, "no good word" was ever spoken on behalf of "success – in the sense that was in the general air" (*AU* 123).
41 Renu Bora productively and compatibly reads Strether's visual and tactile admirings of young men in another direction: Strether's interest in Chad's (or Bilham's) physical "texture invites us to read queer curiosity (manual and other pleasures) into many textures . . . clothing, furniture, . . . or architecture"; by way of this erotized "fetishistic allure," James invites the reader to mime his protagonist's fascination and the perverse desires it may bespeak; Bora, "Outing Texture," p. 95.
42 James, "Author of 'Beltraffio,' " *English Illustrated Magazine*, June–July 1884, p. 564.
43 Charteris, *Life and Letters of Gosse*, p. 276.
44 Horne, "James: The Master and the 'Queer Affair' of 'The Pupil,' " 78.
45 Stevens, *James and Sexuality*, pp. 171, 167.
46 Susan E. Gunter and Steven H. Jobe, "Dearly Beloved Friends: Henry James's Letters to Younger Men," in John R. Bradley (ed.), *Henry James and Homo-Erotic Desire*, Houndsmills, England: Macmillan, 1998, p. 129.
47 Susan E. Gunter, " 'You Will Fit Tighter into my Embrace!': Queer Rhetoric in Henry James's Letters to Jocelyn Persse," Henry James Society panel,

Modern Language Association, Chicago, December 1999; the following quotations from James's letters to Persse are from pp. 3–7.

48 Horne, "Henry James: The Master and the 'Queer Affair' of 'The Pupil,' " 90, n. 5.

49 Schueller and Peters, *Letters of Symonds*, volume III, *1885–1893*, p. 424.

50 Forster, "Terminal Note," *Maurice*, pp. 245–6.

51 Forster, *Commonplace Book*, p. 29.

52 Brooks, *Body Work*, p. 1.

53 Sedgwick, "Beast in the Closet," p. 194.

54 Buchele, "Renunciations," p. 147.

55 Woolf, "Ghost Stories," p. 50.

56 Symonds, *Problem in Modern Ethics*, p. 73.

57 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, volume I, pp. 42–3.

58 Leland Person, Jr., "Henry James, George Sand, and the Suspense of Masculinity," *PMLA* 106 (1991), 525.

59 Lyndon Orr, "Men Who Marry and Men Who Do Not" 1905, quoted in Vincent J. Bertolini, "Fireside Chastity: The Erotics of Sentimental Bachelorhood," *American Literature* 68, no. 4 (December 1996), 729.

60 Gunter, "Queer Rhetoric," 5.

61 In terms highly congenial to my argument, Jonathan Levin thoughtfully discusses the Jamesian balcony as a site of "ideal balance" between privacy and exposure, "the external face of a carefully cultivated interior world"; *The Poetics of Transition: Emerson, Pragmatism, and American Literary Modernism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 126–7. Tom Lutz shows how this significantly charged space in the fiction reflects James's youthful initiation in the "fine art" of "taking in" sensations from a Parisian balcony, as recounted in James's autobiography; *American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991, pp. 248–9. For a powerful exegesis of balcony sexual politics in *The Golden Bowl*, see Leo Bersani, *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1976.

62 Bertolini, "Fireside Chastity," pp. 729–30.

63 Christopher Lane, "Jamesian Inscrutability," *Henry James Review* 20 (1999), 247.

64 *Memoirs of Symonds*, ed. Grosskurth, pp. 183, 188.

65 Amy Lowell, "The Sisters," in *Complete Poetical Works of Amy Lowell*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955, pp. 460–1.

66 William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth *et al*., New York: W. W. Norton, 1979, p. 398.

5 GRATIFYING ''THE ETERNAL BOY IN US ALL'': WILLA CATHER, HENRY JAMES, AND OSCAR WILDE

1 Elizabeth Sergeant, "Excerpts from *Willa Cather: A Memoir*," in James Schroeter (ed.), *Willa Cather and her Critics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967, p. 120.

2 Acocella, *Cather and the Politics of Criticism*, p. 48.
3 Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, pp. 122, 119–20.
4 Walpole quoted in Hart-Davis, *Walpole: A Biography*, p. 193.
5 Elizabeth Moorhead, "The Novelist," in Schroeter (ed.), *Cather and her Critics*, pp. 102–3.
6 T. K. Whipple, "Willa Cather," in Schroeter (ed.), *Cather and her Critics*, p. 42.
7 "A Short Story Course Can Only Delay" (Flora Merrill), in L. Brent Bohlke (ed.), *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*, Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1986, p. 75.
8 Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, pp. 167–76; Butler, *Bodies that Matter* pp. 143–66. The strongest treatments to date of Cather's queerness are Lindemann's *Cather: Queering America*, and Jonathan Goldberg's *Willa Cather and Others*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001. It bears noting, given the objectives of this chapter, that the first study mentions James only in passing as a "touchstone of late Victorian . . . sexual ambiguity" and does not invoke Wilde at all, casting Cather's ambivalences "in a specifically American mode" (pp. 21, 34), while the second involves Wilde tangentially (but thoughtfully) without substantially invoking James.
9 Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 77.
10 Lionel Trilling, "Willa Cather," in Schroeter, *Cather and her Critics*, p. 155 (my emphasis).
11 Whipple, "Willa Cather," p. 43.
12 Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*, New York: Free Press, 1999, p. 53.
13 Sarah Orne Jewett quoted in Sharon O'Brien, *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 336.
14 Cather quoted in Bohlke, *Cather in Person*, p. 39.
15 Whipple, "Willa Cather," p. 47.
16 Lindemann, *Queering America*, pp. 41, 44; Acocella, *Politics of Criticism*, p. 46.
17 In *The Song of the Lark* the marriage of diva Thea Kronborg that is casually reported in "the Denver papers" seems entirely functional, with a commercial gentleman bending to the "discipline" of serving her operatic career. Thea's Wagnerian "shining armor" and "impatience for the sword" signify offstage as well, or rather they suggest that there is no offstage for the virile artist who is wedded to her or his art (*EN* 701, 688, 693, 696. *My Ántonia* culminates in a sort of Victor–Victorian union between Ántonia Shimerda and her Anton. If Anton Cuzak is "not a man of much force," as one of Cather's choric voices observes, then (*pace* the critics) this gentle spouse is "somehow . . . just right for Tony" Shimerda (*EN* 912).
18 Spender, *Destructive Element*, p. 196.
19 Rebecca West, "The Classic Artist," in Schroeter, *Cather and her Critics*, p. 62.

20 Philip Hoare, *Serious Pleasures: The Life of Stephen Tennant*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1990, p. 217.
21 Warner, *Trouble with Normal*, p. 55.
22 Hoare, *Serious Pleasures*, p. 341.
23 In her 1896 review of *The Other House* ("the sort of book that keeps one up until three o'clock in the morning"), Cather is audibly relieved to find that James could produce "passionate flesh and blood characters," especially the manly, "comely fellow" Anthony Bream, thus masculinizing himself as an author as well (*WP* II: 551–2).
24 Acocella, *Politics of Criticism*, pp. 47, 56.
25 I refer here, of course, to James's much quoted phrase "that queer monster the artist," from a late letter to Henry Adams (*L* IV: 706).
26 James, "Death of the Lion," pp. 130, 169; Rowe reads "The Death of the Lion" as one of James's more complex "defenses against sexuality" and a key transitional text in his emerging gender politics; *Other Henry James*, pp. 112–21.
27 Felski, *Gender of Modernity*, p. 95.
28 Acocella's claim that Cather consistently "endorsed" the stigmatizing of male homosexuals, or "willie-boys, as she called them," is not tenable, as evidenced in her intimate friendship with the British author Stephen Tennant. Quite possibly the pejorative "willie-boy," like the figure of the abject "Will" Maidenwood, suggests a subconscious affinity with deviant men by recalling Cather's self-fashioning as the "boy" Will or Billy throughout the period of her adolescence. *Politics of Criticism*, p. 47.
29 Jonathan Goldberg, "Strange Brothers," in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (ed.), *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997, p. 473.
30 Thwaite, *Gosse: A Literary Landscape*, p. 358. The ironies multiply: Wilde's work never appeared in the *Yellow Book*, and the "yellow book" he carried at the time of his arrest was simply a novel in yellow covers, like the type that entices Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors*.
31 Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, New York: Random House/Vintage, 1990, p. 19.
32 Katherine Mansfield, "Carnation," in *The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, New York: Ecco Press, 1983, pp. 322–3.
33 As Judith Butler suggests, Cather employs a name like "Jimmy Broadwood" (or "Tony" or "Tommy" or maybe especially "William Cather") not to *mean* "masculine" as the reified category "radically distinct" from feminine, for this would concede the authority of the sex/gender system to dictate such discriminations; rather, the name refers more fundamentally to the processes of "translation and displacement" that constitute (and perpetually reconstitute) gender and sexuality, pointing to the way in which a "refracted sexuality" such as lesbianism is produced as a "challenge to legibility" within normative frames of reading, both in literary texts and in the culture at large; *Bodies that Matter*, pp. 144–5.
34 Lindemann, *Queering America*, p. 41.

35 John P. Anders, *Willa Cather's Sexual Aesthetics and the Male Homosexual Literary Tradition*, Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1999, p. 61.
36 Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, pp. 169–70.
37 Anders, *Cather's Sexual Aesthetics*, p. 62.
38 George du Maurier, *Trilby*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994, p. 67.
39 Julie Abraham, *Are Girls Necessary? Lesbian Writing and Modern Histories*, New York and London: Routledge, 1996, p. 42.
40 Danson, *Wilde's Intentions*, p. 26.
41 Felski, *Gender of Modernity*, p. 95.
42 Lindemann, *Queering America*, p. 45.
43 Abraham, *Are Girls Necessary?*, p. 42.
44 Edmund Wilson, "Two Novels of Willa Cather," in Schroeter, *Cather and her Critics*, p. 25.
45 Sinclair Lewis, "A Hamlet of the Plains," in Schroeter, *Cather and her Critics*, p. 31.
46 Christopher Nealon, "Affect-Genealogy: Feeling and Affiliation in Willa Cather," *American Literature* 69, no. 1 (March 1997), 19.
47 Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 186, 188.
48 Heavy-handedly, Cather inscribes another double for Claude in the "psychopathic case" pregnantly named "the lost American." The "queer thing" about this soldier's injuries is that they have "clear wiped out" all memories of only the women left at home, including a strenuous fiancée; the novel broadly hints that his madness is all method (*EN* 1198–1201).
49 "Fiction Recalls Violinist Lost in War: An Interview with Willa Cather," in Bohlke, *Cather in Person*, p. 56.
50 Ibid., p. 56.
51 Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, volume 1, trans. Stephen Conway, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
52 Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 301–20.
53 Craft, *Another Kind of Love*, pp. 120–1.
54 Ullman, *Sex Seen*, pp. 63–4; *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*, (ed.) Donat Gallagher, London: Methuen, 1983, p. 124.
55 North, *Reading 1922*, p. 188.
56 "Fiction Recalls Violinist Lost in War," in Bohlke, *Cather in Person*, p. 56.
57 Pulitzer citation quoted in Bohlke, *Cather in Person*, p. 57.
58 Lindemann, *Queering America*, p. 113.
59 Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, pp. 174–6.
60 Abraham, *Are Girls Necessary?*, pp. 54–5, 44.
61 In Cather, substitution breeds substitution, so that a man without "boys of his own" (such as Roddy Blake) may adopt a male friend (Tom Outland) as a surrogate son (or surrogate daughter, since Tom faints "like a girl in a novel"), then "nurs[e]" him back to health, quasi-maternally, and subsequently play the "older brother" to him (*PH* 164–5, 215). Still, a familial model remains in play;

as in *One of Ours*, the attempt to map out a new order of relations between men or between women becomes entangled in the very structures it seeks to subvert.

62 Goldberg, "Strange Brothers," p. 471.
63 Abraham, *Are Girls Necessary?*, p. 52.
64 Rowe, *Other Henry James*, p. 108.
65 Goldberg, "Strange Brothers," p. 473.
66 Goldberg makes a strong case for Louie Marsellus, the Professor's son-in-law, as the texts Wildean figure, and some of Marsellus's penchant for sensualism rubs off on the Professor. St. Peter's taste coincides with "Louie's taste" as he "strokes . . . with evident pleasure" the furs that Louie buys for his wife (*PH* 67). The furs that link Louie, Tom, and the Professor clearly correspond with the fetishized blanket that brings the bodies of Roddy Blake, Tom, and St. Peter into relation; see Goldberg, "Strange Brothers," pp. 470, 473.
67 Forster, *Maurice*, p. 209.

6 ''THE OTHER HALF IS THE MAN'': THE QUEER MODERN TRIANGLE OF GERTRUDE STEIN, ERNEST HEMINGWAY, AND HENRY JAMES

1 As a measure of the status of *The Torrents of Spring* in the Hemingway canon, the 300-page *Cambridge Companion to Ernest Hemingway*, ed. Scott Donaldson, Cambridge University Press, 1996, contains only three passing mentions of the text.
2 Harvey Breit, *The Writer Observed*, Cleveland, OH: World Publishing, 1956, p. 276.
3 Hemingway scholars will recognize my renovations of Philip Young's *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966. I have benefited particularly from Comley and Scholes's thoughtful study, *Hemingway's Genders*.
4 Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America*, New York: Random House, 1935, p. 52.
5 John Hyde Preston, "A Conversation with Gertrude Stein," in Linda Simon (ed.), *Gertrude Stein Remembered*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994, pp. 159–61.
6 Rena Sanderson, "Hemingway and Gender History," in Donaldson, *Cambridge Companion to Hemingway*, p. 171.
7 Preston, "Conversation with Stein," p. 160.
8 *Anderson's Love Letters*, pp. 306–7.
9 Gertrude Stein, "Transatlantic Interview," in Robert Bartlett Haas (ed.), *A Primer for the Gradual Understanding of Gertrude Stein*, Los Angeles, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1971, p. 22.
10 Joseph Allen Boone argues, on the basis of Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler's *The Young and Evil* (1933), that another audience did exist, as well as other types of authors, in whose shared world Jake Barnes's "sexual dysfunction and Brett's 'faghag' propensities" would have "fit right [in]" rather

than "wreaking the havoc" that Hemingway depicts. But *The Young and Evil*, consciously modeled after *The Sun Also Rises*, circulated mainly in Paris (with Stein's support), having been "instantly seized by English and American customs" before sinking out of sight altogether – a prospect hardly to be risked by Hemingway, or very many others; *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 225, 471, n. 104.

11 Preston, "Conversation with Stein," p. 159.

12 *Dear Sammy: Letters from Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas*, ed. Samuel M. Steward, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977, p. 56.

13 Hemingway quoted in Kenneth S. Lynn, *Hemingway*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987, p. 533.

14 Sedgwick, "Beast in the Closet," pp. 205, 207.

15 Introducing the welcome reissue of Glenway Wescott's *The Pilgrim Hawk*, Michael Cunningham joins Edmund White and many other readers in attributing a Jamesian quality to Wescott's prose: "It is James . . . whom Wescott most nearly resembles . . . produc[ing] all his sparks from within: what fascinates him are devastating events that spring directly from character"; *The Pilgrim Hawk: A Love Story*, New York: New York Review Books, 2001, pp. xviii–xix. This reception history reverses the invidious take on the James–Wescott relation, treated at length here, seeing it more as one of intergenerational gay "influence" in both style and subject matter. I am indebted throughout this chapter to Jerry Rosco's valuable new study *Glenway Wescott Personally: A Biography*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.

16 Glenway Wescott, "A Sentimental Contribution," in *Homage to Henry James, 1843–1926*, Mamaroneck, NY: Paul P. Appel, 1971, pp. 186–7.

17 Spender, *Destructive Element*, pp. 34–5.

18 *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994, p. 123.

19 Ernest Hemingway, *Green Hills of Africa*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935, pp. 65–6. Linda Wagner-Martin argues that Stein's motive in counter attacking was "guilt over her sponsorship" of Hemingway after wading through the "scathing undercurrent of anti-Semitism and homophobia" in *The Sun Also Rises*; "*Favored Strangers": Gertrude Stein and her Family*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995, pp. 186–7. Caramello reads *The Autobiography* as a preemptive strike against the "symbolic matricide" that Stein expected from her protégé, but also as a sign of resentment toward a patriarchal spoils system that honored Hemingway's labors (and Picasso's) while neglecting her own; *James, Stein, and the Biographical Act*, p. 161.

20 Ernest Hemingway, "The Autobiography of Alice B. Hemingway," unpublished MS, Ernest Hemingway Collection, John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Columbia Point, Boston, MA, no pagination.

21 For a further example, here is Sherwood Anderson, writing in 1923: "Horses and Negroes seem to be the two things in America that give me the most ascetic [*sic*] pleasure . . . In the horse what a noble bearing. No lousy inferiority complex there" (*SA* 101). Stein's variant form of romantic racialism, and its role in her

emergent sense of sexual identity, is well discussed in Lisa Ruddick, *Reading Gertrude Stein: Body, Text, Gnosis*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990, pp. 32–3, 120, 21. For sociohistorical context, see David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem was in Vogue* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997) and Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

22 Michael Reynolds, *Hemingway: The Paris Years*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 335.

23 Frances Kerr, "Feeling 'Half Feminine': Modernism and the Politics of Emotion in *The Great Gatsby*," *American Literature* 68, no. 2 (June 1996), 405–31.

24 Allen Tate, "Hard-Boiled," in Robert O. Stephens (ed.), *Ernest Hemingway: The Critical Reception*, n.p.: Burt Franklin & Co., 1977, p. 43.

25 Sanderson, "Hemingway and Gender History," p. 182.

26 Stephens, *Hemingway: The Critical Reception*, pp. 127, 142, 145, 131, 155.

27 Hemingway, *Green Hills of Africa*, pp. 23–4.

28 Breit, *Writer Observed*, p. 263.

29 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 32–3.

30 Ezra Pound quoted in Robert McAlmon, *McAlmon and the Lost Generation: A Self-Portrait*, ed. Robert E. Knoll, Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1962, p. 353.

31 *Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, ed. Bruccoli, p. 119.

32 Hemingway's description of Gide, from *Death in the Afternoon*, is quoted in Comley and Scholes, *Hemingway's Genders*, p. 120. The passage praises the painter El Greco for "redeem[ing], for the tribe" of "fairies," not just the "prissy . . . moral arrogance" of Gide, but "the lazy, conceited debauchery of a Wilde who betrayed a generation" – a judgment curiously akin to James's and Cather's – and "the nasty, sentimental pawing of humanity of a Whitman"; Comley and Scholes argue that these are not "blanket condemnations" of homosexuality but rather objections to a "way of textualizing that sexuality that allies it with the sentimental and moralistic"; pp. 120–1. The fine distinction is untenable, however, given the powerful cultural logic by which the sentimental and moralistic get routed back into the discourse of effeminacy: a condemnation of this sensibility in men is perforce a condemnation of the queer.

33 Kerr, "Feeling 'Half Feminine,' " p. 405.

34 Caramello, *Biographical Act*, p. 120.

35 See Susan M. Griffin's insightful treatment of James's recurrent narrative interest in "laceration" and "mutilation" in "Scar Texts: Tracing the Marks of Jamesian Masculinity," *Arizona Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (winter 1977), 61–82.

36 Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang*, 2nd supplementary edn, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975, p. 413.

37 Stephen Calloway, "Wilde and the Dandyism of the Senses," in Peter Raby (ed.), *The Companion to Oscar Wilde*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 47–8.

38 On Huysmans's impact on Wilde and on European aestheticism generally, see also Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, pp. 252–3.

39 Holland and Hart-Davis, *Complete Letters of Wilde*, pp. 660, 656.

40 Ruddick, *Reading Gertrude Stein*, pp. 77, 83. The use of "bottom" or "bottom nature" is pervasive in Stein's text; for example, describing a partner in one of the work's "pairs of women": "Mary Maxworthing . . . had not a very large bottom in her to her, she had a little sensitive bottom in her" (*MOA* 215). In the "repetitive, almost drugged" cadences of *The Making of Americans*, Ruddick discerns a deeper logic where readers like Hemingway found the formal slovenliness of the eternal feminine: Stein's "strange style reflects not absentedmindedness or self-indulgence but self-exploration" of complicated "primitive fantasies" in the working-out of her identity and sexual politics; pp. 72–3. Similarly, when Hemingway later dismisses Stein's work as the "manure" of "contented cows," he again shows his (allergic) insightfulness into the lesbian thematics and excremental metaphorics of a piece such as "As a Wife has a cow a Love Story"; "Autobiography of Alice B. Hemingway." As Kay Turner's archival research shows, "cow" was Stein's codeword for Toklas's stools, constituting a sort of "hallmark of married intimacy" and mutual nurture : "Gertrude's devotion to Alice's 'cows' . . . combines a heightened and freely discursive eroticism with the desire to make art. Both in lovemaking and in defecating . . . Toklas's body provided the sensual, corporeal model . . . [for Stein's] writing pushed out on the page in all its rhythmic, repetitive, regressive and erotic glory"; *Baby Precious Always Shines: Selected Love Notes Between Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, pp. 33–4.

41 Men of other stripes saw Stein's new hairstyle otherwise. To Samuel Steward, she resembled "a Roman senator about to break into voluble Latin"; *Dear Sammy*, p. 7. Anderson found, approvingly, that the tonsure made her look "like a monk" (*ABT* 907), while the aesthete Harold Acton thought of her in the guise of a priestess of the "Aztec Mexicans"; Simon, *Stein Remembered*, p. 113. The challenge Hemingway faced in absorbing Stein's physical transformation rehearsed the challenge to narrative management that earlier male authors, including James, confronted in the hystericized female body. Ender observes: "what produces the fiction . . . of sexual difference is surely a system of representation where (masculine) knowledge or consciousness overrides (feminine) passion and maintains the separation between spectator and spectacle." Yet this "fiction" collapses, for sexual identity proves to be, on the evidence of the male-authored text itself, "an inherently deconstructive construct": "the attempt to master sexual difference . . . ends up producing not knowledge, but some hysterical enactment of the impossibility of distinguishing"; *Sexing the Mind*, p. 95.

42 Andrew Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 2.

43 Ernest Hemingway, "Explanatory Glossary," *Death in the Afternoon*, quoted in Comley and Scholes, *Hemingway's Genders*, p. 107.

44 E. M. Forster quoted in P. N. Furbank, *E. M. Forster: A Life*, 2 vols., New York: Harcourt, 1977/1978, volume 1, p. 164; Emma L. Erving's letter to Stein quoted in Brenda Wineapple, *Sister Brother: Gertrude and Leo Stein*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 205.
45 Tate, "Hard-Boiled," p. 43.
46 Ford Madox Ford, *Henry James: A Critical Study*, New York: Octagon Books, 1964, pp. 170–4.
47 Virginia Woolf, "The Method of Henry James," in Andrew McNeillie (ed.), *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, volume 11, *1912–1918*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987, pp. 346, 348; Gladys Brooks, *If Strangers Meet: A Memory*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967, p. 53.
48 Hemingway, *Green Hills of Africa*, p. 70. See also Marilyn Elkins, "The Fashion of *Machismo*," in Linda Wagner-Martin (ed.), *A Historical Guide to Ernest Hemingway*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 93–115, which is valuable for understanding the sartorial elements and stage props involved in Hemingway's self-conscious pose as a man with the military bona fides that Cather and James lacked; it must be said, however, that the general argument – having had "no literal war experience . . . Hemingway had never earned the right to wear" a soldier's uniform – rehearses the culturally charged opposition between authentic and fake (or vicarious) masculine credentials that seems to have motivated Hemingway's aggressive virility in the first place; p. 99.
49 T. S. Eliot, "On Henry James: in Memory," in Dupee, *Question of James*, p. 123.
50 The full formulation, from Hemingway's 1936 correspondence, reads rather chillingly: "Thought I was facing impotence, inability to write . . . and was going to blow my lousy head off"; quoted in Sanderson, "Hemingway and Gender History," p. 184; or to take a later, kindred example from a 1949 letter: "Can fuck better than when I was 25 and write good afterwards which was never true before" (*SL* 668).
51 Here I take exception with Jamie Barlowe's useful "Hemingway's Gender Training," in Wagner-Martin, *Historical Guide to Hemingway*, pp. 117–53, which argues that we lack evidence that Hemingway was "consciously aware of the consequences of his notions of gender . . . [or] of the connections between his guilt-ridden bouts of depression and his refusal to reconsider his ideas about gender"; I contend that his awareness on this score was almost too acute, if powerfully resisted, adding another level of pathos to his trials of masculinity; p. 130.
52 This passage from *Death in the Afternoon* is quoted and well discussed in Comley and Scholes, *Hemingway's Genders*, pp. 109ff.
53 Margaret Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War: An Autobiography*, London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930, p. 140.
54 Wescott, "Sentimental Contribution," pp. 179, 181.
55 Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. 50. In *Sun* a single overture to another man ("Oh, how charmingly you get angry") marks the speaker – the fictionalized Wescott – as gay (*SAR* 21). The subcultural signifiers of gayness in *Sun* (hair,

dress, gesture, voice, mannerism [e.g., *SAR* 20]) show how attentive Hemingway was as an ethnographer, bearing out as well Chauncey's claim for a hermeneutics of suspicion that construed "an inversion of any one aspect of one's prescribed gender persona" as being "symptomatic of a much more comprehensive inversion"; pp. 55–6. In other words, Hemingway was, like most modern men, at once a subject and an agent of sexual surveillance.

56 Michael S. Reynolds, "Hemingway's Bones," in *Hemingway's Reading, 1910–1940: An Inventory*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 23.

57 It seems backwards to label Strether's fate a "tragedy," as Linda Wagner-Martin does (see my chapter 4), while at the same time discounting the ways in which Barnes's experience, and that of his social set, appears to be just what Hemingway called it, "a damn tragedy" (*SL* 229); "The Intertextual Hemingway," in Wagner-Martin, *Historical Guide to Hemingway*, pp. 175–6. Lynn also asserts that Strether's best-known speech "left a deep impression" on Hemingway, "echoing" not in Barnes's dialogue but in Robert Cohn's; yet he cites no concrete evidence that Hemingway had yet read *The Ambassadors*; *Hemingway*, pp. 328–9.

58 Although Hemingway could be tendentious about the biographical record, I take at face value his claim that *The Awkward Age* marked his first meaningful encounter with James's novels. His air of startled discovery seems genuine, and when he subsequently reproached Pound for his high estimate of James, the latter replied (in early 1928): "I never suggested that you read the Awkward Age." Pound only then referred Hemingway to his own "nice little map of Henry," which does not seem to have included *The Ambassadors* on its itinerary; Reynolds, *Hemingway's Reading*, pp. 22–3.

59 For example, James's appeal to "spare my blushes" was not invented but rather selected by Hemingway for effect; see Kaplan, *James: The Imagination of Genius*, p. 565.

60 Rudyard Kipling, "The Ladies," in *The Complete Poems of Rudyard Kipling* (poetryloverspage.com).

61 Hemingway quoted in Reynolds, "Hemingway's Bones," p. 18.

62 Sherwood Anderson, "The Man who Became a Woman," in Maxwell Geismar (ed.), *Sherwood Anderson: Short Stories*, New York: Hill & Wang, 1966, p. 60.

63 Wagner-Martin, "Intertextual Hemingway," p. 177.

64 Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1915), quoted in Bech, *When Men Meet*, p. 17.

65 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, pp. 1–2.

66 Walpole's letter quoted in Hart-Davis, *Walpole: A Biography*, p. 193.

67 Edel, *James: A Life*, p. 721.

68 Wescott, "Sentimental Contribution," p. 179.

69 *Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, ed. Bruccoli, p. 122.

70 Van Wyck Brooks, *The Pilgrimage of Henry James*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1925, pp. 32–3.

71 *Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, ed. Bruccoli, p. 123.
72 Wescott, "Sentimental Contribution," pp. 179, 186.
73 Stephen Spender, *Letters to Christopher*, ed. Lee Bartlett, Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1980, pp. 62–3.
74 Spender, *Destructive Element*, pp. 36–7. In the fine print of a footnote, Spender concedes that "the rumour of [James's] castration seems exaggerated and improbable"; p. 37, n. 1.
75 Gamaliel Bradford, *American Portraits, 1875–1900* (1922), Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1969, p. 187.
76 Mitchell and Leavitt, *Pages Passed*, p. 220.
77 Gunter and Jobe, *Dearly Beloved Friends*.
78 Anderson, "Man who Became a Woman," p. 73.
79 Anderson's narrative treats the abjected ex-teacher Biddlebaum with compassion as "one of those rare, little-understood men who rule by a power so gentle that it passes as a lovable weakness. In their feeling for the boys under their charge such men are not unlike the finer sort of women in their love of men" (*WO* 31).
80 Creech, *Closet Writing/Gay Reading*, pp. 44, 48, 50–1.
81 Moon, *Small Boy and Others*, p. 27.
82 Van Wyck Brooks, *An Autobiography*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1965, p. 429.
83 Ibid., pp. 432–3.
84 James Hoopes, *Van Wyck Brooks: In Search of American Culture*, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977, p. 303.
85 Van Wyck Brooks, *John Addington Symonds: A Biographical Study*, New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1914, pp. 19–20, 47, 57–8. For a valuable treatment of the Symonds left out of Brooks's account, see Robinson, *Gay Lives*, pp. 7–26.
86 Brooks, "Two Phases of James," pp. 138–40. According to Stevens, "The Altar of the Dead," which revolves around one man's mourning rituals for another, marked a turning point for James (as Brooks apparently perceived), establishing "a queer context for melancholia" and dramatizing the sociopolitical "ills attending any construction of sexuality depending on repudiation"; *James and Sexuality*, pp. 162–3.
87 Brooks quoted in Hoopes, *Van Wyck Brooks*, pp. 156, 158, 159.
88 Brooks, *Autobiography*, pp. 439, 441.
89 *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan, New York: Random House, 1980, p. 168.
90 Pound quoted in Kerr, "Feeling 'Half Feminine,' " p. 408.
91 Stephen Spender, *Journals 1939–1983*, ed. John Goldsmith, New York: Random House, 1986, p. 416; *The Destructive Element*, pp. 27–8.
92 Wilson, *Shores of Light*, p. 577. Wescott quoted in Bruccoli and Duggan, *Correspondence of Fitzgerald*, p. 331.
93 Zelda Fitzgerald quoted in Lynn, *Hemingway*, p. 286.
94 Preston, "Conversation with Stein," p. 158.
95 D. T. Max, "Ernest Hemingway's War Wounds," *New York Times Magazine*, 18 July 1999, p. 29.

96 Boone, *Libidinal Currents*, p. 202.
97 Burns, *Staying on Alone: Letters of Toklas*, p. 210.
98 Yale University Press catalog (spring 2000), p. 12.
99 *True at First Light* still finds Hemingway preoccupied with contrasting the authorial type of the aloof, sterile bachelor, epitomized in James, whose troubles are purely aesthetic ("line of departure problems") and the male writer of experience, celebrity, and romantic entanglements that "Henry James was not faced with" (*SL* 709). At the same time, his weird fantasy of snatching away James's "consolatory cigar" (smoked on a balcony overlooking Life) and giving it to a young African woman whom he desires contains the recognition that he has authorized himself as both man and artist partly through a history of aggression against James and his supposedly vestigial masculinity; New York: Scribner's, 1999, pp. 232–3.
100 Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, p. 134.
101 Paul Lauter, "The Heath Top 100," *The Heath Anthology of American Literature Newsletter*, no. 19 (Spring 1999), p. 1. The survey does confirm Boone's point about canon reformation to the extent that the top two vote-getters were not Faulkner and Hemingway, but Toni Morrison and Ralph Ellison.
102 Hemingway quoted in Lynn, *Hemingway*, p. 533.
103 Ironically, Hemingway's fantasy role-playing provides evidence for Gide's claim about "male Lesbians": "many heterosexuals [i.e., straight men], either through diffidence or self-impotence, behave in relation to [women] like women and, in an apparently 'normal' pair, play the role of true inverts" (*GL* 421).

CODA ''NOBODY IS ALIKE HENRY JAMES'': STEIN, JAMES, AND QUEER FUTURITY

1 Gertrude Stein quoted in Diana Souhami, *Gertrude and Alice*, London: Pandora, 1991, p. 12. See also Turner's superb account of the Stein–Toklas marriage in the introduction to *Baby Precious Always Shines.*
2 Burns, *Staying on Alone: Letters of Toklas*, p. 357.
3 Ibid.
4 Wineapple, *Sister Brother*, p. 120.
5 Gertrude Stein quoted in Caramello, *James, Stein, and the Biographical Act*, p. 171.
6 Ibid., p. 179.
7 Ibid., p. 172.
8 Ibid., p. 198.
9 Ezra Pound, "A Brief Note," in Leon Edel (ed.), *Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963, pp. 28–9.
10 See Bruce Kellner (ed.), *A Gertrude Stein Companion: Content with the Example*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1988, p. 33.
11 Phelps and Rosco, *Continual Lessons: Journals of Wescott*, p. 52.
12 Ernest Hemingway quoted in Comley and Scholes, *Hemingway's Genders*, p. 107.

13 Bersani, *Homos*, p. 4.
14 Bech, *When Men Meet*, p. 90.
15 Ruddick, *Reading Stein*, p. 132.
16 Gertrude Stein, *Wars I Have Seen*, quoted in Ruddick, *Reading Stein*, p. 125.
17 Ruddick, *Reading Stein*, p. 125.
18 *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, ed. Frederick C. Mish *et al*., n.p.: Merriam-Webster, n.d., p. 390.
19 Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, p. 134.
20 Gore Vidal, "Oscar Wilde: On the Skids Again," in *United States: Essays, 1952–1992*, New York: Random House, 1993, p. 218.

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