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Domestic Mobility in the American Post-Frontier, 1890-1900

Julie E. Prebel

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

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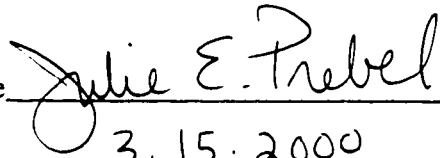
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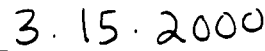
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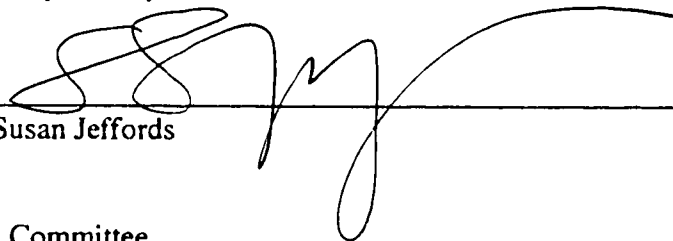
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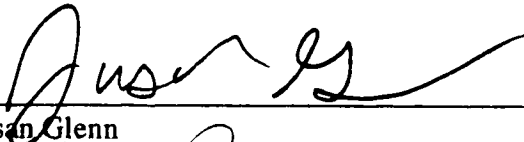
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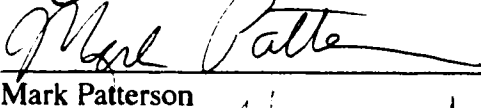


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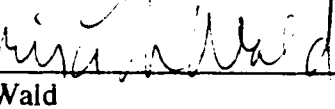
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Abstract

Domestic Mobility in the American Post-Frontier, 1890-1900

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This project offers a redefinition of domestic fiction through a consideration of how themes of domesticity intersect with tropes of mobility in late nineteenth century literature and culture. By extending the archive of domestic fiction beyond the antebellum era, I examine the ways in which domestic ideology becomes located in the public sphere, where concerns about the increasing movement of the population and the nation were under debate. I argue that understanding the domestic as a mobile concept enables the reconsideration of the importance of domesticity in shaping the discourses of American identity and exceptionalism beyond the Civil War era. Chapter 1 examines Clara Louise Burnham's *Sweet Clover: A Romance of the White City* and *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Dreiser in order to show how the nation is displayed and performed through domesticity. Rather than homespaces, these novels situate domesticity in the public arena of imperial politics and market capitalism, demonstrating the ways in which "home" reaches beyond private, interior domains. Chapter 2 reads Jane Addams' *Twenty Years at Hull House* and Abraham Cahan's *Yekl* in order to show how domesticity is reconfigured through social spaces in which national narratives about immigration and

Americanization are presented and debated. Chapter 3 extends my examination of the literal and metaphorical representations of "home" as I consider how Charles Chesnutt's *The House Behind the Cedars* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson* by Mark Twain both rely on domestic ideology in order to challenge and secure the boundaries of racial identity. In these novels, the domestic is represented as a stabilizing force necessary to map the distinctions between male and female, white and black, and national "self" and foreign "other." Finally, Chapter 4 examines *The Californians* by Gertrude Atherton and *The Octopus* by Frank Norris, demonstrating the ways in which domestic ideology is constituted in the "contact zone" between people, cultures, and places. The focus in this chapter on literary depictions of U.S. expansionism suggests yet another way that the language, themes, and tropes of domesticity are critical to the construction of late nineteenth American nationalism, which was concerned with issues of geographical, social, and economic mobility.

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Introduction

The Paradox of Domestic Mobility

The domestic doctrine Beecher helped to define held women and the home as the embodiment and the environment of stable value. Maintaining a site of permanent value, the domestic cult of true womanhood facilitated the transition to a life increasingly subject to the caprices of the market.¹

American legend has it that the United States has long been “the land of opportunity” for the common man. No other society has so often celebrated social mobility, none has made a folk hero of the self-made man to quite the same degree. The idea of the distinctive fluidity of our social order has been a national obsession for more than a century.²

The title of this study links two apparently contradictory terms: nineteenth century domestic ideology and mobility. In pairing domesticity and mobility I explore and challenge the notion of the domestic as a static condition in contrast to the idea of mobility as representing the progress and movement fundamental to American nationalism. The long-standing view of domesticity understands “home” as the site of stability and permanence. Studies of nineteenth century women’s writing, in particular, have revealed the importance of domesticity as a stabilizing force amidst the chaos and anxiety associated with nation making. The “cult of true womanhood” and the ideology

of separate spheres have crucially shaped our understanding of middle-class white women's domestic or "sentimental" fiction in the nineteenth century, demonstrating the importance of "home" both in terms of securing women a place in the literary canon and as an agent of social change.¹ Although this work is fundamental to my project, the paradox of what I call "domestic mobility" questions the assumption of the domestic as bounded, static homespace. My argument is, instead, that the domestic, as Amy Kaplan reminds us, is "more mobile and less stabilizing,"⁴ and is not only the stable center within a fluctuating post-frontier nation, but is also a mobile concept enabling the U.S. to imagine itself as "home" within its national and imperialistic enterprises. Rather than

¹ Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America*, 3.

² Stephan Thomstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City*, 1.

³ Barbara Welter coined the phrase "The Cult of True Womanhood" in her 1966 essay of the same title. She defines the "cult" as requiring women to uphold the virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Numerous feminist critics, following Welter's fundamental study, have since taken up the idea of true womanhood and domestic ideology in nineteenth century women's fiction. This canon includes Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977); Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985); Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American fiction Exclude Women Authors," *American Quarterly* 33 (1981): 123-139; Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985); Mary P. Ryan, *Empire of the Mother: American Writing About Domesticity, 1830-1860* (New York: Institute for Research in History and Haworth Press, 1982); Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1990); Lora Romero, *Home Fronts: Domesticity and its Critics in the Antebellum United States* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997). There have also been important critiques of how this canon excludes black women writers and how the notion of domestic ideology is racialized. Some of these include Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992); Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992); and the essays collected in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, edited by Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford UP, 1992).

⁴ Amy Kaplan's essay "Manifest Destiny" in the special issue of *American Literature* entitled *No More Separate Spheres* (70:3, September, 1998; 581-606) has encouraged and influenced my work in this project. Although I developed my theory of "domestic mobility" before this special issue, Kaplan's argument that "domesticity is more mobile and less stabilizing; it travels in contradictory circuits both to expand and contract the boundaries of home and nation and to produce shifting conceptions of the foreign" has been helpful in considering the ways that the domestic is itself a mobile concept. Kaplan is more interested in the mobilization of the domestic during the peak era of America's westward expansion (the 1830s-1850s). My study, instead, takes up the issue of American expansionism in the decade following the closing of the western frontier in order to consider how domestic ideology continues to shape the geopolitical and metaphysical boundaries of what it means to be American.

viewing the domestic as the anchor for American identity, I consider domestic ideology to be an agent of national expansion and exceptionalism. By imbuing the domestic with a sense of movement, I thus pose a challenge to the doctrine of separate spheres, which has created a stable, gendered divide between private and public in nineteenth century culture.

This is not to say that the notion of separate spheres has not been useful in underscoring the importance of nineteenth century women writers and domestic fiction. Feminist critics have found domestic ideology and the gender binary of separate spheres particularly helpful in terms of explaining the exclusion of women from the Emerson-Thoreau-Hawthorne-Melville-Whitman literary canon established by F.O. Matthiessen in 1941 and subsequently supported by new critics such as Lewis, Chase, and Fiedler.⁵ For example, in her landmark study *The Feminization of American Culture*, Ann Douglas relies on the ideology of separate spheres in order to argue for the rise of a more "feminine" version of American culture in the late eighteenth century, in contrast to what she views as the masculine culture of Puritanism. This feminization of American culture, Douglas claims, explains the development of women's sentimental or domestic fiction in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Douglas's premise is subsequently taken up by Nina Baym in *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and About Women in America, 1820-1870*. In particular, Baym's now classic essay, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood:

⁵ It is widely held by feminist literary critics of nineteenth century domestic ideology (such as Baym, Tompkins, and Amy Kaplan) that F.O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941) establishes a literary canon excluding women writers that is later taken up by new critics such as Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1957); Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Criterion Books, 1960); and R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors,” argues that theories of American literature from Matthiessen to more recent work by Eric Sundquist have either excluded women writers altogether or rendered masculine “important” American fiction. The “essential Americanness,” Baym contends, the “myth” of what constitutes a distinctly “American” literature, has critically been viewed as the territory of white male writers. Women enter the “frontier” of male writing only as enemies representing the impediments and entrapments of American society.⁶ Baym’s groundbreaking work reintegrating women writers into the landscape of American literary theory reveals the importance of the domestic as a form of nationalistic enterprise. Jane Tompkins, like Baym, uncovers a tradition of women’s writing in *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*. Tompkins suggests that women’s sentimental fiction, rather than confining women or women’s issues to the domestic sphere, can perform a version of the public and political work of nation making. Yet Tompkins’s study, like Douglas’s and Baym’s, ultimately relies on and reinforces the separate spheres ideology in its insistence on the domestic as stable, bounded homespace in contrast to the mobile, masculine world of politics and economics.

Building on these influential works on the paradigm of separate spheres, there have been several studies of domestic fiction in the last decade that consider the permeability of the borders between the private realm of women and home and the masculine public arena of money, markets, and politics. Gillian Brown, for example, in *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America*, links nineteenth century domestic ideology and the history of possessive individualism in a rhetorical

move similar to my pairing of domesticity and mobility. Brown's purpose in joining the domestic and American individualism is to demonstrate "the role of domestic ideology in updating and reshaping individualism within nineteenth-century American market society" (Brown, 1). Brown argues that in the nineteenth century possessive individualism, a public realm of "market activities generally available only to white men," becomes "associated with the feminine sphere of domesticity" (2). Yet while her study points us to the synonymous relationship between the domestic and individualism, her literary readings reinforce the gendered divide between masculine modes of power and authority and what she terms the "feminization of selfhood" that occurs in this confluence (7). Although Brown's domestic ideology may not depend on the notion of home as the site of stability and permanence, her reliance on the notion of a feminized selfhood in contrast to the masculine-driven concept of American individualism nonetheless redraws the separate spheres paradigm.

Only recently have we witnessed the emergence of studies on nineteenth century fiction that intentionally and carefully challenge the binarism of domestic ideology. In *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, Hazel Carby examines the racial hierarchies of the separate spheres paradigm. By focusing on the material conditions of black women, Carby demonstrates the ways that the cult of true womanhood upheld national virtues and ideals impossible for the black woman to achieve. Carby's study is a crucial reminder of how race is frequently excluded from discussions of nineteenth century domestic fiction and how a

⁶ Baym, pp. 10-14.

consideration of race thus demands alternative discourses of womanhood.⁷ In the past few years, the work started by Carby and other critics of the separate spheres ideology has resulted in studies concerned with challenging the theoretical preoccupation with the gendered and racialized stable divide between private and public, home and nation. Among these is Lora Romero's groundbreaking 1997 book *Home Fronts: Domesticity and its Critics in the Antebellum United States*. In this study, Romero not only interrogates the binarisms through which domestic ideology is organized, but also challenges the theoretical investment in the culture of domesticity: "*Home Fronts* is as much about contemporary critical investments in domesticity as it is about domesticity itself" (viii). Using a Foucauldian model of inquiry, Romero approaches domestic ideology and our study of it through attention to the mobility of power relations at the core of the domestic hegemony. Rather than viewing private and public as social divides, Romero argues for the elasticity of these spheres as locations or "fronts" deploying both power and resistance.

The influence of Romero's work can be seen in the 1998 special issue of *American Literature* entitled *No More Separate Spheres!* which, as suggested in its title, seeks to break down the binary that has been so appealing to literary scholars. The essays in this volume examine how issues of race and ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, and region complicate discussions of the separate spheres paradigm. Two essays in this

⁷ There are several salient critiques of the racialization of domestic ideology, including the landmark study edited by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (New York: Feminist Press, 1982). See also Deborah E. McDowell, "*The Changing Same*": *Black Women's Literature, Criticism and Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford, 1992); Hortense Spillers, ed., *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Karla F.C.

collection are particularly resonant with my work on domestic mobility. You-me Park and Gayle Wald's article "Native Daughters in the Promised Land: Gender, Race, and the Question of Separate Spheres" has an archive very different from my own; the authors advance their argument about the boundaries between public and private not through readings of nineteenth century texts, but in an analysis of four twentieth century novels.⁸ Yet their attention to the "centrality of questions of mobility to a discussion of separate spheres" (613) demonstrates a similar concern with the link between domesticity and mobility. Park and Wald suggest the confluence of domesticity and mobility by linking the social subordination of women in the domestic realm to their social immobility within the patriarchal public sphere. In doing so, Park and Wald thus contest the binary inherent in domestic ideology through literary readings that reveal the inseparability of private and public, domestic and mobile spheres.

In "Manifest Domesticity," Amy Kaplan takes this confluence between domesticity and mobility a step further in her suggestion that the domestic is itself a mobile concept:

According to the ideology of separate spheres, domesticity can be viewed as an anchor, a feminine counterforce to the male activity of territorial conquest. I argue, to the contrary, that domesticity is more mobile and less stabilizing; it travels in contradictory circuits both to expand and contract the boundaries of home and nation and to produce shifting

Holloway, *Moorings & Metaphors: Figures of Culture and Gender in Black Women's Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

⁸ Park and Wald discuss novels by two African American and two Asian American writers: Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946), Gwendolyn Brooks's *Maud Martha* (1953), Cynthia Kadohata's *The Floating World* (1989), and Chang-rac Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995).

conceptions of the foreign. (583)

Kaplan's notion of "traveling domesticity" (583) destabilizes the separate spheres paradigm by imbuing the domestic with double meaning as both the familial household and also the imagination of the nation as "home" in opposition to the foreign. Kaplan's argument about the inseparability of domestic ideology and narratives of empire engages my own concerns with the ways that the domestic operates not in a sphere separate from the concerns of the nation but rather in dialogue with the rhetoric of nationalism. Kaplan problematizes the separate spheres paradigm by showing the "imperial reach of domesticity" (600) and thusly the breakdown of the boundaries between private and public spaces. In her remapping of the domestic in relation to the foreign, Kaplan suggests an inherent mobility in domesticity that warrants further critical attention.

In this project, I extend the critical terrain of work on domestic ideology through a consideration of the ways that mobility collapses the divide between the private realm associated with women, home, and domesticity, and the public world of men, markets, and the rhetoric of nationalism. Attention to various tropes of mobility enables the link between private and public, not only promoting a sense of the domestic as mobile, but also a methodology that insists on the elasticity of the boundaries between interior and exterior that have too frequently, as the critical history from Baym to Kaplan shows us, reinforced gender, racial, and class hierarchies.

Unlike domestic ideology, which has been given extensive definition and treatment in literary theory, mobility is a term that is both assumed and undefined. The assumption of mobility as so familiar as to not warrant definition stems in large part from the fact that movement has preoccupied the American imagination from the inception of

the nation to the present day. Mobility has characterized American national identity throughout history, from America's movement into the wilderness, across the continent, beyond national borders, and into outer space. Movement is also the essence of the myth of the American dream of upward social and economic mobility, and it is particularly important during times of national crisis when "the people" need a familiar, believable version of American history. Morris Dickstein, for example, discusses the proliferation of representations and images of movement in art, film, and literature during the depression era when people were seeking reassurances of the American dream.⁹ Similarly, Carolyn Anderson looks at the filmic preoccupation with class mobility during the Reagan-Bush era and suggests that a conservative political agenda combined with high rates of unemployment resulted in the need for movies that represented the possibility of upward socioeconomic movement.¹⁰ These studies of twentieth century culture posit mobility as an ideology: a belief system called upon in order to assuage the anxieties of the public imagination.

But perhaps the most extensive study of mobility, and the one most relevant to this dissertation, is Stephan Thernstrom's *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (1964). Thernstrom charts the development of an ideology of mobility in the nineteenth century brought on by the geographical movement of the population from rural to urban.¹¹ He claims that by the 1850s we can witness a shift from

⁹ Morris Dickstein, "Depression Culture: The Dream of Mobility," *Partisan Review* 63:1 (1996); 65-80.

¹⁰ Carolyn Anderson, "Diminishing Degrees of Separation: Class Mobility in the Movies of the Reagan-Bush Era," *Beyond the Stars: Themes and Ideologies in American Popular Film*, ed. Paul Loukides and Linda K. Fuller. Bowling Green, OH: Popular, 1996; 141-63.

¹¹ Thernstrom's thesis of the social mobility of working class families centers on the city of Newburyport, Massachusetts, which, prior to his study, had already received extensive historical and sociological attention in W. Lloyd Warner's series about modern class structure, *The Social Life of a Modern Community* (New Haven, 1941).

the "household economy of the old community" to the establishment of a fluctuating labor market (43). In Thernstrom's view, the rise of the city and the spread of the factory brought with it the promise of mobility as a new "social creed," which held that "every man had an opportunity to rise to the top" in this state of constant movement and circulation of people and goods (56). Thus, in addition to defining itself by geographical movement (the belief in manifest destiny), the U.S. begins to celebrate its position as a nation of social mobility. This nineteenth century notion of social mobility functioned in much the same way as Dickstein and Anderson claim of mobility in the twentieth century: as a system for managing cultural anxieties during a time of social, economic, and national upheaval and uncertainty:

The mobility ideology which grew up in the nineteenth century...played a strategic role in the evolution of American social attitudes, serving to overcome certain traditional hostilities toward the city and the factory, and to allay the fears of many who saw urbanization and industrialization as a threat to American democratic values. (Thernstrom, 60)

Thernstrom's definition of mobility is remarkably resonant with the rhetoric of domestic ideology in which the home is the site of stability and permanence necessary to assuage the anxieties of the marketplace:

The function of the ideology of the ideology of mobility was to supply the citizens of nineteenth century America with a scheme for comprehending and accommodating themselves to a new social and economic order. (58)

In his focus on the process of mobility within particular households, Thernstrom links the promises of mobility and its successes or failures to the family and its structure, values, attitudes, and goals. In fact, according to Thernstrom's chronology, the mobility ideology is contemporaneous with the development of domestic ideology in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Both ideologies function similarly to provide coherence and order in contrast to an external or public world perceived as hostile and alien.

This conjunction of domestic, interior space and geographical and social movement brings us full circle to the paradox of domestic mobility: how can space be mobile and how is movement spatialized? Domestic mobility is less paradoxical when considered from the perspective of ideological contemporaneity. If, as suggested in the critical legacy I have sketched out above, domesticity and mobility develop in response to similar social circumstances in the nineteenth century, they can be read as similar forms of cultural expression. Moreover, this historical and ideological confluence enables the reconsideration of the domestic as outwardly and upwardly reaching, revealing the inherent mobility of domesticity to extend beyond the boundaries of private, familial spaces as part of the project of domestic nationalism. Conversely, movement can also be rendered spatially, bound to the principles of gender, racial, and class divides of domesticity. By bringing together these concerns under my term "domestic mobility," I argue that an exploration of the relationship between domestic ideology and various taxonomies of mobility, such as the movement from rural to urban, immigration, racial passing, and western expansionism, problematize assumptions about social and national progress upon which theories of American nationalism are founded.

My use of the terms “domesticity” and “mobility” throughout this project needs more explicit definition in order to demonstrate their linkages and resonances. Both of these terms (in their various forms) span three levels of definition: literal, metaphorical, and ideological. On a literal level, domesticity, for example, connotes a sense of spatiality, of “homespace.” In this way, domesticity is the location for the enactment of family life and kinship. As the critical work on domesticity demonstrates, the home functions as a *retreat from and anchor amidst the chaos and disorganization of the public arena.*

Yet along with this more literal sense as sentimental home life, domesticity can also be read metaphorically to describe the ways in which the principles or themes of “home” are relocated to the public sphere and called upon in the project of narrating the nation. In this sense, “the domestic” is no longer bound exclusively to its literal meaning as domesticity, but also serves to define the boundaries of the nation as “domestic” in contrast to the foreign. Being “at home” can thus signal the comforts of family and also, metaphorically, a sense of familiarity among domestic-as-national relations. In this way, the domestic is not only a feature of the sentimental (in fiction or culture), but also a persuasive and active agent in the development of nationalistic sentiment or affection. Throughout this project I deploy “the domestic” in order to suggest this duality of “home” and “nation” in order to show how reading domesticity metaphorically constructs a continuum of what we might consider to be domestic life that forms the basis for the relations between individual and country.

Finally, my use of domestic ideology includes not only the system of belief associated with women (such as the Cult of True Womanhood) and the home, which is

how domestic ideology is typically viewed by literary and cultural historians, but also the ideological role that domesticity plays in the onward and outward progress of the nation. Yet my use of domestic ideology does more than demonstrate the shared discourse between home and nation; instead, it is my intention to show the role of domesticity in the narratives and rhetoric through which late nineteenth century culture and nationalism was constituted and made convincing. Domestic ideology, in this sense, becomes a national narrative that is no longer tied to the boundaries of homespaces, but is instead called upon to help redefine U.S. character and exceptionalism during a time when these "American" ideals were under question.

These reconsiderations of domesticity, the domestic, and domestic ideology in late nineteenth century literature and culture lead, almost inevitably, to issues of mobility. Although mobility has been a central feature of American exceptionalism from the inception of the nation, and has also been an appealing trope in American literature from Natty Bumppo to Jack Kerouac, mobility is a particularly apt context for considering the ways in which domesticity is reconstituted in the 1890s. Similar to the three levels of definition for domesticity, in this project I also conceive of mobility on literal, metaphorical, and ideological axes. On a literal level, I use mobility to describe the physical or geographical movement of people (or characters) across spaces and between places, which, in the texts I read, is often represented by walking, riding in trains, streetcars, boats, or canoes. However, this literal movement is frequently at odds with the metaphorical movements of people and characters socially and economically. In this study, I frequently equate or conflate literal and metaphorical definitions of mobility because the texts I examine reveal the ways in which characters might often move

geographically from place to place without attaining the promises of upward social or economic mobility associated with these movements. Similar to the ways in which I have suggested domestic ideology includes both the literal sense of domesticity and the metaphorical duality of the domestic, so, too, do I contend that an ideology of mobility necessarily conflates literal and metaphorical movement in order to suggest how both are implicated in the success or failure of an individual (or a character) to be truly “mobile.” Throughout this study, mobility and movement are in tension with immobility and stasis, forming a dialectic that helps to describe the ways in which mobility is critical to an understanding of the literature of this time as “domestic” in its concern for the nation and its people.

There is no dearth of literary criticism on either domesticity or the tropes of mobility I mention above. Yet although both of these ideologies have helped construct and redefine the canon of American literature and cultural theory, the most extended studies of the importance of literary representations of mobility in domestic novels occur in examinations of British texts.¹² This dissertation redresses this critical gap in American literary theory in two ways: first, by extending the archive of domestic fiction beyond the 1860s and secondly, by demonstrating how these texts are in dialogue with tropes of mobility during a critical period in the history of American nationalism.

¹² See, for example, Joy Holland’s 1992 dissertation, *Locations of Desire: Social Mobility and Ideal Space in Novels by Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Stendhal and Sand, 1830-1860*; Linda Mills-Woolsey, *Houseless Woman and Travelling Lass: Mobility in Dorothy Wordsworth’s Grasmere Journals*. The most influential discussion of domesticity and imperialism (as mobility) is Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995). With regard to analyses of mobility in American fiction, Marjorie P. Piechowski’s 1979 dissertation entitled *Social Classes and Upward Mobility in American Urban Fiction from Howells to Cather* examines the trope of social mobility, but does not treat it in relation to domestic ideology, which (in my view) is pervasive in the works of these writers. Similarly, an article by N.E. Dunn and Pamela Wilson, “The Significance of Upward Mobility in

Studies of domestic fiction, such as those I mention above, typically focus on novels written by white women from 1800-1860, with Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) as the focal point for most of these discussions. For example, Lora Romero challenges the assumption that a "mob of scribbling women" dominated the literary scene between 1800 and 1860 in order to complicate the standard view of literary history as divided into separate spheres, although she relies on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in order to confront this tradition. Acknowledging the conventional timeframe of domestic ideology, Amy Kaplan claims that "domesticity dominated middle-class women's writing and culture from the 1830s through the 1850s, a time when national boundaries were in violent flux" in order to advance her argument about the inseparability of domesticity and empire (584). Although her argument, like Romero's, challenges the critical terrain of domesticity, Kaplan nonetheless concludes her essay in familiar literary territory, with a claim about the importance of remapping our readings of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. My intention here is not to minimize the importance of Stowe's novel, or necessarily to single it out among a tradition of white women's domestic writing that includes, among others, Susan Warner, E.D.E.N. Southworth, Sarah Josepha Hale, Catherine Beecher, Catharine Sedgwick, Maria Cummins, or Lydia Maria Child.¹³ Rather, I mean to redirect critical attention to an era and texts not typically considered "domestic." The fact that most studies of domestic fiction do not extend past the conclusion of the Civil War points to a

Martin Eden" (*Jack London Newsletter*, Carbondale, IL, 5:1, 1-8) focuses on the myth of upward mobility but overlooks the importance of the domestic in the novel.

¹³ These are just the more "popular" women novelists of domestic fiction that recur throughout literary criticism. Nina Baym and Jane Tompkins both remind us of lesser-known women writers that deserve greater critical attention, and Hazel Carby and Karla F.C. Holloway extend this canon to include domestic fiction by African American women writers.

central problem of the ideology of separate spheres.¹⁴ Although critics, as I have indicated above, have started to deconstruct this ideology, there remains a blind spot in scholarship that limits our notions of what constitutes the domestic to the early and mid-nineteenth century.

This blind spot stems in part from imagining the domestic only as “domesticity,” which fails to consider the double meaning of the domestic that Amy Kaplan so rightly defines as both familial and national. But secondly, limiting our discussions of domestic ideology to the antebellum era, regardless of whether or not these studies consider the role of domesticity in empire making, isolates domestic concerns in the first half of the decade from the continuing movement and expansion of the nation throughout the nineteenth century. In this dissertation, I consider how domestic discourse was constructed and deployed in relation to the mobile forces of national expansion later in the century. In particular, as suggested in the complete title of this project, I examine domestic mobility in the last decade of the nineteenth century in order to pose the

¹⁴ Along with Hazel Carby, who reads the post-Civil War works by Frances Harper, Pauline Hopkins, and Nella Larsen as sentimental novels engaging versions of nineteenth century domestic ideology, there has also been recent work focusing on features of domestic ideology, such as gender and sexuality, that examines texts written and published in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Several essays examining the separate spheres issue beyond the mid-nineteenth century are included in the special issue of *American Literature* edited by Cathy Davidson: most notably, Marjorie Pryse’s “Sex, Class, and “Category Crisis”: Reading Jewett’s Transitivity” and the article by You-me Park and Gayle Wald discussed above. The most promising scholarship on post-Civil War era domestic ideology and its relation to U.S. imperialism is Rosaura Sanchez and Beatrice Pita’s work on the novels of Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton. In their introductions to *The Squatter and the Don* (1885) and *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1872), Sanchez and Pita link Ruiz de Burton’s sentimentalism to her representations of U.S. colonial expansion in the West. José F. Aranda, Jr. also has an essay (included in the special issue of *American Literature*) discussing Ruiz de Burton’s literary responses to “the post-1948 realities of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,” although his focus is less on the sentimentalism of the novel.

question of how the rhetorical closing of the western frontier led to the development of domestic discourse contemporaneous with discourse about the mobility of the nation.¹⁵

Post Civil-War Literature and Post-Frontier Nationalism

Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent and its westward movement, it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports.¹⁶

With the publication of the 1890 U.S. Census as the inaugural moment for my discussion of domestic mobility, I consider the complex and seemingly contradictory issues raised in the census: the closing of the western frontier, immigration, the movement of the population from rural to urban centers, and the decline in white birthrates (or race suicide). While historical studies of the frontier and American literary criticism have cited this census for its frontier declaration, there has been virtually no attention to the other declarations of the document, which provide the context for the broad cultural

¹⁵ I use the term “post-frontier” in my title (and throughout my project), but I do not intend this to mean that I view the frontier as closed. Rather, I employ “post” as a designation of the specific era following what was, essentially, a rhetorical, discursive “closing.” As I explore the forces of domesticity and empire in the 1890s, I do so with the understanding that just as the frontier is mythic in its proportions, so, too, is its supposed closing. While the U.S. Census of 1890 might declare the west closed, certainly migration westward continued at a rapid pace, with further colonization of native Hispanic and American Indian populations in the west and southwest. Thus, I consider the closing of the frontier to be a rhetorical gesture, in much the same way as historians and literary critics such as Ron Takaki and Richard Slotkin. Of the apparent closing of the frontier, Slotkin, for example, reminds us that “the Frontier was far from closed. More public land would be taken up and brought into production between 1890 and 1920 than during the supposed heyday of the western frontier in the decades that followed the passing of the Homestead Act (1862)” (*Gunfighter Nation*, 30).

discussion and debate that led to theories of race, gender, and national identity in this era. These overlooked census declarations demonstrate a particular concern with geographic and social mobility as well as the impact of the movement of the population on domestic concerns such as marriages, birthrates, and kinship relationships.

The critical history of frontier studies is extensive, and it is important to situate my project with relation to this tradition in order to clarify my interest in this time period. Firstly, this project is not a frontier study, such as those in the tradition of Frederick Jackson Turner or Richard Slotkin. Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," which he presented at Chicago's Columbian Exposition in 1893, responds to the closing of the frontier by emphasizing the importance of westward expansion to the development of American character and exceptionalism:

American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West. (2-3)

Turner cites the closing of the frontier as a critical rebirth of the nation comparable to the inception of American nationalism with the Declaration of Independence and the formation of the U.S. Constitution. The "loss" of the frontier line, for Turner, signals a crisis in meaning, as he poses the question of what will happen to the nation without this

¹⁶ Compendium of the Eleventh United States Census, 1890 (from an introduction entitled "The Progress of

geographical perspective. Extending and challenging Turner's logic of the centrality of frontier nationalism, Richard Slotkin reminds us that the frontier has provided the most enduring myth in America's cultural and national development. Slotkin, like many other literary and cultural historians, debunks Turner's thesis by emphasizing the mythic proportions of the frontier, which have largely overlooked the history of colonization and genocide in America's progress westward. Slotkin argues that the function of frontier mythology is to infuse the environment, landscape...with meaning in the form of a story." in a process that collapses "particular and contingent experiences" into "universal rules" (*Gunfighter Nation*, 11). Slotkin agrees with Turner, however, that the closing of the frontier "coincides with a crisis in American social and political history," as the promises of upward mobility embodied in the frontier myth were being challenged by the social and economic order of a more modern, industrial society (31). From Turner to Slotkin, frontier studies have focused on the 1890 Census and given us an understanding of the mythology upon which American national identity is founded.¹⁷ But in their neglect of the other census declarations, these theses have left intact the divide between nation and "home," opposing the geography of national progress to domestic concerns of the familial household.

My point here is not to survey frontier studies nor to offer a close textual reading of the Eleventh U.S. Census but to suggest how domestic ideology imbued the debates about the future of the post-frontier nation following the publication of the census report.

the Nation); xlviii.

¹⁷ For other recent studies of the frontier and the significance of its closing, see David Mogen, Mark Busby, and Paul Bryant, eds., *The Frontier Experience and the American Dream: Essays on American Literature* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1989); Gregory H. Nobles, *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1997).

While Turner focused on the frontier declaration, other historians, social commentators, and politicians were constructing theories, based on the additional findings of the census, about private, domestic issues such as sexuality and reproduction. The U.S. Census Report of 1890 was unique because not only was the population counted, which helped the Bureau determine western settlement, but also changes in the American population based on race and region were included in the declarations.¹⁸ Most notably, the census findings that between 1880 and 1890, during which time the frontier was settled, there was a marked decline in white birthrates gave rise to numerous social commentaries that blamed "race suicide" on the influx of immigrants and a more mobile female and black population. Francis A. Walker (a former Census Bureau superintendent) was the most prolific among these critics. In his articles published in *Forum*, "The Great Count of 1890" and "Immigration and Degradation," Walker took the findings of the census as evidence for his theory that the overpopulation of America's cities by immigrants and blacks was in part to blame for the decrease in white birthrates among the urban population. Furthermore, Walker cited the New Woman, who refused to marry and reproduce, as a central threat to the destruction of the white race and a traitor to the project of American progress in the critical era following the closing of the frontier.

At this time of heightened concern over the future of America, national rhetoric (as represented by the U.S. Census Report) as well as cultural discourse (Turner, Walker, etc.) demonstrate a preoccupation with mobility and domesticity, which thus makes this

¹⁸ For the first time in a census report, a population count was paired with studies of the impact of immigration and race on fecundity and mortality, resulting in statements such as "The normal rate of

an appealing decade for my dissertation about the confluence of these ideologies. Just as the antebellum era attracts scholarship on domesticity because of the ways in which the language of domesticity suffuses the rhetoric of nationalism, so, too, do the 1890s offer a useful historical and cultural context from which to consider how domestic ideology is (re)constituted and deployed during a crisis of empire.

Domestic Mobility and Methodology

Unlike the antebellum era, however, the last decade of the nineteenth century is not typically seen as “domestic.”¹⁹ Rather, the 1890s are viewed as a time of upheaval and change, a time when the closing of the frontier was a reminder of a more urban, modern society fraught with the problems brought on by the geographical and socioeconomic movements of the population. Literature in this era has been seen as particularly responsive to these concerns in its representation of the “real” life impact of urbanization and modernization.²⁰ Yet literary criticism, which has attempted to both define and challenge a literary tradition in the late nineteenth century, consistently overlooks how

increase has been, and is, greatly disturbed...by immigration, and it is difficult to estimate the effect of this upon our rate of increase” (Census Report, “Progress of the Nation,” xxxix).

¹⁹ It is important to distinguish “domestic” from “romance” because the literature in the last decade of the nineteenth century has indeed been read as consistent with the romance thesis advanced by Richard Chase in *The American Novel and its Tradition*, which has shaped the canon of American fiction. Chase’s theory that American literature can be characterized by the romantic quest of a hero (always male) is an ahistorical and universalizing thesis that fails to consider the social conditions shaping literary culture. Romance, in this sense, is quite different from the domestic, which, as I employ it here, develops precisely out of the specific historical and cultural contexts that I discuss throughout the dissertation. I also frequently refer to the “romance plot” in my discussion of the novels in this study, but this attention to heterosexual unions should not be confused with Chase’s romance thesis.

²⁰ Literary criticism of this decade tends toward reading the work of William Dean Howells, Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser as “realism,” opposing the cultural concerns at the turn of the century with the sentimentalism of earlier fiction. There are numerous studies of realism (which is often conflated with “naturalism”), including June Howard, *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American*

the discourse of domesticity negotiates the cultural anxieties brought on by the increasing mobility of the nation as it emerges as a world power at the turn of the twentieth century. In the chapters that follow, I employ the concept of domestic mobility in order to demonstrate that the social, cultural, and literary history of the 1890s resides in the domestic spaces of both home and nation.

The writers and texts in this study engage and challenge this concept of domestic mobility in divergent ways and across different cultural registers. My archive includes both female and male authors in order to break down the gender binarism of the separate spheres doctrine that opposes home and nation, women and men. In fact, my readings suggest the ways in which these writers deploy domestic ideology in unexpected ways. The women writers included in this study, Clara Louise Burnham, Jane Addams, and Gertrude Atherton, have written texts that seem either formally or thematically “sentimental.” Yet these authors relocate private issues of home, family, gender, and sexuality to the public sphere, revealing their concern with the language and politics of nation building. Conversely, the male authors I examine, Theodore Dreiser, Abraham Cahan, Mark Twain, Charles Chesnutt, and Frank Norris, appear to deal primarily with social and national issues of class, immigration, race, and expansionism. These novels, however, show the collusion of public and private spheres in their sustained (and at times obsessive) attention to homespaces, sexuality, and gender relations.

My readings are organized around tropes of mobility through which these collapses of private and public become evident, beginning with the movement from rural to urban spaces in Chapter 1, to immigration in Chapter 2, racial passing as a form of

mobility in Chapter 3, and concluding with the mobility of the nation through western expansionism in Chapter 4. While I have constructed a sort of “geography” of domestic mobility by organizing the chapters around these specific taxonomies of movement, my readings reveal resonances between the texts that point to the ways in which neither domesticity nor mobility are static terms bound to a single interpretation. For example, although I introduce the idea of the mobile New Woman in Chapter 1, each chapter and each text show how this version of domestic ideology is deployed differently and distributed across the discourses of region, race, and ethnicity. Similarly, although race is the focus of Chapter 3, all of the chapters in this dissertation deal with the mobility of racial identity and its co-construction with gender and sexuality. Domestic mobility, then, not only collapses the private and public divide, but also offers a methodology for considering the ambiguous and fluctuating meanings of identity in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Chapter one traces the relationship between mobility and domesticity through a reading of Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* and the non-canonical novel *Sweet Clover: A Romance of the White City* by Clara Louise Burnham. These two novels are mirror images of each other and provide contrasting representations of the effects of increased urban mobility on the structure of the individual and national family. Both novels chart the movement of their female protagonists from rural family homes to cities. In this sense, it is not only rural to urban that functions as the central trope of movement in the novels but also female mobility that is depicted in this geographical shift. The primary female characters in these novels, Clover and her sister Mildred in Burnham’s novel, and

Carrie in Dreiser's, represent versions of the New Woman (a term that came into parlance in the 1890s), who, in contrast to their True Women predecessors, move beyond the family home in search of social and economic independence. Yet rather than depicting female mobility as liberating, these novels suggest that female mobility has the potential to threaten the sexual and gender order of domestic relationships. Just as female mobility seems to invert the logic of domesticity, so, too do these novels articulate shifts in notions of domesticity by placing the domestic on display in two arenas: Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition in Burnham's novel and the rise of the theatre in *Sister Carrie*. The collapse of separate spheres is seen through these national displays, as public space becomes the realm of private scenes and performances of domesticity. By focusing on the suggestion in these novels that the mobility of women effects this collapse of spheres and impinges upon the freedom of men and the stability of family. I contend that the notion of the New Woman emerges as antithetical to the national project of securing America's uncertain post-frontier future.

Whereas the previous chapter is concerned with the movement from rural to urban, chapter two extends my argument through a consideration of mobility in the form of immigration and its impact in the construction of an increasingly gendered and racialized notion of the domestic. Through a reading of Jane Addams' account of her desire to establish the first settlement house in the U.S., this chapter argues that Hull House responds to the increasing concern about urbanization and immigration by providing a new form of domestic space through which to shape and respond to such pressing social issues. In particular, Addams both relocates and redirects Victorian ideals regarding femininity to a new sphere while advocating Hull House as an Americanizing

agent in the process of assimilating immigrants. Conversely, Abraham Cahan's story of immigrant life in *Yekl* exposes ruptures in the narrative of American progress that complicate notions of the domestic as itself a mobile concept set forth in Addams' *Twenty Years*. Cahan links immigrant mobility to domesticity, demonstrating the ways in which gender ideology—ideals of American manhood and womanhood—permeates the process of Americanization. Reading these texts together reveals the complicated and conflicting ways in which domestic ideology was deployed in national rhetoric about the importance of securing a distinctly "American" identity. Francis Walker and Theodore Roosevelt relied on the language of domesticity in their theories of what constituted Americanness, and this conflation of public and private discourse can be seen in both Addams' and Cahan's narratives of personhood.

The gendered and racialized conceptualization of the domestic suggested in Addams and Cahan's representations of urbanization and immigrant mobility is also inflected by Jim Crow legislation in this time period. In chapter three, I explore this parallel through a reading of mobility as racial passing in Charles Chesnutt's *The House Behind the Cedars* and Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Through their representations of family and kinship ties, these novels problematize social and geographic mobility as progress available to all by showing the effects of mobility on domestic relationships. While contemporary scholarship views the relationship between passing and domesticity as one of conflict, this chapter advances the argument that the relationship between domesticity and mobility is one of interdependency between white and black, male and female, mobility and immobility. These novels also suggest an investment in "fixing" the indeterminacy of identity, demonstrating the ways in which geographical and social

mobility was perceived as threatening to the racial and gender domestic order of late nineteenth century American nationalism. These concerns with reaffirming and policing cultural and national divides find their most notable expression in the Plessy v. Ferguson case, which gave legal definition to racial identity. Homer Plessy's fateful train ride frames my discussion of Twain and Chesnut because it helps make evident the collapse of public and private spheres enacted through the discourse (and legislation) of racial passing and miscegenation.

Chapter four extends this discussion of miscegenation in an examination of Gertrude Atherton's novel *The Californians*, which depicts the racial and cultural "mixing" of Anglo Americans and Mexicans during a critical period of U.S. expansionism. In my discussion of how Atherton's narrative reveals a concern with the hybridity of this western interaction, I also return to a more sustained reading of the *New Woman*, showing how geographical and female sexual mobility can be seen as threatening to the project of American nationalism. When paired with Frank Norris' *The Octopus*, Atherton's "domestic" novel takes on greater significance as an historical register of western expansion. Similarly, reading these texts together reveals the sentimental underpinnings of Norris' historical narrative about the battle between ranchers and the railroad monopoly. *The Octopus* is most apparently concerned with the movement of capital and goods; yet, public and private collude as the story of the railroad (the primary trope of mobility in the novel) becomes juxtaposed with a romance plot and rhetoric about the dangers of female urban and sexual mobility pose to the domestic order of the agrarian landscape. Although these novels offer divergent depictions of the history of America's early ventures in California, the narratives resonate in their attention to the

ways in which domestic discourse develops out of the confrontations between cultures in the “contact zone” of frontier and empire.

In my readings of domesticity and mobility in these texts, I intend to complicate the separate spheres metaphor by showing the exchanges of home and nation, private and public evident in these works. This does not mean that the domestic is not cast, at times, in familiar terms as stabilizing and bounded homespace; these texts frequently call upon domestic ideology for precisely these purposes. Yet with attention to mobility, the reach of domesticity extends beyond interior spaces and becomes part of the project of American empire building. Thus, if the domestic seems to secure boundaries, these boundaries are as much national as they are familial. My readings of these texts are also not celebratory attempts to rescue authors or texts from obscurity, nor is it my intention to denigrate a canon. It is important, in my view, to read Burnham and Atherton, not because they wrote especially “good” novels, but rather because they help us understand the confluence of mobility and domesticity in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Along these lines, my critiques of the more “canonical” works in this study (Dreiser, Norris, Twain, Chesnut) are not intended to trash these writers or novels, but rather to redress the seemingly thematic incongruities overlooked by literary criticism. The power of the texts in this dissertation derives from their representations of domesticity as both liberating and binding, of the tension between mobility and immobility, and of the ways in which these ideologies together offer a challenge to the cultural and critical divides of nineteenth century America.

Chapter One

Domestic Ideology, Mobility, and the New Woman in Burnham's *Sweet Clover: A Romance of the White City* and Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*

That is the mobility, the critical mobility, which was altering the novel. It is also the altered, the critically altered relationship between men and things, of which the city was the most evident social and visual embodiment. In seeing the city...as at once the exciting and the threatening consequence of a new mobility, as not only an alien and indifferent system but as the unknown, perhaps unknowable, sum of so many lives, jostling, colliding, disrupting, adjusting, recognising, settling, moving again to new spaces. Dickens went to the centre, the dynamic centre, of this transforming social experience.¹

Although Raymond Williams is discussing the work of Dickens in the quote above, his emphasis on the city and the “threatening consequence of a new mobility” helps frame one of the primary concerns of this chapter: namely, how mobility, in the form of rural to urban migration, simultaneously threatens and transforms social experience. Just as the Eleventh U.S. Census focused on the increasing movement of the population to urban centers, so, too, does American literature of this era evince a concern with the impact of this “new mobility,” and how “moving again to new spaces” is at once “exciting” and “threatening.” In America’s first post-frontier decade, the primary concern about urban mobility was not only over how it would transform social experience but also how all this movement might unsettle American national identity. The question of what would become of America as a nation now that its western expansion was complete turned to focus on the effects of urbanization. How would this new mobility, in the form of urban migration,

¹ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, 164.

change the landscape of American identity? How would notions of community and identity become more problematic in the movement to what Williams refers to as “new spaces?”

The two novels I discuss in this chapter, Clara Louise Burnham’s *Sweet Clover: A Romance of the White City* (1895) and Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* (1900) register these concerns in narratives that trace the movement of their title characters. Clover Bryant and Carrie Meeber, from their rural family homes to urban centers. In these novels, late nineteenth century anxieties about urbanization intersect with domestic ideology, as each focuses on the impact of mobility on notions of home. In the sections that follow, I explore this intersection by focusing on how each narrative represents domestic ideology and the ways that notions of the domestic both construct and are informed by the geographical and social mobility brought on by the shift from rural to urban.

In the 1890s, concerns about rural to urban mobility are frequently situated in cultural discussions about the New Woman, a term that described young, usually unmarried women, who were geographically and socially more mobile than women of previous generations. Along with social theorists, politicians, and even the medical profession, writers of this era were engaging the debate about this mobile New Woman and her impact on the social fabric of American culture and identity. Both Burnham and Dreiser offer their versions of the New Woman; in Burnham’s novel, new womanhood is represented as part of the process of urbanization, though ultimately exchanged for marriage, which seems to stabilize the social conditions of the shift from rural to urban. Similarly, Dreiser links the movement from rural to urban to Carrie’s desire to fashion herself in the image of the women she sees in the city. *Sister Carrie*, in fact, extends Burnham’s depiction of the New Woman, demonstrating the tragic effects of the seeming successes of New Womanhood on domesticity and gender ideology. I argue that these two novels are mirror images of each other, which provide contrasting representations of the effects of increased mobility on the structure of the individual and national family.

In each of these novels, the intersection of mobility with domestic ideology, in the form of gender relations, constructions of womanhood and manhood, and depictions of homespace, is seen through displays and spectacles of national sentiment. These novels articulate shifts in notions of domesticity by placing the domestic on display in two arenas: Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition and the rise of the American theater. In *Sweet Clover*, Burnham's depiction of the Fair advances the importance of domestic ideology in terms of both stabilizing and advancing the work of the nation. Burnham's dramatization of this World's Fair, which took as its theme the progress of American civilization, helps make visible the confluence of domesticity and mobility by placing these issues on display, in much the same way as the "real" Fair demonstrated a concern with how to best represent American progress while securing the domestic boundaries of the nation. Dreiser, on the other hand, relies on the theater as a vehicle for American New Womanhood, demonstrating the ways that female mobility, as represented by Carrie's rise as an actress, may have devastating social consequences. By focusing on the suggestion in these novels that the mobility of women impinges upon the freedom of men and the stability of family, I contend that the notion of the New Woman emerges as antithetical to the national project of securing America's uncertain post-frontier future.

The Collusion of Domesticity and Empire in Burnham's *Sweet Clover: A Romance of the White City*

Chicago, one might say, was after all only a Newer York, an ultimated Manhattan, the realized ideal of that largeness, loudness and fastness, which New York has persuaded the Americans is metropolitan. But after seeing the World's Fair City here, I feel as if I had caught a glimpse of the glorious capitals which will whiten the hills and shores of the east and the borderless plains of the west, when the New York and the Newer York of today shall

seem to all future Americans as impossible as they would seem to any Altrurian now.¹

That Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition was the occasion for Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis on the closing of the frontier is no coincidence: where better to present his theories on the importance of the frontier to American history and national identity than at the Fair, which marked a new era in the progress of American civilization? As historians such as Robert Rydell have noted, the theory behind the Fair was to show the United States and the world the progress of America as a nation: unified, with a distinct civilization of its own. The Fair represented, in Alan Trachtenberg's sense, "a new city on a hill," a shining example of all America had and would become (*Incorporation* 209). At a time of concern over the loss of the frontier and its significance in America's destiny as a mobile nation, the Fair represented America's preoccupation with expansion--both geographical and capital. The Exposition highlighted America's geographical evolution, but also, as Wim de Wit notes, "enable[d] the United States to showcase its products and place them in competition with other countries" (*Grand Illusions* 44). The Fair was indeed an "artifact of Western imperialism" (Rydell, *Frankenstein* 144): both a national event and a blueprint for future (as Howells' Altrurian traveler notes) "glorious capitals."

Yet what made the Columbian Exposition of 1893 such an appealing national experience was its participatory aspect: fairgoers could tour the world while remaining within the safe, secure, and well-organized spaces of the White City. As Trachtenberg notes, the Fair *as city* was built and designed with the idea of "how space might be ordered and life organized" (*Incorporation* 212). Further, the Fair was designed to introduce visitors to evolutionary ideas not only about America's history as a nation, but also about race and gender. Just as the Fair affirmed the United States as an imminent world power, so, too, did it reaffirm existing and emerging attitudes towards more "local" notions of

² William Dean Howells, "Letters of an Altrurian Traveller," 20.

racial and gender identity. The ordered spaces of the Fair revealed a distinct racial and gender hierarchy, with the Midway Plaisance, which housed the "ethnic" exhibits and the Departments of Ethnology and Anthropology that proposed to offer evidence of the non-white world as barbaric and childlike, and the Woman's Building, which purported to show evidence of women's progress yet mainly placed domesticity on display, clearly in a subordinate relation to the Fair's white "center": the Court of Honor. As such, America's ventures in expansionism and imperialism are tempered with--and indeed seem constructed upon--a lack of evolution, progress, and movement for racial and gender "others."² Or perhaps more accurately, this new city on a hill was spatially designed to emphasize the distinction between those who did, can, and will move, evolve, or progress, and those for whom movement is and should be restricted.

Consistent with Gail Bederman's reading of the Fair as a familiar example of white male hegemony, in the first part of this chapter I focus on the Columbian Exposition as an example of how Americans deployed discourses of progress and civilization to construct gender, race, and class in the first decade of post frontier America. Through a reading of the little known novel *Sweet Clover: A Romance of the White City* by Clara Louise Burnham, I demonstrate the ways that the deployment of domestic ideology secures the boundaries of an American nation plagued with concerns over the "loss" of frontier space and an increasingly mobile population. Rather than dismissing *Sweet Clover* as a "lesser" sentimental novel of little importance in the context of other Chicago-era fiction by Dreiser, Sinclair, or Henry Fuller, I read it for the way it interprets and synthesizes the various cultural concerns and social conflicts at work in the late nineteenth century. In particular, concerns about the increasing movement from rural to urban centers as well as the

³ In *Manliness and Civilization*, Gail Bederman makes explicit the Fair's segregationist policies. She argues that discourses of civilization on display at the Fair were designed to demonstrate the superiority of white male supremacy, as seen even in the design of the Exposition which highlighted the achievements of white men and excluded white women and all non-white cultures in the "manly exhibits of the White City" (34).

emergence of the mobile New Woman are brought together in Burnham's novel through attention to kinship and marriage, which are both imbued with the power to transcend and resolve social and cultural problems prompted by rural to urban and female mobility.

The novel's primary mechanism for resolving post-frontier anxieties about space, mobility, and identity is Chicago's World's Fair. The novel is staged around the opening and closing of the Fair and, interestingly, any action in the narrative occurs as the characters tour the fairgrounds, where the seeming frontier-like expanse gives room for the acting out of romantic desire and family planning. The architecture and organization of the fairgrounds are also particularly significant in the novel, as demonstrated in the narrative's obsessive attention to the dual design of the Exposition, the juxtaposition of the "barbaric" Midway Plaisance with the "civilized" White City. Burnham's brand of domestic ideology is seen in this narrative attention to the Fair, which is where "home" really occurs. In Burnham's novel, the actual house where Clover, her sister, and their lovers and family live more resembles a hotel, with people coming and going, than it does a home. Instead, homespace is created within the spaces of the fairgrounds. As they find less trafficked but crucially surveillant places (which I will discuss below), the characters carve out domestic places and moments at the Fair. It is this blurring of the boundaries of "home" and the Fair, private and public, that particularly interests me in Burnham's novel. In this sense, she does something slightly different with the domestic sphere than is normally expected or represented in sentimental novels, displacing home from its traditional dwelling and collapsing private and public spheres into the fictionalized spaces of the fairgrounds. As a cultural metaphor, home takes on new significance in Burnham's narrative as it becomes specifically attached to the imperial project and display of American empire. The house is more than the domestic microcosm of the nation here. These "separate" spheres literally collapse, enabled by the imperial scene and spectacle of the Fair.

I see the function of Burnham's narrative as twofold, providing a catalog of the events of the Fair, its dramatic opening and closing as well as the particular attractions of the Midway Plaisance, while simultaneously constructing a narrative about American progress through the use of tropes of domesticity and mobility. In *Sweet Clover*, empire is literally brought "home" to Chicago, which was at this time considered the new metropolis through which to construct and project a post-frontier version of American national identity. Both the domestic plot and Burnham's representation of the Fair serve as key sites of nationalistic sentiment. Although the romance is the overt plot in the novel, the story of the Fair is the covert mechanism through which Burnham illustrates and attempts to resolve domestic and cultural "problems" about the future of the nation. Given that her novel was published in 1895, just two years after the Exposition, Burnham's representation of the Fair was both a "real" reminder for contemporary readers and fairgoers and an imaginative textual space through which to create resolutions to domestic and national issues plaguing society. The fictionalization of the Fair thus enacts the key strategy in Burnham's melodrama, which attempts to resolve cultural concerns about geographical and social mobility through the union of the novel's two couples, who simultaneously tour the world while acting out their desire for each other.

The unmistakable plot of Clara Louise Burnham's novel, *Sweet Clover: A Romance of the White City*, is one of romance and marriage. It is the story of two sisters, Clover and Mildred Bryant, and their trials and tribulations on their path to eventual love and marital bliss with men who happen to be cousins, Gorham Page and Jack Van Tassel. The Van Tassel and Bryant children grow up together, their parents early settlers of Chicago when it was considered the West. Yet the death of Clover's father leaves the family miserable and destitute, saved only by the patronage of the Van Tassel family and a distant relative who eventually stops sending funds. As Clover matures and assumes responsibility for her ailing mother and family of three siblings, she attracts the attention of

the Van Tassel patriarch, now a widower, who offers her and her family a way out of their poverty. The subsequent marriage between Van Tassel and Clover is not one of love but of convenience, providing him with the beauty and vitality of her youth in his decline, while offering Clover the financial means to adequately provide for her family. Upon Jack Van Tassel's return from college, a rift forms between him and his childhood friend over her marriage to his father. Jack, who somewhat naively fails to see what Clover offers her father in return for her financial security, travels to Boston and then onto Europe, returning only after his father's death, which happens to coincide with the opening of Chicago's World's Fair. The death of Clover's husband, and the subsequent death of everyone in Clover's family except for her younger sister Mildred, sets the romantic plot in motion, as the two sisters are eventually wooed by Gorham Page and Jack Van Tassel, respectively. The end of the novel, which concludes with the closing of the Fair, finds Clover married to Gorham Page, with Mildred and Jack's impending marriage seemingly not far behind.

While the melodrama of the novel sets its sights on the goal of uniting these two couples against all odds, Burnham's sentimental project not only appeals to readers' emotions, but also uses the trope of the family drama in order to stage concerns about social and geographical mobility that recur throughout the narrative. The novel opens in 1889 Chicago, and more specifically in Hyde Park, which is depicted as rural country just recently annexed to the city proper. The country/city dichotomy is important to note, as the Bryant sisters' romantic journey first begins with their movement out of their rural surroundings, which are characterized by poverty, disease, and death. This geographical movement is linked to social mobility, both of which are made possible by Clover's first marriage to the wealthy and socially established Van Tassel (who, incidentally, is on the planning committee for the Fair). After the deaths of their family and Van Tassel, Clover and Mildred gain the social status and money that affords them the opportunity to travel and remake themselves as "new" women who are unencumbered by domestic roles as

daughters and wives. What she gives up by marrying Van Tassel, Clover gains with respect to financial freedom and security. While the novel implies that Clover's sexuality is at stake in the exchange between herself and Van Tassel, clearly she benefits from this union, which represents both a new marriage and the reaffirmation of older notions of kinship. Burnham's play with the dynamics of what constitutes family, the interplay between notions of family as kinship and kinship as community, suggests a certain mobility with respect to kinship itself, depicted here as able to transcend and reinvent social spheres and boundaries.

Kinship, in fact, is the key to traversing very different geographical and social spaces, as seen early in the novel in the dichotomies between rural/urban and poverty/wealth. The novel opens with a description of Chicago and its neighborhoods, a city in a state of flux:

In a city like Chicago, where events occur with phenomenal rapidity, two or three years make great changes in a neighborhood. Hyde Park, which long hung back like a rebellious child loath to yield its independence, had at last placed its reluctant hand in that of the mother city; but with the suburb's growing population there had already come a new state of affairs. It was no longer the case that everybody in Hyde Park knew everybody else. Those families who made homes there when but two trains ran daily to and from town, felt, on the rare and rarer occasions of meeting one another in a stranger crowd, the drawing of a tie tender as that of kinship. (18)

Here, Burnham fictionalizes the process of urbanization, with the allegorical union of urban mother and rural child. Yet this union of rural and urban does not form the sort of dynamic family hinted at in the allegory; rather, it makes strangers out of suburban families who previously felt themselves akin to one another. I read this scene as symbolic of the post

frontier shifts with respect to geographical and social space. Similar to the frontier, which was declared settled, Hyde Park has grown more populated, the spaces between people closer, until the sense of pioneer independence, kinship, and space gives way to the changes brought on by an increasingly more urban and mobile society. Further, geographical space and social status merge as the novel divides Hyde Park into sections according to class, with Clover and her family residing in a "shabby home on the back street" while the Van Tassel's have the "fine house on the lake shore" (19). The novel bridges these divides between geographical space and social status first through the marriage of Clover to the elder Van Tassel and then, after his death, through the mechanism of the World's Fair, which enables seemingly more permanent kinship bonds.

It is clear, even in Clover's loveless union to Van Tassel, that Burnham sees in heterosexual marriage answers to problems about how to maintain social ties and a class order that might otherwise be lost in the changing landscape and movement from rural to urban. The marriage between Clover Bryant and Mr. Van Tassel reenacts what Burnham refers to as the "one interchange" that remains from earlier "pioneer" days (19). Clover's marriage to Van Tassel not only solves the more immediate problems in her life--namely, the poverty of her family and her sole burden of caring for her sick mother and three younger siblings--but also resolves some of the narrative anxiety about post frontier space and urban mobility. Clover's marriage reaffirms an older "interchange" and connection that existed between her family and the Van Tassels long before the urbanization of Chicago and the social and spatial conflicts that (as suggested in the quote above) created strangers out of neighbors. Burnham's characterization of the relationship between Clover and the elder Mr. Van Tassel suggests Raymond Williams' argument about the interdependency of the country and the city, or rural and urban spaces. In his examination of the "tensions" that emerge between rural and urban, Williams claims that the shift from agrarianism to urbanization resulted in uncertain relations between people and the land: people were caught

in what he calls "temporary settlements"--able to find a "place" in the changing social structure, but always "threatened with losing it" (*County and City* 43). This tension--the space between having a social place and losing it because of the loss of land or shifts in geographical space--arises primarily (in Williams' scenario) out of changes and conflicts regarding class and the "new" social order produced by shifts in class structures. This argument is particularly useful when considering the relationship between Clover and Van Tassel, which is forged not only out of the economic need of the Bryant family, but also, in the context of the above quote about urban mobility, to secure the "one interchange" that existed before Chicago became a city. In other words, while marriage rescues Clover and her family from poverty, so, too, does it reify familiar, comfortable notions of class based on geographical and social origins. Domestic ideology thus equalizes the seemingly random effects of urbanization that allow the Van Tassels to prosper while the Bryants languish.

In much the same way that marriage traverses the geographical and social boundaries between people, the Fair collapses the spaces between private and public, home and empire, enabling connections and interchanges between people of disparate geographical, cultural, and social backgrounds. In Burnham's novel, the Fair itself seems to expand space and spatial relations, as seen through the main characters who, upon entering the Fair, experience a "sense of roominess [as] the first sensation, after struggling in the city's crowd" (126). In Burnham's depiction, the Fair also promotes a sense of movement or mobility, from the canoes aptly named "Progress" and wheeled carts that transport fairgoers from place to place, to camel rides that afford fairgoers the experience of Arab transportation, to the ferris wheel that offers a panoramic view of the Midway. Interestingly, this version of the Fair provides the context for Burnham's story of romance, as domestic ideology intersects, or perhaps even more accurately interacts, with space and mobility. Somewhat ironically, the odd sense of roominess and movement of the Fair

prompts an intimacy between the characters that they seem unable to construct elsewhere. Yet this newly forged sense of romantic bliss is dependent upon the ability of the novel's main characters to privatize the spaces and manage the mobility of the Fair itself. Clover, Mildred, Jack, and Page are not thrown willy-nilly into the narrative of the Columbian Exposition, but are invested with the authority to organize the space and movement of the scenes around them in order to advance their flirtations. While the novel does make mention of the White City and in particular the Court of Honor and Peristyle at its center, much of the romantic action occurs in Burnham's representation of the Midway Plaisance, where the characters both immerse themselves in and remove themselves from the multi-ethnic displays therein. Burnham's dramatization of the juxtaposition of the Midway and the White City, which depicts movement in the form of a progression from dirty and barbaric to beautiful and Godlike, hints at the ways that uneasiness about race and progress is rooted in anxieties about space and mobility.

As if to confirm Robert Rydell's observations of the Fair's dual foundation, the novel reminds its contemporary readers of the hierarchical theory behind the design, as Burnham's domestic family drama intersects with late nineteenth century concerns about racial mobility. In a rather long passage, one bemused, new visitor to the Fair, Miss Berry Love, discusses the virtues of the White City versus the unpleasantness found along the Midway:

"That Midway is just a representation of matter, and this great White City is an emblem of mind. In the Midway it's some dirty and all barbaric. It deafens you with noise; the worst folks in there are avaricious and bad, and the best are just children in their ignorance, and when you're feelin' bewildered with the smells and sounds and sights, always changin' like one o' these kaleidoscopes, and when you come out o' that mile-long babel where you've been elbowed and cheated, you pass under a bridge--and all

of a sudden you are in a great beautiful silence. The angels on the Woman's Buildin' smile down and bless you, and you know that in what seemed like one step, you've passed out o' darkness into light." Aunt Love paused thoughtfully. "It's come to me...that perhaps dyin' is goin' to be somethin' like crossin' the dividin' line that separates the Midway from the White City. I've asked myself when I've passed under that bridge and felt the difference down so deep, what did make it so strong? 'Tain't only the quiet and the grandeur o' those buildin's compared with the fantastic things you've left behind; I believe it's just the fact that the makers o'the Fair believed in God and put Him and their enlightenment from Him into what they did; and we feel it some like we'd feel an electric shock." (201-02)

In this passage, Miss Love views the Fair in the terms that Rydell describes: as a "moral compass" of right and wrong, good and bad, with a distinct schema that emphasizes the movement from the carnivalesque, immoral Midway to the civilized and "pure" spaces of the White City (*All the World* 50). The dichotomous spaces of the Fair are also imbued with a certain physique, revealing an emphasis on a mind/body split where the Midway represents all that is "matter" while the White City stands for an "emblem of the mind": the journey out of the Midway and into the White City is a movement out of the body and into a more ethereal, enlightened state of being. Although race is not specifically mentioned, the passage suggests a certain racialization of the spaces of the Fair. The Midway is both matter and movement, and along with noisy and barbaric people Miss Love is bewildered with the "smells and sounds and sights" that are "always changin' like one o' these kaleidoscopes." Burnham's choice of a kaleidoscope to describe the sense of constant change and movement in the Midway is interesting given that a kaleidoscope is an instrument that reflects color and splits images, blurring colors and shapes into different symmetrical

patterns. It is precisely this blurring of colors and images that makes Miss Love anxious; she wants to move out of this place where images and people are in a constant state of flux.

While perhaps subtle, we can read the sense of anxiety about movement and color in this passage as a metaphorical representation of late nineteenth century concerns with racial mobility. The era of Reconstruction had given way to Jim Crow politics and practices designed to keep African Americans in "place." As African Americans became more geographically mobile, migrating to and working in America's urban cities, so, too, did the frequency of lynchings and other acts of violence against African Americans increase. Ida B. Wells reminded the world of the horrors committed against black Americans with her publication of *The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition*.³ Frederick Douglass, who contributed the introductory essay to the publication, describes the "threat" of African American mobility in the following terms:

A ship rotting at anchor meets with no resistance, but when she sets sail on the sea, she has to buffet opposing billows. The enemies of the Negro see that he is making progress and they naturally wish to stop him and keep him in what they consider his proper place. (59)

Lynching, as Wells and Douglass argue, was a popular and prevalent means of keeping African Americans in "place." For blacks of this era, geographic and social mobility were

³ The exclusion of African Americans from participation in the Columbian Exposition was the occasion for Wells' publication. Although the Fair proposed to represent the progress of American civilization, there were no exhibits demonstrating the progress of African Americans in just the twenty-five years since the end of slavery. Several black women's organizations appealed to the Board of Lady Managers for inclusion in exhibits in the Woman's Building, but their repeated requests were denied--often ignored--by the committee of white women. The exclusion of blacks from the Fair was also evident in the employment hierarchy of the Fair: although the Fair was a boom to Chicago's economy in terms of employment, there were few job opportunities for blacks except as laborers at the Fair. There were only three clerical positions given to African Americans. Black men were even denied posts as guards at the gates of the Fair based on their "failing" of medical examinations, which were often inaccurate. Perhaps the most notable African American included in the Fair was Frederick Douglass, though he was included NOT as a representative of Africans or Blacks in America, but rather as the liason representing Haitian culture at the Fair.

linked to perceived violations of the color line and, as Wells and Douglass remind us, white Americans constructed laws in order to keep this racial dividing line firmly intact.

The passage above from Burnham's novel stresses this color line--what Miss Love refers to as "the dividin' line that separates the Midway from the White City." She credits God and the "makers o' the Fair," who were working under divine intervention, with the success of this dividing line that emphasizes difference like the "feel [of] an electric shock." Passing out of the Midway and into the White City is a movement into a sort of stasis where images, people, and race do not change kaleidoscopically, where dividing lines are not only affirmed but also desired. Finally, one other notable aspect of this passage is the way that space and movement are not only racialized, but also the role that gender plays in the construction of this dividing line. Just as the dual foundation of the Fair is emphasized in the description of the Midway versus the White City, so, too, does the passage stress the placement of the Woman's Building as the transitional space between the two. With its angels that "smile down and bless you" as you pass "in what seemed like one step...out o' darkness and into light," the Woman's Building (complete with angels symbolic of the domestic realm) serves as both a guide into civilization and a monitor of the dividing line.⁴

Historians and critics of the Columbian Exposition have long noted the position of the Woman's Building poised at the intersection of civilization and barbarism. Yet the impact of this spatial positioning on notions of gender in the late nineteenth century demands further interpretation. As a representation of white women's achievements and progress, the Woman's Building suggests that, like its placement within the Fair, women were seen, in Anne McClintock's sense, as "boundary markers," serving as "mediating and

⁵ In the context of her discussion of the Fair as a site of white male hegemony, Bederman describes the placement of the Woman's Building:

Even the location of the Woman's Building underlined white women's marginality to civilization. Not only did the commissioners place the Woman's Building at the very edge of the civilized White City, far from the manly Court of Honor, they also situated it directly opposite the only exit to the *uncivilized* section of the fair, the Midway. On the border between civilization and savage (as befit woman who, according to scientists, were biologically more primitive than men), the Woman's Building underlined the essential manliness of the white man's civilization. (35)

threshold figures by means of which men oriented themselves in space, as agents of power and knowledge" (*Imperial Leather* 24-25). As Turner suggests in his thesis about the importance of securing American character at the closing of the frontier, the need for orientation is a particular effect of the "loss" of the frontier, and is consistent with the goal of the Fair's designers to orient and secure America a place in the order of Western imperialism. McClintock suggests a gendering of imperialism that is consistent with the Fair's spatial dynamics and representations. Within the actual Fair itself, the Woman's Building served to orient visitors within the evolutionary schema of the Exposition. Further, within Burnham's novel, not only the Woman's Building but also the primary female characters serve to orient and guide the male characters through various forms (national and romantic) of progress.

McClintock argues further that imperialism comes into being through and is contingent upon domesticity. In her analysis of Victorian Britain, for example, McClintock asserts that "the cult of domesticity was a crucial, if concealed, dimension of male as well as female identities--shifting and unstable as these were--and an indispensable element both of the industrial market and the imperial enterprise" (*IL* 5). While McClintock focuses on British and European examples for her argument, her premise is useful for considering the relation between the imperial and the domestic in nineteenth century America. While much work has been done on the cult of domesticity and its impact in shaping the values and morals of nineteenth century America, little attention has been given to the ways that domestic ideology was a pervasive and powerful agent in America's imperial enterprise.⁵ More specifically, as seen in the context of Burnham's novel and its attention to the Fair, domestic ideology--while often concealed, as McClintock notes--shapes gender, class, and

⁶ A recent and notable exception is the special issue of *American Literature*, 70:3 (Sept) 1998 entitled *No More Separate Spheres!* which seeks to deconstruct the binary of private/public, home/nation. While my own interest in the relation between domesticity and nationalism was well in place before the publication of this volume, I am nonetheless encouraged and influenced by the scholarship of the issue.

racial identities, linking these dynamics in a fundamental way to the United States' imperial project at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Fair and Burnham's fictional representation of it enact what McClintock refers to as "commodity racism," wherein the narrative of imperial progress is converted into a mass-produced consumer spectacle (*IL* 33). Both the actual Exposition and Burnham's dramatization serve to advertise evolutionary racial and racist theories of progress and civilization. As seen in *Sweet Clover*, this process of converting the narrative of imperialism into a participatory spectacle, a conversion process that Rydell refers to as a "willed national activity toward a determined utopian goal," occurs through the deployment and exhibition of domestic ideology. Through various rituals and displays of domesticity, Burnham's narrative collapses the notion of separate spheres, as "home" space literally *is* the space of empire.

For example, at one point in the novel Gorham Page finds an exclusive tearoom in which to woo Clover. This space is valued by Page because it is "untouched" by other fairgoers and by Clover for the "remoteness one feels from everything confusing, or noisy, or soiling" (355). In much the same way that Miss Love confirms the evolutionary structure of the Fair by emphasizing its dual construction, Clover associates the Midway Plaisance with confusion, noise, and dirt, making it undesirable in comparison to the tearoom that sits isolated and exclusive above the chaos of the Midway. This domestic scene makes possible an escape from the uncivilized and places the characters on the path to romantic and evolutionary progress, not only providing Clover and Page with the space in which to advance their flirtations, but also reaffirming their social position as superior and civilized in contrast to the scene below. In a more notable example, Mildred takes Jack to a concealed, enchanted "house" off the thoroughfare of the Midway:

They moved along toward the crowd by the camel stand, and here in the noisiest, busiest portion of the winding street, Mildred led her

companion into an open door which revealed a long, blank corridor. The dragon guarding it was a most commonplace American. Most people whose curiosity led them to look into the uninviting hallway were quickly frightened off by the placard stating the fifteen-cent admission fee. There was so much to see, and time and money were so limited, little wonder that the obvious attractions of the street decided them not to explore this side-show... . The visitors passed within and found themselves in a spacious shadowy room with lofty arched ceiling. The windows were unglazed and shielded by curious hand-carved lattice work. Thick rugs were upon the floor, and small tables inlaid with pearl and ivory stood about. On a larger one were a number of tiny and precious coffee cups, held in little brass stands. Long-stemmed pipes hung upon the walls, and divans or cushions upon the floor invited repose. Rich portières divided the suite of rooms from one another. (276-78)

Equipped with the price of the admission fee, Mildred and Jack gain privileged access to a suite of rooms above the Midway Plaisance. The crowd and noise of the street below are replaced by the spaciousness and elegance of this unoccupied "home," which denies access to "most people" who, unlike Jack and Mildred, cannot afford the fifteen-cent fee. The extreme poverty of Mildred's childhood has been completely erased by this point in the novel as she has become one of the elite for whom both time and money are not obstacles. The privileges of money allow Mildred and Jack to pass easily--and seemingly undetected--from the more commonplace attractions and visitors on the street below into a clearly more civilized locale. Here, hidden from the view of the crowd but able to survey the scene below, they find exactly what they desire: a fantasy house complete with dark-skinned servants--as Jack remarks, a "chapter out of the Arabian nights" (278). This is a private, concealed semblance of home that affords them the opportunity to enjoy their "romantic

eyrie" while laughing over the "absurdities enacted before their eyes" (279).⁶ The secret home they find is actually part of the Department of Enthology--fitting, as this is the space from which the couple surveys and catalogs the crowd below:

Their position was just opposite the camel stand, and from their height they commanded a view of the kaleidoscopic life of the street. The bystanders pressed about the cushions upon which the camels knelt to take on or be relieved of those intrepid passengers who embarked for the adventurous journey to the end of the street and back again. (279)

As this quote describes, Mildred and Jack "command a view of the kaleidoscopic life of the street," but are clearly not part of it. While the camel passengers below them are limited to a journey that takes them only from one end of the street to the other, Jack and Mildred find not only spaciousness but also unimpeded mobility in their domestic scene. Yet perhaps more accurately, what Jack and Mildred find is precisely an escape from the mobility of the scene below. While other fairgoers experience what it might be like to move like an Arab, Mildred and Jack, unrestricted by entrance fees, pay for the familiarity and stability of home. Rather than an Arabian adventure, Mildred and Jack opt for the domestic comforts that the Arab servant helps to provide.

Similar to Miss Love's observations about the kaleidoscopic Midway, escape from the street seems particularly important at this point in the novel, as Mildred and Jack attempt to secure the dividing line that has been blurred during their visit to the Midway. Just prior to the domestic scene described above, Jack is attracted to one particular Nubian he encounters in a tent in one of the Midway exhibits:

"What a splendid woman, Mildred!" he exclaimed. "What an artist's model she would make." The object of his admiration was tall, straight as an

⁷ The connotations of "eyrie" as an eagle's nest are worth noting here, insofar as an eyrie offers the height from which to observe and plan the capture of prey below. From their more civilized room above, Mildred and Jack can be seen as predatory observers of the Midway below.

arrow, dressed in a long robe of white, and wore large hoop earrings. She had symmetrical features of haughty mould, and was very dark, with thick crinkled black locks free from feathers, shells and twine, braided among the Soudanese tresses. She was an impressive figure standing immovable upon the stage among the dancers. (272)

Jack's attraction to this Nubian woman, who stands out because of her darkness and immobility, is ultimately contained within a familiar narrative of racial and class hierarchy, as he imagines what "that woman could have [been] brought up in a different environment," one that would train her for a servant to pass him his "coffee at breakfast" (272). Yet, while the boundaries of class and race are quickly reaffirmed, stabilizing any violations of the dividing line that were suggested in Jack's desire for this woman, gender identity is destabilized in this scene. After sharing his attraction for the Nubian woman with Mildred, Jack is dismayed to learn that "she" is actually a "he": the woman he has been admiring and desiring is actually Mohammed Ali, the Nubian chief. This discovery silences Jack, and within the next few pages we see him attempting to reorient himself within gender familiar boundaries by purchasing a souvenir for Mildred and urging her to leave the Midway. Thus, the discovery of the suite of rooms above the Midway enables domestic ideology to secure not only class and race identity but also gender, removing the characters from the possible boundary dangers of the kaleidoscopic street below.⁷ While Jack can legitimize his sexual desire for the Nubian "woman" by making her his servant, Mohammed Ali's manhood disrupts this domestic fantasy. In order to escape the chaos of the Midway, and in particular the sexual/gender confusion of the Nubian chief, Jack must

⁸ Bederman discusses the gender-ambiguous Dahomey Village, citing a New York Times reporter who claimed that the sexual distinction between Dahomey men and women was not obvious considering that the men might be "clad mainly in a brief grass skirt and capering nimbly to the lascivious pleatings of an unseen tom-tom pounded within..." (36). Bederman notes further that the Midway, as the inverse of the White City, was not only nonwhite and uncivilized, but also denoted the "unmanly." Thus, in my reading of the scene in Burnham's novel, Jack's experience with the Nubian "woman" suggests a certain unmanly, perhaps even homosexual, "danger" that must be recuperated through the more traditional domestic scene with Mildred in the room above the Midway.

necessarily reaffirm these boundaries by making his domestic fiction more of a reality; in the romantic idyll with Mildred, he asserts himself as a man wooing a woman, with a dark-skinned Arab servant in attendance. While watching the camel riders below, Jack and Mildred are joined in their suite of rooms by Clover and Gorham Page. From their position on a balcony above the Midway, the two couples enjoy a private view of one of the most entertaining parades at the Fair: the wedding procession. The shift from camel rides to the wedding procession symbolizes the progression from uncivilized to civilized, as the narrative of progress, represented by the thoroughfare of the Midway to the gates of the White City, from the kaleidoscopic street below to the semblance of home above, blends with the wedding narrative. In much the same way that Clover's marriage to Van Tassel earlier assists in the reaffirmation of familiar and familial boundaries, so, too, does the wedding procession represent a declaration of white, American, and heterosexual identity. As the couples observe the shift in the scene below from the Arab giving camel rides on Cairo Street to the wedding procession, they practice being both ethnographers and lovers, roles that provide a sense of domestic stability amidst the movement of the Fair.

The significance of these domestic scenes is that they blur and suspend the logic of private and public spheres, reconfiguring a privatized notion of home within the public spectacle of the Exposition. Yet even more importantly, these scenes suggest a reconceptualization of the domestic, a collapse of spheres that imbues the concept of the domestic with double meaning. In the context of these scenes, the domestic is both demarcated as "home" space within the familiar/familial trappings of white, middle-class domesticity and also serves as the space for imagining the nation *as* home. In Amy Kaplan's sense, this doubleness of domestic ideology positions the "domestic" in contrast with the "foreign," self to other: "Domesticity...is related to the imperial project of civilizing, and the conditions of domesticity often become markers that distinguish civilization from savagery" ("Manifest Domesticity" 582). In Burnham's novel, the

markers that distinguish civilization from savagery can be seen in the customary effects of home that the characters find in their romantic eyrie: tearooms, coffee cups, a suite of rooms with lavish décor, and domestic servants. While these emblems of the domestic indeed help distinguish the civilized world of the Bryants, Van Tassels and Pages from the decidedly less civilized world of the Midway with its dirty streets and camels, these markers of domesticity merely hint at the larger issue of how the domestic becomes domestication, and how, in Kaplan's sense, domesticity feeds the logic of imperialism. In the passages discussed above, Burnham constructs scenes that demonstrate the doubleness of domestic ideology, wherein domesticity is represented by the familiarity of homespace, while at the same time this homespace positions the characters as civilized Americans in contrast to the foreigners of the Midway. For example, Jack's desire for a Nubian woman that he can train for servitude demonstrates his (and perhaps Burnham's) investment in a civilizing project whereby foreign others are relied on in order to bolster American domesticity. Similarly, at one point in the novel Clover expresses her desire to take home one of the dancing girls in a theatre performance:

"I want one of those brown girls to take home as bricabrac," returned Clover. "Aren't they the roundest, prettiest creatures! Really, the whole thing seems strange enough to be a sight in fairy-land; and do you hear that enchanting rustle of trees above our heads?" (305)

Here, domesticity and domestication collude, as the foreign "other" becomes a domestic item for display. Clover's desire for the Javanese girl demonstrates precisely the doubleness that Kaplan refers to, insofar as Clover's need for a brown-skinned foreigner reveals her need to domesticate, to make this girl a part of the fabric of her own domestic project. In the case of Clover and Jack, their need to take "home" part of what is on exhibition at the Fair suggests both a desire to civilize the savage and also assert their distinctly American authority over the foreign. In this context, domestic ideology not only

secures the class, gender, and racial identities of the novel's primary characters, but also stabilizes the borders between national identity and foreign otherness.

Maintaining the privileges of class and race is of primary concern in the novel, serving to motivate not only the fictional characters to sustain close family ties, but also readers in the narrative of national progress. While the overt goal of *Sweet Clover* is the union of white, heterosexual characters in marriage, throughout the novel Burnham hints at late nineteenth century national anxiety about race suicide and the need to monitor domestic and national identity by maintaining firm gender boundaries. Through the staging of the on again/off again relationship between Mildred and Jack, Burnham positions women at the center of this discussion, bestowing on women the responsibility of securing domestic and national domains.

Unlike her sister Clover, who demonstrates a compulsion to affirm and reaffirm kinship ties through marriages that stabilize geographical and social boundaries, Mildred is fraught with decidedly anti-domestic desires. She is described as having a "tempestuous nature" that causes her to behave irresponsibly (325). Although she flirts shamelessly with Jack and many other men, she prefers travel and even social work to the stability of marriage. Her vanity and self-indulgence, which place her on par with an "octopus [for whom] everything must be absorbed," are blamed for her inability to give her life over to "God's help" and the "progress [that cannot be made] without Him" (324).

This representation of Mildred resonates with discourse and debates about the "New Woman," a term that came into parlance in the 1890s. Repudiating the image of the nineteenth century "True Woman," bound by the virtues, as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg defines, of "docility, dependence, and domesticity" ("Body Politic" 103), the New Woman emerged in the late nineteenth century in "flight from the patriarchal home" (109). In one sense, both Clover and Mildred appear to fit the type for the New Woman, both having migrated from their rural roots to more urban and mobile social positions. Yet while

Clover's social climbing is deemed acceptable and integrative because of her domestic achievements, Mildred's mobility threatens domestic borders. The description of Mildred as irresponsible, an all-absorbing and non-progressive octopus, echoes popular sentiment that characterized "the younger generation of women...entering in such large numbers into the newer occupations and freer life" as "disturbing influence[s]" to the social fabric (Park *The City* 108).⁸

Rather than allowing Mildred to resist the pull of domesticity, Burnham recuperates her into the novel's primary narrative, first by emphasizing Mildred's unhappiness and finally by securing her union to Jack. The end of the novel, which coincides with the closing of the Columbian Exposition, finds Clover happily betrothed to Gorham Page while Mildred begins to deteriorate. Entering into "charitable work...heart and soul" (400), Mildred makes pilgrimages into Chicago's back streets and slums and dedicates herself to reform work. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg notes, reform work was one of the ways that progressive New Women moved out of the home and into the public arena in an attempt to secure themselves a place and a voice among the male-dominated world of social work. The 1890s, in particular, evince an era of political and social mobility and maturity for women, led by Chicago reformers such as Jane Addams and Lillian Wald.⁹ Burnham's scripting of Mildred as a reformer places her character into this social network and affirms her a place in the order of New Women. Yet, Burnham tempers Mildred's movement with a warning about the threat of such female mobility to existing gender relations and the social order. The more Mildred works, the more unhappy she becomes, causing Clover and the other characters to grow concerned for her health and sanity. Simultaneously, Jack

⁹ While I will return to a fuller discussion of Park and Burgess in the second part of this chapter, it is worth noting here that the work of these male urban sociologists was extremely influential at the turn of the twentieth century. Park, Burgess, and W.I. Thomas, whose work I will elaborate on in my reading of Dreiser, theorized that the migration of women to the city and their subsequent mobility within the city was a dangerous and "disturbing" social influence. Park, in particular, saw migrating women as one of the most significant problems plaguing urban America.

¹⁰ I discuss Jane Addams and the way that domestic ideology informs national reform in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

also begins to deteriorate and even Clover's home shows signs of decline, growing as "dreary [as]...the long and...strong pull of winter" (404).

Jack's return to Chicago thus finds Clover, Mildred, and also the Fair in a state of disorder and decay. Upon his arrival, the three observe smoke coming from the fairgrounds and Jack and Mildred rush to the scene. Entering the abandoned grounds, they discover that the Peristyle, the centerpiece of the Court of Honor in the White City, is on fire. Designed to draw visitors' attention to the architectural beauty of the White City, the Peristyle was perched over the central arch in the main basin, and depicted Columbus in a chariot, flanked by horses with riders carrying banners led by women. The motto of the 1893 Columbian Exposition was inscribed directly beneath the Peristyle statue: "Ye Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Make You Free." Throughout the novel, the Peristyle holds particular interest for the characters, serving to unite the couples in their desire for each other in ways similar to the domestic scenes above the Midway. Early in the novel, Mildred tells Jack that along with her vanity and self-love the Peristyle is his only rival. As they watch the Peristyle burn, Mildred turns to Jack "with a wild movement" that represents her final submission to him:

"The--the Peristyle has gone!" [Mildred] exclaimed chokingly.

"Yes, darling," he answered close to her ear. "My rival. Forgive me, but you are making me so happy I can't realize anything except that I have you in my arms. What does it mean? only that you are overwrought?"

Mildred lifted her face slightly, but away from the burning pyre. "Your rivals are all gone, Jack," she said, as steadily as she could speak. "Even I do not count." (410)

In my reading, domesticity and nation collapse in a scene that exchanges one iconic image for another: Columbus for (impending) marriage. Insofar as the thematic design of the Fair proffered to recuperate the loss of the American frontier into a larger narrative of national

progress and unity, Burnham's juxtaposition of the burning of the symbol of the Republic with the final display of unity between Mildred and Jack attempts to assuage anxiety over perceived national loss through a display of domestic redemption.¹¹ In terms of gender and social relations, this scene symbolizes the reification of a familiar order: a "truth" (to draw on the Fair's motto) that secures not only Mildred and Jack's but the nation's identity as well.

Yet this is also an unsettling scene that equates national "loss" and subsequent recuperation within the framework of domestic ideology with a "loss" of self and identity for women. The burning of the Peristyle not only destroys *one* of Jack's rivals (the Peristyle), but also Mildred herself in a narrative where she no longer "count[s]." Although the nation might be regained in this scene, Mildred is lost and made devoid of meaning--and this is where Burnham's novel ends.

The conclusion of the novel offers no imaginary resolutions to the loss of the symbol of America except marriage. Mildred's ventures into New Womanhood, her independent travel and charity work, recede into the background with the advancement of the marriage plot. Whereas marriage has functioned earlier in the novel as the means through which to stabilize class and social relations, here it takes on even greater significance as it helps rescue an unstable American Republic on the verge of destruction. Although the symbol of American exceptionalism and freedom is indeed burned in the fire, there is the suggestion that the nation will continue to prosper and progress, as long as Mildred exchanges her love

¹²In terms of the recuperation of national "loss" that I am suggesting occurs in this scene from Burnham's novel, it is crucial to note that the actual fire at the Fairgrounds, which occurred on July 5, 1894, was deemed the work of rioters who were responding to the Pullman strike. Chicago residents--such as Burnham--were well aware of the connection between the fire and the strike, although there was no direct evidence linking the two events. Yet, as James Gilbert notes in *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893*, "...the symbolism was clear enough for Chicago: two of its greatest cultural environments had been destroyed--the fate of the Fair and Pullman's experiment were overcome by neglect and exploitation" (165). Although not my focus in this reading of the Fair or Burnham's novel, it would be worth further exploring the relationship between the Fair and the Pullman strike. The railway system, which just the summer before had transported thousands of fairgoers to Chicago, represents an important aspect of post frontier mobility: the threat that the strike posed to the nation, read with the symbolic destruction of the nation in the burning of the Peristyle, suggests a link that deserves closer attention.

of the Peristyle-as-nation for her union with Jack. This exchange, however, immobilizes Mildred within a narrative of domestic ideology. As she concedes to Jack's victory over her, she is no longer the independent, spirited woman that we have seen throughout much of the novel; instead her sense of adventure and flirtatiousness has been "fixed" within a narrative of romance and marriage. As represented through Mildred, unchecked female desire and mobility is ultimately contained within a larger narrative that unites domestic ideology with national progress, as New Womanhood is replaced by an all too familiar version of domesticity.

An "Adventitious" Woman: Mobility and Morality in Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*

Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century American literature is replete with images of the migrating New Woman, from Henry James' *Daisy Miller*, to Edith Wharton's *Lily Bart*, and most notably in Theodore Dreiser's depiction of country girl gone urban in *Sister Carrie*. In this section, I examine Dreiser's novel in light of the emergent discourse of urban sociology at the turn of the twentieth century, which was particularly concerned with female mobility and the impact of such mobility on America's domestic and national life. In more subtle ways than Burnham's narrative, Dreiser's construction of Carrie Meeber in the image of the New Woman demonstrates the social scripting of mobility and morality that conflates woman's public eminence with her refusal to adhere to traditional sexual and domestic responsibilities. Resonant with the discourse of male urban sociologists and Victorian physicians in this era, Dreiser's construction of Carrie in the image of the migratory New Woman, whose cosmopolitan standards of virtue make her a threat to the moral order of the city, makes her the discursive scapegoat for all that goes wrong in the novel.

Sister Carrie charts the title character's migration from the "green environs" of her country village to Chicago, and eventually New York. Searching for the means to survive

in the city, Carrie rejects factory and retail work, which were typical occupations for the single woman of the day, and embarks on a stage career that lands her a degree of fame and fortune by the end of the novel. Yet, Carrie's seeming social and economic rise as an actress is tempered with the suggestion of her moral "fall"--a fall with repercussions that seem less immediate for Carrie and more damaging to her second lover, George Hurstwood. Engaging in his own form of social theorizing throughout the novel, Dreiser reminds readers that Carrie's migration to and apparent success within the city holds serious moral consequences: without a "household law to govern her," Carrie falls prey to the "hypnotic influence" of the city and into a life of fallen virtues that place her on par with a prostitute (77, 4).

The seeming paradox that Dreiser constructs with respect to Carrie--success/failure, rise/fall--is consistent with social theories about the New Woman that were prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In particular, Dreiser's narrative, which emphasizes Carrie's lack of "home principles" or "household law," points to the importance of domestic ideology within the discourse of urban sociology: a field that was influential in shaping national ideas about race, class, and gender. My interest in drawing comparisons between Dreiser's literary representation of Carrie as a New Woman and social theory about New Womanhood heeds Susan Mizruchi's claim that comparing literary and sociological categories both "amplifies and complicates" representations of types and terms. Mizruchi argues that "as employed by contemporary social scientists, types are most often stabilizing; as employed by a corresponding company of literary writers, they are provisional. Both social scientists and writers extol types, but the writers are more likely to question them" (Mizruchi, 12). In this sense, literature is particularly useful in terms of expanding our understanding of certain social typologies, and this is true in my discussion of Dreiser's representation of Carrie. While certainly he plays with the New Woman as a "type" more than the sociologists do, Dreiser nonetheless seems to subscribe

to what Mizruchi terms the "language of social control" evident in contemporary rhetoric about the New Woman.

Three of the most influential urban sociologists of the day, Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, and Roderick McKenzie, collaborated in a book entitled *The City*, which detailed the threat to American life and culture through an examination of the spatial and migratory shift from rural to urban. In their discussion of the forces that create a city, the authors argue that these forces are not only geographical but also social. With its "body of customs and traditions," the city is more than geographic space: it "possesses," as the authors say, "a moral as well as a physical organization, and these two mutually interact in characteristic ways" (4). After establishing their theory of the city as having a dual foundation, the authors spend much of their book discussing the ways that this physical and moral "center" of modernity can be disrupted, disorganized, and demoralized primarily through increased migration to and mobility within the city. Park, for example, argues that the "mere movement of the population from one part of the country to another...is a disturbing influence" (108). Theorizing the impact of this disturbing influence, Park concludes that too much mobility leads ultimately to social delinquency and vice, and he cites three specific migratory populations as bearing the responsibility for such social decay: Negroes migrating northward, immigrants from Europe, and the "younger generation of women who are just now entering in such large numbers into the newer occupations and the freer life which the cities offer them" (108). While I will return in subsequent chapters to Park's first two examples of migratory populations that pose a threat, because of their mobility, to American life, Park's focus on the New Woman is particularly important for considering the collusion of domestic ideology and national narratives in relation to Dreiser's novel. In Park's terms, female power and visibility, or what he cites as the "entrance of women into greater freedom...industry, [p]rofessions, [a]nd party politics...make the control of vice especially difficult" (109). Within the discourse of sociology, this association of women

who migrate too far from "home" (both geographically and socially) with vice, delinquency, and promiscuity, place women within a discursive field in which they become, following Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's understanding of the threat posed by the New Woman, "the scapegoat for all that was problematic" in the moral order of the city (Smith-Rosenberg 111).

In making his claims about the dangers and demoralizing effects of women entering the city, Park draws on the earlier work of another social scientist, W.I. Thomas. In "The Adventitious Character of Woman," a chapter from his 1907 book *Sex and Society*, Thomas points to the conditions of industrialization and modernization at the turn of the twentieth-century and is concerned that a "peculiar code of morals" has developed to "cover the peculiar case of woman" (233). He claims that these new, modern moral codes "have much to do with the emergence of the adventuress and the sporting-woman"--the tag phrases he applies to the "modern [American] woman" who migrates from the country to the city (239-40). According to Thomas, this migrating New Woman threatens to destroy both her own community and the entire human race as a result of her "adventitious" behavior and "not-completely-functional relation to society," unless she has been "morally standardized before leaving home" (242):

As long as woman is comfortably cared for by the men of her group or by marriage, she is not likely to do anything rash, especially if the moral standards in her family and community are severe. But an unattached woman has a tendency to become an adventuress... . As long...as she remains with her people and is known to the whole community, she realizes that any infraction, immodesty, or immorality, will ruin her standing and chance of marriage, and bring her into shame and confusion. [W]hen she becomes detached from home and group, and is removed not only from surveillance, but from [o]rdinary stimulation, her inhibitions are

likely to be relaxed. (241)

Without behavioral and moral standardization, women who wander from their group, dominated notably by their men, become, in Thomas' words, "difficile, unreal, inefficient, exacting, unsatisfied, [and] absurd" (237-38).

What I see at work here is Thomas' attempt to script sociological rhetoric as public policy onto the female body. Smith-Rosenberg analyzes a similar scripting of public policy onto the bodies of women during the nineteenth century in the form of the American Medical Association's anti-abortion discourse. She links the A.M.A.'s anti-abortion campaign between the 1850s and the 1880s to the "social and demographic transformations" that brought women in greater numbers into America's urban centers (103). She argues that "in constructing these women [as dangerous and deviant], mid-Victorian physicians conflated their own fears of the middle-class woman's public presence and social eminence with those women's equally troublesome refusal to accept traditional sexual responsibilities" (105). In other words, male medical discourse constructed these new, more public women as social "problems" in order to assuage their own anxieties about the changing social, economic, and material conditions in a newly industrialized America. Smith-Rosenberg further contends that this "male medical argument" held that "physiological disorder would parallel social disorder when small-town America's daughters abandoned old sureties and fled to...the city" (111). In my reading of Thomas, his claim that "the girl coming from the country to the city" marks the potential for "irregular" behavior on par with a criminal act resonates with Smith-Rosenberg's reading of the A.M.A. campaign. Much like the A.M.A.'s attempt to remedy social disorder by scripting public policy onto the bodies of women, Thomas' insistence on the moral standardization of women is his solution to at least some of the problems of a more modern and mobile America--a way to "order" both the physical conditions of modern urban life and the moral center that Park discusses.

Dreiser's novel, published in 1900, prefigures Thomas' 1907 work by drawing a similar connection between female mobility and social disorder in *Sister Carrie*. It is widely held by literary critics that Dreiser engages in his own social theorizing and philosophizing about morality throughout the novel. Yet literary critics have overlooked the relationship between mobility and morality clearly evident in Dreiser's narrative. Amy Kaplan, for example, looks specifically at the opening scene in the novel and says that it begins on "two discordant narrative registers: the documentary of a young girl's journey to the city, and the sentimental commentary on the moral ramifications of her venture" (*Social Construction* 140). Yet with the cultural concerns of turn-of-the-century America in mind, there is nothing discordant about what this opening narrative documents. Carrie's mobility, here in the form of her first migration to the city, and Dreiser's commentary on morality emerge as congruent acts: the migrant narrative is also the moral one. In fact, Dreiser's lesson on morality, interjected as Carrie speeds away from the "threads which bound her so lightly to girlhood and home", is remarkably resonant with Thomas' discussion of what happens when women are not morally standardized before leaving home:

When a girl leaves her home...she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse. Of an intermediate balance, under the circumstances, there is no possibility. The city has its cunning wiles no less than the infinitely smaller and more human tempter. There are large forces which allure, with all the soulfulness of expression possible in the most cultured human. The gleam of a thousand lights is often as effective, as to all moral intents and purposes, as the persuasive light in a wooing and fascinating eye Without a counselor at hand to whisper cautious interpretations, what falsehoods may not these things

breathe into the unguarded ear! Unrecognized for what they are, their beauty, like music, too often relaxes, then weakens, then perverts the simplest human perceptions. (3-4)

Without a "counselor" to guide her through this transition from her country village to the city and its "wiles," Carrie indeed falls prey to a tempter in the form of Charlie Drouet, who she meets on the train. A few chapters later in the novel, tired of trying to earn a meagre wage making shoes in a factory and unsatisfied with the portrait of womanhood and domesticity projected by her sister, Carrie becomes Drouet's lover. She yields to his desire for her, primarily because he convinces her that a "nice room" and good clothes will help her "get something to do" in the city (69). As Carrie settles into this illicit relationship with Drouet, Dreiser reminds his readers that Carrie yields to Drouet's influence precisely because she lacks a clear set of moral standards: "...there was no household law to govern her. If any habits had ever had time to fix upon her, they would have operated here" (77). Unlike the "victim of habit," who Dreiser claims would feel a "scratching in the brain...a little prick of conscience" when faced with an unaccustomed situation, Carrie, because she "had no excellent home principles fixed upon her," becomes instead a fallen woman. Acting as social critic, Dreiser links Carrie's migration and her subsequent desire to be more socially mobile within the city with a lack of "home" principles and moral habits.

Donna Campbell argues that writers such as Dreiser have a sympathy for their fallen women, that as social critics and realist writers concerned with conditions in America's cities they can understand the economic conditions that result in women selling themselves as sexual commodities. Yet I see in Dreiser's narrative an anxiety about what this "fall" means in the community at large. As Carrie becomes more of a public figure in the novel, ultimately becoming somewhat of a celebrity in the stage community, she begins to seem less a victim of the city and more of a force within it--a force that takes the form of a threat in terms of its impact on the men she is involved with.

What I suggest in my reading of the novel is that Carrie's refusal to perform the duties of domestic womanhood, specifically those of wife and mother, results in a downfall that has repercussions throughout the social network established in the narrative. In the context of turn of the century discourse about the role of women in sustaining the nation, Carrie represents the type of "new" American woman who, in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, is "less happy, and...less useful":

But exactly as it is true that no nation will prosper unless the average man is a home-maker; that is, unless he earns enough to make a home for himself and his wife and children, and is a good husband and father: so no nation can exist at all unless the average woman is the homekeeper, the good wife, and unless she is the mother of a sufficient number of healthy children to insure the race going forward and backward. The indispensable work for the community is the work of the wife and the mother. It is the most honorable work. It is literally and exactly vital work, the work which of course must be done by the average woman or the whole nation goes down with a crash. ("The Parasite Woman" 235)

In this passage, Roosevelt extends the sociological work of Park and Thomas by making an explicit connection between women as "homekeepers" and the progress of the nation. For Roosevelt, the woman who does not perform the duties of a wife and mother threatens the American democratic ideal, resulting in the downfall of the "whole nation." Domestic work is the only "vital work" for women, the only means through which she can become an "absolutely indispensable citizen of this Republic" (240). Not only does she threaten the nation with race suicide (if she is not "the mother of a sufficient number of healthy children"), a woman's refusal to engage in the vital work of the nation has repercussions in the larger scope of Roosevelt's Americanism. The commitment to "ardent patriotism" that comes about by accepting the duties of national citizenship extends beyond U.S. borders:

in Roosevelt's logic, fulfillment of domestic duties not only secures "justice for all within [America's] own borders," but also makes the U.S. more "fit" for "world leadership on behalf of the democratic ideal" (241). In Roosevelt's scenario, women with (in Dreiser's words) "home principles" not only sustain the nation's domestic borders but also help secure the U.S. a place in the mobile imperialist enterprise.

Read in the context of contemporary sociological and political discourse about the role of women in the nation, Dreiser's fictional narrative is about much more than the migration of one young woman to the city. Carrie's decidedly anti-domestic aspirations, much like Mildred's, not only disrupt the social fabric of the narrative, but also threaten to destroy the imagined national community established through the novel.¹² Yet while Burnham contains the possibility of this threat by marrying Mildred off to Jack at the end of the novel and having her lose herself in this union, Dreiser explores the impact of unrestrained female social and sexual mobility on an America particularly invested in domestic ideology as part of the project of nationhood and democracy.

Carrie's anti-domestic and thus anti-democratic path begins with her arrival at her sister Minnie's flat in a working class, immigrant neighborhood of Chicago. Watching Minnie in the throes of domesticity--in the kitchen with the baby--Carrie feels an immediate dislike for her "discordant" surroundings:

In the interval which marked the preparation of the meal, Carrie found time to study the flat.... She felt the drag of a lean and narrow life. The walls of the rooms were discordantly papered. The floors were covered with matting and the hall laid with a thin rag carpet. One could see that the

¹³ I draw here on Benedict Anderson's notion of the "imagined community." In what has now become a fundamental study in theories of nationalism, Anderson proposes the definition of a "nation" as "an imagined political community" in which a "horizontal comradeship" forms that stretches across the inequalities of members who, although they will likely never know each other, work together to construct and sustain their nation (*Imagined Communities* 6). For Anderson, the historic advent of print capitalism facilitated the process of imagining the nation because print created an effect of "homogenous empty time" in which isolated individuals reading a novel or newspaper are assured that there are other individuals that share a common time and space.

furniture was of that poor, hurriedly patched-together quality which was then being sold by the installment houses. Too ignorant to understand anything about the theory of harmony, Carrie yet felt the lack of it.

Something about the place irritated her, she did not know what. She only knew that these things, to her, were dull and commonplace. (13)

Unlike Minnie, who seems to accept her role and her surroundings with indifference, Carrie decides immediately to dissociate herself from this scene of working-class domesticity. She writes that night to Drouet, who has promised to visit her at Minnie's, advising him not to call on her. At this point in the narrative, Carrie sees any potential relationship with Drouet an impossibility until she can first "get work and establish herself on a paying basis" (14). On the advice of Minnie's husband (who is anxious to start receiving Carrie's room and board money), Carrie starts out the next morning to literally walk the streets of Chicago's industrial district in search of work.

Yet Carrie's first ventures into the search for work result in a certain crisis for her: she wants the independence and mobility that having her own money might bring but does not want to be seen as a "wage-seeker":

Once across the river and into the wholesale district, she glanced about her for some likely door at which to apply. As she contemplated the wide windows and imposing signs, she became conscious of being gazed upon and understood for what she was--a wage-seeker. To avoid conspicuity and a certain indefinable shame she felt at being caught spying about for some place where she might apply for a position, she quickened her steps and assumed an air of indifference supposedly common to one upon an errand. (18)

With Dreiser's attention to "realism" in mind, this scene seems to be merely a very "real" representation of the embarrassment and self-consciousness that often accompanies looking

for a job. In this sense, Carrie's desire to "avoid conspicuity" seems consistent with one who does not want to be seen--particularly by those with more (economic and social) power--as one in need. Yet this scene also taps into the novel's larger and more pervasive concern with the tension between visibility and invisibility and the relation of the visible to the domestic ideology that Carrie ultimately disrupts.

Examining "economies of visibility" as a way to read constructions of race and gender, Robyn Wiegman theorizes the relationship between the visual/visible and identity (*American Anatomies* 3). While Wiegman's model is more specific to the conditions of racial hegemony in various cultural forms and literary and filmic representations, her attention to the complex relationship between visibility and invisibility offers a useful way to consider how visibility is related to Carrie's emergence as a subject in Dreiser's narrative. Working with Foucault's theory of the panoptic, Wiegman draws attention to the ways that visibility is inscribed in various social spaces and technologies which attend discourses of race:

...[The] panoptic system was generalized throughout the Western world, no longer bound to a specific architecture but wrought within a broader configuration of social space, visual technologies, and disciplinary exercise. Assuming the form of an omnipresent surveillance, power was itself invisible, but [in Foucault's terms] 'capable of making all visible...a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere.' This insertion of the social body into a field of permanent and self-incorporated visibility took place alongside various economic upheavals that accompanied the production of the discourse of race, demonstrating the colluding specular and panoptic frameworks through which race was deployed as a technique of disciplinary power in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (39)

Although her focus here is on the relationship between visibility and racial discourse, Wiegman's interpretation of Foucault's theory of the panopticon resonates with Dreiser's scene of Carrie's search for work. As Carrie goes from shop to shop in search for a position, receiving rejections and rebukes from various male managers and business owners, her cowardice and self-consciousness grow and begin "to trouble her" (19). As in the passage quoted above, Carrie's discomfort is rooted in the fact that she becomes "conscious of being gazed upon," which makes her aware of herself as a "wage-seeker." With Wiegman in mind, I suggest that the scene of Carrie's search for work begins a process in the narrative through which Carrie becomes aware of herself as a classed and gendered subject. In the Foucauldian panoptic model, the entire passage becomes a description of the sort of "faceless gaze" that has the disciplinary power to transform Carrie from merely an anonymous country girl into a woman in (economic) need. Making Carrie the spectacle within this social system suggests that the visible functions here as a way to keep Carrie under surveillance, her movement through these social spaces controlled by the "gaze" of the male proprietors.

Carrie's desire for invisibility at this point in the novel is explicitly linked to her awareness that she is the sort of wage-seeker associated with the poverty and domestic unhappiness she sees in her sister's world.¹³ Her search for work embodies the crisis between her desire for a degree of independence and (economic) mobility and her understanding that participating in the labor market will ultimately hold no value beyond the meagre wages that enable her to pay for room and board. This early crisis points to the complexities between visibility and invisibility: the visibility that Carrie desires contrasts with the sort of invisibility of the labor market employing primarily women and immigrants. Although she does not want to be "seen" in the context of other wage-seekers,

¹³ My reading of the association between Carrie's domestic environment and her search for work is resonant with Amy Kaplan who argues that the "Hansons' working-class flat not only offers no haven from the market but lies on a continuum with the workplace" (*Social Construction of American Realism* 143).

Carrie does want to be noticed in Drouet's world, where she imagines the freedom associated with the "things she would like to do...clothes she would like to wear and...places she would like to visit" (50). Carrie's version of what it means to be seen is explicitly linked here to movement in the form of economic, social, and geographic mobility. By exploring the relationship between mobility, visibility/invisibility, and the novel's domestic ideology, I suggest that Dreiser's narration of Carrie (and subsequently Hurstwood) offers a way to extend Weigman's Foucauldian theorization of the function of the visual, implicating the visibility/invisibility paradigm in the larger discourse of Americanism.

After she becomes ill and loses her first job, Carrie is forced to search again for work; it is during this second search for work that she encounters Charlie Drouet. Immediately, Drouet surmises her unhappiness and, after taking her to lunch in a place where he could "see and be seen as he dined," he gives Carrie money and procures her promise to meet him again the following day (58). Although she has a moment of hesitation when Drouet first offers the money, Carrie is attracted to the life he offers her: a life of new clothes in a world that seems far away from her sister and "those people out there" (62).¹⁴ Carrie is also attracted to the "enlivening spectacle" that Drouet creates around him, to the sort of social visibility she desires. The transaction between herself and Drouet seems to hold only good, guileless possibility, until she returns to her sister's later that evening. Once back among the domestic, immigrant world of "those people," Carrie begins to feel shame over accepting Drouet's money, on "getting money without work" (66). She is once again conflicted, or as Dreiser describes in "that middle state in which we mentally balance at times, possessed of the means, lured by desire and yet deterred by conscience or want of decision" (67). Drouet, too, recognizes the perceived impropriety of

¹⁵ It should be noted that "those people" makes direct reference to the immigrant working class. Although not the focus of my reading here, references such as this, which pervade the novel, warrant an examination of the immigrant narrative underpinning *Sister Carrie*.

Carrie accepting money from him and continuing to live with her sister and thus convinces Carrie to ignore her conscience and accept his offer: "Now, why not let me get you a nice room? I won't bother you--you needn't be afraid. Then when you get fixed up, maybe you could get something" (69). For Carrie, the possibility that she might be able to "get something" on her own negates any possible immorality with Drouet. Convincing herself that she has not yet done anything wrong with Drouet, that she "had not done so and so yet," Carrie accepts more money from him, allows him to select new clothes for her, and finally agrees to pretend that they are merely brother and sister so he can rent her a room. Thus begins the narration of Carrie's "fall."

Dreiser's commentary, which follows immediately after Carrie succumbs to Drouet, draws a parallel between Carrie's "middle state," which leads to her fall, and the "intermediate stage" of civilization:

Among the forces which sweep and play throughout the universe, untutored man is but a wisp in the wind. Our civilization is still in a middle stage--scarcely beast, in that it is no longer wholly guided by instinct; scarcely human, in that it is not yet wholly guided by reason. On the tiger no responsibility rests.... In this intermediate stage he wavers--neither drawn in harmony with nature by his instincts nor yet wisely putting himself into harmony by his own free will. He is even as a wisp in the wind, moved by every breath of passion, acting now by his will and now by his instincts, erring with one only to retrieve by the other, falling by one only to rise by the other--a creature of incalculable variability. (73)

Here Dreiser theorizes that civilization is like a "wisp in the wind": constantly moving, not according to instinct or reason but because of desire, with a variability that is "incalculable," boundless, unable to be fixed or held in check. There is a degree of anxiety present in Dreiser's commentary about the incalculability of civilization and the potential

dangers of this middle stage that parallels the earlier anxiety about Carrie's movement through the city without fixed home principles. In fact, the above commentary is immediately followed by another narrative musing on Carrie's lack of a household law, which would have guided her towards duty, and away from the allure of Drouet. The pairing of Carrie's fall with Dreiser's comments on the potential fall of civilization suggests a link between women, mobility, and social progress on par with Roosevelt's notions of what constitutes a true Republic. As Dreiser concludes, it is only "when this jangle of free will and instinct have been *adjusted*" that "man [civilization] *will no longer vary*. The needle of understanding will yet point *steadfast* and *unwavering* to the...pole of truth" (73, emphasis added). The urging here is towards a lack of movement--towards stability--that comes about only through the adjustment of civilization. With the parallel between an adjusted civilization and a morally standardized woman in mind, clearly Carrie represents the "wisp in the wind" that threatens to impede social progress.

Through the novel's focus on the visible, Carrie becomes a mirror for social progress. Dreiser constructs a narrative in which Carrie herself becomes a spectacle, representative of late nineteenth century concerns about mobility and domesticity. Whereas in Burnham's novel the Fair functions as a spectacle that makes evident the relationship between domestic ideology and imperial logic, home and empire, in Dreiser's version Carrie and her role as an actress highlight the interplay between domestic and national ideologies. One of the primary mechanisms that the narrative relies on in order to link Carrie's mobility and national progress is the mirror. There are several mirror "scenes" throughout the novel, in which we see Carrie demonstrate a self-awareness that she seems to lack throughout much of the rest of the novel. The mirror offers Carrie the opportunity to remake herself in the image of New Womanhood that she views on the street, in the shops, and in the theater. It is through these mirror scenes that we see Carrie's consciousness intersect with her desire, as she seems to be more aware of what she has

given up (namely, her sexuality) in order to become the sort of woman she admires. For example, in one early mirror scene, after Carrie and Drouet are living together, the mirror registers Carrie's doubts about the new woman she has become:

Here then was Carrie, established in a pleasant fashion, free of certain difficulties which most ominously confronted her, laden with many new ones which were of a mental order, and altogether so turned about in all of her earthly relationships that she might have well been a new and different individual. She looked into her glass and saw a prettier Carrie there than she had seen before; she looked into her mind, a mirror prepared of her own and the world's opinions, and saw a worse. Between these two images she wavered, hesitating which to believe. (89)

While Drouet reinforces the first image Carrie sees--that of a prettier Carrie--Carrie is plagued by the second image--that of a "worse" Carrie. In contrast to Drouet's voice of praise, she

heard a different voice, with which she argued, pleaded, excused. It was no just and sapient counsellor.... It was only an average little conscience, a thing which represented the world, her past environment, habit, convention, in a confused, reflected way. With it, the voice of the people was truly the voice of God. (89)

The voice she hears represents the voice of "the (godlike) people" in this passage, who deem her a "failure" in comparison to "the good girls, [who] will draw away from such as you, when they know you have been weak" (90). The voice of the people here is the voice of a moral majority: not the voice of her own conscience (which is only "an average little conscience" anyway), but the reflection of a larger, more pervasive social critic. While her illicit life with Drouet seems to be the result of Carrie's migration to the city and her desire for social and economic mobility, Drouet, perhaps ironically, offers Carrie a degree of

stability. She pleads with and ultimately ignores the voice of the people, staying with Drouet because of economic need. Having experienced the world of a wage-seeker, Carrie chooses the "voice of want," which Drouet can (at least temporarily) satisfy, over the voice of a collective conscience.

Yet, as has often been noted, Carrie's desire--her "voice of want"--becomes all-consuming: "She longed and longed and longed" (page). As June Howard has argued, Carrie "signifies desire" throughout the novel and it is Carrie *as* desire that makes her particularly suited for the stage: "the character Ames tells Carrie that her face has something 'the world likes to see, because it's a natural expression of its longing.... Sometimes nature...makes the face representative of all desire. That's what has happened in your case'" (Howard 42). It is Carrie's "sympathetic, impressionable nature," the fact that she "was created with that passivity of soul which is always the mirror of the active world," that ultimately makes her a success. Dreiser links Carrie's perpetual longing to her ability to recreate a likeness of the world--an "outworking of desire to reproduce life" which is the "basis of all dramatic art" (157).

What I want to suggest is that Carrie's "outworking of desire to reproduce life" is troubling within the domestic ideology that I argue is at the core of Dreiser's narrative. Staged through the spectacle of Carrie as an actress, the relationship between Carrie's excessive desire and the process of reproducing life contrasts with the sort of woman as reproducer of and for the nation believed to be the stronghold of (Rooseveltian) American progress and idealism.¹⁵ As a stage actress that reproduces life only insofar as she can serve as a reflection of audience desire, Carrie is the complete inversion of the domestic

¹⁶In "*Sister Carrie's* Popular Economy," Walter Benn Michaels also draws a connection between desire, an "economy of excess" and American idealism. He argues that American idealism is based (at least in part) on a "state of equilibrium in which one wants only what one has" and that any desire "exceeding or outstripping" this state of satisfaction is "the enemy" that disrupts equilibrium and idealism. He suggests that Carrie's excessive desire demonstrates the "evils" of "unrestrained capitalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," and as such poses a potential threat to an American idealism based on the moderation of desire and economy.

woman as wife and mother. Her need to reproduce *herself* in this way stages female desire as all-consuming and ultimately destructive, as seen particularly through Hurstwood's downfall.

It is precisely Carrie's incessant longing that makes Hurstwood so appealing; he is different from Drouet (and at the time of their first meeting, apparently more successful socially and financially). With Hurstwood, Carrie can imagine remaking herself again, perhaps even marrying him. Yet, Hurstwood's "fall" begins when he meets and begins to desire Carrie. While Carrie's movement in the novel shifts from being looked at to displaying herself, from invisibility to spectacle, Hurstwood's move is the opposite: from the luxuries of being "seen" to complete invisibility at the end of the novel. While certainly connected through their relationship with each other, critics often read Carrie and Hurstwood through autonomous narrative registers.¹⁶ I am suggesting, however, that Dreiser's narrativization of Hurstwood's fall is contingent upon Carrie's seemingly upward mobility--a rise to the top that, as I suggested earlier, serves ultimately to make visible Carrie's own "fall" as a woman.

Carrie and Hurstwood begin their relationship with a train ride from Chicago that lands them ultimately in New York City: an event that represents the second migration in the novel. After he steals the \$10,000 from the bar that he manages, Hurstwood deceives Carrie into running away with him. Their subsequent long train ride is significant for both, as it offers them an opportunity to remake themselves, to create a new narrative in new surroundings. As Carrie looks out "upon the moving panorama of rural life," she chooses to go with Hurstwood because, through this second migratory movement not unlike her first, she "would be away from all past associations, she would be in a new world" (285).

¹⁷ In my research of both contemporary readings of *Sister Carrie* and those considered to be fundamental to Dreiser studies, I have found no mention of the possibility that Carrie's story and Hurstwood's are contingent upon each other. While critics such as June Howard and Amy Kaplan have noted the juxtaposed trajectories of Carrie and Hurstwood, neither argues that these trajectories arise directly out of Carrie's mobility narrative.

Similar to her journey to Chicago, this train ride offers Carrie the chance to sever all ties with the past, enabling her to forget the illicit life she led with Drouet in Chicago.

This second migration from rural to urban at first seems to offer Carrie another, more "standardized" way of life. After changing their names, she and Hurstwood marry and Carrie suddenly develops "enough of the instincts of a housewife" to set up a comfortable home (307). While Hurstwood finds comfort in the image of Carrie as a satisfied housewife, it becomes increasingly clear that domestic duties are not her "chief expression in life" (316). As Carrie notices the changes in Hurstwood, his "stay-at-homishness" and his well-dressed state compared to her own deteriorating appearance, she begins to desire more than a settled domestic life. Befriended by the wealthier Mrs. Vance, Carrie returns as a spectator to the theatre, which rekindles her desire to act: "Carrie longed to be of it. She wanted to take her sufferings, whatever they were, in such a world, or failing that, at least to simulate them under such charming conditions upon the stage" (325). Carrie's own desire to be part of the world of the Vances--going to the theatre, wearing the right clothes--marks the beginning of Hurstwood's deterioration. Her desire to participate in what Veblen has termed the "conspicuous consumption" of society coincides with Hurstwood's disenfranchisement from this culture of consumption. Furthermore, Carrie's longing to be more than merely a consumer, but also part of a system in which she becomes, essentially, a consumable commodity, removes her further from the domestic fiction she and Hurstwood have created; subsequently, Hurstwood can no longer depend on this fiction. After he loses his job, Hurstwood falls into a depressive state where he stays home and reads the paper (presumably looking for work). In order to stave off impending poverty, Carrie finds a job as a chorus girl on the stage. As she becomes more active in the stage community, Carrie's desire to disengage herself from Hurstwood and their domestic life together increases: among the other actresses, she was "ashamed to own up that she was married" (399). Finding more success with various theatre companies, the

site of her relationship with Hurstwood becomes unbearable: "It was all poverty and trouble.... It became a place to keep away from" (407).

In terms of the domestic narrative, Carrie and Hurstwood begin to switch roles. Hurstwood takes over control of the "household method and economy," in which Carrie was "far from perfect" (363). Another symbol of this role reversal is the use of the rocking chair: where Carrie used to sit and read, rocking in her chair and longing for more in the world outside, Hurstwood now occupies the chair with his newspaper reading. Dreiser readers have long pointed to the rocking chair as the pervasive image of the sentimental in the novel. Amy Kaplan, for example, claims that "The reencoding of sentimental conventions in *Sister Carrie* can be seen...in the omnipresent rocking chair" (*Social Construction of American Realism* 144). While Kaplan sees Hurstwood's final disintegration as marked "not only by Carrie's abandonment, but by his being forced to sell back the furniture" which represents domestic stability, I would argue that the shift in domestic roles, symbolized by the shift in who occupies the rocking chair, is a significant moment often overlooked in the trajectory of Hurstwood's downfall. The role-switch suggests more than a reencoding of gender roles within the framework of the domestic; insofar as it sets the characters on their final paths, this reversal in traditional domestic gender roles points to the dangers of what can happen when female desire and ambition migrate away from marriage and homespace.

Whereas Carrie moves further and further away from a settled domestic life, becoming more noticed in the stage community, Hurstwood's attempts to move beyond the world of his rocking chair are failures. Moving completely away from the site of the rocking chair and the domestic narrative it registers, Carrie's increasing visibility in the theatre integrates her not only into the stage community but also into a larger community of theatre-goers representative of "the people" of the city. Conversely, through his newspaper reading, Hurstwood imagines a community for himself that ultimately fails to integrate him

with "the people." Dreiser's narration of Hurstwood's involvement with newspaper accounts of the world outside demonstrate an instance of Benedict Anderson's notion of an "imagined community," formed in part through various print media, such as newspapers. While in Anderson's schema, participation in various forms of print capital forge imagined links between people, Dreiser demonstrates the failure of this logic with Hurstwood. Although reading about the trolley workers compels Hurstwood to venture into the strike, the newspaper accounts merely contain and selectively filter the actual experience of the strike. As Amy Kaplan argues: "The newspaper...evokes a sense of community, of shared experience filtered through information, at the same time that it upholds the reader's sense of himself as outside observer. Hurstwood's experience of the strike dispels both senses--of community and neutrality; when he ventures out of his apartment as a scab, he is not prepared for the intensity of the social conflict and is forced to take sides" (*Social Construction* 154). Although reading the paper makes Hurstwood believe that he can "get on over there," perhaps finding a place for himself within this unstable economic order, his movement into the community he imagines does not bring him closer to a shared experience: in fact, in becoming a scab he declares "I'm not anything" (413)--a declaration of self-obliteration that foreshadows his complete invisibility by the end of the novel.

While critics frequently read the strike chapter as somewhat unrelated to the rest of Dreiser's narrative¹⁷, I suggest that the chapter works to secure the distinction between Hurstwood as immobile and anonymous versus Carrie as mobile and visible. While becoming more socially visible, by the end of the novel Carrie has indeed "wandered," in W.I. Thomas' sense, from the surveillance and standardization of (her) men; she abandons Hurstwood and rejects Drouet when he calls on her at the theatre. This severing of "home" ties has particularly devastating effects on Hurstwood, who (just as Carrie is finding

¹⁸ Kaplan, for example, maintains that the strike scene is "roped off in a separate sphere" in the novel: "...one of the few chapters without both a sentimental and a metrical heading; it therefore seems more straightforward and realistic but also more removed from any interpretive context [and]...rendered quite visible at the cost of any narrative context" (*Social Construction* 155).

success in New York) moves into complete anonymity, seeing himself as "one sees a city with a wall about it," with himself on the "outside [with the] forgotten" (339). I suggest that Carrie's apparent success simultaneously displaces Hurstwood, moving him to the outside of the city that she has won over. In fact, when her showgirl friend catches sight of a man, who appears to be a vagrant, falling down in the snow on Fifth Avenue and says "how sheepish men look when they fall?," Carrie does not even look and thus fails to notice that it is Hurstwood who has fallen outside of her window (495). Within the logic of public/private spheres, Hurstwood and Carrie have indeed completely shifted roles at this point in the narrative: it is now Hurstwood in the position of the more "feminized" and invisible outsider, while Carrie, with her newly acquired social success, seems to hold the power of the proprietary gaze. After his (literal and figurative) "fall" outside Carrie's window, Hurstwood walks back to his rented room and gasses himself to death. While the end of the novel charts both Carrie's and Hurstwood's migration to New York, the effects of these migrations hinge on Carrie's mobility within the city: as she appears to succeed and rise, Hurstwood tragically fails and falls. Within the rhetorical context of mobility and the New Woman, as Carrie becomes, in Thomas' terms, a more "adventitious" woman and detaches herself from any semblance of home, her moral fall makes men as a consequence socially sheepish, forgotten, and invisible.

While Carrie achieves a level of social and economic success in the city, Dreiser tempers her apparent progress with frequent reminders that Carrie, having first sold herself to Drouet and then to Hurstwood, remains a form of capital:

...[T]he crowd, wearied by dull conversation, roved with its eyes about the stage and sighted her. As she went on frowning...the audience began to smile. The portly gentlemen in the front rows began to feel that she was a delicious little morsel. It was the kind of frown they would have loved to force away with kisses. All the gentlemen yearned towards her.

She was capital. (447)

In one sense this last line describes her success--she was "excellent." But in the larger context of this quote, the line makes it clear that Carrie, for all her apparent theatrical talent, is only valued insofar as she is a consumable commodity (most notably for) an audience of "gentlemen." In a novel that many critics argue is about turn of the century consumer culture, Carrie's ability to transform "anonymity into identity" becomes a "valuable commodity that allows her success as an actress."¹⁸ In Volume One of *Capital*, Marx defines a commodity as a "thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort of another."¹⁹ As Kaplan (and also Walter Benn Michaels) argues, in the context of Dreiser's novel Carrie becomes a commodity because she has, in Marx's terms, a "use value" that satisfies (human) desire. Marx further argues that the value of a commodity expresses itself through the act of exchange: it is through this process of exchange that social relations are formed. In explaining the formation of modern capital, Marx finally argues that the "circulation of commodities is the starting-point of capital."²⁰ While Marx speaks primarily of the appearance of capital as money (the result of the process of circulation and exchange of commodities), the Marxist model is useful for considering Carrie's role as a commodity in Dreiser's novel. As she becomes more successful on the stage, Carrie's "use value"--her appeal to the audience--increases. In one sense, it is Carrie's ability to mirror and reproduce the desire and conditions of her urban audience that secures her a sense of self within a community. In the exchange of her "frown" for audience pleasure, Carrie enters into a set of social relations that she ultimately benefits from in the way of earning more and more money. Yet, in becoming a consumable commodity--a "delicious little morsel"--her own desire (seen as excessive throughout the novel) to be less domestic and more socially mobile can also be contained and controlled. Similar to her experience of looking for work

¹⁹Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism*, 158.

²⁰From *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition, edited by Robert C. Tucker, p. 303.

²¹*The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 329.

earlier in the novel, even on stage Carrie can be disciplined by the gaze of the audience of gentlemen, who "roved with its eyes about the stage and sighted her." I suggest an extension of Marx's theories of commodity exchange and capital formation that takes into account not only social relations, but more specifically the production of gender relations: brought into the "sight" of the audience, Carrie becomes their capital--a valuable commodity, but an exchange at the expense of Carrie's own desire and mobility. Through her visibility on the stage, Carrie can be brought into the surveillance of the community, as represented by an audience of men.

Much like the discourse of male Victorian physicians and urban sociologists, Dreiser, through his own social scripting about mobility and morality, conflates woman's public eminence with her refusal to adhere to traditional sexual responsibilities. Along with the threat that her migratory movements ultimately pose to masculinity in an urban context, I read Dreiser's references to Carrie as "capital" as further evidence of his narrative containment of her as a "fallen" woman within the domestic ideology at work in the post frontier American nation. Dreiser's depiction of Carrie as a commodity reinforces the notion that her migration to the city is linked to her sexual wanderings. She may achieve a degree of economic success, but this success is tempered with the fact that she has exchanged her sexuality for visibility on the stage, a visibility that is itself laden with sexual connotations.

Clover and Carrie: Rural Nostalgia, Domesticity, and the Dialectic of Mobility/Immobility

More subtly than in *Sweet Clover*, which makes evident the concerns about the future of the post-frontier nation through the spectacle of a World's Fair, *Sister Carrie* charts national progress through the narrativization of Carrie's rise--and fall--as a visible new woman in an urban context. On the one hand, Carrie seems to represent a further dramatization of

Mildred, or what Mildred might have become if she had continued to explore the city without the guidance of a husband. Both Carrie and Mildred step outside of the boundaries of conventional gender ideology, yet the conclusion to Dreiser's novel, which contrasts sharply with Burnham's, demonstrates the tragic effects of female mobility on the domestic. Not only is the familiarity of domesticity undermined, but Dreiser also offers no resolution, as Burnham does with the marriage plot, for a nation plagued with migrating women.

While Carrie indeed represents a version of Mildred Bryant gone wrong, she is also an extension of Clover in that both can be seen as metaphoric for post-frontier concerns over rural and urban space and mobility. Even more than Mildred, Clover is the primary symbol of the shift from rural to urban in Burnham's novel, in much the same way as Dreiser's narrative is constructed upon Carrie's fateful train ride from her rural home to the city. And no less significantly, Clover, like Carrie, exchanges her sexuality for economic freedom and security. This exchange is neatly erased by the end of Burnham's novel, in which marriage and money help cover up the past. But, in fact, Carrie and Clover are more alike than they might appear. Both start out as poor, country girls in search of a better life. Both are rescued from rurality and poverty by city-men, who provide them with the opportunities to recreate themselves. Although both Clover and Carrie are explicitly linked to place at the start of each narrative, through descriptions that remind readers that these are girls from the country, from poor or, at best, working class families, their social origins are nearly forgotten by the end of their stories, replaced by women who seem to be enjoying all the benefits of their new economic status. The Clover and Carrie we see at the end of the novels are certainly not the poor, country girls at the start.

In this sense, Carrie and Clover's transformations demonstrate Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the shift from class to style and taste. In his study of French class structures, Bourdieu interprets contemporary consumer preferences and taste as shaped by the process

of class-inflected “distinction.” Bourdieu’s analysis of how social origin, as a determinant of social classification, is either replaced or covered up by consumer preferences speaks to the ways that Clover and Carrie essentially reclassify themselves through their participation in modes of consumption: “A class is defined,” Bourdieu writes, “as much by its being-perceived as by its being, by its consumption—which need not be conspicuous to be symbolic—as much as by its position in the relations of production” (Bourdieu, 483). Money literally enables these women to buy out of their “class”; they readily exchange their links to the past and their origins for the pleasures (clothes, travel, trips to the Fair or to the theater) that money can buy. As a way to extend Bourdieu’s discussion of how class becomes a matter of taste and style, I contribute the idea that mobility is what effects this change. Social origins as the basis for social and economic classification shifts with the notion of mobility. While Dreiser and Burnham’s depiction of the rural associate it with poverty, decay, and stagnation, clearly the urban, the Chicago metropolis, represents both a geographical and social movement away from rural inferiority and despair. Once Clover and Carrie are removed from this space, they begin to desire and take on characteristics of their urban environment, which enables them to, in Bourdieu’s sense, reclassify themselves as consumers. In a sense it no longer matters what “position” Clover or Carrie actually hold in the “relations of production” to which Bourdieu refers; their socio-economic status is no longer a product of their social origins, but rather becomes defined by their participation in a system of what is clearly, in these novels, urban consumption. Although Carrie can be seen as a Bourdieuan example of this shift from geographical capital to consumption, as demonstrated in her desire to remake herself in the image of urban new womanhood, with the taste and style of the higher class Drouet and Vances, Clover complicates the notion that taste alone constructs class status. In Clover’s case, geographic mobility effects this change; once she leaves her rural setting, Clover seems automatically to become a woman of taste and distinction.

Yet while these narratives are founded to a great degree on the rural to urban movement of Clover and Carrie, each also evinces a sort of nostalgia for the rural and the immobility it seems to represent. Although the city represents civilization in the form of consumer capital, the associations of Clover and Carrie with the pastoral and the rural suggest an idealization not merely of these landscapes but more importantly of the moral economy these spaces signify. While *Sister Carrie* and *Sweet Clover* are clearly “urban” novels that focus on the city and its spectacles, each maintains an investment in the rural as, in Raymond Williams’ terms, a “resting place” from social conditions that are disordered and unstable (Williams, 12). In his discussion of the interdependency of the rural and urban, Williams argues that a tension emerges because of the gap between idealizations of the past, which represents a moral economy, and the new capitalism of the modern, urban present. In Williams’ sense, the rural functions as a sort of moral “memory,” as an escape from the conditions of the city (46). Although he is interested in British novels by authors such as Dickens and Jane Austen, Williams’ argument that certain “pastoral” figures emerge in literature as metaphors for this tension between rural and urban is useful when considering Dreiser and Burnham’s representations of Carrie and Clover. Consider, for example, Clover’s name, which evokes the immediacy of rural agriculture and the sense of ease and leisure associated with living a life “in the clover.” The embodiment of her name, Clover represents the “resting place” for the characters in the novel, the touchstone and “home” at the center of the narrative. The narrative insistence on Clover’s impeccable morality, even when she enters into the loveless relationship with Van Tassel at the start of the novel, combined with the metonymic association of her with the rural, suggests an investment in a moral order of the past. Even more importantly, this sense of stability and order is related to the novel’s version of domestic ideology. More than any other character, Clover represents the importance of constructing and sustaining kinship ties and marriage.

For example, at the end of the novel when Mildred finally concedes to Jack, Mildred acknowledges that their union means as much to them as it does to Clover:

“I believe,” she said, “this lifts the last cloud from Clover’s horizon.”

“Yes,” answered the latter... “the world never looked so bright to me as now.... I think...heaven itself must have grown happier tonight.” (411)

In this way, Clover literally embodies the domestic ideology that drives the narrative, providing a sense of stability amidst the changing geographical and social conditions brought on by rural to urban mobility.

In Dreiser’s version of this literary pastoral, naming is also significant. Although Carrie’s name does not conjure up an image of the rural in the same way as Clover’s, her name does represent, especially for Hurstwood, a sort of prelapsarian nostalgia and desire for stability. In Dreiser’s novel, Carrie changes her name with each geographic and social move she makes, from Meeber to Wheeler, the name she takes while living with Hurstwood, and finally Madenda, her stage name. Renaming charts Carrie’s geographical and social mobility, symbolizing her success at moving further away from the country girl image. Each time she changes her name, Carrie essentially reconstitutes herself, creating a new subjectivity. Yet Carrie’s desire to forget and erase her origins in this way contrasts with Hurstwood’s preoccupation at the end of the novel with the past and the sense of domestic stability it signifies. When Hurstwood wanders aimlessly at the end of the novel, cold, hungry, and without a place to sleep, he stumbles onto Broadway where he encounters an advertisement for Carrie and her dance company:

At Broadway and 39th Street was blazing, in incandescent fire, Carrie’s name. “Carrie Madenda,” it read, “and the Casino Company.” All the wet, snowy sidewalk was bright with this radiated fire. It was so bright that it attracted Hurstwood’s gaze. He looked up, and then at a larger gilt-framed poster-board on which was a fine lithograph of Carrie, life-size. (493)

Here, Carrie's name in lights seems to take on a life of its own; along with the life-size poster, the image of "Carrie Madenda" overwhelms the landscape around it. Clearly, Carrie becomes a spectacle here, one that contrasts with Hurstwood's image of her in the past, which was of something "old" and familiar. When Hurstwood first falls in love with Carrie, for example, he sees her in terms not unlike the image of Clover, as something pure, simple, in contrast to the urban environment:

In Carrie he saw the embodiment of old experiences and old dreams. There was in her fresh cheeks something of the old garden of spring.... In a fading, an almost desolate garden here, was sprung up a new flower. Eyes of soft radiance. Form of graceful, attractive lines, cheeks soft and colorful, hair that was pleasant to look upon—a lightsome step, a youthful fancy, a radiant fire of feeling as he had so recently seen. Here was something which was new, something which took him back. (203)

Carrie, like Clover, summons up an image of a garden among the desolate urban landscape, as she is simultaneously something "new" and something that conveys an idealized past of "old experiences and old dreams." The "radiant fire" she projects here is distinctly different from the brightness of her name and image at the end of the novel. Whereas she can be seen as the literal embodiment of a sort of rural nostalgia at the start of her relationship with Hurstwood, Carrie ultimately becomes the essence of the urban: literally, a living advertisement for the attractions of the city, gaining the economic and social capital necessary for urban success and mobility.

In this movement from Carrie Meeber to Carrie Madenda, Carrie is clearly the anti-Clover, who remains, at the end of Burnham's novel, an idealization of domestic womanhood. Yet both novels suggest an investment in notions of stasis, whereby women remain fixed within "old" narratives of the past. Together these novels trace a trajectory from True Womanhood to New Womanhood and back again, valuing the image of women

as wives and suggesting the threat that migrating women might pose to ideologies of home and gender. As seen in Burnham's novel, female mobility is acceptable insofar as it can be contained within a larger narrative of domesticity. Dreiser, on the other hand, shows the impact of female sexual and social mobility on the structure of social relations and what might happen if women wander too far from home.

Chapter Two

The "Lurch" of Progress: Domesticity and Americanization in Jane Addams' *Twenty Years at Hull House* and Abraham Cahan's *Yekl*

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, mobility not only took the form of young women migrating from rural homes to urban centers, but also of the exodus of immigrants to the United States. For example, between 1880 and the outbreak of World War I, an estimated 2,000,000 Jews left Russia, Poland, and other eastern European countries in search of a better life in America. Part of the cultural anxiety about what would become of America in its post-frontier era was due to the influx of immigrants. The anti-Asian hostility and discrimination that led to the segregation and political disenfranchisement of Asians earlier in the century fueled anti-immigrant sentiment at the turn of the century. As concerns about the suicide of the white race grew, broader applications of earlier acts of discrimination, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, sought to limit the number of immigrants entering the U.S. through a quota system that created a hierarchy of most and least desirable "types" of immigrants.

After the publication of the Eleventh U.S. Census in 1890, social theorists, such as Francis A. Walker, were determined to show the dangers of indiscriminate immigration. Walker, for instance, cited the influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Huns, Poles, Bohemians, Russian Jews, and South Italians, as particularly problematic as they threatened to invade and replace America's "native stock" with an undesirable foreign element (Walker, "Immigration and Degradation," 642). Interpreting the results of the census, Walker concluded that the connection between immigration and white birth rates was not merely statistical coincidence.

Rather, he argued that the rise in immigration was partly responsible for the decrease in “the domestic birth-rate” and that the only solution to this national crisis was to greatly limit, if not eliminate altogether, foreign influence (“Immigration,” 127).

Somewhat less extreme, though still problematic, were the seemingly more moderate responses to the apparent crisis brought on by immigration. Rather than a total freeze on immigration, politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt called for the complete assimilation and Americanization of all immigrants. An early proponent of the melting pot theory, later popularized by Israel Zangwill’s play “The Melting Pot,” Roosevelt argued that only by passing through the “crucible of naturalization” does one become an American. For Roosevelt, the immigrant must leave behind the Old World and “learn to talk and think and *be* United States” (“True Americanism,” 28-30). Roosevelt’s language itself parallels the process of becoming American, requiring that the immigrant first adopt New World language, which in turn leads to a shift in consciousness where one “thinks” like an American, and finally, the immigrant not only becomes a member *of* the nation, but actually *is* the nation. Roosevelt’s conflation of the relationship between individuals and the nation suggests that identity is indeed dependent upon successful assimilation. In his view, the immigrant who fails to become thoroughly Americanized becomes “nothing at all”; cut off from the Old World and unable or unwilling to readily assimilate to the New, the unAmericanized immigrant loses his or her own identity, “harm[ing] both themselves and us” (26). In keeping with Walker, Roosevelt relied on an “us” versus “them” dichotomy, supporting “more drastic laws” to “regulate our immigration,” as a way to “keep out races which do not assimilate readily to our own” (27). For Roosevelt,

Americanization was not simply an option; it was the fundamental right and duty of the American people.

In response to the Rooseveltian notion of a homogeneous American people, Horace Kallen coined the term "cultural pluralism" in an effort to deconstruct the homogeneous "we" and recognize the hyphenated position of the immigrant trying to synthesize Old and New Worlds. In opposition to the theory of cultural unity set forth by the metaphor of the melting pot, Kallen offered the metaphor of an orchestra, "a chorus of many voices each singing a rather different tune," to represent the heterogeneity of American culture ("Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," 217). Kallen's theory of Americanism emphasized harmony over unison, diversity over "like-mindedness," multi-ethnicity over the "old Anglo-Saxon theme 'America'" (219). For Kallen, this view of Americanism gave definition to the notion of democracy itself, which he argued was based on self-realization, self-control, and self-government. Kallen seemed to recognize that his ideas might be considered radical and unpopular among America's upper-class, and often nativist elite, as he concluded his essay series with the question: "do the dominant classes in America want such a society?" (220).

At the end of the nineteenth century, these debates about immigration and assimilation become fused with rhetoric about the social mobility of women. The connection between the New Woman and the European immigrant is evident in works from Walker to Roosevelt, who define the ideal American according to attributes represented or desired by the Anglo male. In her discussion of national character at the turn of the twentieth century, Lois Rudnick emphasizes that the "qualities of national character held up as the model for assimilation were those of the male Anglo-American"

("Feminist Success Myth," 145). Subsequently, the European immigrant was seen as having traits opposite to those of the true American: "he was anti-democratic; immoral; dull-witted; lacking in individuality and ambition; subject to a herd instinct—all traits that can be viewed as pejorative versions of the feminine ideal of purity, passivity, and submissiveness" (Rudnick, 146). By pointing to the ways that views on the characteristics of immigrants conflicted with the still-popular Victorian ideology of the True Woman, Rudnick sketches a parallel between the immigrant and the New Woman—both of whom are viewed derisively as anti-American.

In this chapter, I examine the confluence of immigration and womanhood, demonstrating the ways that debates about mobility—as immigration and assimilation--both inform and are informed by the rhetoric of domesticity. I focus on two texts that emerge while politicians and social theorists were debating the future of America as a nation of unassimilated immigrants and anti-domestic young women: *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Jane Addams' autobiographical account of the founding of the first settlement house in the U.S., and Abraham Cahan's novel *Yekl*, which tells the story of a Jewish immigrant attempting to assimilate into American culture. My purpose in bringing together what appear to be very dissimilar narratives is twofold: first, to demonstrate how each comments on the other, offering flipside representations of mobility narratives. While Addams' self-revealing story of Hull House is ultimately one of personal and social success, Cahan's story of Jake's assimilation is one of defeat. Secondly, through attention to the dialogue between mobility and domesticity, this chapter brings into relief the gendered dynamics at the core of the process of assimilation and Americanization.

The pairing of Addams' autobiographical, historical narrative with Cahan's novel may, at first glance, seem implausible on the basis of contrasting genres. Yet attention to the ways that each represents mobility in the form of individual and social progress, along with the ideology of domesticity through which each narrative unfolds, offers an interdisciplinary contribution to the cultural dialogue surrounding concerns of gender and assimilation in this era. What Addams' *Twenty Years* and Cahan's *Yekl* share is precisely this focus on progress in the form of assimilation and gender identity, wherein self-generation and self-discovery intersect with the broader framework of national discourse on what it means to be American.

Mobile Domesticity in Addams' *Twenty Years*

Within the climate of intense debate about what to do with the rising immigrant population, Jane Addams established the first settlement house in the United States, in the heart of Chicago's poor, immigrant neighborhood. Contemporary concerns over democracy and the future of the American people were at the core of Addams' project, as evident in her charter statement that Hull House

combined three trends: first, the desire to interpret democracy in social terms; secondly, the impulse beating at the very source of our lives, urging us to aid in the race progress; and, thirdly, the Christian movement toward humanitarianism. (*Twenty Years at Hull House*, 98)

According to Addams, Hull House was a way to respond to the duties of national citizenship while serving the more immediate or local needs of the neighborhood. In her discussion of the "Necessity for Social Settlements," Addams sounds remarkably like

Kallen, employing the metaphor of a chorus of voices as she argues for the importance of Hull House in developing, cultivating, and training the “isolated voices” of the urban Chicago neighborhood connected by Halsted Street (97). Addams is particularly invested in the project of helping immigrants and young women who find themselves adrift in the city “socialize their democracy” (92). In Addams’ view, democracy was not simply an ideal to be upheld; her notion of democratic socialization required independent action towards democratic lives and goals. In this sense, Addams does more than simply support democratic ideals such as freedom and mobility; rather, she encourages a process that enables people to give “tangible expression to the democratic ideal.”

In her narrative, Addams, who was from Cedarville, Illinois, a frontier town when her father first settled there, expresses not only a drive to socialize democracy but also to domesticize the unknown, making sense of the “wilderness” of the changing American landscape by recuperating it into a notion of “home.” Hers is both a domestic and a mobility narrative as implied in the idea of “settlement” itself, which in her view is particularly resonant with anxious Americans concerned about the fate of the post-frontier nation:

The word “settlement,” which we have borrowed from London, is apt to grate a little upon American ears. It is not...so long ago that Americans who settled were those who had adventured into a new country, where they were pioneers in the midst of difficult surroundings. The word still implies migrating from one condition of life to another totally unlike it, and against this implication the resident of an American settlement takes alarm. (45)

Here Addams comments on the discomfort of alarmed Americans such as Francis Walker or Theodore Roosevelt who acknowledge the immigrant roots of American culture but want to distinguish between a “settled” American and an “immigrant.” Addams is sensitive to this relationship and in fact opens Hull House as a way to facilitate this process of helping immigrants—and also young women—settle into a productive American life.

In one sense, Jane Addams defies the social conventions of her time with the establishment of the first Settlement house in the United States in 1889. By opening Hull House on Halsted Street, amidst Chicago’s poor, immigrant population, Addams accomplishes more than the sort of charity work frequently done by Victorian women during the late nineteenth century: she deploys and reconfigures notions of the domestic in order to organize charitable forces while creating a new social movement. The general economic depression that swept across the country in the 1890s was intensified in Chicago following the closing of the Columbian Exposition, which left thousands unemployed and brought about the need for immediate social action. For Addams, the settlement offers the domestic space in and through which to shape and respond to such pressing social issues.

Yet on the other hand, a more nuanced reading of *Twenty Years at Hull House* suggests that Addams retreats to conventional domestic ideology and Victorian femininity, “play[ing] some version” of an all too familiar domestic, feminine role, as Marianne DeKoven argues (DeKoven, 323). While relocating and redirecting Victorian ideals regarding femininity and domesticity to a new sphere—that of the Settlement house—Addams creates a version of femininity that, in keeping with DeKoven’s

argument, allows her to “lead a new social movement under the cover of a relatively conservative gender self-definition” (335).

While Addams’ narrative sets out to tell the story of the establishment of the first Settlement house in the U.S., it is more revealingly (and perhaps importantly), as critics such as DeKoven and Lois Rudnick point out, a story of self-definition. Addams’ story of Hull House is also the story of her own “becoming” and construction of herself as a subject, both in terms of gender and the larger narrative of self-generation that provides the foundation for American nationalism. Interestingly, however, Addams constitutes herself by redefining the American homespace, which takes on a subjectivity of its own in her narrative. As Lois Rudnick notes, after the bullfight chapter (“The Snare of Preparation”) in which Addams recalls her reasons for opening Hull House, Addams as the subject of the narrative drops out and is replaced by the house itself. While the opening chapters of *Twenty Years* are largely autobiographical, focusing on Addams’ childhood memories and her relationship with her father, her education at boarding school, and her subsequent physical and mental breakdown, much of what follows tells the story of Hull House itself and its role in aiding social progress.

A consideration of this slippage between subjectivity narratives suggests yet another reading of the domestic ideology at the core of Addams’ project. Rather than viewing Addams as either socially revolutionary or conservative with respect to notions of gender, I suggest that Addams relies on Victorian ideals of home and womanhood precisely in order to secure a place for herself and for Hull House in the national landscape. In my view, the self-generation and self-definition that give way to the generative story of a house founded on domestic principles offers a challenge to

traditional notions of womanhood and what constitutes a home. Ultimately, Hull House succeeds twofold, providing solutions to “at home” social problems within a familiar domestic setting while enabling Addams to secure a place for herself in a culture critical of nontraditional, unmarried, and socially mobile young women. If, as Lois Rudnick argues, self-generation is the “essential myth of the American dream,” then Addams’ autobiographical narrative says much about Addams’ desire to secure a place—for Hull House and for herself—in the national landscape.

One of the earlier chapters in *Twenty Years*, “Boarding School Ideals,” reveals Addams’ process of becoming, both in terms of gender and in terms of nation, and prepares for the narrative that follows. In this chapter, Addams describes her days at boarding school, highlighting her participation in an oratorical contest. This event stands out as particularly important, as Addams finds herself representing not only her own college but the progress and success of all college women. While she is enthusiastic about “full college education for women” (52), she is resentful about serving as a stand-in for all women:

When I was finally selected as the orator, I was somewhat dismayed to find that, representing not only one school but college women in general, I could not resent the brutal frankness with which my oratorical possibilities were discussed by the enthusiastic group who would allow no personal feeling to stand in the way of progress, especially the progress of Woman’s Cause. I was told among other things that I had an intolerable habit of dropping my voice at the end of a sentence in the most feminine,

apologetic and even deprecatory manner which would probably lose
 Woman the first place. (53)

As Addams makes clear, acting “feminine,” with personal feelings and stereotypical female mannerisms, is antithetical to the “Woman’s Cause,” and when she does indeed lose first place (ending up in fifth, with first prize awarded to William Jennings Bryan) her companions make her realize that she “had dealt the cause of woman’s advancement a staggering blow” (54). This appears to be a pivotal moment for the young Addams who, much to the dismay of her father, stubbornly refuses to accept anything less than a college education, both because she values it for herself and also recognizes the importance of education in the social progress of women. While she enjoys being part of a school gaining notoriety, she is clearly uncomfortable representing women’s progress and angry over the lack of support she receives from other women. As DeKoven suggests, this event in part explains Addams’ retreat to Victorian notions of femininity, inasmuch as Addams, after this point in her narrative, defines herself against this example of “progress.”

Interestingly, while Addams seems to withdraw from proto-feminist discourse about women’s progress, she was seen as an example of the more intellectually and socially mobile new woman. Yet Addams’ views on “new” womanhood prove to be complex and at times contradictory. She is both conservative, from a feminist perspective, in her retreat to traditional feminine roles and values, and pragmatic, seeming to understand the importance of excelling at typically male enterprises. Her graduating essay on Cassandra, for example, demonstrates Addams’ construction of the fine line between old and new notions of womanhood. Relying heavily on Darwinian,

evolutionary theory, Addams emphasizes the importance of science in aiding woman to “organize” her “intuition,” which she cites as an example of the “feminine trait of mind.” Quoting her own essay, Addams recalls: “...woman can only ‘grow more accurate and intelligible by the thorough study of at least one branch of physical science, for only with eyes thus accustomed to the search for truth can she detect all self-deceit and fancy in herself and learn to express herself without dogmatism’” (57). The essay concludes by saying that once woman has “gained [the] accuracy...to bear throughout morals and justice,” she must apply what she has learned from the study of science and find “active labor” in the world beyond academics (57-58). As her narrative continues, it becomes clear that Addams’ quest is precisely to find a balance between intellectual study, which can provide a woman with a more organized and accurate knowledge of herself, and active labor, which relies on a return to what she calls the “charms” of women’s primitive lives: namely the domestic work that provides the “basis of all family life” (*Twenty Years* 175-76).¹

For Addams, intellectual pursuit that does not find expression through active, primarily domestic labor leaves women without a moral purpose. In the chapter “The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements” she discusses the “tragic” effects on “young girls” who find themselves cultured and educated but without a place in the gendered economy:

It is true that there is nothing after disease, indigence and a sense of guilt so fatal to health and to life itself as the want of a proper outlet for active

¹ One of the developments at Hull House was the opening of a Labor Museum in which the “shifting pictures of woman’s labor,” the “charm of woman’s primitive activities,” such as cooking and spinning, are on display in order to encourage “new” and immigrant women to utilize their domestic skills.

faculties. I have seen young girls suffer and grow sensibly lowered in vitality in the first years after they leave school. In our attempt then to give a girl pleasure and freedom from care we succeed, for the most part, in making her pitifully miserable. She finds "life" so different from what she expected it to be. She is besotted with innocent little ambitions, and does not understand this apparent waste of herself, this elaborate preparation, if no work is provided for her. (93)

One of the main goals of Hull House, as Addams clarifies, is to provide a solution to this large-scale and potentially "fatal" social problem. By providing domestic training to college and working women, Addams sees Hull House as the necessary link to a healthy, vital, and happy life. When she refers to the sense of "uselessness [that] hangs about" young women who do not have an "outlet for their active faculties," warning that such sustained inaction can lead to a severe "atrophy of function" within the entire "human system," Addams sounds similar to her moralizing contemporaries Theodore Dreiser and W.I. Thomas, who are both (as I discussed in the previous chapter) critical of the socially mobile and progressive New Woman. Addams advocates a return to Victorian notions of domesticity in much the same way that Dreiser and especially Thomas emphasize the values of the "True Woman."

Addams' desire to provide the space in which to adequately train young women in household arts is rooted in her own experience after college. She immediately collapses after graduation, and while she manages to begin medical school after just a few weeks she once again suffers a complete breakdown. This time she is "literally bound to a bed in my sister's house for six months" under the supervision of S. Weir Mitchell and his

notorious rest cure (60-61). As Marianne DeKoven points out, the “rise of feminism coincided exactly...with the hystericization and invalidization of women, and the first generations of college-educated women, as among the most visible of the New Women, were prime targets of this form of debilitation” (333). Charlotte Perkins Gilman conveys the often devastating effects of Mitchell’s rest cure in “The Yellow Wallpaper,” where the protagonist is bound to a bed in much the same way as Addams.² Addams attributes her own breakdown, which she writes about after her prolonged rest in bed, to a lack of “moral purpose” (59). Having acquired an education but (to paraphrase Addams) without an outlet for her active faculties, Addams finds herself “absolutely at sea” (59). Rather than return to medical school, she instead follows Mitchell’s “prescription” (59) and spends the next two years in Europe.

It is while traveling in Europe that Addams decides to open the first Settlement house in the United States. Readers of Addams frequently cite this journey as pivotal—a time of development for both Addams and her Settlement project. Critics interested in the social reform movements of the Progressive era remark on the particular importance of Addams seeing the Settlements in England and their influence on her decision to open Hull House. Yet Addams’ decision to bring the Settlement house to Chicago is even more complex than merely constructing an American movement from a European (or British) model. The moment of her decision—when and where she decides that a Settlement would be a good idea—is what I call a foundational moment, one that helps Addams find a sense of connectedness for herself, something to “do” with her faculties,

² For a closer comparison of the biographies of Gilman and Addams, see Robert Grimm, “Forerunners for a Domestic Revolution: Jane Addams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and the Ideology of Childhood, 1900-1916.”

while simultaneously rooting this specific decision within a larger narrative of American nationalism.

While certainly seeing the Settlements in England has an impact on Addams, it is not until she views the bullfights in Madrid that she articulates her plan to open Hull House. In the pivotal chapter “The Snare of Preparation,” which begins with Addams’ description of her breakdown and subsequent rest cure, she recalls her trip to Madrid with a group of friends, including Ellen Starr who became Addams’ personal as well as professional lifetime partner.³ The chapter ends with Addams’ remembrances of the bullfights—an experience that solidifies her decision to begin the Settlement. The narrative attention to the bullfights raises provocative questions about the relationship between viewing the fights and opening Hull House: why do the bullfights solidify her decision? What, in particular, is the connection between the gore and violence of the fights and her conviction to establish a “home” where young women can put their education into active practice?

Addams remembers making a decision to “rent a house in a part of the city where many primitive and actual needs are found, in which young women who had been given over too exclusively to study might restore a balance of activity along traditional lines” (72) by first recalling her experience at the bullfights in Madrid:

We had been to see a bullfight rendered in the most magnificent Spanish style, where greatly to my surprise and horror, I found that I had seen, with comparative indifference, five bulls and many more horses killed.

³DeKoven elaborates on the relationship between Addams and Starr, comparing them to another (perhaps better known) lesbian pair: Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas.

The sense that this was the last survival of all the glories of the amphitheater, the illusion that the riders on the caparisoned horses might have been knights of a tournament, or the matador a slightly armed gladiator facing his martyrdom, and all the rest of the obscure yet vivid associations of an historic survival, had carried me beyond the endurance of any of the rest of the party. I finally met them in the foyer, stern and pale with disapproval of my brutal endurance, and but partially recovered from the faintness and disgust which the spectacle itself had produced upon them. I had no defense to offer to their reproaches save that I had not thought much about the bloodshed; but in the evening the natural and inevitable reaction came, and in deep chagrin I felt myself tried and condemned, not only by this disgusting experience but by the entire moral situation which it revealed. (73)

Pointing to the juxtaposition of Addams' decision to open Hull House and her viewing of the bullfights, Marianne DeKoven argues that this is a crucial moment in the narrative where a "gender-marked scen[e] of looking and not looking at the violence of the Spanish bullfight coincide[s] with moments of career-altering revelation" (341). DeKoven reads this scene in the context of the relationship between Addams and Starr, claiming that it is not Addams' "chagrin" (as suggested in the above passage) that convinces her to put her faculties to work, but rather "it was precisely her ability to watch the bullfight...that empowered her to take that first step. [S]he saw that she could function as a man would [and] have access to the public sphere, as long as her partner would go there with her" (343). As DeKoven suggests, this scene is laden with gender markings, such as the

references to knights and gladiators fighting the last battle of “historic survival.” Insofar as Addams places herself, via the “brutal endurance” of her looking, in the position of one of these illusory knights, clearly this scene can be read as a moment of (gender) transformation, wherein Addams’ own entry into the public sphere is inaugurated by viewing a masculine-dominated spectacle. While the other women of her party (including Starr) suffer “faintness and disgust,” Addams feels “comparative indifference,” at least initially, in response to the “bloodshed.”

Juxtaposed with Addams’ statement about needing to rent a house in order to help restore balance to the lives of young women, the bullfight scene takes on even greater significance in terms of the gender dynamics that shape Addams’ view of the importance of moral order and “balance” in the constitution of oneself and the survival of humanity, what she refers to later in the narrative as the “race life” (92). The “natural and inevitable” reaction Addams later has to the fights suggests a certain gendered inevitability about the importance of maintaining individual and social moral balance. While she is initially unmoved and indifferent to the spectacle of the fights, it is almost as if she later convinces herself to view the experience as disgusting, acting out a response similar to that of her disapproving female companions. For Addams, the bullfights also necessarily produce a “moral reaction” that magnifies her sense that she is without a moral compass, as she comes to realize that anything less than actual social reform—education, travel, charity work—is “self-seeking” (73). In the context of the entire chapter, in which the bullfight scene and her subsequent decision to open Hull House intersect with her notions on morality and womanhood, the bullfights bring into

view not only Addams own at-sea morality, but “the entire moral situation” of “new” women like herself.

The bullfight scene thus enacts a key moment of self-definition, in which Addams realizes her individual goals and aspirations while at the same time contextualizing herself within a broader narrative of national belonging. Although this scene represents a foundational moment for Addams, one in which she comes to recognize and find a solution for what she perceives as her atrophied functionality, it is also a moment in which the violence and gore of the bullfights conjure up a sort of nationalistic patriotism. Insofar as the bullfights represent a spectacle of national proportions in Spain, I suggest that there is a complicated transnationality at work in this scene, which brings one national event, the Spanish bullfights, into dialogue with another, the founding of an American social movement. Interestingly, it is at this particular moment, when she is merely a spectator, a foreigner, that Addams has a metaphysical, transnational experience through which she comes to define herself as a subject. The gore and violence of the fights not only shock her into a moment of self-definition, but also interpellate her into American personhood.

In a chapter framed by two important moments—Addams’ breakdown and subsequent rest cure and the Spanish bullfights—Addams’ reasons for opening Hull House can be seen as emerging out of a desire to synthesize her educated and culturally refined American self with the “part of [her] consciousness which had been formed by reading of English social movements” (*Twenty Years*, 43). In her discussion of American citizenship in her chapter on the “Influence of Lincoln,” she writes of her feelings of doubleness and her desire for union: “I continued to fumble for a synthesis which I was

unable to make...I developed that uncomfortable sense of playing two roles at once...almost a dual consciousness" (43). This desire for synthesis stems in part from her consciousness of a gender identity at odds with social conventions. Moreover, this sense of duality also arises out of her observation of "homesick immigrants huddled together in strange tenement houses" (43). Addams' interest in immigrant life is to some degree an extension of her own self-fashioning, wherein the recognition of her own duality leads to her understanding of the need for a space in which immigrants can make the successful transition from Old World to New.

Focusing on the conflicts and challenges that arise when interacting with the generations of Chicago's immigrant population (in the chapter entitled "Immigrants and Their Children"), Addams establishes the importance of Hull House as an Americanizing agent. She writes of the function of Hull House as a "bridge between European and American experiences in such wise as to give them both more meaning and a sense of relation" (172). She sees Hull House as mediating between Old world and New in order to simultaneously retain whatever there may be of value in the Old while introducing desirable and acceptable elements from the New. In part, her sense of the relationship between Hull House and immigration echoes Theodore Roosevelt's ideas of what constitutes an American when she says: "One thing seemed clear in regard to entertaining immigrants; to preserve and keep whatever of value their past life contained and to bring them in contact with a better type of Americans" (169). Addams, perhaps more thoughtful than Roosevelt of the gap between Old world and New, and of the difficulty in crossing this divide, sees Hull House as the necessary bridge—a way to fill a cultural, social, and national chasm while bringing meaning to both. In this sense, Hull House can

be seen as a Rooseveltian caldron of sorts, the space through which to transform the simple immigrant into a more meaningful and complex American.⁴

Addams places herself in the center of this nationalizing process, becoming, in a sense, mother to “homesick immigrants” who she describes as a “household of children, whose mother is dead” (43). By casting herself in this way, Addams becomes a particularly “American” mother, who will not just take the place of Old World mothers, but will also replace Old World ways with a New World upbringing. The mother/child relationship she constructs between herself and her immigrant children affords her the opportunity to teach new moral lessons, training them as “children” so they can become assimilated, Americanized adults. Addams also benefits from this relationship, which allows her to act out a traditional role for women without subscribing to a traditional lifestyle. What Addams loses by not being a traditional woman—heterosexual, married, reproductive—she gains by reinvesting in ideologies of traditional womanhood. In very important ways, then, Hull House provides her with the legitimized space in which to be both a successful woman and mother.

One of the primary ways that Hull House sought to provide a bridge between Old and New worlds while keeping young people—especially young women—away from the “overmastering desire” and allure of the city was through its stage productions. In Addams’ view, the Hull House stage functions as a “reconstructing and reorganizing agent of accepted moral truths” (270), in contrast to the city’s theaters which can be

⁴ Throughout her narrative, Addams expresses a tendency to view immigrants as primitive and simple. She is particularly drawn to first generation immigrants—those who have yet to be Americanized—because they are easier to deal with than subsequent generations who presumably may have formed their own ideas about American life: “From the very first months at Hull House we found it easier to deal with the first

morally and socially destructive. She tells the story, for example, of a young Italian girl who falls prey to the wiles of the city and goes “astray” because of her fascination with the city’s theaters:

A striking illustration...came to us during our second year’s residence on Halsted Street through an incident in the Italian colony, where the men have always boasted that they were able to guard their daughters from the dangers of city life [such as the white slave trade]. The first Italian girl to go astray...was so fascinated by the stage that on her way home from work she always loitered outside a theater before the enticing posters. Three months after her elopement with an actor, her...mother received a picture of her dressed in the men’s clothes in which she appeared in vaudeville. Her family mourned her as dead and her name was never mentioned among them or in the entire colony. (266)

This story is particularly compelling for Addams’ argument about how easily young women (especially) are seduced by the dangers of city life. What begins with a fascination with the stage progresses quickly to the loitering that leads ultimately to sexual and gender transgressions that devastate a community.

While Addams is cautious about the theater and how it can be enticing and destructive, she nonetheless supports the opening of a stage at Hull House so that immigrants can “endeavor [to] reproduce the past of their own nations through those immortal dramas which have escaped from the restraining bond of one country into the land of the universal” (268). When used as an arena through which to stage domestic

generation of crowded city life than the second or third, because it is more natural and cast in a simpler

concerns—both by reproducing the domestic life of immigrants and also by providing the space in which to perform domestic (as social and national) “accepted moral truths” (270)—the Hull House theater aids in the assimilation of immigrants by releasing them from the differences of culture and nation, absorbing them into a universal whole. In the context of Hull House as an agent of Americanization, theater reproductions are more than performances of everyday life; they are also performative in the sense that these reproductions render individual differences and national bonds of “country” less distinct in America—the “land of the universal.”

Yet it would be shortsighted to view the overall project of Hull House as one that erases differences in order to maintain a collective whole. As DeKoven points out, Hull House is interesting precisely because of its heterogeneity. It is more diverse and permeable than the traditional home of the nuclear family in late Victorian America. Further, Addams’ settlement house collapses public and private spheres, in that as “home” Hull House is an extension of the city, a “vital center,” as Lois Rudnick remarks, for political, social, economic, and cultural life (Rudnick, 156). Insofar as Addams’ main project is to bring together the old and the new, either through the assimilation of immigrants or the training of the New Woman in domestic labor, she accomplishes this largely through the reconciliation of the “domestic sphere with the wider arena of community, city, state, nation, and world” (Rudnick, 147), establishing Hull House as a model for other Settlements in New York and throughout the United States. In this way, Addams redefines the homespace; no longer a sanctuary or retreat for the work-weary American male, her construction of a “house” displaces home from its usual meaning and

mold” (169).

purpose, even while she may subscribe to more conventional ideologies regarding gender-appropriate work and labor

The “Lurch” of Progress in Cahan’s *Yekl*

While Addams offers an American success story, one in which women are safeguarded within the trappings of domesticity and immigrants are assimilated into American culture, Abraham Cahan’s *Yekl* is a story that exposes ruptures in the narrative of American progress. Like his contemporaries Theodore Dreiser, Stephen Crane, and Frank Norris, Cahan is interested in probing the impact of America’s social and economic forces and their power to influence acculturation and assimilation. Yet his accounts of the Jewish immigrant’s experience of Americanization—both in *Yekl* and his later novel *The Rise of David Lavinsky* (1917)—suggest that the process of assimilation is fraught with problems that these other writers do not consider.

Yekl is the story of Yankel (Yekl) Podkovnik, who changes his name to Jake upon arriving in the United States from Povodye, a town in northern Russia.⁵ In order to escape the anti-Semitic, Czarist tyranny in Russia, Jake comes to America to establish a better life for his family (his parents, wife, and son) who he has left behind. Cahan introduces us to Jake three years after his arrival in the U.S., working in a sweatshop where he is a garment maker. In the construction of himself as Jake, Yekl has not only

⁵ As Aviva Taubenfeld notes, “Yekl” is not an actual Yiddish name. William Dean Howells, who championed the publication of Cahan’s English version of the story, chose Yekl over Cahan’s Yiddish character name Yankel, perhaps with another literary character in mind, Dr. Jekyll. I am greatly indebted to Taubenfeld’s illuminating discussion comparing and contrasting Cahan’s two versions—Yiddish and English—of his story. For more on the literary partnership between Cahan and Howells, see Jules Chametzky’s study *From the Ghetto: the Fiction of Abraham Cahan* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts Press, 1977).

left behind his former name, but also attempts to shed any attachments to the Old World which might mark him as a “greenhorn”—including his family. With the exception of a scribe who translates his letters from home, no one in Jake’s present community is even aware that he has a family, a wife and son in particular. Jake’s attempt to become more American appears to be succeeding until the arrival of Gitl and Yosselé, his wife and son. Upon their arrival, Jake’s bachelor activities, his nights out at the dancehall and interest in sporting events, come to an abrupt end. More significantly, however, his assimilation into the New World is interrupted by the distinctly un-American presence of his family, most notably his wife. Subsequently, the story focuses on the deteriorating relationship between Jake and Gitl, and the problems that arise when Old World dreams and values clash with New World desires and realities. Ultimately, their marriage ends in divorce, with Jake seeming to obtain what he wanted all along: Mamie, a wife fashioned in the image of the American New Woman, and freedom from his past.

While Cahan’s story, more generally, is concerned with the problems of immigrant assimilation, the narrative focuses more specifically on the domestic issues of home and family. As Matthew Frye Jacobson notes, “Yekl’s doomed quest to escape his own *Yiddishkayt* is played out almost entirely on the terrain of gender and sexuality” (“Quintessence of the Jew,” 106). According to Jacobson, Cahan’s view of “an immutable *Yiddishkayt*,” an essential, racialized and biologized sense of Jewish selfhood, intersects with (Old World) traditional notions of gender and sexuality—most notably, an “immutable, conserving femininity” (Jacobson, 107). As such, Jake’s attempt to become a “*regely* Yankee” (*Yekl*, 8) is doubly fraught, dependent not only on his successful

conversion from “a Yekl” (12) to Jake but also on the negotiation of competing Old and New World notions of gender and sexuality. As I argue below, the end of the novel implies Jake’s failure to become a “real” American man, suggesting the impossibility of reconciling the desire for assimilation, a seemingly progressive narrative of national subjectivity, and fixed notions of gender and sexuality.

From the start of the story, Jake’s purpose is clear: to distinguish himself from the “hodgepodge” of the ghetto by fashioning himself in the image of Yankee manhood. Yet the description of the Jewish ghetto hints at the difficulty of Jake’s complete Americanization. One of Cahan’s more famous scenes of Jake’s walk through the Jewish ghetto is worth quoting at length, as it reveals the process of assimilation to be both progressive and paradoxical:

Suffolk Street is in the very thick of the battle for breath. For it lies in the heart of that part of the East Side which has within the last two or three decades become the Ghetto of the American metropolis, and, indeed, the metropolis of the Ghettos of the world. It is one of the most densely populated spots on the face of the earth—a seething human sea fed by streams, streamlets, and rills of immigration flowing from all the Yiddish-speaking centers of Europe... Hardly a block but shelters Jews from every nook and corner of Russia, Poland, Galicia, Hungary, Roumania.... You find there Jews born to plenty, whom the new conditions have delivered up to the clutches of penury; Jews reared in the straits of need, who have here risen to prosperity; good people morally degraded in the struggle for success amid an unwonted environment; moral outcasts lifted from the

mire, purified, and imbued with self-respect; educated men and women with their intellectual polish tarnished in the inclement weather of adversity; ignorant sons of toil grown enlightened—in fine, people with all sorts of antecedents, tastes, habits, inclinations, and speaking all sorts of subdialects of the same jargon, thrown pellmell into one social caldron—a human hodgepodge with its component parts changed but not yet fused into one homogeneous whole. (14)

On one hand, this “compact city within a city” (24) appears to be a good example of the American melting pot, which mixes all sorts of people “into one social caldron.” As the complete scene (which I have not quoted in its entirety here) suggests, a progression from Old World to New takes place, wherein Jews are no longer identified by place of origin (such as Russia, Poland, etc.), but are linked by the pellmell of the ghetto itself.⁶ Yet in another sense, this scene of apparent assimilation suggests that these immigrants, while perhaps less Old World in their social and economic status, are “not yet” New World either. The hodgepodge of the ghetto forms a community of sorts, but this is not the national community imagined in the narrative of assimilation. As Aviva Taubenfeld points out, “the Jewish immigrants are coalescing not in what Israel Zangwill called the ‘melting pot’ of American society but in the separate cauldron of the ghetto. Just as their language is transforming into American Yiddish, not English, for now, at least, they are becoming American Jews, not Americans” (Taubenfeld, 155). Similarly, while Jake has changed his name and withheld the truth about his marital status in order to make himself

⁶ I am indebted to Priscilla Wald for her insights on this subject. Wald has a brilliant reading of this ghetto scene, tracing what she calls the “grammar of assimilation” which demonstrates the progression from Old World to New that occurs through the grammatical as well as narrative stripping away of place.

a real American Yankee, his Americanized Yiddish, imperfect English, and features that are “strongly Semitic naturally” (3) reveal his performances of American manhood to be at least one step removed from the real thing.

Yet Cahan shows an investment in performativity, with words such as “performance,” “audience,” and “affectation” which recur throughout the story. And clearly, Yekl/Jake’s notions of what constitutes a real man are rooted in displays of manhood. While in the Old World, for example, Yekl is averse to becoming a soldier himself and he and his family are greatly relieved when they learn that he will not have to wear a soldier’s uniform, he nonetheless has a passion for watching the Russian soldiers perform their drills. Upon arriving in America, Jake’s interest in boxing, baseball, and other American sports suggests a similar enjoyment in watching manhood on exhibition. In fact, as Jake makes clear when defending his interest in boxing, these displays of sportsmanship help situate him: “Once I live in America, I want to know that I live in America. *Dot’sh a’ kin’ a man I am!* One must not be a *greenhorn*” (5). In other words, these displays of American manhood help him *know* America, bringing America into his consciousness while simultaneously allowing him to imagine himself a member in the larger fraternity of American manhood. This investment in performativity as part of the process of conversion from an Old World greenhorn to a New World American man suggests a way to broaden Benedict Anderson’s notion of an “imagined community,” wherein performances (or performing roles), in addition to the advent of print capital, facilitate the transition from individual subjectivity to national identity.⁷

⁷ I am not the first to broaden Anderson’s notion of the “imagined community.” Anne McClintock, for example, argues that Anderson’s reliance on the technology of print capitalism fails to consider “the fact that print capital has, until recently, been accessible to a relatively small literate elite” (Imperial Leather,

While displays of manhood help situate Jake in the terrain of American identity, his past resurfaces with the death of his father, causing a regression that transports him back to his home and childhood. Chapter three, "In the Grip of the Past," marks a key moment in this narrative of conversion and is crucial for understanding how, in a moment of liminality, issues of place and mobility intersect with gender and sexuality. Similar to the scene of the Jewish ghetto, which Cahan describes as Jake walks through it, the scene following the news of his father's death once again unfolds as Jake is walking. The domestic scene that follows is worth quoting at some length as it helps demonstrate not merely the importance of mobility in the scene itself (Jake's walk), but also how the ensuing family drama sets Jake on the path of progress towards becoming a real man.

As he was directing his steps to his lodgings Jake wondered why he did not weep. He felt that this was the proper thing for a man in his situation to do, and he endeavored to inspire himself with emotions befitting the occasion. But his thoughts teasingly gambolled about among the people and things of the street. By-and-by, however, he became sensible of his mental eye being fixed upon the big fleshy mole on his father's scantily bearded face. He recalled the old man's carriage, the melancholy nod of his head, his deep sigh upon taking snuff from the time-honored birch bark which Jake had known as long as himself; and his heart writhed with pity and with the acutest pangs of homesickness.... It is Friday night....

374). As a way to make more inclusive Anderson's notion of how nations are created and how nationalism functions, McClintock introduces her concept of "commodity spectacle," which enables a sense of collective unity through the display of public spectacles and icons (such as flags, monuments, emblems).

There, seated by the side of the head of the little family and within easy reach of the huge brick oven, is his old mother, flushed with fatigue.... Opposite to her, by the window, is Yekl, the present Jake.... Besides the three of them there is no one else in the chamber, for Jake envisioned the fascinating scene as he had known it for almost twenty years, and not as it had appeared during the short period since the family had been joined by Gitl and...Yosselé.

Suddenly he felt himself a child, the only and pampered son of a doting mother. He was overcome with a heart-wringing consciousness of being an orphan, and his soul was filled with a keen sense of desolation and self-pity. And thereupon everything around him—the rows of gigantic tenement houses, the hum and buzz of the scurrying pedestrians, the jingling horse cars—all suddenly grew alien and incomprehensible to Jake. (30-31)

At the start of this scene, performances of manhood fail Jake, as he is unable to “inspire himself with emotions” that might be expected from a “man in his situation.” Instead, his memories of his father and his homesickness are recalled as he watches the “people and things of the street.” In a moment of liminality, where Jake becomes Yekl and Yekl is again Jake, the landscape of the New World—people and things—melds into his father’s features, igniting his memories of home. The grammar of this passage is revealing in the ways that Old and New Worlds, past and present, become amalgamated. With present tense verbs throughout, it suggests a process of conversion that depends on the

familiarities of the past while taking place in the present moment: "it *is* Friday night," by the stove "*is* his old mother," "by the window, *is* Yekl, the *present* Jake." As the passage moves through the conversion from Jake into Yekl, Yekl into a child, with this child becoming an orphan, the narrative focuses largely on the trappings of domesticity (the childhood home, complete with the brick oven) and the image of the attendant mother. Interestingly, the focus at the end of the section I have quoted is no longer on the father but on the mother, and in particular the domestic environment which she created. The sense of loss at the end is not over the death of the father, but is linked to no longer being the "pampered son of a doting mother." This feeling of loss seems so overwhelming to Jake that he imagines himself an orphan.

Cahan constructs a narrative parallel between Jake's regression into orphaned childhood and his displacement within his present day environment. Jake's feeling that he is "suddenly" a child and an orphan is coincident with his sense that everything around him becomes "suddenly" alien and incomprehensible. In one sense, this scene can be read as simply representing the displacement that Jake feels. The death of his father brings into relief the isolation of the New World. With his father dead and his mother an illusory memory in the Old World, Jake imagines himself without origins, without kinship ties. Yet there is a complex appeal of the orphan metaphor here in which parentage-as-family and parentage-as-country overlap. The appeal of the orphan image is that it enables a complete divestment of origins, the past, kinship. Jake's sudden orphaning divests him of his origins and allows him to be "reborn," in a sense, without a past, in a process of conversion from Old World to New, immigrant to American. In exchange for parentage-as-family (his dead father and absent mother), America

(parentage-as-country) stands in as the “doting mother” able to confer a sense of identity and legitimacy onto Jake. Where Addams is “mother” to the immigrants and young women at Hull House, Jake becomes a “son” of America. Within a national narrative of assimilation, the construction of Jake as orphan is part of the process of Americanization that affords him the opportunity to exchange his infantile citizenship for full-fledged American manhood.⁸

Yet how does Jake move from the incomprehensibility of himself as an orphan and his sense of discord in an alien environment to knowing his place as a man? What mediates this conversion? Ultimately, it is fatherhood—or more precisely “fatherly affection” (31)—that convinces Jake of his rights to manhood. The images of his childhood home give way to images of his wife and son as the scene quoted above continues to include Jake’s imagining of himself as a father. While he only has the “faintest recollection—scarcely anything beyond a general symbol” of his child’s features, he nonetheless places himself in a fatherly scene where he “tickles it [the child] under its tiny chin” (31). The present tense grammar of the scene once again creates a moment of liminality, one in which the newly orphaned Jake feels the “thrill of fatherly affection to which he had long been a stranger.” Once again, the complex overlap of parentage-as-origins and parentage-as-family recurs on the terrain of the domestic imaginary, as fatherly affection offers a way for Jake to no longer feel like a stranger—a way for him to make himself comprehensible within the discordant scene around him.

⁸ Indirectly, I allude to Lauren Berlant’s theory of “infantile citizenship” in my discussion of Jake’s self-orphaning. What interests me about Berlant’s theory in the context of my reading of *Yekl* is her emphasis on performativity—how one can play at being American—and also her discussion of how the national symbolic depends on the infantilization of its citizens in order for it to succeed. See Berlant, “The Theory of Infantile Citizenship,” in *Public Culture* 5:3 (Spring) 1993; 395-410.

This scene suggests that fatherhood confers a sense of duty as a man, linking masculine progress in the New World to a stable home life. But where playing father to his son seems to move Jake closer towards his goal of becoming a regular Yankee, the performances of husband and wife between Jake and Gitl only impede his progress.”

We are first introduced to Gitl in the scene I discussed above, where she appears in Jake's memory and imagination as “rustic,” with a “too wide” mouth and “prominent gums” (31). As opposed to the idealistic images of his mother and son, this unfavorable representation of Gitl only prepares for Jake's complete aversion to her later in the narrative. When he spies Gitl at the detainment center at Ellis Island, Jake is immediately filled with loathing of her “uncouth and un-American appearance” (34). Gitl's unshapely clothes and dark wig mark her as an orthodox Jew from the Old World, contrasting so sharply with Jake's New World appearance that even the immigration officer double checks to be sure that they are actually husband and wife.

Along with linking Gitl's un-American appearance to her Old World attire, this early description of Gitl establishes a parallel between Old and New Worlds which further racializes the image of the true American. In addition to her generally Old World look, Gitl is described as

...naturally dark of complexion, and the nine or ten days spent at sea had covered her face with a deep bronze, which combined with her prominent cheek bones, inky little eyes, and, above all, the smooth black wig, to lend her resemblance to a squaw. (34)

⁹ After they meet at Ellis Island, Jake and Gitl embrace and kiss each other, but this “performance had an effect of something done to order” and only serves to reinforce their “mutual estrangement” and, in particular, Jake's aversion to Gitl (35).

Here Gitl's un-Americanness is represented not only by her "slovenly" dress and wig, but also by her darkness. The parallel between her un-American appearance and her resemblance to a squaw is troubling and it is not clear what Cahan's meaning might be. In constructing this parallel, he may tap into cultural discourse of the time that linked the displacement of Native Americans from their homelands to that of the immigrant experience.¹⁰ Yet Cahan's intention in this passage is not to construct a parallel between immigrants and Native Americans through a focus on displacement. Rather, the image of the squaw is summoned up in further support of the negative description of Gitl. As equally problematic is the blackening of Gitl that occurs in this description. Everything about her is "dark," "inky," and "black," and these are precisely the qualities that Jake finds loathsome. It is important to remember that in 1896—the year *Yekl* was published—the U.S. is heavily invested in Jim Crow era legislation and sentiment. This is a time, after all, when the darkness or lightness of skin color determines eligibility for American personhood, and American Indians are not recognized as citizens until the next century. The racist reference to Gitl as "squaw," along with the progressive blackening of her, reinforces the overall portrait of un-Americanness, adding to her Old World dowdiness and making her unfit for American personhood and unappealing to Jake. And although Jake tries to inspire himself with respect for Gitl's "spotless purity" and wifely

¹⁰ The similarity between these two vastly different experiences—one of colonization and one of immigration—is frequently linked through reference to the Dawes Act in 1887. One of many Indian removal acts, the Dawes Act sought to remove Indians from land in the west that whites wanted, offering to individual Native American families 160 acres not to be sellable for 25 years. On the surface, this plan sounded like a good deal as it offered something in return for displacement. Yet the main requirement of this plan was total abandonment of one's tribe or any tribal affiliation. In short, the Act called for a divestment and denial of cultural heritage in exchange for property. Some social theorists in the late nineteenth century found this situation somewhat analogous to the experience of immigrants who were encouraged to cut off and deny their past in order to secure themselves a place as citizens in the New World.

sense of duty (45), even moral purity fails to make Gitl the suitable wife for Jake's New World aspirations. Imagining himself "an innocent exile from a world to which he belonged by right," Jake even wishes Gitl dead so that he can claim his rights to American manhood (44).

In contrast to the blackening of Gitl which serves to reinforce Jake's aversion to all things Old World, there is a whitening of Mamie that is crucial in terms of fueling both Jake's desire for her and also his desire to become more fully assimilated. Whereas Gitl is described as dark, black, and inky, Mamie is associated throughout the narrative with whiteness. In their pivotal love scene on the rooftops, her own dark features, unlike those of Gitl, are lightened; her "swarthy face" is suffused with "ivory effulgence," her dark eyes gleam with an "unearthly luster" (76). And while Mamie, the *émigré*, may not be an American-born New Woman, she certainly performs it well, befitting her for Jake's own investment in performances of American identity. Jake admires Mamie's command of English and the way that she looks the part of a real American woman. In fact, it is Mamie's successful performance of Americanized womanhood that provides the defining moment for Jake, when his repulsion of Gitl becomes unbearable and his desire to once again be on the "same social plane" as Mamie becomes overpowering (53). Mamie's visit to the Podkovnik home leaves Jake with the sense that his current domestic life and marriage to Gitl has degraded and, in a sense, emasculated him:

She [Mamie] seemed to him elevated above the social plane upon which He had recently stood by her side, nay, upon which he had had her at his beck and call; while he was degraded...wallowing in a mire, from which he yearningly looked up to his former equals, vainly begging for some

recognition. An uncontrollable desire took possession of him to run after her...and to swear that he was the same Jake and as much of a Yankee and a gallant as ever. (53)

His desire for Mamie thus becomes a desire for renewal of his sense of American manhood.

The novel concludes after Mamie helps arrange Jake's divorce from Gitl. As Mamie and Jake ride the streetcar to their marriage at city hall, it would seem that Jake has achieved his goal of becoming more American. Yet the end of the story suggests that Jake is less than satisfied with his outcome. The final chapter entitled "A Defeated Victor" concludes with Gitl attempting to act the part of a grieving divorcée, while Jake and Mamie proceed to the mayor's office to make their union legitimate.

While Gitl was indulging herself in an exhibition of grief, her recent husband was flaunting a hilarious mood. He did feel a great burden to have rolled off his heart.... But in his inmost heart he was the reverse of eager to reach the City Hall. He was painfully reluctant to part with his long-coveted freedom.... Still worse than this...was a feeling...that, instead of a conqueror, he had emerged...the victim of an ignominious defeat.... [Gitl's] future seemed bright with joy, while his own loomed dark and impenetrable. What if he should now dash into Gitl's apartments and, declaring his authority as husband, father, and lord of the house...take Yosselé in his arms, and sternly command Gitl to mind her household duties?

But the distance between him and the mayor's office was

dwindling fast. Each time the car came to a halt he wished the pause could be prolonged indefinitely; and when it resumed its progress, the violent lurch it gave was accompanied by a corresponding sensation in his heart. (89)

In this final scene, Jake's desire to become more of a real American, complete with an Americanized wife, is tempered with the familiar trappings of old notions of domesticity. His impulse to declare his authority over Gitl and Yosselé suggests the need to reassert the boundaries of gender and sexuality that are disrupted by the process of Americanization. Where he had control over Gitl, he will be, in the very least, an equal to Mamie, who has just paid for his divorce. In Jake's impulse to return to Gitl, we can see evidence of a return to Victorian notions of gender, similar to Addams' call for the reassertion of gender boundaries as a way to stabilize home-as-family and home-as-nation. Yet in Cahan's story, this desire to control the domestic environment is explicitly linked to an assimilation narrative.

Significantly, then, this scene calls into question American ideals and the promises of assimilation. Notions of freedom, mobility, and equality seem both undesirable and unattainable in a narrative that ultimately creates a victim instead of a new American. While Jake is seemingly upwardly mobile at the end of the story, the lurch of the streetcar offers a metaphor for the rupture in a narrative of conversion, assimilation, and progress. As the streetcar halts, it becomes clear that what Jake desires is not movement, but rather a prolonged pause, one that will keep him in perpetual

liminality between Old and New Worlds. This reading of the end of the story seems in keeping with Cahan's own views that assimilation was undesirable and impossible.¹¹

Yet it is troubling that this anti-Americanization theme intersects with Cahan's version of a marriage plot that exchanges one wife for another in the hopes of attaining American manhood. While the story closes with the sense that American progress may not be attainable nor perhaps desirable, it does so problematically with the suggestion that women simultaneously facilitate and hinder masculine mobility. At the end of the story, we see Mamie with considerable power and authority—she has the money that buys Jake out of his marriage to Gitl and has in essence bought her man. In a slightly different but no less significant way, the ending reveals Gitl, too, as having more happiness than she did while with Jake. Unlike Jake, she gains the freedom of a new life, which she starts with a new marriage to a “man who was to take care of her and her child” and a grocery store business with the money she earns in the divorce (88). Thus, while divorce for Jake fails to bring about his hoped for freedom and mobility, Gitl and Mamie fare well, their lives greatly improved. Whereas marriage is a useful commodity for the women, enabling them to exchange both men and money between themselves in order to achieve greater social and economic status, marriage stifles Jake. Although Mamie is the cultural capital that Jake thinks he needs in order to become more of an American man, he finds the New World woman more of an equal, destabilizing his manly sense of domestic power and authority. In a sense, this juxtaposition of feminine success with masculine failure may simply be the appropriate conclusion to the story of a rather unlikable,

¹¹ Matthew Frye Jacobson points out that Cahan's argument “that assimilation was undesirable” and “in fact impossible” is frequently underscored throughout *Yekl*, where the “theme of assimilationism” is seen to be a “regressive impulse” (106).

unsympathetic protagonist: perhaps Jake gets what he deserves. Yet the way that Cahan narrates Jake's victimization and "ignominious defeat" suggests that Gitl and Mamie are in some way responsible for Jake's downfall. Their apparent mobility, as seen in their economic power, domestic control, and performativity, contrasts with Jake's lack of movement (which he both experiences and desires). What they gain, he loses. Thus, the "lurch" of progress at the end of the story resonates with double meaning, calling into question the desirability and possibility of immigrant assimilation while suggesting that this process of Americanization fails, at least in part, because of the complicated gender relations at its core.

Women, Immigrants, and the Intersection of Assimilation and Domesticity

At stake in reading Addams alongside Cahan is an understanding of mobility in the form of assimilation and gender identity. *Twenty Years*, for example, represents mobility in two ways: in the social narrative of immigrant Americanization and also in the rhetoric about womanhood that encourages the assimilation of migrating young women into active national life. Similarly, Cahan fictionalizes the process of immigrant assimilation while simultaneously revealing the intersection of this narrative with that of mobile manhood. Yet underpinning these similarities are important differences between representations of domestic ideology in each text that broaden notions of the domestic in this era. By looking at the ways that each text narrativizes mobility, I conclude with attention to what a reading of each brings to the other with respect to constructions of domesticity.

In both texts, success is rooted in late nineteenth century notions of domestic ideology. Cahan represents this fictionally, through his depiction of what happens to Jake, Gitl, and Mamie at the end of his story. Whereas Gitl and Mamie achieve their domestic and economic power through marriages that give them access to the American ideology of upward mobility, both Jake's manhood and his interpellation into American national life are halted, represented metaphorically by the lurch of the streetcar. The streetcar, which itself signals a form of modern, urban mobility, contrasts sharply with the static notions of domesticity offered to Jake at the end of the narrative, suggesting an Americanized, urban mobility at odds with gender mobility. In many ways, Addams seems to resolve this paradox of an urban mobility at odds with gender mobility through her reconstructed notion of American homespace. Just as Hull House acts as a mediating agent for immigrants and wayward young women, so, too, does it provide Addams with both the means and the actual space through which to constitute a narrative of American identity for herself.

Yet in the context of a work like *Yekl*, which represents modern, urban, immigrant life, Addams' story of Hull House as a domestic, Americanizing space takes on even greater importance. Reading the implications of the intersection between domesticity and mobility in Cahan's story against Addams' narrative offers a broader understanding of the cultural and historical significance of Hull House's place within the national rhetoric about immigration and personhood. While Hull House indeed provides the domestic space in which to become a more active member of American society, Addams' redefined notion of home is purposefully discrete, contained, and to an extent removed from the fray of modern, urban existence. Although Addams founded the settlement

house in order to aid immigrants and young women in the realization of their American personhood, Hull House nonetheless stages an Americanness that is one step removed from the real thing. This is not unlike Cahan's depiction of the ghetto community that transforms immigrants into Americanized versions of themselves, not actual Americans. In fact, while one of the goals of the settlement project may have been to prepare immigrants for American life, it did so primarily by encouraging a return to forms of domestic and Old World labor that would potentially leave them ill-equipped or economically disadvantaged in an increasingly modern, industrial America. However, as an agent of social reform, Hull House also aided in the process of acculturation by giving young women and immigrants the space through which to practice being American.

In much the same way that Cahan's depiction of the ghetto sweatshop and dancehall demonstrate an investment in these spaces as places where American identity can be acted out and practiced, so, too, does Hull House evince a concern with performance. Reading *Yekl* alongside *Twenty Years* thus foregrounds the importance of performativity in the process of assimilation—whether immigrant assimilation or the acclimation of young women to urban life. For example, in Cahan's story, Jake's interest in displays of American manhood (in the form of boxing and baseball) propel his desire to be a regular Yankee. In much the same way as the end of Cahan's narrative proves Jake's failure to attain these American ideals of manhood, Addams' claims about the Hull House stage as instructional suggest a theory of performativity that fails to "simulate life itself":

I have come to believe...that the stage may do more than teach,

That much of our current moral instruction will not endure the test

of being cast into a lifelike mold, and when presented in dramatic form will reveal itself as platitudinous and effete. (270)

Addams' description of dramatic productions as "platitudinous and effete" is particularly telling in terms of her own self-fashioning, in which she evinces a desire to more socially active and productive. While she seems critical of attempts that stage performances of lifelike situations, she nonetheless unconsciously demonstrates an investment in notions of performativity that are not unlike Jake's interest in displays of manhood. Although Cahan's novel is a fictional representation of this desire to interpellate oneself into American gender ideology, Addams' autobiographical narrative suggests a similar fictionalization of herself necessary to the project of socializing individual democracy.

Interestingly, both Cahan's Jake and Addams are interpellated into American national life by becoming part of a family dynamic. Both Jake and Addams experience a moment of liminality that is central to their stories: for Jake, this moment occurs when he imagines himself back in the Old World with his mother and father—a key scene that results in the imagination of himself as America's "son." For Addams, her liminal moment happens at the bullfights that lead to her decision to begin Hull House and become a "mother" to orphaned immigrants and wayward women. While clearly becoming a son is not exactly the same as claiming a form of motherhood, I suggest that these transtextual moments of liminality function to make evident the importance of the family dynamic in the national narrative of Americanization. Reading these scenes together as representative of the drama of national family life suggests a particular historical and cultural concern with the American family. Attention to the importance of maintaining distinctly "American" kinship ties is evident, for example, in Francis

Walker's anti-immigration treatises, in which he relies on the language of domestic ideology in order to support his claim that immigration is responsible for the decline in the "domestic birthrate" ("Immigration," 127). In the case of Addams and Cahan, the metaphysical and metaphorical link between Addams and Jake constructs a mother-son bond that is crucial to the formation of a unified, assimilated American family. Through the fictionalization of herself as "mother" to homesick immigrants, Addams in effect becomes a character in the drama of national family life; Jake, in turn, is the adopted, orphaned immigrant son.

Yet Jake's immobility at the end of Cahan's novel implies the failure of the sort of Americanizing process that might make Jake America's son. As I discuss at length above, it is in part Cahan's own view of the impossibility of assimilation that influences this reading of failure. A consideration of how Addams' narrative is in dialogue with Cahan's further complicates the assimilation myth by showing the slippage between domestication and Americanization. While Hull House is truly revolutionary in its reconfiguration of homespace, providing shelter for America's "other half,"¹² a consideration of *Twenty Years* alongside *Yekl* suggests an American domestic ideology that immobilizes immigrants and women in search of national belonging and domestic freedom. The insistence in each narrative on domestic ideology can be read as a form of control that binds immigrants and women to their places, withholding the promises of Americanization.

¹² I allude here to the title of Jacob Riis' photojournalist work *How the Other Half Lives*, in which he presents photographs of immigrant ghettos and slums of New York City at the turn of the century.

Chapter Three

Movements on the Color Line: Race and Domesticity in
Chesnutt's *The House Behind the Cedars* and Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*

We shall...contend that, in any mixed community, the reputation of belonging to the dominant race, in this instance the white race, is *property*, in the same sense that a right of action or of inheritance is *property*; and that the provisions of the act in question which authorize an officer of a railroad company to assign a person to a car seat apart for a particular race, enables such officer to deprive him, to a certain extent at least, of this property—this reputation which has an actual pecuniary value, “without due process of law,” and are, therefore, in violation of the Second restrictive clause of the first section of the XIVth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.¹

Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and Charles Chesnutt's *The House Behind the Cedars* are both novels dealing with themes of racial passing and miscegenation. Yet each narrative also articulates an understanding of the complex construction of racial identity that occurred during the 1890s. Twain comments on the way that racial “difference” was “made,” a socially constructed fiction based upon heritage, when he has Tom Driscoll, upon discovering that he is not actually white, declare “Why were niggers *and* whites made? What crime did the uncreated first nigger commit that the curse of birth was

decreed for him? And why this awful difference made between white and black?"

(117). Tom recognizes that regardless of the appearance of his skin color he has been deemed black by birth, and with this recognition comes the acknowledgement of the social inferiority of that "difference." Through Tom's realization of the difference between white and black, Twain alludes to the ways that race, in this era, was constituted according to a set of complex and frequently contradictory "rules," based not on what could be seen, but instead on the custom of the country that defined racial identity according to speculative evidence such as genetic theories. Blackness was fixed through the "one drop" rule, and whiteness became defined as a form of property offered only to those who had no known or acknowledged "drop of black blood" (Gibson, xi).² While Twain seems to capitulate to this understanding of racial identity, Chesnutt, on the other hand, questions whether race is a matter of "blood" and heritage when he has John Warwick insist that because he looks white he is white. Rejecting Judge Straight's argument that the "'one drop'" rule is the "'law of this nation,'" John maintains "'it don't apply to me....A negro is black; I am white, and not black'" (113). Although each offer slightly different perspectives on the race debate in this era, both Chesnutt and Twain, in their attention to the ways that race is socially constructed, engage the debate over racial identity that was America's post-Reconstruction cultural preoccupation.

The 1890s, which witnessed the defeat of Reconstruction, as evidenced by accelerating racism, Jim Crow sentiment and legislation, disenfranchisement laws, and

¹ This quote is from the brief in the case of the Supreme Court, no. 210, *Homer Adolph Plessy vs. J.H. Ferguson*.

² Donald Gibson reminds us that both blackness and whiteness were defined through the one-drop rule: "It is at this moment in history that 'white' finds its modern definition in America: It comes to mean one

the peak of lynchings, was an era of black discrimination that reached what Eric Sundquist has termed its "authoritative constitutional expression" with the Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Sundquist, 47).³ Homer Plessy's willful violation of Louisiana's Jim Crow railroad car law in 1892 established the context for a decade of discussion and debate about the constitution of whiteness, which led to attempts to immobilize the dissemination of blackness by "fixing" the indeterminacy of identity. Light enough to pass for white, Plessy took a seat in the whites only car, only to announce to the conductor that he was, in fact, black, which led to his immediate arrest for the violation of Louisiana's Jim Crow railroad law. The primary issue brought out in the Plessy case, which was supported in the segregationist legislation of this era, was over the intermingling or mixing of the races. Concern over the decline in the white population or race suicide, given greater attention with the publication of the Eleventh U.S. Census, was deemed in part due to unrestricted immigration and partially the result of racial miscegenation. Continued intermixing of the races was seen as a threat of national proportions that had to be controlled and contained. Jim Crow railcar laws represented an attempt to control and contain the spread of blackness in the white population. By segregating whites and blacks on a train, social "mixing" was kept to a minimum, which, presumably assisted in the process of enforcing stricter racial boundaries.

whose forebears are white and white only; one who does not carry in his or her body a known (or acknowledged) "drop of black blood" (Gibson, xi).

³ According to Sundquist, *Plessy v. Ferguson* defined a "dual constitutional citizenship," whereby states could operate outside of national legislation, creating a separation of national and state rights that enabled states to disregard the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, thus denying blacks their rights as emancipated citizens, in favor of the enforcement of Jim Crow laws.

The Plessy case highlights a contradiction that is the primary concern of this chapter (and this project): the conflict between mobility and immobility. While the train itself signifies mobility in the form of transportation and the geographical movement of people and goods, in the Plessy case it becomes a contradictory site for debates about racial identity that ultimately result in the “fixing” of blackness and the denial of whiteness as a form of social and economic mobility. In this sense, the Plessy case highlights intersecting taxonomies of mobility, geographical and racial, as topographical borders are crossed while metaphysical borders are constituted and contested. As a sort of mobile narrative, the train metaphorizes the movement of the color line and the social and sexual border crossings at the core of the cultural anxiety over miscegenation.

The cultural implications of Plessy v. Ferguson can be seen in both Chesnutt and Twain’s novels through their mutual attention to juridical, geographical, and bodily borders. In *Cedars*, for example, the allusion to Plessy’s ride in the white rail car is seen most notably in Rena’s fateful train ride that takes her back to Patesville. Although Rena’s whiteness is presumed on this journey (she neither makes a claim of blackness nor does she appear as anything but white), the train nonetheless represents her geographical and metaphysical movement towards blackness. In much the same way as Homer Plessy is stripped of his right to claim himself white, so, too, is Rena ultimately deprived of the property of whiteness. As the train passes from South Carolina to North, crossing the geographical boundaries that delineate her racial identity, Rena, in effect, traverses racial borders that lead to her estrangement from her lover, George Tryon, and disenfranchisement from the white community that he represents.

Concerns highlighted in *Plessy v. Ferguson* about the indeterminacy of identity, blood as a determinate of race, and the investment in whiteness as a form of property, find expression in Twain's narrative of changelings, twins, and the sanctity of motherhood. Attempts by the novel's title character to make a record of the town and its people through a system of fingerprinting demonstrate Twain's play with the cultural obsession to fix identity. Although at the start of the narrative Pudd'nhead Wilson's ventures into the world of the law have failed to establish his reputation as a lawyer, he ultimately succeeds precisely because of these imprints, which reconstitute the borders of racial and gender identity. In place of a train ride, Twain offers the sale of Tom "down the river," a movement that confirms (in a progression not unlike that of Rena in *Cedars*) the unalterable "truth" of his blackness.⁴

Chesnutt and Twain's reliance on tropes of kinship and family demonstrate another link to the issues raised in the *Plessy* debate over the importance of heritage in the constitution of racial identity. While racial passing and miscegenation provide the thematic context for each, Chesnutt's and Twain's novels unfold through narratives preoccupied with family and kinship ties, which are simultaneously immutable and also able to be changed at will. The stories suggest both the naturalization of family, whereby "the family" conforms to certain cultural expectations, conferring identity and community according to traceable kinship ties and heritage, and a denaturalization of the notion of family as an indeterminate link to political and cultural identification. The cultural attention to notions of heritage, which underpinned the one-drop rule, can be seen in these novels through stories about familial relationships. In both Twain and

Chesnutt's narratives, a character's link to family determines racial identification.

Furthermore, family not only confers racial identity but also affirms gender ideology; similar to the ways in which race is fixed according to heritage, gender identity is also bound by the ties the characters have to their kin.

This attention to notions of family underscores the relationship between mobility and domesticity in each novel. For instance, Chesnutt's novel highlights the intersection between mobility and domesticity through attention to the confluence of racial and gender identity. In this passing narrative, domestic ideology shapes the construction of racial identity. For example, John and Rena's divergent notions of family, particularly their distinctly gendered roles within the family, provide the basis for their claims to whiteness or blackness. There is a similar investment in domestic ideology in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, wherein reconstituting the boundaries of family (by determining who is really Roxy's son and who is really a Driscoll) secures both racial and gender identity.

In this chapter, I examine how mobility in these novels, articulated as racial miscegenation and passing, gender performativity, as well as movements within and across geographical spaces, highlights the interaction between race and domesticity. I argue that attention to these taxonomies of mobility offers an understanding of the ways that the domestic was called upon in this era in order to stabilize both racial and gender identity. In both Twain and Chesnutt, racial passing represents the potential for upward social and economic mobility. Yet each novel also reveals anxiety over the indeterminacy of racial identity and the consequences of unchecked miscegenation,

⁴ Although Twain's novel lacks a symbolic train ride, the Plessy debate shows up, as Eric Sundquist

which domestic ideology helps assuage. In Chesnutt's novel, for example, the conflation of domestic ideology and mobility is articulated through the trope of racial passing. While passing represents the potential for upward social and economic mobility in the novel, as seen in John Warwick's success at becoming a white lawyer, domestic ideology hinders his sister's movement into the white world. Conventional ideas about gender and Rena's relationship to notions of home literally immobilize her attempts to claim whiteness in the same way as John. Rena's story makes evident the conflict between racial passing and domesticity, underscoring the paradox of mobility and immobility. Similarly, in Twain's novel, racial passing is the primary trope of mobility. Roxana's "plot" (to borrow from the title of Carolyn Porter's essay), set into motion when she switches her son for her slave master's, is intended to give her son all the promises of white social and economic mobility, while seizing some of the master's property for herself. Yet Roxy and Tom's mobility plot is at odds with the progression of the narrative itself, which is towards the stabilization of gender, racial, and national identity. Their movements within white society ultimately fail to dismantle the white, patriarchal ideology of domesticity at the core of the narrative, thus pointing yet again to the tension between mobility and immobility.

Rena Walden: At the Confluence of Racial Passing and Domestic Ideology

Charles Chesnutt's story of racial passing and failed romance was familiar to readers of late nineteenth century fiction who were well acquainted with the themes of

reminds us, in the narrative's obsessive attention to the law.

miscegenation and domesticity in wide circulation during this time.⁵ Yet Chesnut's handling of these themes teases out the conflict and conflation between passing and domesticity, bringing concerns about gender, race, and class to the foreground. As Donald Gibson argues in his 1993 introduction to the novel, the conflict between passing and domesticity propels the narrative, calling into question racial definition and the certainty of kinship ties. Gibson's argument suggests that in Chesnut's novel what constitutes race is closely linked to domestic relationships, ultimately revealing a conflict between "passing and domesticity [wherein] the former is likely to make impossible the duties and responsibilities attendant upon the latter" (Introduction, xiii). Gibson claims that the conflict between passing and domesticity explains John Warwick's success at passing, while Rena Walden's conflation of race and domesticity results in her failure to pass in(to) white society. While John can more easily cut himself off from kinship ties in order to pass as a white man, Rena is unable to separate race and family in the way that John can, which results in a series of coincidences that conclude with her tragic failure to lead the life of a white woman.

My reading of Chesnut's novel focuses on the ways that Rena's story highlights the paradox of mobility and immobility through attention to this conflation of race and domesticity. In particular, I argue that the intersection of Rena's geographical and social mobility reveals an anxiety about female sexuality and the potential threat this form of movement might pose to both white and black masculinity. Rena's migrations back and forth over the color line not only suggest her racial fluidity, but are also linked to the

⁵ See, for example, works by George Washington Cable; Frances Harper's *Iola Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted*; Kate Chopin's "Desiree's Baby"; Pauline Hopkins, *Contending Forces: A Romance of Illustrative*

potential for sexual transgressions that must ultimately be contained within nineteenth century conventions of domestic ideology.

Chesnutt's *The House Behind the Cedars* opens with John Warwick's (né Walden) return to Patesville, North Carolina after a ten-year absence. As the chapter title suggests, he returns "A Stranger from South Carolina," an unrecognizable new man who has successfully assimilated into white society, to find much of his hometown unchanged. This opening chapter narrates John's walk through the more affluent center of town to its declining outskirts, where he follows a young woman as she makes her way toward a "neighborhood so uninviting" (6). It is not until the girl goes into the house behind the cedars, his boyhood home, that John recognizes her as his own sister, Rena. During his reunion with his mother, Molly, John discloses the intent of his visit: to bring Rena with him to South Carolina so that she can care for his home and young son, both in need of attention since the death of his white wife. Much to the anguish of their mother, Rena accompanies John and, after a year of formal education, becomes "mistress" of his large plantation home. This opening scene previews the primary concerns of the novel: racial passing and kinship, mobility and domesticity. These opening chapters also establish the conflict between passing and domesticity, represented by John's break with his kinship ties in Patesville and also Rena's subsequent exchange of her home and mother for the promise of upward mobility and the advantages of whiteness.

We learn much about John in these opening chapters, which depict him as selfishly manipulative and altogether not very likeable. To Molly and Rena, he seems a real gentleman, "represent[ing] to them the world from which circumstances had shut

them out” (13). Indeed, in his successful move from poor black child in Patesville to rich white lawyer in South Carolina, John becomes the whitest of gentlemen, marrying the daughter of an old slaveholding family in the South and inheriting the ownership of a large plantation house. This irony is lost on John, who even draws on the language of slavery as the last attempt to manipulate his mother into letting go of Rena:

She [Rena] has only to step into my carriage—after perhaps a little preparation—and ride up the hill which I have had to climb so painfully. It would be a great pleasure to me to see her at the top. But of course it is impossible—a mere idle dream. *Your* claim comes first; her duty chains her here. (18)

Coming from a man who is now a white plantation owner, John’s reference to the “chains” of duty resonate with double meaning, condemning Rena not only to the bonds of static domesticity but also to life as a black woman. After hypothetically marrying Rena off to local black men, knowing that his mother would disapprove of these alliances, John tells his mother that his world holds more possibilities for Rena to move “with the best in the land” (Chesnutt’s frequent refrain for the “best” whites), ultimately marrying a rich man and living in a fine house equipped with servants (18).

Yet John is not entirely motivated by an altruistic desire to see Rena rise in the white world; rather, he needs Rena to fulfill the domestic role left vacant by his wife so that his own success can continue. He forms his plan to have Rena accompany him while following her on his walk through Patesville. When John first see Rena while walking through town, he does not see her as his sister but rather as a sexual object. The sight of

this "strikingly handsome" young woman excites him, so much so that he follows her as she makes her way home.

As he walked along behind her at a measured distance, he could not help noting the details that made up this pleasing impression, for his mind was singularly alive to beauty, in whatever embodiment. The girl's figure... was admirably proportioned: she was evidently at the period when the angles of childhood were rounding into the promising curves of adolescence. (5)

There is something unsettling about John's lust for a young woman who is apparently not much older than a child. Yet, as the narrative reveals the young woman of John's growing desire to be his sister, an even more complex and unsettling story is uncovered that further complicates the paradox of passing and domesticity.

This opening scene of the novel establishes the psychologically incestuous relationship between John and Rena that governs much of John's actions until he finally disappears from the narrative, replaced by Rena's would-be lover and husband George Tryon. Although he arrives in Patesville wifeless, John leaves with Rena, who will essentially fulfill the role of wife and mother for him and his son. While John does not want to marry, as we learn from the narrator's dismissal of a potential love interest between him and a young widow, he does want someone to fulfill the function of wife. Having a mistress of the house only adds to his power as a white man and master. While John is cautious about marriage, for fear of exposing the secret of his origins, once he learns that the tantalizing young woman is his sister, he recognizes the possibility of gaining a "wife" without the trouble of marriage. A semi-spousal relationship develops

between John and Rena that benefits them both. Embracing her nephew in a “motherly caress” (43), Rena gains the sort of domestic power previously only afforded white women:

The servants, of whom there were several in the house, treated her with a deference to which her eight months in school had only partly accustomed her. At school she had been one of many to be served, and had herself been held to obedience. Here, for the first time in her life, she was mistress, and tasted the sweets of power. (43)

Valuing Rena more for her qualities as a possible mate rather than a sister, John, too, benefits from the “charm and grace [that] she lend[s] to his own household”:

It was a source of much gratification to Warwick that his sister seemed to adapt herself so easily to the new conditions. Her graceful movements, the quiet elegance with which she wore even the simplest gown, the easy authoritativeness with which she directed the servants, were to him proofs of her superior quality. . . . His feeling for her was something more than brotherly love,--he was quite conscious that there were degrees of brotherly love, and that if she had been homely or stupid, he would never have disturbed her in the stagnant life of the house behind the cedars. (44)

Clearly, John’s desire to have her in his home is based on “something more” than the usual sort of sibling affection. Rena’s beauty and grace, which mark her as a “superior” woman, suit John’s need for an admirable partner. The psychologically incestuous relationship between John and Rena, in which she is the object of his desire, as we also

saw in the opening scene where he follows her with lustful designs in mind, establishes the connection between Rena's mobility and sexuality that recurs throughout the narrative. Rena, although she moves with John presumably in order to take advantage of the privileges of white economic and social mobility, is not afforded the opportunity to move unencumbered in white society. Rather, her sexuality, of which she is apparently unaware and does not control, makes her a sexual target—first for her brother and later for George Tryon and Jeff Wain—and impedes her social mobility by placing her within familiar domestic spaces and roles.

The intersection of the incest story with the unfolding passing narrative suggests a certain mobility inherent in the notion of kinship ties, wherein "family" can, in essence, be mobilized in order to sustain an identity that is itself mobile. Although her sexuality and male desire hinder Rena's movement, John finds advantages to having Rena be both his sister and his (surrogate) wife. In addition to valuing Rena for her successful, adaptive, and elegant displays of white, wifely domesticity, John brings Rena to his home so that he can continue to live the American dream.

Still another motive...had more or less consciously influenced him. He had no fear that the family secret would ever be discovered,--he had taken his precautions too thoroughly.... Because of this knowledge, which the world around him did not possess, he had felt now and then a certain sense of loneliness; and there was a measure of relief in having about him one who knew his past, and yet whose knowledge, because of their common interest, would not interfere with his present or jeopardize his future. For he had always been, in a figurative sense, a naturalized

foreigner in the world of wide opportunity, and Rena was one of his old compatriots, whom he was glad to welcome into the populous loneliness of his adopted country. (45)

While in one sense successful passing seems to require both a geographical and psychological break with origins and family, the intersecting incest narrative suggests the importance of family ties in maintaining white identity. While he has left his hometown, his mother, and the house behind the cedars, John needs someone to know his past. Rena is a surrogate wife to John in the present, but is also his link to “home” in a broader, foundational sense. Having Rena with him completes his passing narrative, enabling him to claim his right to the American dream. While John lives the life of a successful white man, Rena necessarily secures both his manhood and his whiteness by managing both his home and his history.

Rena helps mediate what is, in essence, John’s assimilation into white culture and society. The suggestion, in the passage above, that racial passing is analogous to the experience of “a naturalized foreigner” resonates thematically with immigrant narratives of the time, such as Abraham Cahan’s *Yekl*, where the protagonist finds himself alone and orphaned in the New World. As an immigrant, John welcomes Rena as a “compatriot” into “the world of wide [and presumably white] opportunity” to ease the loneliness he experiences in “his adopted country.”⁶ Chesnutt’s use of the immigrant analogy in order to describe John and Rena’s experiences of racial passing suggests, as Darryl Hattenhauer has noted, “an assertion of melting-pot idealism, of the forging of a ‘new man,’ of

⁶ In fact, the connection between John’s story of racial passing and that of Jewish assimilation is hinted at earlier in the narrative when John returns to Patesville and finds the primary changes to his hometown in the form of storefront signs that indicate evidence of Jewish immigration.

Cinderella success, of love 'regardless of race, creed, color,' of the promise of America itself" ("Racial and Textual Miscegenation," 42). The juxtaposition of the passing narrative with that of naturalization and assimilation also broadens the significance of mobility to interpellate subjects into personhood, suggesting that passing consists not only of the movement from one racial identity into another but also one national identity into another. For John and Rena, compatriots in the New World, racial passing simultaneously requires that they become naturalized. Like foreigners who give up their past in order to remake themselves anew in the land of opportunity, they are not only becoming white, but are also becoming citizen-members of this New World collective.

The passing/naturalized foreigner analogy recurs throughout the novel, most notably in two scenes where the confluence of race and nation intersects with ideologies of class and gender. The first of these scenes occurs in the chapter "Doubts and Fears," after Rena expresses to John her misgivings about marrying George Tryon without first telling him the story of her past. While Rena has been able to play the part of a white woman successfully, "conform[ing] her speech, her manners, and in a measure her modes of thought, to those of the people around her," she cannot envision a happy marriage to Tryon unless she reveals "the secret that oppressed her" (50). Alarmed by the possibility that Rena's investment in romantic sentiment might endanger his own position, John engages Tryon in a conversation about ancestry and family that intentionally blurs the lines between race and class.

Rather than approaching him directly on the topic of race, John “test[s] the liberality of Tryon’s views” in a misleading discussion in which class replaces race as the shameful family secret:

“I think you ought to know, George...that my sister and I are not of an old family, or a rich family, or a distinguished family; that she can bring you nothing but herself; that we have no connections of which you could boast, and no relatives to whom we should be glad to introduce you. You must take us for ourselves alone—we are new people.” (57)

Through a series of rhetorical negations, John tells Tryon what he and Rena are not, attempting to uncover Tryon’s prejudice against those who might not have roots in the legacy of distinguished, rich, and (although John does not say it) presumably white American families. In this scene, John takes the naturalized foreigner analogy even further, not only remaking himself and his sister as white, but also creating a distinct class of self-made “new people” who generate new notions of what constitutes family. John redefinition of family no longer relies on the idea of kinship as heritage; rather, kinship is constituted through the mutual, self-creating experience of being “new,” a concept consistent with John’s insistence that race is not inherited by blood. Persuaded by this concept of new people, Tryon assures Warwick that the family ancestry is of no importance to him, further devaluing the idea that an old family is the best family:

“My dear John...there is a great deal of nonsense about families. If a man is noble and brave and strong, if a woman is beautiful and good and true, what matters it about his or her ancestry? If an old family

can give them these things, then it is valuable; if they possess them without it, then of what use is it except as a source of empty pride, which they would be better off without? If all new families were like yours, there would be no advantage in belonging to an old one." (57)

Tryon's series of what-if rhetorical questions support John's construction of a new class of people without social connections or ancestry. Old notions of family value, the way in which family is itself a commodity, are replaced by seemingly more liberal and fluid ideas about the advantages of new families, who are self-created and self-possessed. Tryon's speech suggests this shift in values from family to self whereby self is the commodity, which allows room for John's theory that whiteness is a form of property that can be claimed regardless of heritage or blood. Yet while Tryon's view is radical with respect to changing notions of family as property, his view of what is valuable about personhood is still rooted in old, conventional gender ideologies, giving the advantages of being "new" to brave, strong men and True Women in particular.⁷

The conversation between John and Tryon redefines the relationship between ancestry and class standing, subsequently altering the meaning and value of family. Yet, at the same time as it debunks the notion that an old family is the best family, with roots that can be traced to the first settlers in colonial America, the discussion between the two men is also highly suggestive with respect to Chesnut's views on race and the impact of miscegenation on American culture. Although the racial subtext is lost on Tryon, it is not on John or on Chesnut's readers, who were reading about the "miscegenation question"

in newspapers and other contemporary novels. Thus, Tryon's final statement to John, "If all new families were like yours, there would be no advantage in belonging to an old one," has more subtle and far-reaching implications than he recognizes. After all, what if all families were indeed like John and Rena's? The redefinition of family offered in Chesnut's narrative seems to suggest that racial miscegenation is inevitable and perhaps even desirable in the construction of the individual and national family, as it replaces old, stagnant notions of ancestry with seemingly more fluid, "new" ideas about kinship.

Indeed, Chesnut's story of passing for white is, as William Andrews reminds us, his "contribution to the...discussion of the 'miscegenation question'" (Andrews, 137). In staging this conversation between John and Tryon, Chesnut not only deconstructs the white bourgeois family, he also emphasizes the social fiction of race itself, which was constituted in the post-Civil War era through Jim Crow laws enacted to prevent racial amalgamation. Rather than viewing race as a "problem" to be corrected in part through segregationist laws and mores, Chesnut "believed in the power of racial amalgamation to elevate or otherwise refine humankind biologically" (Andrews, 140). As Andrews notes, Chesnut advocated the acceleration of assimilation through racial intermingling and intermarriage, deeming it to be as important to blacks as it was in assimilating immigrants into American national life. In the scene above, the ease with which John and Tryon exchange old families for new also suggests an investment in the fluidity of racial identity, which is itself mobile and able to be redefined at will.

Yet while Chesnut's narrative suggests a certain mobility with regards to class and race, it indicates that gender identity is static, bound by conventional standards of the

⁷ I allude here to the ideology of the True Woman, a nineteenth century concept that defined the "true"

domestic. Although John's story of passing is politicized, tapping into social issues surrounding race and class, Rena's story is a domestic one of romance gone awry. Chesnutt contrasts John's success in sustaining his claims to white manhood with Rena's tragic failure to move beyond the social fiction of race and gender ideologies. In this sense, some critics have read Rena's story as following the literary conventions of the tragic mulatto, with an inevitable trajectory resulting in her death. Yet, as Sally Ferguson and others have noted, Chesnutt's construction of Rena is more complex than a depiction of a woman who fails because of the fiction of racial ideology. Rather, Rena's failure is explicitly linked to a domestic ideology in which she is bound to the principles of home. After Tryon's discovery of her blackness, Rena acknowledges an essential gender difference that enables John's mobility while binding Rena to her "place": "A man may make a new place for himself—a woman is born and bound to hers" (121). Rena's statement makes an argument for an inherent masculine, generative mobility versus the immobility that place offers for women. The effects of this gendered paradox of mobility and immobility are suggested in the letter that Tryon sends John after he learns of Rena and John's "antecedents" (102):

I need scarcely assure you that I shall say nothing about this affair, and that I shall keep your secret as though it were my own. Personally, I shall never be able to think of you as other than a white man, as you may gather from the tone of this letter; and while I cannot marry your sister, I wish her every happiness... (103)

While Tryon refuses to marry Rena because of the threat she poses to his race and ancestry, he nonetheless “makes allowances” (102) that include John in a fraternity of white men. At the same time as he affirms John’s claims to whiteness, Tryon imagines Rena to be a “hideous black hag,” with hair like “coarse wool,” bloodshot eyes,” and “unwholesome fangs” (98). Tryon’s racism blackens and demonizes Rena, hindering her social progress: clearly, she will never be the wife of a Southern aristocrat. Yet this condemnation does not extend to her brother, who remains, to a degree, unscathed by Tryon’s racism, his own progress unimpeded.

Although John manipulates Rena with false optimism and the promise that she could live a life much like his own, Rena’s lot is finally the same as her mother’s in the sense that both women are held accountable for the “sins” of female sexuality and bound instead to their racial and gender “place.” Rena’s “fall,” the moment when Tryon discovers her blackness and imagines how, if he had married her, this black blood might contaminate his own social and economic position, is juxtaposed with the story of her mother’s illicit relationship with John and Rena’s white father. Molly’s relationship with a white “gentleman” who she is forbidden by law to marry offers the family greater economic security; yet, it is tinged with a sense of sinful illicitness for which Molly (and subsequently Rena) is held accountable throughout the narrative, which makes frequent references to Molly’s sin. John, for example, manipulates his mother by drawing on her sense of shame, convincing her to allow Rena to join him by reminding his mother: “...you must let her go...it would be a sin against her to refuse,” to which Molly replies, “I’ll not stand in her way—I’ve got sins enough to answer for already” (19). Although all members of the Walden family are complicit in this narrative of miscegenation,

Chesnutt's novel makes the sexual mobility of women seem particularly threatening.

While there is the presumption that racial miscegenation is acceptable (if not socially, at least in terms of the patriarchy and fraternity established by men) when initiated by men, such as John and his father, the narrative suggests that it is unsettling for women to do the same. Thus, women can be (and are) manipulated by the sexual desires of men, but are not invested with the authority to either claim their own sexuality or use this sexuality in order to gain a greater sense of social agency or racial mobility. Ultimately, Molly and Rena do not end up gaining access to the promises of whiteness, nor do they benefit from marriages to white men; instead, they are relegated to the house behind the cedar trees and the confines of the domestic this house represents.

Furthermore, the male characters are given the authority to construct and reconstruct racial identity at will, as suggested most notably when Tryon, driven by his love of Rena, determines that he can "make her white":

He would make her white; no one beyond the old town would ever know the difference. If, perchance, their secret should be disclosed, the world was wide; a man of courage and ambition, inspired by love, might make a career anywhere. Circumstances made weak men; strong men mould circumstances to do their bidding. (140)

Not only can Tryon constitute Rena's whiteness, he can, by virtue of his manhood, mobilize circumstance in order to secure his own (as well as Rena's) future. Tryon's confidence in his ability to shape Rena's identity and future is similar to John's own belief that his white manhood entitles him to a mobile destiny. A distinction to note here is that passing as white (John) allows men to control their own destiny but not that of

others, while “being” white (Tryon) gives men the power to affect and alter the lives of others, notably women (Rena). In spite of this distinction in degrees of power and control, the male characters are invested with the “right” to cross racial and social boundaries, while women are rooted to their place, not only in the form of homespace, but also “place” as it is represented socially, racially, biologically.

The novel stages these concerns about female mobility by contrasting the urban and the rural, spaces associated with mobility and immobility. For example, while John’s movement is from rural to urban, where he eventually finds success, Rena moves from rural to urban and back again, finally disappearing in the deep recesses of the rural landscape. The connection between rural and urban spaces and immobility and mobility is seen in Chesnutt’s construction of the town of Patesville, which itself becomes increasingly urbanized in the novel with the new railroad system that runs directly into town. Yet while typically the railway represents mobile, urban possibilities, in this narrative it functions conversely, transporting Rena back to her mother, which leads to her containment within the familiar and familial trappings of home. There is an attempt to stabilize female mobility by keeping women confined to rural settings: houses behind cedars and schoolhouses in the woods. Hazel Carby’s discussion of how black women are perceived as racial threats that disrupt black/white middle class relations and urban black masculinity resonates with Chesnutt’s portrayal of Rena, who has the potential to destroy the black/white fraternity established between John and Tryon.⁸ Although Tryon

⁸ In part, my reading of the parallel between mobility/immobility and urban/rural is informed by Hazel Carby’s work on the migration of black women to the city between 1870 and 1910. Carby’s purpose is to “describe and connect a series of responses, from institutions and from individuals, that identified the behavior of [migrating women] as a social and political problem, a problem that had to be rectified in order to restore a moral social order” (Carby, 116-17). While Carby’s focus is on the migration of black women

promises to keep the Warwick family secret to himself, offering his “protection”

(122) to John as a man, he withdraws his friendship: a bond that increased John’s status among the white bourgeoisie. Rena’s “fall” into rural black womanhood also reminds John of his own blackness, forcing him to put aside his ambitions for a political career:

Warwick had cherished certain ambitions, but these he must now put behind him. In the obscurity of private life, his past would be of little moment; in the glare of a political career, one’s antecedents are public property, and too great a reserve in regard to one’s past is regarded as a confession of something discreditable.... Warwick, who had builded so well for himself, had weakened the structure of his own life by trying to share his good fortune with his sister. (122)

Rena’s mobility thus does more than destabilize urban black masculinity: her migration in the form of racial passing in effect reconstitutes John socially as black, limiting his success to less public “white” ventures.

Rena’s return to the house behind the cedars marks her reintroduction to a presumably more black, rural, and domestic existence. Yet as the narrative makes clear, this Rena is not the Rena who left with John the year before. The remnants of her other life are visible to the members of the community, who are “dimly conscious of a slight barrier between Mis’ Molly’s daughter and themselves” (143). Chesnutt again uses the naturalized foreigner analogy in order to show how Rena is initially “in-between” past and present, rural and urban, black and white:

From the south to northern cities, her argument about how these women came to be seen as social and moral threats supports the idea that female racial passing is a form of migration with the potential to problematize social relations.

The time she had spent apart from these friends of her youth had rendered it impossible for her ever to meet them again upon the plane of common interests and common thoughts. It was much as though one, having acquired the vernacular of his native country, had lived in a foreign land long enough to lose the language of his childhood without fully acquiring that of his adopted country. (143)

In this passage, Chesnutt shows melting-pot idealism gone awry. Rena is neither a member of the Patesville community nor of her brother's world, neither black nor white. Rena's "recent association with persons of greater refinement" sets her apart from the people of her "native country," and "upon this very difference were based her noble aspirations for usefulness—one must stoop in order that one may lift others" (143). Although the narrative describes Rena's "difference" as "better" in terms of class, race, and gender, she is nonetheless reintegrated back into the rural black community, in fact, making herself blacker, through her decision to devote her life to the education of her race. Donald Gibson describes this process as Rena's development of a "black consciousness," in which her "attempt to pass forces her to see herself in a different light, not only in the light of her own eyes but in the light of the vision of the society around her that defines her race" (Gibson, xiii). In a sense, Rena views herself (and is seen by others) through a sort of double-consciousness that registers her simultaneously an outsider and a member of this community.

Although Rena is compelled by a moral obligation to "her people" (143), as Gibson argues, her "dedication to race becomes possible only after she conflates race and domesticity" (xiv). For Gibson, this conflation occurs when Rena returns to her mother,

where she realizes that “she is unable to escape her tie to blackness that is, through her mother, biological and incontrovertible.” While clearly Rena’s return to Patesville inaugurates her entrance into black womanhood, I view this conflation of race and domesticity as occurring more notably at the end of the novel, where Rena’s domestication intersects with the increasingly rural landscape. Rena’s journey from her mother’s home to the abusive Jeff Wain’s dilapidated plantation house traces her trajectory from the recently urbanized and more modern city to the stagnant, secluded rural setting where Rena will take her place as a teacher at the schoolhouse in the woods. This journey from Patesville to Sampson County—from urban to rural and from mobility to immobility--represents the flipside of Rena’s journey with her brother earlier in the narrative. Both Wain and the secluded rural setting represent a static, blacker “double” to John and his more visible, mobile white society. In fact, Rena serves a similar purpose as surrogate wife, mother, and mistress of Wain’s household. This mirrored doubling is suggested in the contrast between the “large white house,” notable for its “signs of thrift and prosperity,” which Rena and Wain encounter during their journey, and Wain’s “old plantation house, somewhat dilapidated, and surrounded by an air of neglect and shiftlessness” (154). The location of these homes is of particular importance with regards to the contrast of mobility with immobility and urbanity with rurality: the more affluent house stands just “back from the road at the foot of a lane,” while Wain’s house is located miles from the town, “off from the main highway” and down a “narrower road” (154). The visible location of the white house at the intersection of the highway and a lane implies mobility and modernity while Wain’s secluded house represents the immobility of its rural setting. These domestic spaces are also decidedly racialized, with the white

house predictably belonging to Tryon and his family and Wain's house inhabited by his mother, an "old woman, much darker than her son" (154). In a sense, then, Rena's journey represents both her geographical and metaphysical movement from urban to rural, affluent to poor, and white to black.

At the same time as she is becoming more domesticated, oppressed by Wain's sexual tyranny and later Tryon's own obsessive infatuation with her, Rena also seems to become increasingly blacker the deeper into the woods she goes. Throughout their journey Wain is quick to point out to interested townspeople evidence of Rena's blackness, and by the end of the novel Rena seems to accept the notion that her racial identity has been conferred upon her, as seen in her letter rebuking Tryon's advances of friendship:

You are white, and you have given me to understand that I am black. I accept the classification, however unfair, and the consequences, however unjust, one of which is that we cannot meet in the same parlor, in the same church, at the same table, or anywhere, in social intercourse; upon a steamboat we would not sit at the same table; we could not walk together on the street, or meet publicly anywhere and converse, without unkind remark. As a white man, this might not mean a great deal to you; as a woman, shut out already by my color from much that is desirable, my good name remains my most valuable possession. (172-73)

Here Rena subscribes to Victorian American ideas of womanhood, as she conflates racial identity—and its boundaries—with that of gender identity. If she must necessarily be black, then she must also secure herself a place as a woman of "good name" in the

ideology of domesticity. In fact, she retreats to what might otherwise be the limitations of her sex both in order to preserve her dignity and as an act of self-possession. If her race is determined for her by men who attempt to lay claim to her, Rena's sex is a commodity that she calls upon in order to interrupt this system of exchange. Deprived of "much that is desirable," of whiteness itself as a form of property, Rena refuses to capitulate either to Wain's sexual drama or Tryon's sexually-obsessed offer of friendship; instead, she lays claim to her reputation as a woman, appealing to her "good name" in order to turn the property argument on its head.

Yet in the end, Rena's appeal to her womanhood as a kind of property fails to provide her with the means of self-possession that might enable her to move beyond the fate seemingly scripted for her by her biraciality. The confluence between race and domesticity that drives the narrative is strikingly played out in the novel's final dramatic scene, where Rena encounters Jeff Wain and George Tryon at intersecting paths in the woods. Unbeknownst to Rena or to each other, each man conspires to overtake Rena as she walks home from the schoolhouse in order to convince her (apparently through whatever means necessary) of their intentions towards her. Rather than confront either of them, Rena runs deeper into the forest in the midst of an increasing storm, where she is found hours later by a search party, "lying unconscious in the edge of the swamp, only a few rods from a well-defined path which would soon have led her to the open highway" (183). The significance of Rena's proximity to a "well-defined path" and the "open highway" cannot be overlooked, given the emphasis throughout the novel on the association of Rena with various roads, paths, and forms of mobility. The intersection of the highway with the stagnant waters of the swamp serves as a metaphor for the narrative

tension between mobility and immobility. The fact that she ends up in a stagnant swamp, near a clear path but ultimately unable to find her way onto the highway, is symbolic of Rena's immobility. Rather than functioning as a source of increasing agency, Rena's womanly virtue forms a boundary with respect to place and movement. In contrast to the mobility of the open highway, Rena's position at the "edge of the swamp" suggests her social, racial, and gendered "place."

In a sense, then, Rena's immobility implicates her within the literary conventions of a tragic mulatta, who functions in Carolyn Porter's terms as a "figure of containment for white culture" (Porter, 123). In Porter's view, the mulatta must be recontained because of what it threatens to expose, "the physical evidence of miscegenation" (123). Indeed, Chesnut's novel is constructed upon notions of concealment and secrecy, from the overall plot of racial passing to the preoccupation with people, places, and histories hidden from view. In keeping with Porter's argument about the narrative necessity of containing the mulatta, Chesnut's novel hides Rena in the woods or (along with her mother) behind a screen of cedar trees to cover up the evidence of miscegenation. Rena's immobilization within this strategy of concealment further supports this idea that she poses a particular threat that must be contained. Yet in *Cedars*, the larger issue of containment is not miscegenation itself, which has already taken place and is even condoned (with respect to John and his father), but the transgressive power of women to cross back and forth over the color line. In particular, the uncertain signs of Rena's racial identity pose a problem to both white and black men in the novel.

Along with the potential to unravel the security of Tryon's white lineage, at the end of the novel Rena is a threat to Frank Fowler, who has no chance of winning her

affections because of his darker complexion. The last chapter of the novel, which depicts Frank's encounters with white hunters and travelers during his transportation of Rena back to Patesville, serves as Chesnutt's unmistakable reminder of the prevalence of racially motivated lynchings at the turn of the century. Frank himself recognizes that he might be placing himself in danger when he debates whether or not to help the white woman (who turns out to be Rena) he finds in the bushes at the side of the road:

Frank stood for a moment irresolute, debating the serious question whether he should...[render] assistance, or whether he should put as great a distance as possible between himself and this victim, as she might easily be of some violent crime, lest he should himself be suspected of it—a not unlikely contingency, if he were found in the neighborhood and the women should prove unable to describe her assailant. (191)

Frank's hesitancy vanishes upon his discovery that this white woman is Rena, but much of the rest of the chapter focuses on his interactions with white men who question his claim that Rena is not white but a "bright mulatter" (193). Given the cultural climate, Chesnutt intends these men to represent the potential for a lynch mob. And although perhaps not as intentional, Rena undoubtedly introduces this threat into the narrative. She is, on the one hand, an object of sexual desire, Frank Fowler's fantasy woman. Yet, on the other hand, Rena's reclaiming of her sexuality, her refusal to allow either Wain or Tryon to mar her good name, is dangerously transgressive and jeopardizes Frank's life. Rena's sexual and geographical mobility are threats that the narrative contains by recasting her as less fluid and more boundaried. Both racial and gender identity are stabilized in the end of the novel, as Rena becomes "a young cullud 'oman," and Mis'

Molly Walden's daughter" (195). The promises of whiteness, of upward economic and social mobility, are finally fixed within the discourse of domestic ideology, which secures the movement of the color line by making Rena "cullud" while reining in female mobility through the reaffirmation of Rena as daughter.

Kinship, Performativity, and Patriarchy in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*

Chesnutt's story of racial passing and the consequences of miscegenation develops themes found in Mark Twain's complicated tale of baby switching and twins in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Darryl Hattenhauer argues that, in fact, "the central situation of *The House Behind the Cedars* owes itself to *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. In both novels, the plot is set into motion when a black man is mistaken for white and denied his inheritance" (Hattenhauer, 36). Yet while Hattenhauer concedes that the protagonist of Chesnutt's story is Rena and not John, his claim that the plots of both novels center on the racial passing of central male characters overlooks the importance of Rena and Roxana in sustaining and contesting the fictions of racial and gender ideology in each story. In a sense, as Myra Jehlen has said of Roxy, each of these characters functions as a sort of "consciousness" of their stories, the character whom readers feel compelled to side with, even when they represent more transgressive or criminal (as in the case of Roxy) aspects of society.

While both Chesnutt's Rena and Twain's Roxy construct and even concede aspects of their identity based upon a desire to move beyond the boundaries of race, Roxy is motivated by a sense of maternal protectionism to save the life of her son; in contrast, Rena's primary goal to marry a white man and live as a white woman is seemingly less

altruistic. Critical views of Roxana as mother are sharply divided between those who see her motherhood as a source of agency and those who understand her authority as a mother impinged upon by the laws of slavery and custom.⁹ In this section, I am less interested in entering this debate about agency and motherhood, focusing instead on Twain's representation of the relationship between tropes of mobility (socioeconomic, racial, and gender) and domestic ideology. Roxana and Tom (as her "real" son and proxy) are constructed with seemingly performative and fluid identities that enable them to cross color and gender lines, as seen in Tom's racial and gender passing and Roxy's drag performances. Yet this apparent mobility is grounded in conventional notions of domestic ideology, revealing, as in Chesnut's novel, the tension between mobility and immobility.

Similar to Chesnut's novel, which relies on the analogy of the naturalized foreigner in order to advance the plot of racial passing and miscegenation, Twain's novel unfolds through two intersecting mobility narratives. In addition to the story of Tom's racial passing and Roxy and Tom's gender performativity, Twain's narrative has at its core the story of Italian twins who represent mobility in the form of immigration and assimilation. While critics have discussed the importance of the Italian twins to the story

⁹ Myra Jehlen, for example, argues that in *Roxana* "Twain endorses a black woman's subversion of the white patriarchy," investing her with the power to challenge domestic ideology: "A black woman exercising the authority of motherhood in a white society may call into question the domestic ideology of white womanhood" (Jehlen, 112). Yet while Roxana's act of switching her baby who is, like herself, part black and thus subject to the laws of slavery, with that of her master does indeed seem to intervene into the white patriarchal system of slave culture, it is less clear how she disrupts the logic of domestic ideology. Mark Patterson points to precisely this disjunction in his discussion of motherhood and surrogacy in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Taking issue with Jehlen's claim that Roxy is invested with subversive power, Patterson says that "the problem with Jehlen's argument is her implied, but illusory, connection between Roxana's agency—her act of 'free grace'—and her identity and 'authority' as a mother" (Patterson, 463). Whereas Jehlen views the interaction between race and domesticity, Roxana as a black mother, as subversive, Patterson questions this agentive authority given that Roxy is a *slave* mother.

of “twinned” babies Tom and Chambers, there has been no critical attention to the ways that the immigrant narrative, as a story of mobility, underscores the importance of domestic ideology in fixing racial and gender identity.¹⁰ Thus, in this section I examine the story of the twins as a mobility narrative and consider how its intersection with Tom and Roxy’s story demonstrates the importance of the domestic, as both domesticity and the nation as “domestic” (in contrast to the “foreign”), in securing the boundaries of national, as well as racial and gender, identity.

Twain’s engagement with domestic ideology is more complex than Chesnut’s, requiring some explanation and definition. On the one hand, as explored somewhat by Jehlen and Patterson, domestic ideology is seen through the representation of Roxana and notions of motherhood. It is her maternal desire to protect her son from the horrors of slavery, to keep him from being sold down river, which motivates her to switch him with the Driscoll baby, setting the narrative into motion. Yet alongside this story of domesticity as motherhood, a masculine subplot unfolds and with it another version of domestic ideology. The story of the Italian twins, Luigi and Angelo, their duel with Judge Driscoll, and their subsequent murder trial aligns the domestic with American identity in the expatriation of foreignness. These gendered versions of the domestic—one female and maternal and the other masculine and patriarchal—intersect through the idea of race as a form of property. Twain, in his attention to the slave economy that compels Roxy’s baby-switch and the narrative that follows, taps into 1890s juridical and cultural discourse, highlighted in the Plessy case, about whiteness as property. Similarly, the story of the twins not only belies a concern over immigration but

also racializes these foreign “others,” finally exiling them from the narrative in a movement not unlike the sale of Tom down the river.

In the changeling plot, the intersection between maternal domesticity and concerns over racial identity as property is most apparent in the baby-switching scene, which begins with Roxana’s recognition that she and her son are merely “po’ niggers” who can be sold down the river (69). As she prepares herself and her son for the “river over *yonder*,” her reference to heaven, she changes from her everyday “ole linsey-woolsey” and into her “new Sunday gown” that she had yet to wear. Admiring herself in the mirror, Roxy perfects her “death-toilet” by making herself more “like white folks,” which compels her to dress her child in clothes befitting the world beyond. Since we know that clothes are all that distinguish the white Thomas à Becket Driscoll from Roxy’s Valet de Chambre, this change in baby clothing is significant, pointing to the ways that race, in this maternal economy of exchange, is performative and not biological. In fact, the change of clothes itself seems to “fix” any ontological disparity between the two children:

“Dah—now you’s fixed.” She propped the child in a chair and stood off to inspect it. Straightway her eyes began to widen with astonishment and admiration, and she clapped her hands and cried out, “Why, it do beat all! I *never* knowed you was so lovely. Marse Tommy ain’t a bit puttier—not a single bit.” (71)

Roxy’s declaration that her son is now “fixed” intimates a wrong that has been righted; more precisely, Roxy’s fixing implies that what has been indeterminate with respect to

¹⁰ For discussions of the importance of the Italian twins in Twain’s story, see Eric Sundquist, George E.

these twin-like babies, namely their racial identity, is now more established and certain. Her exchange, motivated by maternal protectionism, is in effect what confers whiteness and blackness upon the children. Just as she makes herself over in this mirror scene from black slave to more like white folks, so, too, does she transform her son from being the sellable property of someone else to having access to whiteness as a form of cultural capital.

The fact that the “real” Chambers has been made into Tom, however, severs the mother/son relationship, as Roxy “forgot who she was and what he had been” (77). In the exchange of her son’s racial identity with that of her master’s, Roxana not only loses her son but also a sense of her own personhood as

...mock reverence became real reverence, the mock obsequiousness real obsequiousness, the mock homage, real homage; the little counterfeit rift of separation between imitation-slave and imitation-master widened and widened, and became an abyss, and a very real one—and on one side of it stood Roxy, the dupe of her own deceptions, and on the other stood her child, no longer a usurper to her, but her accepted and recognized master. (77)

The fiction Roxy created, which made her son an “imitation-master” and herself an “imitation-slave,” gives way to reality. No longer merely an act for the public display of others, the deception becomes real, setting Roxy up as the “dupe” who doesn’t know any better. Twain suggests here that successful imitations can themselves reconstitute the boundaries of identity. Tom’s passing for the white heir of the Driscoll family not only

succeeds in fooling the Driscoll's and the entire community, but becomes the source of a figurative amnesia that causes Roxana to "forget" that her real son is not white and that she is not his slave. The fiction she has created, along with both her and subsequently Tom's enactment of it, blurs the lines between domesticity, race, and property as Tom becomes simultaneously "her darling, her master, and her deity all in one" (77). Ultimately, Roxy's charade is so successful that she becomes "merely his chattel," as she "saw herself sink from the sublime height of motherhood to the sombre deeps of unmodified slavery" (81). As Twain hints at here, motherhood carries with it a degree of cultural cache, especially in this era that exalted the woman who was "true" to both her nature and her nation by being domestic and maternal. Yet Roxy's "fall" from motherhood to slavery suggests the unequal distribution of the benefits of motherhood as a form of cultural property along racial lines. Hazel Carby has shown how the nineteenth century "cult of true womanhood" exposes "the polarity between ideologies of black and white womanhood" (Carby, 33), wherein the black slave woman cannot possibly "fit" the domestic conventions of what constitutes a woman. In Roxy's case, not only does she not meet the requirements of white womanhood, given the fact that her virtue has already been taken from her by her slave master (of which Tom is evidence), but she also loses her claim to motherhood when she gives Tom up for white.

Roxana regains her identity, albeit somewhat modified, as "mother" to Tom when she discloses to him the secret of his true heritage. Motivated economically, having lost the savings she made while working as a chambermaid on a steamboat, Roxy commits herself to the project of keeping Tom, who has by now become an irresponsible gambler, in the Driscoll will. By reclaiming her son as *her* possession, she attempts to assure

herself of some of the master's property, even if this means aiding and abetting Tom's thievery. In effect, Tom becomes Roxy's agent, intervening on her behalf into the white patriarchal system of slavery and economics. The suggestion that Tom will, indeed, act out Roxy's own vengeance is shown in the scene where he bows before her in a gesture of submission, begging her to keep his covert actions in the city under wraps in fear of losing his place in the Driscoll will:

The heir of two centuries of unatoned insult and outrage looked down upon him and seemed to drink in deep draughts of satisfaction. Then she said:

"Fine nice young white gen'l'man kneelin' down to a nigger-wench! I'se wanted to see dat jes once befo' I'se called. Now, Gabr'el, blow de hawn, I'se ready... Git up!" (109)

This performance that has Tom, in white face, kneeling at the foot of a black woman symbolically redresses the wrongs of slavery, while at the same time shifting the balance of power with regard to gender as well. Tom's obsequious gesture reconstitutes Roxy as mother and gives her mastery over him.

This scene also previews the interchanges of race and sex that drive much of the narrative. Roxy and Tom both assume racial and sexual disguises and enact, as Susan Gillman argues, "the tangle of fact and fiction through which identity is constituted" in Twain's novel (Gillman, 90). As Gillman points out, although Roxana is "to all intents and purposes as white as anybody" (Twain, 64), the fiction of law and custom, the one-drop rule, enforces the fact of her blackness (Gillman, 90). Both she and Tom play with the idea that racial and sexual (or gender) identity are immutable "facts" when they put

on various disguises. Throughout the narrative, Tom, eager to pay off his gambling debts, dresses in drag in order to rob the townspeople of their possessions. Already successful at passing for white, Tom is equally good at performing femininity and puts on a convincing show for Wilson, who is plagued throughout the novel “over the problem of who that girl might be” (99). Tom even has the ability to appear as different “girls,” dressing up in both drag and blackface in the scene where he ends up stabbing Driscoll. Roxy, too, is adept at disguising herself in order to evade detection, most notably when she makes herself up as a black man in order to escape the slavery down river into which she has been sold. The fluidity with which Tom and Roxy move between racial and sexual identities suggests Twain’s reminder of the ways that “fiction [is] shored up and made to look like fact” (Gillman, 90). In other words, when Roxy and Tom assume blackface drag, they make themselves up as what they do not *appear* to be: a black man and a black woman. Yet these visual markers of race overlap with the juridical “fact” of their identities since, according to law and custom, Roxy and Tom really *are* black. The sexual disguises further complicate these instances of performativity. In becoming a black man and a black woman, Roxy and Tom in essence exchange fictions and identities; Roxy is more like Tom (black and male) while he acts out Roxy’s (social, legal) black femaleness. Through this nexus of racial and gender identity, each act out what the other cannot imagine or achieve in “reality”: in Tom drag, Roxy escapes from slavery down river; in Roxy drag, Tom kills the master, thus acting out the hatred and vengeance Roxy has towards Percy Driscoll when she says earlier in the novel: “I hates him, en I could kill him!” (69). Each thus becomes an agent for the other in acts that

enable them, collectively and symbolically, to disrupt the white market economy of slavery.

The consanguineous relationship between Roxy and Tom further reinforces the interaction between race and domesticity represented in these performances and exchanges. The fact that they are mother and son emphasizes the ways that kinship, in Twain's novel, subverts gender and racial boundaries while reinforcing the borders of national identity. Although Twain uses Tom and Roxy to highlight the fluidity of the borders of race and gender, his Italian twins illustrate the importance of redrawing these boundaries in order to assuage national anxiety about what constitutes Americanness in the 1890s. The arrival of the twins, Luigi and Angelo, creates quite a stir in Dawson's Landing, not merely because of their twinness but also the fact that they represent something "so grand and foreign": "Italians! How romantic! Just think...there's never been one in this town and everybody will be dying to see them..." (88). The desire of the townspeople to possess some of this distinguished foreignness for themselves also has something to do with the mobility Luigi and Angelo represent. As "travellers" who have been in "Europe and everywhere," the twins embody the allure and romance of mobility that is especially appealing to a community that has rarely ventured beyond the perimeter of Dawson's Landing. In fact, Roxy and Tom are the only characters who are described as ever leaving Dawson's Landing, which further connects them to the twins. Yet while Roxy and Tom are either not a part of this community (because of slave status) or represent its "bad" element (in the case of Tom), the community embraces the twins wholeheartedly; they, in turn, apply for citizenship and vow to "finish their days in this pleasant place" (164).

Although the twins are an attractive novelty to the townspeople, they also serve an important function in terms of highlighting the patriarchal economy of race and family at the core of the story. Their arrival instigates the second “plot” of the novel—a narrative concerned with displays of masculinity, patriotism, and lineage. The apparent nobility and honor of the twins intersects with Dawson’s Landing’s chief representatives of manly honor: the Driscolls and the Howards. Because they “hailed from Old Virginia,” these families, namely the men, receive a “recognised superiority” (138). As Twain makes clear, this superiority is “exalted to supremacy when a person of such nativity could prove descent from the First Families” of Virginia, a position of nobility and aristocracy held by Judge Driscoll and his boyhood friend Pembroke Howard. The “F.F.V” —first families of Virginia—represents a system of patriarchal law that must be upheld at all costs:

The F.F. V. was born a gentleman; his highest duty in life was to watch over that great inheritance and keep it unsmirched. He must keep his honour spotless. Those laws were his chart; his course was marked out on it; if he swerved from it by so much as half a point of the compass it meant shipwreck to his honour; that is to say, degradation from his rank as a gentleman. (139)

The honor of the F.F.V. is called into question with Tom’s altercation with Luigi, who delivers a very public kick to Tom during a Sons of Liberty meeting. Rather than dealing with the incident as a true Driscoll man would, with a duel, Tom brings Luigi up on assault and battery charges. While Tom is pleased with the outcome of the trial, in which Luigi is fined for the assault, Judge Driscoll views Tom’s response as an extreme blow to

“the blood of my race” (141). Tom’s ungentlemanly behavior once again excises him from his Uncle’s will and, still refusing to duel with Luigi, the Judge himself upholds family honor by challenging the twin. This altercation with Luigi, which Tom instigates and the Judge attenuates, not only highlights the importance of masculine honor, but also the investment in white supremacy that pervades much of the narrative. While the Judge deems Tom’s behavior an insult to the blood of his race with respect to the code of chivalry and family honor of an F.F.V., clearly there is more than masculinity at stake here. Although Howard Pembroke tries to reassure Driscoll that Tom “is of the best blood of the Old Dominion,” from the Judge’s perspective, Tom seems a contradiction, “the base son of a most noble father” (141-42). In his emphasis on “best blood,” Twain forces readers to consider Tom’s blackness as a factor in his unmanly actions. In fact, Twain has Roxy say as much when she, too, curses Tom for his sins against manhood and the white race:

“Pah! It make me sick! It’s the nigger in you, dat’s what it is. Thirty-one parts o’ you is white, en on’y one part nigger, en dat po’ little one part is you’ *soul*. ‘Tain’t wuth savin’; tain’t wuth totin’ out a shovel en throwin’ in de gutter. You has disgraced yo’ birth. What would yo’ pa think o’ you? It’s enough to make him turn in his grave.” (157)

Roxy’s pride in Tom’s birthright, the fact that his “real” father also hailed from one of the first families, only serves to remind Tom of his blackness. It is not merely Tom’s cowardly manhood that makes him unfit to be the son of an F.F.V, but his blackness that disgraces this system of supremacy. In Roxy’s reminder that Tom is one part black and that this part has, in essence, made the “whole” of him black, Twain reinforces the notion

of the one-drop rule as a determinate of racial identity. The thirty-one parts of Tom that are white, of the "best" blood, are not enough to allow Tom (or Roxy, for that matter) to claim this whiteness as a form of property in the same way as the (real) Driscolls or Howards.

In much the same way as the story of the Italian immigrants brings these notions of racial identity and race as property into relief, so, too, does Roxy and Tom's plot demonstrate an investment in anti-immigrant Americanism. In the twins, Tom finds a convenient scapegoat for his own crimes, including the murder of Judge Driscoll, which allows him (at least temporarily) to forget his blackness by claiming the place of the bereaved, white Driscoll heir. The twins quickly fall from favor, once Luigi is indicted for murder, with Angelo as his accessory. What the town has previously embraced, the unique kinship status of the twins, their mobility, and their foreignness, they ultimately use to renounce Luigi and Angelo's membership in their community. In place of acceptance, the twins face the "constant danger of being lynched" (198). The introduction of lynching in the novel may seem, at first, to be merely the consequence of the murder of Judge Driscoll. Yet in the racialized context of what the Judge represents to the community, along with the fact that lynching peaked during this era, the threat of lynching the twins takes on greater significance. In a sense, Twain's concern about what to do once a black man murders a white patriarch is displaced onto the immigrant narrative. The Italians stand in for Tom who, at this point in the novel, is not known to be black. Yet this displacement also forms an analogy between Tom and the twins; in much the same way as Tom seems like a foreigner among F.F.V. men, the foreignness of the Italians becomes racialized through the lynching scenario. In fact, Luigi, who is

assumed to have committed the murder, is frequently described as dark (while Angelo is the lighter twin), which further implicates racial (and racist) discourse in the narrative of the immigrants. The assumption of the twins' crime so unsettles the town that they become the decidedly "black" characters that must be punished accordingly.¹¹

Although at the end of the novel, Pudd'nhead Wilson absolves the twins from this crime by revealing Tom to be the true murderer, he accomplishes this by reinforcing racial boundaries. By proving a discrepancy between the fingerprints of Tom and Chambers taken at five, seven, and eight months to be the result of cradle-switching, Wilson restores a sense of order to the community. Although the crowd in the courtroom is outraged when Wilson says that "A was put into B's cradle in the nursery; B was transferred to the kitchen and became a negro and a slave," he delivers the promise of racial justice when he affirms "but within a quarter of an hour he [B or Chambers] will stand before you white and free!" (222). Wilson's courtroom drama also reifies gender boundaries as well, as he solves the mystery of the "girl" that plagues him throughout the narrative. Roxy, too, is restored to her original place as Tom's mother, yet with the benefit of continuing to receive economic support from Chambers, who assumes his rightful place as the Driscoll heir. Finally, just as it reaffirms racial boundaries by revealing Tom's blackness and selling him down the river, so, too, does the narrative rid itself of the potential "threat" of immigration by sending the foreign twins back to Europe. Although the twins become "heroes of romance" after the courtroom scene,

¹¹ Eric Sundquist also discusses the racialization of the Italian twins in terms of anti-immigrant sentiment: "...the fact that Angelo and Luigi are Italian is far from insignificant. In anti-immigrationist thought of the 1880s and 1890s Italians were widely thought, on the basis of their 'color,' their reputed criminal activities, and their comparatively low standard of living, to be among the most degraded of immigrants, and their willingness to mix with blacks brought forth excited nativist

complete with “rehabilitated reputations,” the novel ends with their weariness of “Western adventure” and return to their native land (225).

Thus the end of the novel demonstrates Pudd’head Wilson’s success in restoring a sense of domestic order through fingerprints that link racial identity to heritage. And while the proof of Tom’s “real” heritage exonerates the twins, the immigrants, as the foreign element in contrast to the nation as domestic, are nonetheless implicated in Tom and Roxy’s racial fiction and removed, as Tom is, from the decidedly white community Dawson’s Landing represents.

Rena, Roxy, Sexuality, and Homer Plessy’s Railroad Plot

Reading Rena and Roxy together allows for a better understanding of the widely divergent experiences of mobility, filtered through race and gender, represented in the two works. For both characters, mobility is the most important issue: moving themselves (in the case of Rena) or their family (as with Roxy) into the world of white social and economic privilege, seizing some of the privileges and promises of upward mobility for themselves. In each instance, however, the characters wrestle with the dialectic between mobility and immobility, finally succumbing to the downward movement depicted in each narrative. In this concluding section, I turn more explicitly to a comparison between Roxy and Rena as the pivotal characters in Twain and Chesnut’s stories of racial passing and domesticity in order to examine the cultural resonances of this dialectic through attention to female sexuality as a form of mobility.

charges that new immigrants would further ‘mongrelize’ America’s racial stock” (67).

Both Twain and Chesnut's novels are poised between the tensions and conflicts that were the common ambivalences in this era about female mobility and sexuality. These tensions, as I argued in the first section of this chapter, are overtly explored in Chesnut's narrative, through the insistence on Rena as a sexual (and sexualized) character. Rena's desire for upward, white mobility, her passing narrative, intersects with the story of her brother, John, her would-be lover, George Tryon, and her admirers, Wain and Fowler, and their sexual desire for her. In a sense, the narrative of Rena's racial passing is replaced by concentrated attention to her as a sexual object; it is once she returns home to the house behind the cedars that she becomes the sexual obsession of Tryon, Wain, and Fowler. This shift from a story of racial passing to one concerned with gender and sexuality demonstrates a narrative progression from mobility (or the potential for mobility) to stasis and containment.

This downward narrative progression also describes Twain's novel, though Twain is much more reticent on the topic of female sexuality and its intersection with racial mobility. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the notion of female sexuality as a form of mobility is seen through the portrayal of Roxy as a mother. Female sexuality, in this instance, is reduced to reproduction. In fact, Twain's attention to the topic of female sexuality is, ironically, revealed (albeit with more nuances) through Tom's performances of femininity. Pudd'nhead's concern over who the "shameless creature" (122) in Tom's room might be and why she would be at Judge Driscoll's house at all, a place where "properly no young woman belonged" (98), hints at the ways that female sexuality, outside of reproduction, is transgressive, dangerous somehow to a sense of social order and stability.

Although Chesnutt and Twain offer very different versions of sexuality, reading Rena's sexual objectification alongside Roxy's motherhood highlights topical issues of sexuality and reproduction at the core of 1890s cultural debates about racial miscegenation. According to the findings of the Eleventh U.S. Census in 1890, for example, immigration and black urban migration coincided with a decline in white birthrates. In the Jim Crow era of these (so-called) findings, segregationist legislation more than encouraged white and black women to reproduce within their race in order to both increase the white population and keep the color line distinct. Furthermore, the increasing mobility of women—both white and black—across geographical and socioeconomic boundaries was seen as antithetical to the national project of (re)producing and stabilizing racial order.

These are precisely the anxieties and concerns underpinning the Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In challenging Jim Crow laws, *Plessy* sets into motion the debate over the constitution of racial identity. Yet the *Plessy* case does more than highlight the constitution of whiteness as a form of property; it also taps into the issue of policing the borders of sexuality. Denying *Plessy* his whiteness both affirms the one-drop rule and sends the message that the movement across bloodlines would have juridical consequences.

Rena and Roxy, in their non-intentional and intentional blurring of the lines between white and black, as seen in their divergent passing plots, threaten the separation between the races deemed essential to American national identity. Their sexuality, these narratives suggest, is a form of mobility that carries with it the potential to taint the purity of the color line and domestic order, just as the train that *Plessy* boarded can be seen as a

“carrier” for the geographical, social, and sexual mobility at the core of miscegenation. In Chesnutt and Twain’s narratives, the potential threat that Rena and Roxy pose to the distinct boundaries of racial, gender, and national identity result in the need to halt their movements, as seen in Rena’s death and the undoing of Roxy’s mobility plot.

Chapter Four

“The World’s Frontier of Romance”: Domestic Order and the West in Gertrude Atherton’s *The Californians* and Frank Norris’s *The Octopus*

But whatever he wrote, and in whatever fashion, Presley was determined that his poem should be of the West, that world’s brave frontier of romance, where a new race, a new people—hardy, brave, and passionate—were building an empire; where the tumultuous life ran like fire from dawn to dark, and from dark to dawn again, primitive, brutal, honest, and without fear.¹

Frank Norris’s wandering poet, Presley, captures Frederick Jackson Turner’s notion of the West as the essence of American exceptionalism when he declares it the space of empire. Presley’s desire to write the “Song of the West,”² an epic poem about the frontier and its people, demonstrates the importance of the West in shaping American character and in providing the standpoint from which to read the history of American nationalism. Yet Presley’s literary aspirations also point to the mythology of the West as “romance,” a story of “a new race” and “a new people,” brave, passionate, and primitive, who were reconstructing the history of America as a romantic frontier. The intersection of history and romance evident in Presley’s poetic musings points to the central narrative strategy used by both Norris and Gertrude Atherton, in which the romance narrative and

¹ Frank Norris, *The Octopus*, p. 13.

² The allusion to Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself” cannot go unremarked here. Presley’s desire to write an epic poem about the West, his need to describe the people and spaces of the frontier, is essentially a

its characters provide the context for the larger national narrative about western expansion and dispossession. In this chapter, I mean to show the ways that the domestic does not operate in a sphere separate from the business of empire, but rather how domestic ideology is a crucial dimension of America's mobile quest for empire. In these texts, domesticity does not simply belong in the private realm of home and family, but is instead an agent of industrial imperialism and cannot be separated from the frontier zone of contact and conquest.

Although this intersection of history and romance is evident in both Norris and Atherton, each novel unfolds through divergent narrative processes. Atherton's novel, for example, is most obviously a romance in the tradition of nineteenth century sentimental novels. Like all good romances, it textualizes the romantic quest of its heroine, complete with conflict and resolution, and ultimately results in the requisite union of a romantic couple. Atherton's novel, however, is also marked by the history of western expansionism, as seen in the narrative subtext about the colonization of California and the dispossession of its native population. Conversely, Norris's story of California ranchers dispossessed by the railroad monopoly is most apparently historical, complete with the fictionalization of the Mussel Slough massacre of 1880, a gunfight between ranchers and agents of the railroad in which many of the ranchers were killed. Yet interacting with this history of the "iron-hearted monster of steel and steam" is the story of romantic love, as well as the romance suggested in Presley's poetic desire of the landscape itself.

desire to construct a history of personal as well as collective identity, not unlike Whitman's poetic musings on the "self" in relation to the environment.

Reading these novels together addresses the dearth of literary criticism on these authors in two ways. On the one hand, Gertrude Atherton's work remains relatively obscure, although she published more than forty novels as well as numerous short fiction and essays serialized in *Forum*, *The Argonaut*, and other popular journals, magazines, and newspapers. Atherton was also a prominent social figure in California, especially in San Francisco, had close friendships with Ambrose Bierce, Gertrude Stein, and Carl Van Vechten and even became somewhat of a cultural icon when her portrait was enshrined as part of the California exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. Despite her literary, social, and cultural prominence, however, there has been little critical attention to her importance in representing and shaping the cultural and literary history of the West. Emily Wortis Leider's 1991 biography of Atherton entitled, *California's Daughter: Gertrude Atherton and Her Times*, redresses this lack of attention and points us, importantly, to Atherton as a critical figure and the early twentieth century's most popular female novelist. The few critics who have addressed Atherton have focused on the biographical details of her life in California and on her "modern," twentieth century novels.³ Yet Atherton was prolific during the 1890s, often publishing two or three novels a year dealing with some of the most prominent themes of the decade: race and miscegenation, class relations, and, chiefly, the importance of the West and its significance in shaping American character and destiny.

These themes are clearly present in *The Californians* (1898); reading this novel alongside Norris's *The Octopus* (1901) underscores Atherton's attention to the West as

³ Charlotte McClure and Jennifer Bradley both write about Atherton and her life in San Francisco. However, there are few considerations of Atherton's writing: see, for example, Laura Hapke and Carolyn

the space of contact and conflict, the site of American nationalism and, to recall Norris's wandering poet, a "new race" and a "new people." As a historical novel, *The Octopus* helps make evident the history of colonization and dispossession behind Atherton's romance. Just as the West is crucial in Norris's narrativization of the battle between ranchers and the railroad, Atherton's West becomes more than an incidental setting; rather, it is fundamental to the story of a mixed race native Californian, Magdaléna Yorba, and her Anglo American lover, Jack Trennahan. Their story of love and romance intersects with Atherton's version of the history between native Californians who were driven from their land and the Americans who settled on their property.

Conversely, Norris's novel is concerned most apparently with the history of California ranchers and their battle with the railroad monopoly. Yet just as Norris's novel emphasizes the history in Atherton's romance, so, too, does Atherton's romance reveal the sentimental underpinnings in *The Octopus*. Unlike Atherton, Norris does not suffer from a lack of critical attention. Literary scholars and historians alike frequently cite the importance of Norris's work, and especially praise *The Octopus* for its representation of a crucial episode in American history.⁴ Yet while critics read this novel for its historical significance, there has been no attention to the romance at its narrative core. Although the overt plot of the novel historicizes the struggle between ranchers and the railroad, as this western narrative unfolds it juxtaposes the battle between men and machine with the characters' romantic trials and tribulations. Reading *The Octopus* as a

Forrey. The most promising critical consideration of Atherton's novels is Patrice K. Gray's dissertation on literary heroines and popular novels from 1895-1915.

⁴ There is no dearth of criticism on Norris, and there are very useful and insightful considerations of *The Octopus*. See, for example, Clare Eby, Donald Graham, Mark Seltzer, and the extended discussions of Norris in Michael Davitt Bell and Walter Benn Michaels.

sentimental novel contemporaneous with Atherton's demonstrates the importance of the romance plot in allegorizing concerns about the western frontier as the space of "true" Americanism.

In this chapter, I pair these two texts in order to tease out the tension between history and romance, arguing that in both novels the historical and the sentimental are linked through tropes of geographical and social mobility. Although the novels dramatize different moments in the history of California and present divergent depictions of western expansionism, the two are similar in their preoccupation with spatial movements from rural, domestic settings to urban environments. In each instance, urban mobility is depicted as undesirable and disruptive to the domestic ideology of each narrative. This movement to and mobility within the city is also gendered feminine, and is associated most notably with female sexual mobility. This intersection of geographical movement and the mobility of women upsets both conventional domestic idealizations of women and the economic and social mobility of the male characters. In the readings that follow, I demonstrate the importance of these tropes of mobility in the construction of a decidedly "western" national identity, showing the ways that domestic ideology is constituted and mobilized on the frontier.

Aristocracy, Sexuality, and Americanization in *The Californians*

On the surface, Gertrude Atherton's *The Californians* is a romance novel that tells the story of a young woman's search for love. Somewhat less apparently, however, Atherton offers a version of the history of America's colonization of the West and how westward expansion dramatically altered notions of territory and space, which in turn resulted in

shifts in social and economic order. In Atherton's novel, the romance narrative provides the context for the larger discourses of ethnicity and social and economic mobility at its core. However, concerns over race and ethnicity that arise in this story of California's conquered Mexican population intersect with—and perhaps are overdetermined by—a narrative of class and domestic order. In Atherton's novel, this tension between romance and history both reconstructs a critical period in the history of the West and reveals the social, economic, and racial antagonisms underpinning the mass exodus westward.

The Californians charts the romantic quest of its protagonist, Magdaléna Yorba, who dreams of an ideal love and happiness that she seems destined to be denied, given her lack of beauty and social grace. The “unfortunate result of coupled races,” Magdaléna is the daughter of Don Roberto Yorba, a native Californian who is rich in land and gold, and the (unnamed) sister of Don Roberto's Anglo American business partner, Hiram Polk, who, in her marriage to the Don, attempts to realize her ambitions of becoming the wife of a great Californian “grandee” and securing herself a position in San Francisco society. The Yorbas and the Polks, in fact, form a very insular sort of “family,” as each man marries the other's sister, establishing residences in mansions side by side on Nob Hill. The third member of this Nob Hill collective is Colonel Jack Belmont, a widower, whose daughter, Helena, is both Magdaléna's foil and her closest friend.⁵ Although she hails from a family of lesser wealth and social significance than the Yorbas or the Polks, Helena nonetheless outshines Magdaléna in beauty and charm,

⁵ In her biography of Gertrude Atherton, Emily Wortis Leider notes that Atherton's use of family names like Yorba, Belmont, Polk, and Montgomery are resonant with Western history and the social elite of San Francisco (167).

“the great gifts of expression and of personal magnetism [that] had been denied [Magdaléna]” (6). Helena’s beauty, coupled with the fact that she “had all the gifts and arts of the supreme coquette,” is ultimately the source of Magdaléna’s greatest unhappiness when her fiancé, Trennahan, falls in love with Helena. After the breakup of Magdaléna and Trennahan, the narrative follows two paths, tracing Magdaléna’s romantic distress while at the same time charting the social decline of the Yorba family. In its conventional romantic ending, the trials and tribulations of love as well as the conflicts hinted at in the narrative about the impact of the dispossession of native Californios are resolved through the felicitous union of Magdaléna and Trennahan.

In Atherton’s novel, women’s social space, their sphere of action and mobility, is the domain of romance and beauty. Conversely, movement through geographical and economic space, the history of the conquered Californio population and the intervention of capitalism, intersect with Atherton’s depiction of Don Roberto and the patriarchal economy he represents. In a sense, mobility traverses very separate spheres of private and public, governed by domestic and gender ideologies. While women are afforded a degree of social mobility, this movement is contingent upon their physical appearance and ultimately their ability to land the right man. Men, on the other hand, control the public sphere of land, money, and capital, enabling them greater access to mobility in the form of economic and social privilege. Although these narratives of mobility operate in distinctly gendered spheres, they overlap in their attention to race and ethnicity, as the story of the mixed race protagonist, Magdaléna Yorba, intersects with the history of Don Roberto’s partnership with Polk, which gives emphasis to the amalgamation of California’s culture and economy.

Atherton's depiction of the relationship that forms between Don Roberto Yorba and Hiram Polk not only allegorizes the history of the settlement of California, but also attempts to resolve the racial/ethnic polarity of Spanish/Mexican versus Anglo through the insistence on class as a mediating factor. Atherton, in order to establish the formation of the partnership between Polk and Yorba, takes us back to 1846 and the annexation of Mexico's California territory. Polk, who has been serving as a Navy shipman involved in the conquest of Mexico/California, has ambitions "to be a rich man," and in Don Roberto, who opens his home to Polk, he finds the space in which to establish himself and his fortune. In turn, Don Roberto, Atherton writes, "escaped the pecuniary extinction that had overtaken his race" through his involvement with Polk. In exchange for giving Polk the security of a home on a large section of land (300,000 acres) and the money to open a store in Monterey, Don Roberto gains the assurance that he will not be displaced when the swarms of Americans arrive to settle California, which Polk's "Yankee sharpness" and influence guarantee (12). Thus, although one of the conquered population, Don Roberto remains a social and economic force in California largely because of the cultural protection Polk provides. Although Don Roberto is "horrified" when Polk increases his wealth by swiftly foreclosing on overdue accounts of the Californians who patronize his store, he nonetheless agrees to a trip to the gold mines, where "in community with his brother-in-law, he staked off a claim, and there the lust for gold entered his veins and never left it" (13). As both men become rich "in something besides land," money and wealth become cultural equalizers, as their now equal class status mediates any cultural or racial difference.

Yet, in the description of the cultural exchange effected by this economic shift, the narrative points to Don Roberto's increasing assimilation into American culture, which belies any apparent cultural and economic equality:

Polk had acquired a taste for Spanish cooking, cigaritos, and life on horseback; his influences on the Californian were far more subtle and revolutionising. Don Roberto was still hospitable, because it became a grandee so to be; but he had a Yankee major-domo who kept an account of every cent that was expended. He had no miserly love of gold in the concrete, but he had an abiding sense of its illimitable power, all of his brother-in-law's determination to become one of the wealthiest men in the country, and a ferocious hatred of poverty. He saw his old friends fall about him: advice did them no good, and any permanent alliance with their interests would have meant his own ruin; so he shrugged his shoulders and forgot them. The American flag always floated above his rooms. (15)

The exchanges described in the above quote suggest a hierarchy between Anglo and Californio that is not overcome by mutual interests in gold mines or good cigars. Although the two men go into business together for their mutual benefit, Polk becomes the "major-domo," the man in charge of the social and economic household they form. While Yorba retains a sense of independence bought by his wealth and social position, his partnership with Polk is one in which Polk clearly holds the economic reins as the steward of the Yorba fortune. Furthermore, although Polk develops a "taste" for Spanish culture, he does not undergo a process of assimilation in the same way as Yorba. Don

Roberto's desire for money and gold capital, which Polk instills in him, results in the subsequent "forgetting" of the alliances with people of his native culture. Affiliations with other Mexicans/Spaniards are replaced by American people and values, an acculturation symbolized by the American flags that hang throughout Don Roberto's house. Yorba desires to be thoroughly American, and disdains anything that might remain of the Spanish within himself:

He felt an American, every inch of him, and hated anything that reminded him of what he might become did he yield to the natural indolence and extravagance of his nature. He would gladly have drained his veins and packed them with galloping American blood. It grieved him that he could not eliminate his native accent, and he was persuaded that he spoke the American tongue in all its purity: being especially proud of a large assortment of expletives peculiar to the land of his adoption. (58)

He admires Polk for his "long hard Yankee legs" and "lantern jaws," which Yorba sees as the distinctions of American nationality, the physical embodiment of the Americanness he can only envy but never quite achieve.

Although it might not form the basis for racial, ethnic, or national equality, the alliance between Polk and Yorba is a class-based aristocracy that establishes a sense of both economic and domestic order adhered to throughout the novel. The insularity of the family they form when Polk marries Don Roberto's sister and the Don, in turn, marries Polk's, protects their economic interests by keeping their fortune securely at "home." Yet while the social and economic amalgamation between Polk and Yorba benefits them

both, their interracial marriages fail to bring about productive or successful cross-cultural alliances. In the case of Polk and Yorba's sister Magdaléna, for whom the protagonist is named, their marriage is one of economic convenience. Mrs. Polk, who "knew little of her husband and liked him less" (19) merely obeys her brother's orders in marrying him. Theirs is an unhappy and sterile union, as seen in the separate residences each occupies and symbolized most notably in the fact that they produce no offspring to carry on the Polk family name. Don Roberto and his wife, on the other hand, do indeed have a child, but, rather than representing the potential for a successful interracial marriage, Magdaléna embodies "the unfortunate result of coupled races" (8).

In Magdaléna, Atherton constructs her version of a tragic mulatta, doomed to unhappiness and failure.⁶ Indeed, the novel suggests Magdaléna's fate in the description of her uncertain and perhaps unwanted birth:

Mrs. Yorba was so ill when her daughter came that the child struggled miserably into existence, and, failing to cry, was put away as dead and forgotten for a time. It was discovered to be breathing by Mrs. Polk, who coaxed it through several months of puny existence with all a native Californian woman's resource. During this time it never cried, only whimpered miserably at rare intervals. It was finally discovered to

⁶ The mulatto figure in literature has typically been an examination of a character of mixed black and white racial heritage. Although Magdaléna is a mixture of Spanish or Mexican and New England whiteness, she nonetheless functions similarly as a figure of the tension and relationship between these races and cultures. Hazel Carby's definition of the role of the mulatta as a "narrative device of mediation" that draws on literary conventions of women's fiction and ideologies of womanhood also applies to Atherton's construction of Magdaléna as the character she uses as the "expression of the relationship between the races" (Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, 89). Indeed, Magdaléna functions throughout the novel to represent the confluence of Anglo and Spanish cultures. Yet unlike some of the novels that Carby examines, such as Harper's *Iola Leroy*, where the mulatta figure has a degree of agency that enables black

be tongue-tied, and as soon as it was old enough an operation was performed. After that, the child's health mended, although she seemed in no hurry to use her tongue. (16)

From her first introduction into the narrative, Magdaléna does not fit the conventional aspects of a literary heroine. Unlike her friend, Helena, who is beautiful and eloquent, Magdaléna is a "plain tongue-tied little hybrid" who has been denied "a beautiful face and an agile tongue" (20-21). In its insistence on Magdaléna as an unfortunate hybrid, the narrative suggests that miscegenation is the root of her problems and failures. She has neither the "agile tongue" of the Anglo, nor the Spanish "beauty [that] was her right" (20). The literal "tying" of her tongue can be seen as a metaphor for the incapacitation of Magdaléna's voice and agency; juxtaposed with the descriptions of her hybridity, it is clear that the narrative intends a causal relationship between Magdaléna's physical flaws and her ethnicity.

The narrative attention to the contrasts between Magdaléna and Helena, furthermore, confirms two of the main preoccupations of the novel: the idealization of female beauty as a source of feminine agency or mobility and the racialization of these ideals. Magdaléna and Helena are part of a circle of wealthy young women who are renowned for their beauty. Much of the narrative action takes place at *débutante* dances and parties in honor of these women, who are obsessively attentive to their physical appearances. Female beauty is, in fact, seen as a commodity, helping to secure the futures of the young women through marriages to wealthy, aristocratic men, while at the same time increasing the cultural capital of their families. Colonel Belmont, for example,

women writers the opportunity to redefine the terms of women's fiction, Atherton's allusion to this literary

takes pride in the fact that his daughter, Helena, is considered the most beautiful of all of these belles; Don Roberto, on the other hand, is plagued by his daughter's lack of beauty, cursing it as a "damnation" (58), because he considers his daughter's beauty and thus marriage potential necessary for the security of the family fortune. Don Roberto's concern about Magdaléna's lack of beauty as an impediment to marriage and the stability of the Yorba wealth is later confirmed by her would-be lover Trennahan, who remarks that "he should be disposed to marry her did she only have a complexion," and that he might be able to overlook her "nose and mouth and elementary figure...did only she possess the primary essential of beauty" (100). The narrative, in its focus on the importance of female beauty to the comfort and security of men, takes pains to remind us that "a man regards a woman's lack of complexion as a personal grievance" (100). Thus, as a commodity for both women and men, feminine beauty is viewed as an important aspect of individual and familial social and economic mobility. As a form of mobility, female beauty ultimately works to stabilize the family and the economic order it represents. Magdaléna, lacking beauty, thus embodies a threat to the capital of the family—and the family as capital—that her father has established.

Moreover, the idealization of female beauty, and what it represents in terms of the potential to mobilize and subsequently stabilize the domestic, is explicitly racialized in Atherton's novel. The whiteness of Helena's skin, for example, is contrasted with Magdaléna's, which is described as being "as dark as an Indian" (89). Yet Magdaléna's lack of beauty is not attributed to whiteness or darkness alone, but rather to the mixing of

type merely reinforces the "tragedy" of Spanish/Anglo miscegenation.

the two. The novel is explicit in its condemnation of miscegenation as the reason why Magdaléna is unattractive:

Why had she been defrauded of her birthright? She recalled something Colonel Belmont had once said about 'cross-breeding being death on beauty in nine cases out of ten.' Why could not her father have married another woman of his race? (114)

Although the narrative demonstrates an investment in the Americanization of Don Roberto seen in his desire for complete assimilation, his marriage to Polk's sister in one sense affirms that clearly racial intermarriage is neither desirable nor does it produce desirable effects. "Cross-breeding," as opposed to acculturation, which makes better Americans, is plainly to be avoided as something detrimental both to the individual (as in the case of Magdaléna) and to the nation, which is attempting to stabilize itself in the wake of westward expansion. While cross-cultural alliances are deemed important in securing economic and social order, which is what the partnership between Yorba and Polk suggests, sexual transgressions across racial borders threaten to mar and disrupt this system of cultural and capital exchange.⁷

Along with the commodification and racialization of female beauty, the narrative articulates the relationship between mobility and domesticity through discourses of gender ideology and sexuality. Although female beauty can be seen as holding the potential for upward mobility, female sexuality, on the other hand, is represented as a

⁷ Leider points out that many of Atherton's novels share this attention to the fear and loathing of "black" or mixed blood. Similar to Magdaléna, for example, the mixed race character in *Senator North*, Harriet Walker, "becomes the receptacle for every conceivable racial stereotype" (Leider, 186). According to Leider, the racist, anti-miscegenation rhetoric in Atherton's novels represents Atherton's own views on race and race relations.

transgressive force with the potential to threaten the stability of home and family.

Once again, the narrative implicates Magdaléna as hybrid in its critique of female sexuality, in contrast to Helena who, although she is considerably the more “mobile” of the two with regard to potentially transgressive behavior, represents the ideal, reproductive woman.

Both Helena and Magdaléna first “transgress” gender and sexual boundaries during an escapade when they dress in drag and make their way through the seedier part of town to watch a warehouse fire. Helena, dressed as a boy, and Magdaléna, who, at the urging of Helena, makes herself up as a “*muchacha* from Spanish town,” become fascinated not only with the fire but also the people they encounter in the poorer part of the city (35). It is here that Magdaléna first sees poverty; it is also on this forbidden journey that the two girls observe the “chippies,” or, as Helena describes, girls that “work all day and promenade with their beaux all evening” (36). Helena and Magdaléna’s interest in the poor and working-class causes them to linger in the city too long, and ultimately they are arrested and taken to the police station, where they are subsequently released upon revealing their true identities as daughters of San Francisco’s most elite. This scene enacts a key moment in the narrative for two reasons: on the one hand, it reveals the tension between mobility and immobility. Although their gender, race, and class drag performance affords them a degree of urban mobility usually denied them by their fathers, who want to keep their daughters away from the potential dangers of the city, ultimately this mobility is stripped from them as they reveal themselves as a Belmont and a Yorba. Magdaléna is even beaten by her father for this venture into the

city, in an act that symbolizes the recontainment of her within a discourse (albeit abusive) of domestic ideology.

Yet secondly, and more importantly, Helena and Magdaléna's encounters with the poor and with working girls provide the context for the discourse about female sexuality that recurs throughout the narrative. Their initial transgression merely previews Magdaléna's walk through the city later in the narrative, where she is both repulsed and fascinated by the women who inhabit the poorer neighborhoods. In one notable scene, she takes a walk down an unfamiliar street that she finds "quiet and deserted and generally inviting" (51), not realizing that she has wandered into San Francisco's prostitution district. This scene, in its attention to the "terror" of aberrant female sexuality and Magdaléna's attraction to it, is worth quoting at some length:

Suddenly, almost in her ear, she heard a low chuckle. She started violently; in all her life she had never heard anything so evil, so appalling, as that chuckle. It had come from the window at her left. She turned mechanically, her spirits sinking with nameless terror.

Her expanded eyes fastened upon the open shutters. A woman sat behind them; at least, she was cast in woman's mould. Her sticky black hair was piled high in puffs,--an exaggeration of the mode of the day. Her thick lips were painted a violent red. Rouge and whitewash covered the rest of her face. There was black paint beneath her eyes. She wore a dirty pink silk dress cut shamefully low.

The blood burned into Magdaléna's cheeks. Of sin she had never heard. She had no name for the creature before her, but her woman's

instinct whispered that she was vile.

The woman, who was regarding her malevolently, spoke.

Magdaléna did not understand the purport of her words, but she turned and fled from whence she had come. As she did so, the chuckle, multiplied a dozen-fold, surrounded her. She stopped for a second and cast a swift glance about her, fascinated, with all her protesting horror.

(53)

Clearly, Atherton contrasts Magdaléna's chastity with the shameful, vile women behind the shutters. Yet Magdaléna, who is chaste to the point of ignorance, having "no name" for these women, nonetheless has a "woman's instinct" of what they represent. Although she is terrified by what she witnesses, the collective chuckle of the prostitutes implicates her in this community of women. Their mocking voices, which surround her and cause her to halt in her retreat from them, nonetheless hold her fascination. Magdaléna's simultaneous terror of and attraction to these women demonstrates a tension between female sexuality as both fear and desire. The novel explores this dialectic in its suggestion that Magdaléna might easily (or more easily than Helena) transgress and become one of them. What she witnesses, and her response to it, affects Magdaléna so much, in fact, that immediately after this scene she is confined for months to her bed with a bad case of "brain fever," the nineteenth century's stock literary trope and punishment for transgressive female sexual behavior.⁸

⁸ As a literary trope, the notion of confining women to bed has its correlate in actual medical and sociological discourse in the nineteenth century, most notably S. Weir Mitchell's "rest cure." For autobiographical references to and literary explorations of Mitchell's treatment, see Jane Addams' *Twenty Years at Hull House* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper."

Atherton racializes this dialectic of fear and desire and, in particular, the potential for aberrant female sexuality by contrasting Helena as the ideal woman for reproducing the nation with Magdaléna, who represents the potential for being “utterly bad” (72). Magdaléna, forbidden to read any books while convalescing from her brain fever, turns to the study of science, most notably Fisk, Huxley, and Darwin, resulting in her loss of religious faith, which has provided her with a sense of moral “instinct” (67). Magdaléna, filled with a vague anxiety that “something” must “take its [religion’s] place,” turns to Helena’s father, Jack Belmont, for advice (69). Belmont sees in Magdaléna’s rejection of religion the possibility that she might succumb to “the temptations that many women have” (70), “temptations which would pass his beautiful, quick-witted, triumphant daughter by” (72). He proceeds to counsel Magdaléna against becoming one of the “creatures as you saw in Dupont Street,” driven by a sense of masculine and patriotic duty:

To his own daughter he could have said nothing on such a subject: he was too old-fashioned, too imbued with the chivalrous idea of the South of his generation that women were of two kinds only, and that those who had been segregated for men to love and worship and marry must never brush the skirts of their thought against the sin of the world. They were ideal creatures who would produce others like themselves, and men—like himself. (71-72)

The interjection of the chivalrous—and segregated—South into this narrative of the West enacts an oddly transhistorical and transcultural moment in which Belmont imagines his daughter to be the ideal southern belle who would reproduce white southern aristocracy.

Conversely, Belmont's musings on this segregated patriarchy implicate Magdaléna as one of the "other" of these "two kinds" of women, presumably the kind that, in contrast to the women who men "love and worship and marry," represents the more sinful and transgressive aspects of both female and male sexuality. The attention in the passage to the South not only hints at a sexual segregation, but also a racial one. While the "ideal creatures" of social and sectional (if not national) reproduction are obviously white, the women with whom old generation Southern men like Colonel Belmont sin are black. The rhetoric and patriotism of the white south, interjected into this conversation about female sexuality and morality, not only implicate Magdaléna in sin, but also align her with slave women in the suggestion that it is her "darker" blood that might lead her astray.

The narrative draws consistent parallels between female sexual mobility, race, and notions of chivalry and social convention, which are fundamental to the project of securing American national identity. Belmont's lecture to Magdaléna about female sexuality, for example, concludes with his claim that wandering women, such as those in DuPont Street, "threatened the whole social structure every time she brought a fatherless child into the world" (73). Although Belmont blames women and their aberrant sexual mobility for the destruction of the values of the imagined community, Trennahan implicates men themselves and their treatment of "women upon whom either the misfortune of circumstances or of a powerful individuality has fallen" in the "degeneration of a national character" (242). Trennahan, torn between his love and attraction for Helena, whom he meets after his engagement, and his duty to Magdaléna, decides to honor his commitment based on his sense that to do otherwise damages social

and national structures. He concludes that the “rotteness underlying the social, and in natural sequence, political structure of the United States was the absence of a convention” (242). For Trennahan, like Belmont, convention and true chivalry are values and qualities of America’s white aristocracy:

Fifty years ago [in the antebellum era], when the United States was still so old-fashioned as to be hardly “American,” it was more or less bound together by the conventions it had inherited from the great civilisations that begat it. These conventions exist to-day only in men of the highest breeding, those with six or eight generations behind them of refinement, consequence, and fastidiousness in association. In these men, the representatives of an aristocracy that is in danger of being crippled and perhaps swamped by plutocracy, exists the convention which forces the most deplorable degenerate of old-world aristocracy to manifest himself a gentlemen in every crucial test. So thoroughly did Trennahan comprehend these facts, so profound was his contempt for the second-rate men of his country, that he was almost self-conscious in his honour. He would no more have asked Magdalena to release him, nor have adopted the still more contemptible method of forcing her to break the engagement, than he would have been the ruin of an ignorant girl. (243)

Clearly, Trennahan is more sympathetic than Belmont to young women who find themselves in “fallen” circumstances, and the concern that he might play a part in what would be Magdaléna’s downfall influences his decision to honor their engagement. Yet both Belmont and Trennahan demonstrate the intersection of sexuality, gender ideology,

class, and race in the construction of American exceptionalism. In the above passage, Trennahan's description of a true gentleman is of "the highest breeding" and presumably (with generations behind him) the whitest stock. Trennahan's old-world aristocracy is much like Belmont's southern man; in each case, these are men of distinction or "consequence" who are born from and eventually marry ideal women like Helena Belmont. Yet, although he desperately wants Helena, Trennahan's commitment to this aristocratic code compels him to overlook Magdaléna's hybrid flaws in order to maintain a sense of convention that is fundamental to both his masculine and his American identity. And while Magdaléna, who cannot endure the possibility of a loveless marriage, releases him from their engagement, she does so without any blemish to his manliness or loss to his sense of individual and national identity. Trennahan's honor and chivalry remain intact, even though this split threatens Magdaléna with another beating from her father, who sees his daughter's failure as his own.

Even more explicitly than Trennahan and Belmont, Don Roberto embodies the connection between masculinity, aristocratic order, and national identity. While the split between Magdaléna and Trennahan might leave Trennahan's honor unscathed, her decision to renounce their engagement inaugurates the decline of Don Roberto's domestic and economic empire. Don Roberto's response when Magdaléna tells him of her break with Trennahan demonstrates the importance of his daughter's marriage in sustaining both the family fortune and his sense of himself as an American: "'And now I no go to have the son, and I go to die in the streets like the others; with no one cents!....Make myself over, and now the screws go to drop out my character, and I am like before'" (257-58). This quote suggests the tenuous hold Don Roberto has on

American identity, which he has bought and paid for as opposed to inheriting by virtue of his race or ethnicity, as his friend Hiram Polk does. This sense of slippage between money, marriage, and nationalism is seen not only in the split between Magdaléna and Trennahan, but also in Polk's death, which occurs on the heels of the break between the couple. Without the promise of a secure economic and domestic future, which Magdaléna's marriage would provide, and without the link to white American masculinity guaranteed through his association with Polk, Don Roberto loses his entire sense of self. Each of these events represents a threat to Don Roberto's cultural and capital investments in family; combined, these "losses" result in his loss of faith in the promises of the American dream.

Rather than the promises of upward economic, social, and ethnic mobility suggested in Atherton's depiction of Don Roberto at the start of the novel, the end of the narrative focuses on the decline of the Yorba household and its inhabitants. The end of the novel charts Don Roberto's mental and physical decline and the deterioration in the Yorba mansion, which reflects the family's loss in social and economic status. At one point, Magdaléna muses that the three houses on Nob Hill "must be pointed out to visitors as the sarcophagi of the futile ambitions of three Californian millionaires" (317). This sense of futility and failure culminates in Don Roberto's suicide at the end of the novel, which suggests the immobilization of American ambition. Yet the ending of the novel also provides the requisite romantic conclusion, as Magdaléna is reunited with Trennahan.

This juxtaposition of the story of California nationalism and progress with romance is once again highlighted through attention to female mobility and sexuality,

which is contrasted with Don Roberto's stasis at the end of the novel. Magdaléna, unable to endure her father's maniacal confinement and frightened with thoughts of murdering him, again ventures into unknown city streets on a walk that takes her past the prostitution houses, into a bar where she is literally manhandled, and finally through Spanish town. She wanders again to Dupont Street and, seeing a connection between these women who "were the rejected of the native boulevards" with her own sense of otherness, wonders if "the painted creatures talking volubly behind the shutters were not happier and more normal than she" (330). Magdaléna's sense that she is "nothing...neither to myself, nor to any one else" (330) leads her to fantasize about becoming the mistress of a large Russian man who attempts to rape her in the bar:

Why should I not go back and live with him, and disappear from a world which takes no interest in me, and in which I am no earthly use?... no life could be worse than mine, nor more immoral, for that matter. I have never fulfilled a single one of the conditions for which women was born, and I'd be more normal as that man's mistress, and less unhappy even if he beat me, which he probably would, than living the life of a blind mole underground. (333)

Magdaléna's venture into the city concludes with her visit to Spanish town, which she finds "sordid," filled with "fat Mexican women" prostitutes and not at all as she had imagined it, with "beautiful girls and handsome gaily attired men" (334). Female sexuality is, as in the earlier scene on Dupont Street, represented dialectically as fear and desire. Although she finds Spanish town ugly in contrast to what she had imagined,

Magdaléna nonetheless feels an “irresistible attraction” to these women, who tell her that “‘si the señorita stay here, she have...baby and grow old too’” (334).

Yet Magdaléna’s “fall” into immorality and sexuality, represented in her movement from Dupont Street, to imagining herself as mistress, and finally in the pull she feels in Spanish town, is merely a figurative crisis that she resolves through her belief in “two small stars of hope”: her father’s death and Trennahan’s return (336).

Magdaléna’s wish, which (in typical sentimental fashion) comes true, resolves the “most formidable crisis of her life” and also provides a stock romantic conclusion to the historical narrative about California nationalism. The novel concludes with Don Roberto’s suicide in which he hangs himself with the American flag. The flag, which previously symbolized Don Roberto’s desire to be thoroughly and patriotically American, now represents the failure of his American dream, contrasting the promises of upward mobility with his literal immobilization by the symbol of American nationalism.

Significantly, the scene preceding Trennahan’s return and the discovery of Don Roberto narrates an interaction between Magdaléna and a native Californian who begs money from Don Roberto and is Atherton’s only explicit discussion of the dispossession of Mexicans during westward expansion. The Mexican, who tells Magdaléna the story of how squatters took his land because her father refused to loan him the funds to pay off his mortgage, represents a reminder of the history of California’s colonization and a cultural past that Don Roberto has attempted to forget in the process of becoming an American. Yet the end of the novel, as suggested in the symbolic suicide, shows Don Roberto’s inability to reconcile this history to the failed promises of America. Atherton offers no resolution to Don Roberto’s story of ambition and desire, ending on a bleak depiction of

California and American nationalism. Instead, she resolves the romance narrative, although Trennahan's promise to Magdaléna that he "shall see that you are happy hereafter" does little to persuade her that she will ever be able to "feel much of anything again" (349). While the marriage plot stabilizes the narrative concerns about Magdaléna's racial hybridity, which no longer seem to matter now that her father is dead, and her potential for sexual transgression, which her marriage contains, its intersection with the story of Don Roberto's desire for economic and social mobility and his tragic failure to become truly American suggests the inability of domestic ideology to resolve the cultural, racial, and economic asymmetries that occur as a result of the colonization of California.

"The Wheat! The Wheat!" Rural Stability and Urban Mobility

In *The Octopus*, Norris, like Atherton, offers an equally bleak representation of California. Yet Norris's California, unlike Atherton's more urban portrayal of life in San Francisco, depicts the relations between people and property in the agrarian frontier. Like *The Californians*, Norris's story of California ranchers and their fight with the injustices of the railroad monopoly presents an important history of California. Yet although *The Octopus* is most obviously a historical novel, underpinning the story of the ranchers and the railroad monopoly is the story of western romance. While Atherton's romance plot sticks to the conventions of the nineteenth century sentimental novel, Norris's "romance" takes two forms: narratives of relationships between men and women and the larger romance of the landscape itself. These romance "plots" converge in Norris's story through the trope of mobility, seen, in much the same way as in Atherton,

in the movement of capital and people through the rural and urban spaces of the West. Yet more explicitly than in Atherton's novel, Norris's attention to tropes of mobility demonstrates a desire not for movement but for immobility—a sense of stasis necessary in order to sustain the romantic essence of the West, "that world's frontier of romance" (13).

This tension between mobility and immobility is seen not only in Norris's representation of the desire for an immovable landscape, but also through the sexual tension at the core of the narrative. In his version of domestic ideology, women, who are both naturalized in association with the agrarian landscape and vilified as urban threats, embody the dialectic between mobility and immobility, representing at once a stabilizing force amidst the chaotic intrusion of railroad capitalism and the home-wrecking, devastating effects of western expansionism.

The novel opens with attention to mobility in the form of western expansion, rendered through the "blowing of a steam whistle" that Presley hears as he makes his way, "partly on foot and partly on his bicycle" through the territory that provides the setting for *The Octopus*. The novel unfolds, as critics have pointed out, through Presley's journey through the narrative landscape.⁹ Presley's ride through the countryside, during which he muses about the romance of the western frontier and the epic poem he will write about the West and its people, contrasts sharply with the mobility of the railroad, which this opening chapter describes as violent and intrusive, even killing a herd of sheep as it makes its way from stop to stop. Presley's romanticized version of the West as

⁹ See, for example, Michael Davitt Bell, Glenn A. Love, Walter Benn Michaels, and Mark Seltzer. For an in-depth reading of the importance of this opening scene and Presley's bicycle ride through the country, see

poetic, idyllic, “like a caress” (41), is ruined by the train, which symbolizes the deadly force of western expansionism:

Presley saw again...the galloping monster, the terror of steel and steam with its single eye, cyclopean, red, shooting from horizon to horizon; but saw it now as the symbol of a vast power, huge, terrible, flinging the echo of its thunder over all the reaches of the valley, leaving blood and destruction in its path; the leviathan with tentacles of steel clutching into the soil, the soulless force, the ironhearted power, the monster, the colossus, the octopus. (42)

As the dying animals on the tracks and the continued movement of the train disrupt the pastoral integrity of the countryside, so, too, is Presley’s sense of romance and nostalgia for a pre-industrial West shattered.¹⁰

Yet, along with the intrusion of the train, this opening chapter also introduces domestic ideology in the form of the sexual tension accompanying Norris’s dialectic of agrarian stability and modern, urban mobility. These opening pages tell the story of Vanamee, the Indian shepherd with psychic powers, whose lover, Angéle, dies in childbirth after being raped by “the Other”—an unknown man who takes Vanamee’s place behind the pear trees where Vanamee and Angéle would meet after dark. The story

Reuben J. Ellis’s “‘A Little Turn Through the Country’”: Presley’s Bicycle Ride in Frank Norris’s *The Octopus*.”

¹⁰ Interestingly, the bicycle itself can be seen as representing an urban intrusion into the agrarian landscape. As Reuben Ellis has argued, in the 1890s bicycles were “high technology,” the “personal computers of their day”:

During the period of Norris’s novel, bicycling was an exciting, accessible and sometimes controversial novelty, mainly associated with urban and newly suburban ways of life and assuming the expansion of leisure time. (Ellis, 18)

of Vanamee and Angéle, which takes on mythic aspects in the novel, serves as a parable about the loss of a sort of agrarian innocence, a romance described as “idyllic, untouched by civilization, spontaneous as the growth of trees, natural as dewfall, strong as the firm-seated mountains” (32). Indeed, although their story ends in violence, death, and (for Vanamee) inescapable grief, the tragic tale of Vanamee and Angéle supplies the archetypal relationship of the novel, insofar as it offers the sense of natural, stable passion other (namely male) characters desire and pursue. This desire for romantic love untouched by civilization is also rendered through the relationship between one of the ranchers, Annixter, and Hilma Tree, a dairy girl who works (along with her family) on his ranch. Annixter, who pretends to be a “woman-hater” (26) because of his extreme discomfort around women, is obsessed with Hilma, who more than any other character in the novel is associated with the pastoral. The narrative is obsessively preoccupied with lengthy descriptions of Hilma, especially her “large white arms” which are at times “wet with milk, redolent and fragrant with milk, glowing and resplendent” (120). Clearly, Hilma represents the mother earth character of the novel, an idealized version of womanhood that links her innocence and naturalness to a prelapsarian landscape untainted by the forces of modernity and capitalism. This image is reinforced by Annixter’s musings about how Hilma manages to keep herself “so clean and feminine”:

Vaguely he seemed to understand that in that great new land of the West, in the open air, healthy life of ranches, where the conditions of earning a livelihood were of the easiest, refinement of the younger women was easily to be found—not the refinement of education or culture, but the natural, intuitive refinement of the woman not as yet defiled and crushed

out by the sordid, strenuous life struggle of overpopulated districts. It was the original, intended, and natural delicacy of an elemental existence, close to nature, close to life, close to the great, kindly earth. (65-66)

Norris clearly intends Hilma to represent the “original, intended, and natural delicacy of an elemental life,” an essentialized naturalness missing in urban women who are “defiled and crushed” by city life. It is fitting that Hilma’s “place” in the novel is the dairy barn, where her preoccupation with cleanliness and purity is linked to the fertile, regenerative properties of the milk:

I love clean things, and this room is my own particular place. Here I can do just as I please, and, that is, to keep the cement floor, and the vats, and the churns and the separators, and especially the cans and the coppers, clean; clean, and to see that the milk is pure, oh, so that little baby could drink it; and to have the air always so sweet, and the sun—oh, lots and lots of sun, morning, noon, and afternoon, so that everything shines. (121)

Hilma’s preoccupation with keeping the barn and especially the materials associated with milk production clean and uncontaminated suggests a conflation of nature and the processes of capitalism, insofar as the dairy barn on Annixter’s property provides his ranch and presumably the community with milk, butter, and cheese. Yet, as suggested in its association with the pure and pastoral Hilma Tree, this is a form of labor and production very different than that of the intrusive and destructive railroad. Hilma’s mode of production, as well as what she produces, rather than modern and urban, reflects

and retains the innocence and naturalness with which she is associated throughout the novel.

Yet this scene between Annixter and Hilma in the dairy barn points to a tension between female sexuality and work or labor that has undesirable and devastating consequences. Annixter's sexual desire for Hilma increases as he watches her work, which she does unceasingly during their conversation in the barn. He is particularly impressed and aroused when she works up a sweat while demonstrating how to use the new butter press—so much so, that he imagines her actions in the barn to be sexual invitations. Annixter's confusion of work and sex, and his assumption that Hilma desires him, equates female mobility as work or labor with transgressive female sexuality. Although Hilma's expression of fear after his forced kiss in the cellar causes Annixter to flee in embarrassment, this scene in the barn so unnerves him that he becomes obsessed with her. Following their interaction in the barn, Hilma, in Annixter's mind, becomes less associated with naturalness and purity and more like women he has known in the city. In fact, this trajectory from the pure, undefiled, and agrarian Hilma to city girl is seen in Annixter's sexual proposition, in which he offers to set her up with "rooms" in San Francisco. Hilma, mistaking this for a marriage proposal, immediately begins to imagine herself in the role of the upwardly mobile rancher's wife on her "wedding trip" to the city and ultimately returning as mistress of Annixter's household (237). When Annixter, concerned that Hilma is trying to "get a hold on him" and his money and property (237), makes it clear that marriage is not his intention, Hilma, along with her mother and father, leaves Annixter's ranch and attempts to disappear in San Francisco, in a movement that symbolizes Hilma's "fall" from her natural state to one in which she

becomes “cheap” like other girls (149). Thus, Annixter’s sexualization of Hilma and his suggestion that she relocate to the city transforms her from “good” to “bad,” from the purity of agrarianism to the sordidness of the urban.

Finally, however, Hilma is reintegrated into the pastoral through Annixter’s realization that he loves her, a realization juxtaposed with the coming up of the wheat. Annixter’s recognition that he loves Hilma restores her purity and innocence as he imagines marrying “this beautiful young girl, pure as he now knew her to be; innocent, noble with the inborn nobility of dawning womanhood” (259). At the same time, this reaffirmation of Hilma’s essential womanhood is linked to the fertile agrarian landscape:

“Why—I—I love her,” he cried. Never until then had it occurred to him. never until then, in all his thoughts of Hilma, had that great word passed his lips....Overnight something had occurred. The change was real. The earth was no longer bare. The land was no longer barren, no longer empty, no longer dull brown.

There it was, the wheat, the wheat! The little seed, long planted, germinating in the deep, dark furrows of the soil, straining, swelling, suddenly in one night had burst upward to the light. The wheat had come up. It was there before him, around him, everywhere, illimitable, immeasurable. The winter brownness of the ground was overlaid with a little shimmer of green. The promise of the sowing was being fulfilled. The earth, the loyal mother, who never failed, who never disappointed, was keeping her faith again. Once more the strength of nations was renewed. Once more the force of the world was revived. (260)

Hilma's brief sojourn in the city is transformative in the sense that after Annixter finds her in San Francisco and they marry, she becomes quite the wise urban consumer; no longer the dairy girl in the barn, she turns to the "serious...work" of buying furniture for her ranch house (286). Finally, however, her return to the ranch and then motherhood, through which "the old simplicity of her maiden days came back to her," restore her pastoral sensibilities, and she "moved surrounded by an invisible atmosphere of love" (350). Hilma's geographical and sexual movements through the narrative landscape, her journey from rural to urban and back again, and her brush with the shameful taint of illicit sexuality, are finally replaced by love as a maternal, natural, and domestic force, of which she becomes the embodiment.

Hilma's presence in the narrative generates and restores a sense of stability to the agrarian landscape after it is left agitated and turbulent in the wake of the battle between the ranchers and the railroad. The story of the railroad monopoly and its willingness and capacity to destroy the livelihoods of the ranchers is juxtaposed with the romantic narrative of Annixter and Hilma Tree, which suggests the intersection between domestic ideology and larger national concerns about geographical and economic expansion and American imperialism. The ranchers, in an attempt to circumvent the railroad, which has increased its rate for transporting the wheat to a price that would result in financial ruin for the ranchers, develop a plan to ship their crop to Asia, marking a "revolution in the wheat" and a "new world of markets...as important as the discovery of America" (226). Yet while the ranchers are making their plans to implement their own brand of outlaw imperialism, the state Supreme Court rules in favor of the railroad, giving them the right

to claim the ranchers' lands, leaving the ranchers without the physical resources to carry out their transnational dream of "invasion of the Orient":

The vision of the new movement of the wheat, the conquest of the East, the invasion of the orient, seemed only the flimsiest mockery. With a brusque wrench, they were snatched back to reality. Between them and the vision, between the fecund San Joaquin, reeking with fruitfulness, and the millions of Asia crowding toward the verge of starvation, lay the ironhearted monster of steel and steam, implacable, insatiable, huge—its entrails gorged with the lifeblood that it sucked from an entire commonwealth, its ever-hungry maw glutted with the harvests that should have fed the famished bellies of the whole world of the Orient. (228)

Clearly, Norris is critical of the gluttonous railroad company. Yet, while the narrative offers a critique of this literal vehicle of western expansionism, it favors the notion of a grass roots American imperialism, of and for "the people," purporting to be in the business of transnational capitalism not for the money but for the salvation of the millions who are starving in overcrowded Asia. When this dream dies, however, Hilma Tree is reintegrated into the narrative as fertile (earth) mother, a surrogate for the "fecund" San Joaquin valley left barren by the devastation of the railroad.

In contrast to Hilma, who represents domestic stability both for Annixter and for the collective of ranchers, Minna Hooven, the daughter of an immigrant tenant on Magnus Derrick's property, is associated with the dangers of modern, urban life beyond the San Joaquin. The novel insists on an inherent "badness" about Minna, especially in

contrast to Hilma, who remains pure and chaste even when propositioned. Minna is a special obsession of Presley, who sees in her the potential for transgressive sexual behavior:

“I hope that Hooven girl won’t go to the bad,” Presley said to Harran.

“Oh, she’s all right,” the other answered. “There’s nothing vicious about Minna, and I guess she’ll marry that foreman on the ditch gang, right enough.”

“Well, as a matter of course, she’s a good girl,” Presley hastened to reply, “only she’s too pretty for a poor girl, and too sure of her prettiness besides. That’s the kind,” he continued, “who would find it pretty easy to go wrong if they lived in a city.”

Although Hilma is also pretty and poor, these qualities add to her natural appeal: in Minna, the combination of her poverty and beauty leads Presley to speculate that she would, as a natural consequence, “go wrong” if given the chance. Presley’s sense that Minna is essentially bad points to the ways that the signs of the “urban” are evident even before Minna arrives in the city. Just as Hilma embodies the stability and domesticity of the rural, Minna, too, is shaped by environmental forces beyond her control. At the end of the novel, Presley’s speculations are realized, as Minna becomes a prostitute in San Francisco, manifesting the dangers of the city as surely as Hilma represents agrarian purity.

The story of Minna’s movement to and mobility within the city provides a “sexual” parallel to the end of the novel, which depicts the “fall” of the ranchers at the hands of the railroad company’s hired guns. Whereas Hilma’s return from the city works

to stabilize the rural environment after the legal defeat of the ranchers, Minna's journey to the city is narrated alongside the story of the death of the ranchers, the railroad's seizing of their lands, and Presley's departure from "the drama" of Los Muertos (458). Minna, her mother, and younger sister, Hilda, go to San Francisco in search of work after Mr. Hooven is killed in the fight with the railroad company. Minna becomes separated from her mother and sister, who beg their way through the streets of the city, homeless, hungry, and ill, until Mrs. Hooven dies, leaving her other daughter Hilda orphaned at the police station. Meanwhile, Minna, who eventually ceases to search for her family, is forced to keep herself alive by becoming a prostitute. Presley even follows the Hooven family to the city, fearing that his predictions about Minna might come true. Yet rather than offering to help her, Presley condemns Minna to her predestined fate, which he links to his own doom as well as to the fall of the ranchers:

Worse than the worst he had feared had happened.... A superstitious fear assailed him that he was, in a manner, marked; that he was foredoomed to fail. Minna had come—had been driven to this; and he, acting too late upon his tardy resolve, had not been able to prevent it. Were the horrors, then, never to end? Was the grisly specter of consequence to forever dance in his vision? Were the results, the far-reaching results of that battle [between the railroad and the ranchers] to cross his path forever?

(414)

Presley, after his meeting with Minna in the city, becomes a "marked" man, presumably "foredoomed to failure" in much the same way that Minna, in his view, was merely

fulfilling her urban destiny. The story of Minna's urban, sexual mobility and her decidedly anti-domestic ending cements into Presley's memory the death of the ranchers. Finally, then, the narrative marks the decline in the agrarian domestic empire established by the ranchers by rendering feminine the invasive, disruptive urban environment and linking this feminized spatial movement to the "grisly specter" of western expansionism.

Yet the novel does not end with this grim view, but instead with an optimism rendered through the permanence and stability of the wheat, which, although it fails to sustain the ranchers or keep safe "young girls...brought to a life of shame," saves "thousands of starving scarecrows on the barren plains of India" (458). In the end, the wheat indeed prevails as a force that transcends national boundaries, becoming a symbol not only of the purity and romance of the frontier, but also of America itself, which is stabilized by this final transnational narrative gesture.

Domesticity and the West as "Contact Zone"

Norris and Atherton's stories of California depict the West as a frontier of promise, progress, and American ingenuity. This is certainly the case with Don Roberto Yorba, who sees in Hiram Polk the prosperity and privilege associated with being an American man. Norris's ranchers also believe in the promises of the frontier as the space in which they can create an empire. The fact that the endings of both novels demonstrate the failure of the frontier myth to sustain the dreams of the male characters points not to the

dissolution of the West as the space of promise, but instead to the ways that the conflicts represented in the novels depict the western frontier as a contact zone.¹¹

In Atherton's novel, California is a geographically and culturally hybridized zone of contact between white Americans and Mexicans. Although Atherton attempts to represent this contact as reciprocal, as suggested in the friendship and economic relationship between Don Roberto and Polk, my reading has shown the inequalities and conflicts in what is essentially a colonial encounter. The intersection created when geographies, cultures, and histories collide serves only to reinforce the power and racial asymmetries between Polk and Don Roberto.

Norris's frontier is also an asymmetrical zone of contact between white ranch owners and the Mexican laborers working the land who are described pejoratively as "decayed, picturesque, vicious, and romantic...relics of a former generation" (21). Unlike Don Roberto, who is at least given access to the mythic promises of the frontier, the Mexicans in Norris's novel neither figure prominently in the narrative nor do they "fit" in the newly created western empire; instead, they represent the suppressed evidence of a "different order of things" (21). Along with this suppressed history of colonization, Norris also depicts the contact zone through the economic and political battle between the ranchers and the railroad. While this conflict is not one of race or ethnic culture, the interactions between the self-made ranchers and the railroad capitalists reveal the forging of an American economic empire based not on class but on money and the movement of "goods" (such as the crops transported by the railroad across the nation and overseas).

¹¹ I am borrowing Mary Louise Pratt's term "contact zone" in order to describe the series of cultural negotiations and conflicts represented in these narratives.

In each instance, domestic ideology is constructed out of these conflicts in the contact zone of frontier and empire. The reconstituted geographical and cultural borders are also gender divides that situate and immobilize women within contested, confrontational spaces. *The Californians*, for example, charts a trajectory beginning with the threat of dispossession and loss of social status for Don Roberto. In order to retain his land and his aristocratic social position, Don Roberto enters into partnership with Polk. This partnership not only enables Don Roberto to assimilate more easily into American culture, but it also forms a stable domestic economy. In this sense, the domestic is not an escape or refuge from the public realm of men, money, or empire, but rather is formed out of these exchanges. Magdaléna, subsequently, embodies the hybridity of this contact between men, cultures, and private and public spheres. Yet rather than representing the success of these interchanges, she is a threat to this domestic ideology. Don Roberto depends on the stability of the domestic order he has created with Polk, and his daughter's geographical movements from "home" to the city streets and her (potential) sexual mobility disrupt and ultimately destabilize the sense of domestic nationalism he has created.

Similarly, Norris's novel demonstrates the ways that domesticity is constituted through the cultural, social, and economic contact between ranchers and the railroad monopoly. Annixter's increasing involvement in this battle is juxtaposed with his increasing desire for Hilma, home, and family. Like Magdaléna, Hilma becomes the embodiment of domestic ideology in the novel. Yet unlike Atherton's protagonist, Hilma represents the stability and permanence of the agrarian domestic. While Magdaléna as hybrid represents the contact zone of frontier and empire, rural and urban, domesticity

and nation, Norris presents these interchanges through conflicting images of femininity: Hilma Tree as fecund earth mother versus Minna Hooven, whose urban mobility destabilizes the domestic in much the same way as Magdaléna.

In both novels, the city is a foil to domesticity, a force that unravels the relationships between men and women as well as the insularity and stability of family. Moreover, these novels equate the city (and its dangers) with loss and conquest, as even sentimental heroes and heroines (Presley and Magdaléna) and heterosexual romance fail to sustain or stabilize either the interior domain of "home" or the external locations of domestic nationalism in the New World landscape of California. Yet what I want to suggest in my readings of these novels is how domesticity is bound to an expansionist logic that produces new borders (through the colonization of the west) while, at the same time, collapses public and private divides by blurring the rhetoric of nation-making in the frontier and the language of domestic ideology.

Conclusion

In this project, I have focused on a specific decade in order to elucidate the ways in which the domestic was reconfigured and deployed during a time frequently seen as a crisis of U.S. empire, when what might be thought of as a “frontier sensibility”—a consciousness of the nation as boundless and mobile—helped to define American identity not only in relation to its progression westward but also its imperialist ventures beyond U.S. borders. Thus the question this dissertation asks is: how do texts within this specific historical context deploy domesticity in order to participate and intervene in the discourse of late nineteenth century nationalism, which was largely concerned with issues of social, economic, and geographical mobility?

Understanding the domestic as a mobile concept should enable the reconsideration of the importance of domesticity in shaping the discourses of American identity and exceptionalism beyond the Civil War era. I began, in Chapter 1, with Burnham and Dreiser in order to show how the nation is displayed and performed through domesticity. The Columbian Exposition, in Burnham’s novel, and the theater, in Dreiser’s, are key sites for nationalistic sentiment invested in notions of home, family, marriage, and conventional gender roles. Rather than homespaces, these novels situate domesticity in the public arena of imperial politics and market capitalism, demonstrating the ways in which “home” reaches beyond private, interior domains.

In subsequent chapters, I examined the collusion of private and public spheres through a slightly different trajectory in which public concerns and social rhetoric are located in domestic themes and spaces. By focusing on Hull House in Chapter 2, for example, I demonstrated the ways in which Addams’s reconfigured homespace enables

the production of a social movement designed to benefit the urban immigrant population and wayward young women. Similarly, in Cahan's novel, *Yekl*, political and cultural rhetoric about the assimilation of immigrants is seen in the novel's domestic themes about home, family, and gender relations. In this novel, Cahan's representation of the Jewish ghetto functions, in much the same way as Addams's settlement house, as the domestic space within which to present and debate national narratives about Americanization.

Chapter 3 extended my examination of the literal and figurative representations of "home," as I considered how Chesnut and Twain both rely on domestic ideology in order to challenge and secure the boundaries of racial identity. In these novels, domesticity appears as the site in which theories about racial identity are constituted, challenged, and reaffirmed. Yet, as I argued in this chapter, while notions of racial identity are infused with the language and themes of domesticity, which helped to make racial theories and conflicts representable, the domestic is ultimately presented as a stabilizing force necessary to map the distinctions between male and female, white and black, and national "self" and foreign "other."

This dual notion of the domestic as representative of both the private sphere of home and family and the public world of community and nation is particularly evident in my discussion of Atherton and Norris in Chapter 4. My readings in this chapter are intended to demonstrate the ways in which domestic ideology is constituted out of the contact between people, cultures, and places, which suggests yet another way that the language, themes, and tropes of domesticity are critical to the construction of a U.S. nationalism concerned primarily with issues of geographical, social, and economic

mobility. This chapter, perhaps more than any other, offers a specific challenge to the separate spheres ideology, as it shows how the collusion of private and public in each novel's representation of domestic nationalism.

While I have concentrated my study on a specific historical era, the broader implications of the ways in which domesticity and mobility intersect and interact in constructions of American nationalism—especially at the turn of another century—are many. Domestic ideology and the language of domesticity continue to infuse U.S. politics and culture, just as public discourse intervenes in private, intimate concerns of “home.” Lauren Berlant, for example, in her focus on the idealized images and narratives about gender, sex, and citizenship that dominated the U.S. politics and culture in the last two decades of the twentieth century, argues that there is no distinct public sphere: instead the nationalism promoted by Reagan Republicanism has fused the intimate concerns of private, daily life with national personhood. As Berlant shows us, images of home and family dominated both the right and left wing agendas of the Reagan-Bush era, suggesting the ways in which domestic ideology has provided the logic of national sentiment and discourse about the future of the nation.

Indeed, the slippage between private and public has extended through the Clinton era, when intimacy defined the political and cultural public arena. The scandal between President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky did more than call into question the legitimacy of the Clinton's presidency, it reaffirmed Berlant's notion that the public arena has become the legitimate site for the debate of intimate issues of sex and family. Much like the 1890s, the 1990s demonstrated the duality of the domestic as both familial and national, as evidenced throughout Clinton-era politics and rhetoric about what constitutes

“at home” concerns. In both of his inaugural speeches (1993 and 1997), for example, Clinton claimed that there was no longer a division between foreign and domestic, and that everything impacting the world was an “at home” issue for the U.S. Clinton’s insistence on renewing the nation, on forming a “more perfect union” (as he stated in his 1997 Inaugural Speech), depends on making people feel “at home with one another” (1997 Inaugural Speech). As the Clinton rhetoric suggests, this sense—or sentiment—of “at homeness” is particularly critical in a global economy dominated by economic, social, and geographical mobility. Clinton’s insistence on “at home” politics in order to form a more perfect national and global community demonstrates the importance of domestic ideology in the formation of U.S. politics and culture.

While the project of empire can be seen in various cultural forms and texts, such as I suggest above with Clinton’s speeches, literature is key to making “knowable” issues of identity and community at the core of domestic ideology. If, as Raymond Williams has argued, novels are “knowable communities,” which “force into consciousness” people and their relations, then the project of literature is to offer the language through which to “know” community (*The Country and the City*, 165). In this context, literature thus functions not only as a means to make sense of the social world, but also helps constitute this social landscape. Extending the archive of what we consider “domestic” thus not only expands the critical canon of American fiction to include works not typically seen as engaging the themes or language of domesticity, but it is also an important step in understanding the cultural processes underpinning American exceptionalism.

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Education

- Ph.D. English, University of Washington, March 2000
 Dissertation: *Domestic Mobility in the American Post-Frontier, 1890-1900*
 Chair: Professor Susan Jeffords
- M.A. English, San Francisco State University, 1994
 Master's Thesis: *Lorine Niedecker's Feminist Poetics*
- B.A. English, University of California at Berkeley, 1990

Awards and Grants

- Robert and Mary Waltz Fellowship, Preparing Future Faculty, North Seattle
 Community
 College, 1997
- Joan Webber Prize for Outstanding Teaching, University of Washington, 1997
- Distinguished Graduate Student Award, San Francisco State University, 1994
- Semester Abroad Fellowship Program, Cambridge, England, 1986

Professional Experience

- Postdoctoral Instructor, Department of English, University of Washington,
 Spring 2000
- Graduate Teaching Fellow, Department of English, University of Washington,
 1994-present
- Managing Editorial Assistant, *positions: east asia cultures critique*, 1998-1999
- Editorial Assistant/Editorial Board, *Interpretations: A Journal of the Graduate
 Literature Association*, San Francisco State University, 1992-1994
- Editorial Assistant/Editorial Board, *The Berkeley Poetry Review*, University of
 California, Berkeley, 1989-1990

Professional Activities and Service

- Co-coordinator, Seventh Annual Conference of the American Studies Colloquium
 "Conversations in American Studies," University of Washington, May
 1999
- Co-coordinator, Sixth Annual Conference of the American Studies Colloquium
 "New Perspectives in American Studies," University of Washington, May
 1998
- Participant, Americanist Teaching Colloquium, University of Washington, 1996-
 present

Participant, American Studies Colloquium, University of Washington, 1994-present

Co-coordinator, Feminist Studies Colloquium, University of Washington, 1994-1995

Coordinator, Graduate Literature Association, San Francisco State University, 1993-1994

Publications

"Themes, Topics, Criticism." *American Literary Scholarship: An Annual*, 1997, ed. Gary Scharnhorst. Durham: Duke UP, 1999. (In collaboration with the American Studies Colloquium at the University of Washington.)

"Anzia Yezierska: American Women Prose Writers, 1870-1920." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. Sharon M. Harris. (forthcoming 1999-2000)

"Stretching the Boundaries: the Re-Invention of Women's Bodies and Voices in 'The Salutation of Elizabeth.'" *Interpretations*, Volume VI (Spring), 1994.

Works in Progress:

"The 'Lurch' of Progress: Domestic Spaces and Americanization in Jane Addams' *Twenty Years at Hull House* and Abraham Cahan's *Yekl*. (Being prepared for publication.)

"Domestic Ideology, Mobility, and Citizenship in Rebecca Harding Davis' *Waiting for the Verdict*." (Being prepared for publication.)

American Mobilities: Class, Space, and Culture. Collection of essays co-edited with Professor Julia Leyda. (Being prepared for publication.)

Conference Presentations

"At Home in the Nation: Domestic Mobility in the Wizard of Oz." Pacific Northwest American Studies Association Conference. Mount Angel Seminary, April 1999.

"Nationalism and Domesticity in the American Post Frontier." Sixth Annual Conference of the American Studies Colloquium: New Perspectives in American Studies. University of Washington, May 1998.

"An 'Adventitious' Woman: Mobility and Morality in Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*." (Panel Chair) Geography and Genre: The Empire State and Other Literary Landscapes. Fordham University, November 1997.

"Body Politics: Mobility and Utopia in Rebecca Harding Davis' *Margret Howth*." *Social Moves: An Interdisciplinary Conference*. Tulane University, November 1997.

"Democracy and Mobility: The Politics of Movement in Rebecca Harding Davis' *Margret Howth*." *American Studies Colloquium Conference*. University of Washington, May 1997.

"Domestic Ideologies and Citizen Bodies in Rebecca Harding Davis' *Waiting for the Verdict*." *Nation and Representation: Recent Work in American Studies*, American Studies Colloquium Conference. University of Washington, 1996.

"Woman in a Word: 'Supplying Essences' of the 'Other' in the Works of William Carlos Williams and Laura (Riding) Jackson." *Twentieth-Century Literature Conference*, University of Louisville, February 1996.

"Look Who's Wearing the Pants: Gender and Hybridity in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*." *Cultural Cartographies: Mapping the Postcolonial Moment*. North Carolina State University, March 1995.

Teaching Experience

University of Washington

Spring 2000 English 353: Late Nineteenth Century American Literature

This upper-division course focuses on the later half of the nineteenth century, examining the relationship between literature by writers such as Dreiser, DuBois, Chopin, and Twain and the complex cultural forces at work in the changing landscape of the American nation.

Winter 2000 English 281: Intermediate Expository Writing

This writing course for non-English majors examines the theme of mobility in early twentieth century American fiction.

Fall 1999 English 111: Writing about Fiction

In this introductory expository writing class, we generate ideas for writing from short fiction readings.

Winter 1998 English 250: Introduction to American Literature

This is a survey course spans the colonial era through the early twentieth century, examining historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence along with literary

works by W.E.B. DuBois, Harriet Wilson, Mark Twain, and Zitkala-Sa.

Fall 1996-
Spring 1997 English 104 and 105: Introduction to Expository Writing
This two-segment writing course is offered to minority and economically disadvantaged students in the Educational Opportunities Program.

Fall 1995-
Spring 1996 English 131: Introduction to Expository Writing
This first-year writing course combines readings from contemporary culture and more "traditional" sources in order to examine the social construction of knowledge.

Fall 1994-
Winter 1995 Reader Assistant
Courses: Nineteenth Century American Literature (Professor Anne Stavney)
American Literature 1914-1945 (Professor Robert Shulman)
English Literature: Chaucer (Professor John Coldewey)

North Seattle Community College

Fall 1997 Coordinated Studies: Women and Men: Power, Sex, Identity
(co-taught with Professor Rita Smilkstein from the Department of English and Professor Karen Stuhldreher from the Social Sciences Division, Women's Studies)
This course combined the teaching of writing with readings from literature, history, and contemporary culture.

San Francisco State University

Winter-
Spring 1993 English Literature: The Age of Chaucer (teaching assistant)

Berkeley High School

1991-1992 Teaching Assistant, Department of English

Research and Teaching Interests

19th and 20th century U.S. Literature and Culture
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Critical Geography

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American Studies
American Poetry
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Professional Associations

Modern Language Association, 1992-present

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