FEMALE PROTAGONISTS USING MASKING STRATEGIES IN LATE-VICTORIAN FICTION: FROM FAILING TO SUCCEEDING

By

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This dissertation explores a pattern that emerges in late-Victorian literature: multi-faceted female characters enact masking strategies to successfully accommodate their complex characters. Female characters who suppress parts of themselves or who are suppressed by others or by society experience detrimental consequences, including death and deformity. On the other hand, female characters who enact masking strategies, representing themselves differently in various situations to various characters, are able to create the realities and futures they desire, leading to fulfilling relationships and secure futures. Several Modernist female characters both extend and break with this masking strategy pattern as they attempt to find stability and community in a chaotic, new world.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: REASSESSING LATE-VICTORIAN FEMALE CHARACTER

Despite the emphasis Victorians routinely put on honesty, rectitude, absolutes, and a basically essential character, their fictional works frequently argue that life, at least "modern" life, requires a much more nuanced and flexible and roundabout path to success. What is required are namely strategies or mechanisms, both offensive and defensive, that disguise, or that present a provisional persona. These strategies or mechanisms reveal value and even truth to be not a “thing in itself” but something inseparable from the rhetorical process of its presentation—the representation, personal stance or “language” conveying it—in short, its strategic mask or masking process. Characters frequently must execute such maneuvers (masking) even to the point of presenting a “reality” opposite to what the user of it believes or the customary interpretation of “truth” is. The path to truth and value becomes simultaneously a deception as well as a revelation. The ostensibly deceptive mask necessarily becomes the means to achieving value or truth successfully; there is frequently no probable or satisfactory success without it.

It has been well recognized that in much late-Victorian fiction, the traditional Victorian female character of wife and mother is narrowly defined and excludes the flexibility to adapt to different circumstances and to fulfill different facets of character that exist outside of the traditional role. Victorian female characters are often shown trying to escape or cope with this one-dimensional existence. Likewise, in much late-Victorian fiction, including proto-New Woman fiction and New Woman fiction, women protagonists generally share many qualities such as intellectual vigor, an interest in politics and education, and rebelliousness against the status quo, to the exclusion of
other facets, namely wifehood and motherhood. These feminist characters are often portrayed as suffragists who advocate equality between the sexes and grapple with several aspects of the Woman Question, including marriage and motherhood. These characters also try to escape or cope with their narrow, rigid albeit “new” existence.

Similar exclusionary logic emerges in the conception of the traditional Victorian female character and in the conception of the New Woman character.

This recognition of the need for flexible self-representation—strategic masking—reaches perhaps its extreme Victorian formulation in the fin de siècle with Walter Pater’s conflations of ethics and aesthetics—morality as fundamentally aesthetic, such as a beautiful effect, perception, interpretation, or representation. Oscar Wilde relates a similar understanding of life in his various renderings to the effect that “Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth” (Wilde 127). Masking creates conditions in which societal conventions and expectations fall away. It frees one to divulge certain revelations and participate in truth-telling that would otherwise remain concealed for fear of breaking social conventions and being subsequently ostracized. After the Victorian Age but growing out of the fin de siècle, Yeats will amplify this understanding into a virtual Modernist manifesto with his view that the man and the mask, the mask and the self, are necessarily inseparable and function dialectically in tandem, such as in his poem “The Mask.”¹ For Yeats the inseparability of the person and the mask allows the person to create and maintain his or her own truths and value as he or she simultaneously and

¹ I am viewing Yeats’ term “man” generally as “man” or “woman.”
successfully participates and functions in society by maintaining society’s values and truths.

Victorian conceptions of identity as one-dimensional, stable, and knowable are often profoundly different from Modernism’s conceptions of identity as multiple, chaotic, and unknowable. Victorian society had codifiable systems with strict rules; organization and categorization abounded, providing stability and certainty, and society had clear expectations and roles for people. Modernist society did not. Instead, Modernist society challenged the “old” Victorian systems, rules, and roles. But in certain key respects, differences between Victorian and Modernist conceptions of identity are more of degree than kind. Numerous late-Victorian authors portray their female protagonists as complex and multi-faceted. When these characters are suppressed by others or by societal constraints or they suppress parts of themselves, they become deformed and often die. When these characters are flexible and adaptable and use processes of masking, they survive and often thrive. Through processes of masking, these flexible characters navigate their worlds, upholding expectations, creating their own realities, and forming desired relationships. Several early Modernist authors extend the notion of multi-facetedness to such an extent that they portray their female protagonists’ identities as multiple. These Modernist characters, similar to late-Victorian characters in some ways, use processes of masking to create relationships, communities, and a temporary sense of stability in their chaotic world.

Rigid Character and Its Discontents

In terms of female character or selfhood, both rigidity and suppression can lead to debilitating consequences on the mind and body. In her chapter “Coordinations of the Mind and Body” in Studies in General Science (1869), Antionette Brown Blackwell
discussed the importance of balance between the mind and body, a prevalent and well accepted notion for many Victorians. She explained that “No mind can attain to the free use of all its powers through a defective body; and again, a defective body is often the direct result of a badly developed mind” (125). She went on to claim that “disused mental powers produce a gross and animal type of organism” (126). As we will see, several female protagonists experience bodily deformity after mental rigidity or suppression.

This chapter traces the pattern of rigid exclusionary logic in late-Victorian fiction and how in some texts, including “The Pleasure Pilgrim” by Ella D’Arcy and Paula by Victoria Cross, characters and societal constraints purposefully force female protagonists into narrow facets of self to the exclusion of other facets, which results in deformity and death. Chapter 2 also explores this rigid exclusionary logic but focuses on female characters’ suppressive, inflexible responses to it that frequently result in detrimental, unhealthy consequences for them. While Chapters 1 and 2 explore how authors highlight the problems of this pattern, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 examine how other late-Victorian authors seek healthier means, involving masking strategies, for dealing with this narrow logic through various adaptations and representations. More specifically, Chapter 3 shows how female protagonists use masking strategies to create lasting, fulfilling romantic relationships. Chapter 4 highlights how married female characters use masking strategies to make their marriages and lives what they want them to be. Chapter 5 explores how marginalized female characters use masking strategies to gain access to “proper” society and attain their desired goals and realities.
Chapter 6 analyzes the shifts to Modernism’s conception of female identity, emphasizing both similarities and differences from Victorian conceptions.

“The Pleasure Pilgrim” (1895) by Ella D’Arcy

An 1895 review in Echo hailed Ella D’Arcy as the “most promising lady recruit to fiction since the advent of Olive Schreiner and Lucas Malet” (“A Commentary” 196). Although many of D’Arcy’s contemporary critics shared this view, other critics did not. The author of an 1895 review in the Chicago Tribune claimed that “The Pleasure Pilgrim” “does not tempt one to become better acquainted with Miss D’Arcy’s writings” (195). One of her most polarizing short stories was “The Pleasure Pilgrim,” published both in the Yellow Book and in 1895 in Monochromes—a collection of D’Arcy’s short stories—as part of John Lane’s Keynote series. “The Pleasure Pilgrim” explores the life and death of a young American woman named Lulie Thayer who travels abroad. It traces her growing desire for her love interest, Campbell, whose increasing disgust with Lulie’s questionable past causes him to harshly reject her and leads to her tragic end. As if illustrating the polarizing nature of D’Arcy’s fiction, one American critic called Lulie a “vulgar caricature . . . of the American girl” whereas a British critic in the same year touted Lulie as a “complex character” who is “carefully drawn” (192).

D’Arcy’s portrayals of Lulie, and female characters more generally, continued to polarize and unsettle later critics. William C. Frierson, in 1942, claimed D’Arcy’s “only vital literary motive” was the “criticism of her sex” (58). Fifty years later, Benjamin Franklin Fischer IV contrasted D’Arcy’s “low-minded (or often close to becoming non-minded)” female characters who “schem[e] in regard to the main chance” or who have “non-dynamic personalities” with “the physical and intellectual-emotional liberation that motivated the New Woman in turn-of-the-century fiction” (“A Commentary 184”).
However, Anne Windholz, drawing on Osbert Burdett’s observation that D’Arcy “saw all her women through masculine eyes,” concludes that “certainly the perspective of male characters accounts for the most scathing indictments of women in these stories,” and “those who have labeled D’Arcy primarily a denigrator of her own sex have failed to credit the diversity of her subjects and her use of point of view” (89, 95). Sarah Maier shares a similar view and claims, “D’Arcy professes a . . . radical feminism” (36).

D’Arcy has often been viewed by critics in one of two ways: either as a harsh critic of her own sex or as a radical feminist. But these views are not mutually exclusive. While I agree with Burdett and Windholz that D’Arcy often showcases her female characters through male perspectives, she also does something more, which allows her to simultaneously criticize female characters and also espouse feminist ideas: She demonstrates the consequences of narrowly defined, rigid female characters who cannot escape their codified categories. Lulie is a case in point. Men in Ella D’Arcy’s “The Pleasure Pilgrim” construct Lulie narrowly as a deceptive, flirty man-eating actress, calling her “the newest development of the New Woman” (D’Arcy 54). They view any deviation from their preconceived notion of Lulie’s character as her simply pretending or acting. In this example, the male characters perceive New Woman character to be rigid, codifiable, and, to a large extent, one-dimensional. It still limits women by reinscribing the narrow logic that was similarly used to define the traditional Victorian female.

Talking with Campbell, Mayne deems Lulie “the most egregious little flirt” he has “ever met” (42). But he immediately contradicts himself claiming, “And yet, she’s not exactly a flirt either” (42). In an attempt to resolve his contradiction about Lulie being a
flirt and not being a flirt, he specifies, “I mean she doesn’t flirt in the ordinary way” (42). In Mayne’s conception, an “ordinary flirt” is a woman who talks a lot, laughs, and makes claims on males’ attention. Lulie, however, “doesn’t talk much, or laugh or apparently make the least claims on masculine attention” (42). Therefore, in Mayne’s conception, Lulie is a negative example of an ordinary flirt. He can only draw attention to her lack of ordinary flirtatious behaviors. Since she is not an ordinary flirt, Mayne tells Campbell, “the women like her,” and he does not “believe there’s one, except [his] wife, who has an inkling as to her true character” (42). Here, Mayne implies three key points: First, he and, to some extent, his wife know Lulie’s “true character.” Second, Lulie has a “true character” that exists and can be known only by certain people. Third, Lulie must be an actress, and a fairly good one at that, since only Mayne and his wife know Lulie’s “true character.” The word “true” indicates that Mayne views Lulie’s character as stable and codifiable. But, as the previous example demonstrates, Lulie’s character is problematic for Mayne because he cannot clearly explain or articulate his views about her supposedly “true character.” He can only describe what Lulie is not, and he can only define her by behaviors and actions she does not possess.

However, Mayne soon attempts to narrowly define Lulie based on what he believes were her past behaviors with men. He views Lulie, in a schematic sense, as something to be studied, and he claims to have had first-hand “opportunities for studying her” (42). In Mayne’s system of study, he is the active scientist who, as a good researcher, repeatedly studies his passive object, Lulie. He disparages Lulie’s reputation to Campbell when he constructs her supposed pattern with men in her past. First, Mayne claims, “She always begins with those velvety red-brown glances” (42).
Using the word “always,” Mayne positions Campbell in the very same category as all of the men Lulie has supposedly “looked at” in the very same way. Moreover, the phrase “always begins with” implies that Lulie’s behavior with men is predictable, and she treats all men the same. Mayne names March, Prendergast, and Willie Anson as specific examples of men with whom Lulie “began that way” (42). Then, Mayne asserts that she “began that way” with “all the men [he has] had here since her arrival” (42). At this point in the story, Mayne has, in his opinion, offered sufficient evidence to demonstrate that Lulie becomes romantically involved with all men she meets.

He begins constructing a possible, fairly simplistic cause-and-effect narrative of retribution about Lulie and her supposed conquests. He defines her character narrowly to Campbell as “the Nemesis for her sex” and claims she “goes about seeing how many masculine hearts she can break by way of revenge” (46). He portrays Lulie as a man-eating, vengeful woman who is the anti-Angel in the House. Sarah Maier claims that “real women, D’Arcy suggests, have flaws, needs, and desires which are not acknowledged in the scope of male fantasies or idealized images” and that “unfortunately, women are constantly judged according to their ability to live up to or to project the ideal image which men desire” (Maier 36). She goes on to explain that this “image necessarily restricts women’s actions and choices by making the women themselves subordinate to an imposed ideal” (36). Maier’s insightful assertion can be expanded: Men also restrict women when they degrade women. For example, Mayne defines and degrades Lulie by what he conceives and defines as a New Woman—an untrustworthy flirtatious Nemesis for her sex.
Mayne uses his narrow definition of Lulie’s character to define the American New Woman. He speculates that Lulie could be “simply the newest development of the New Woman she who in England preaches and bores you, and in America practises and pleases” (D’Arcy 46). He “believe[s] she’s the American edition,” so, in Mayne’s view, Lulie practices, takes action, and entertains. He calls her “the pioneer of the army coming out of the West, that’s going to destroy the existing scheme of things and rebuild it nearer to the heart’s desire” (46). In the traditional Victorian gender system, the mind represents men and the heart represents women. So, if Lulie “rebuild[s]” the gender hierarchy “nearer to the heart’s desire,” women would, presumably, be superior to men. In Mayne’s view, Lulie is a raging American New Woman soldier who is on the front-line of the feminist cause and out to reverse the traditional poles of the gender hierarchy that positions men superior to women. Mayne also thinks that Lulie has an American fiancé and “when she’s had her fling,” she will “go back and marry him” (50). He generalizes this behavior to American girls: “That’s what these little American girls do, I’m told; sow their wild oats here with us, and settle down into bonnes menageres over yonder” (50). Mayne establishes a very narrow national identity for American girls based on location: In England they are the temptresses of men and view England as a sexual play-land,² conquering English man after English man, and in America, they are the dutiful domestic housewives.³

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² Ironically, male colonialists, many from England, viewed un-colonized lands as sexual play-lands that were free from propriety and restraint. These male colonialists often took foreign colonial mistresses and bore them children, only to abandon these foreign families when the colonialists returned to their native countries.

³ Maier speculates that Mayne’s “comparison between the American New Woman and the English New Woman indicates . . . D’Arcy’s desire for the New Woman movement to advance at a quicker pace in England” and explains that “Lulie’s attempt to escape the English restrictions and express her desire” is what “inevitably leads to her downfall in a society which views Lulie’s behavior as heinous” (Maier 46).
After categorizing Lulie specifically as an American New Woman, Mayne simply and succinctly pigeon-holes her character as “an actress, a born comedienne” (D’Arcy 54). Talking with Campbell, Mayne claims, “She acts always, and to every one: to you, to me, to the Ritterhausens, to the Dodge girl, even to herself when she is quite alone” (54). In Mayne’s view, Lulie dedicates herself entirely to her craft, cost what it may. Mayne views Lulie as a master manipulator. For example, he explains to Campbell, “She chooses to pose as in love with you; you don’t respond; the part now requires that she should sicken and pine” (54). In Mayne’s schema, Lulie freely “choos[ing]” and “pos[ing]” indicates that she has free will and is well aware of her choices. Furthermore, she chooses each and every move consciously and purposefully in the parts she plays and bases these moves on the reactions of her supposed object of desire. Since Campbell does not respond to the part Lulie plays as the amorous lover, she now plays the part of the “sicken[ing]” and “pin[ing]” rejected lover. For Mayne, Lulie will always be an actress no matter what she does or how she behaves. There is no potential for falsifiability in Mayne’s hypothesis. So, in Mayne’s schematic, Lulie will always already be acting; she cannot not act.

Campbell too begins to see Lulie as nothing but an actress after his many conversations with Mayne. When Lulie takes Campbell’s hand and puts it around her waist, he “remembered how she had doubtless done this very same thing with other men in this very room. All her apparently spontaneous movements, he told himself, were but the oft-used pieces in the game she played so skilfully” (63). The phrases

While it can be argued that D’Arcy wishes to quicken the pace of the New Woman movement in England, we must also take into account the perspective of this American and English comparison in the story—Mayne. D’Arcy repeatedly focuses on Mayne’s narrow, inflexible view of Lulie’s character and demonstrates problems and detrimental consequences of rigid narrow character, including that of a supposed New Woman.
“very same thing” and “in this very room” indicate Campbell’s anxiety that he is merely one of the many men Lulie is out to conquer. He views her as a skillful player who purposefully plans her movements so that they appear to be spontaneous.

Campbell, now convinced that Lulie is a deceptive actress who is incapable of genuine actions or feelings, refuses to believe her professions of love for him.

Campbell challenges Lulie,

if you really loved me . . . if you had any conception of what the passion of love is, how beautiful, how fine, how sacred the mere idea that you could not come to your lover fresh, pure, untouched, as a young girl should that you had been handled, fondled, and God knows what besides, by this man and the other would fill you with such horror for yourself, with such supreme disgust you would feel yourself so unworthy, so polluted . . . that . . . by God! you would take up that pistol there, and blow your brains out! (65)

He defines love between a man and a woman as “beautiful,” “fine,” and “sacred.” This type of love, he argues, can only be experienced with a woman who is “fresh,” “pure,” and “untouched.” He describes Lulie as “unworthy” and “polluted,” the antithesis of the Angel in the House. Campbell claims that her feelings of love for him are not genuine and offers her an ultimatum: Either she “blow[s] [her] brains out” and proves her love for Campbell to be true or she does not and proves her love for Campbell to be false.

As Maier states, “Campbell directly incites the emotions which cause Lulie to shoot herself in a masochistic demonstration of her love and loyalty” (45). But, perhaps even more importantly, Campbell sets up very clear, rigid either/or logic; similar exclusionary logic haunts several late-Victorian female characters. In this logic, Lulie’s love can only be proven genuine through her death.

Once and for all Lulie attempts to escape the narrow character Mayne and Campbell force her into. “With her little tragic air which seemed so like a smile
disguised,” Lulie held the gun to “the bosom of her gown” (D’Arcy 65). The smug phrases, such as “little tragic air” and “smile disguised” emphasize Lulie as an actress and seem to be expressed from Campbell’s point of view. However, the tone of the passage changes when Lulie takes action: “There came a sudden, sharp crack, a tiny smoke film. She stood an instant swaying slightly, smiling certainly, distinctly outlined against the background of the rain-washed window, of grey falling rain, the top of her head cutting in two the Ritterhausen escutcheon” (66). The smug descriptions vanish, and facts are presented in clear, direct, short phrases. Lulie’s “smile disguised” now becomes Lulie “smiling certainly.” After the gunshot, vague, slippery, questionable descriptions of Lulie are replaced by clear, focused descriptions of her. Finally, in this moment, Lulie’s character is “distinctly outlined.” In this moment, she proves her love for Campbell. Even more importantly, she proves she is not always already an actress. But it costs her her life. All of the sudden nothing “but a motionless, inert heap of plush and lace, and fallen wine-red hair, lay at his feet upon the floor” (66). To some extent, Lulie can be read as a Christ-figure in this scene. She tragically dies for the sins of others, namely Mayne and Campbell, who repeatedly force her into a narrow, rigid character. The words “fallen” and “wine-red” both have Biblical connotations and may represent fallen sinners and the last supper, respectfully. That Lulie lays at the feet of Campbell, who arguably can be viewed as her murderer, emphasizes her status as a martyr. He “kneel[s] beside her,” a mode of worship, and “lift[s] her up,” a mode of elevation and resurrection, even though he does not view himself as her murderer when he asks, “Child, child, what have you done?” (66). Rather, he blames Lulie for her own death. The rigid expectations for Victorian women and the extreme restriction of
character in any way lead to detrimental consequences for several Victorian female characters, including Lulie.

Despite this tragic end for the female protagonist, some of D’Arcy’s contemporary critics viewed D’Arcy and “The Pleasure Pilgrim” as modernist. In 1894 The Rambler listed D’Arcy among their “courageous moderns” who were represented in The Yellow Book (“A Commentary” 190). Furthermore, recent scholar Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV claims “The Pleasure Pilgrim” “takes a merited place in modernist literature” and calls D’Arcy a “Modernist in confronting ‘the problem of sex and marriage’ with un-Victorian directness” (“Ella” 247, “A Commentary” 184). Lulie’s suicide is clearly unsettling and problematic. In 1895, Richard Le Gallienne wisely noted in Realm that D’Arcy “leaves the problem of Lulie Thayer’s personality as much a problem as ever, a problem to which one is foolishly eager to have answered” (“A Commentary” 191). Lulie’s suicide does not seem to accomplish much, especially if D’Arcy’s goal, as some scholars such as Maier have argued, was to help reign in the age of the New Woman and sexual liberation.

The problem is that Lulie is not allowed to function flexibly; rather, she is forced into a narrow American New Woman character by men, and D’Arcy leaves Lulie to her fate. Even Lulie’s supposed ultimate demonstration of genuine love for Campbell does not convince the male characters that she is not merely acting. Eerily, for them, Lulie’s death just becomes part of the role she supposedly plays as an actress. Even in death, she is caught as being always already an actress. D’Arcy brilliantly showcases the horrific effects of narrow character, but she fails to offer potential solutions to this debilitating narrow logic. Perhaps this failure only highlights the detrimental effects of
Victorian inflexibility and rigid categorization of character more. At the same time, though, we are left begging for an escape from this confinement.

*Paula (1896) by Victoria Cross*

Similar to D’Arcy’s Lulie, the main female character in Victoria Cross’ *Paula* (1896) suffers after other characters and societal constraints suppress parts of her character. *Paula* explores the complex life of an intelligent, independent aspiring artist named Paula. To further her artistic career, she gives up Vincent, the man she loves, and marries Reeves, the director of a theater company. Paula shows that Victorian binary logic limits her choices: she must either marry the man she loves or marry the man who will facilitate her artistic career. Victorian societal constraints dictate that Paula cannot be both a wife in love and an artist. She must choose one path, one truth, or the other. She soon finds herself miserable with Reeves and leaves him, only to return to him after he threatens to kill Vincent. Soon after her return, Reeves grows very ill and dies, leaving Paula free at last to return to Vincent. But Vincent has grown ill and needs a blood transfusion, so Paula convinces the doctor to use her blood to save Vincent’s life. With Paula’s blood, Vincent survives and grows healthy but only at the expense of Paula’s life.

Reviewers had mixed reactions to this dramatic, tragic story. A December 1896 review in *The Academy* read, “This is not a good novel. The atmosphere is unreal, the events incredible, the characterisation very rough and very ready” (“*Paula*” 490). But other reviewers found merit in the novel and its main character. A reviewer from the *Morning Leader* referred to Paula as “so full of glow and charm, so aflame with the enthusiasm of art and love, that there can be little else for the reader when he has finished the volume save a feeling of warm gratitude for a daring and successful plunge.
into some of the depths of a passionate woman’s heart” (“from Walter Scott’s List” 494).
As a smart, savvy, business-minded artist, Paula contradicts the traditional ideal throughout much of the novel, but in the end, Paula’s “passionate woman’s heart” causes her to sacrifice her life for the man she loves. Paula’s intense desire to authenticate all aspects of her being sets her apart from the one-dimensional traditional Victorian female ideal, but her sacrifice aligns her with it. Like D’Arcy’s Lulie, Cross’s Paula has a complex character whose facets conflict at times in a society with strict expectations for women.

Cross establishes two strong desires in Paula—her desire to be with her lover and her desire to be an artist. Paula’s uniting with her lover is consistently aligned with fulfilling Nature’s will, whereas Paula’s being an artist is consistently aligned with fulfilling her individual need to succeed. The either/or logic in the novel requires that one of Paula’s facets be suppressed and sacrificed so the other facet can be completely fulfilled. At first, Paula defies Nature, rejecting her desire to unite with Vincent, and the consequences are detrimental.

Early on in the novel, the omniscient narrator warns readers that suppressing any part of one’s character is unhealthy and leads to ruinous consequences. The narrator explains,

Suppression and restraint always damages a character, in the same way as it damages the body. . . . Both mentally and physically restraint is generally the parent of excess at some future date, and suppression is usually the nurse of deformity . . . the human character too far suppressed, from any cause, inevitably deteriorates, twisting itself into distorted lines, becoming misanthropic, hard, selfish, narrow-viewed, or immoderate, as environment favors.” (Paula 23)
The narrator warns that if part of the human character is restrained or suppressed, the human character becomes deformed, unhealthy, narrow, and rigid. Paula serves as Cross’ case in point.

Shortly after Cross relates her theory about suppression, she has Paula meet Vincent, and he awakens her lover facet. Paula finds herself “swayed by some power that seemed quite new to her and beyond herself,” and “she linked her arms suddenly round [Vincent’s] neck and kissed him . . . in a quick, responsive, passionate fervor” (37). For the first time in her life, Paula’s lover facet emerges, manifesting itself through a passionate kiss. The narrator explains that “for one moment,” Paula had “been wholly natural, wholly herself. For one moment there had been no laws, no rules, no fashions, only just the leapings up of sweet, joyous natural impulses” (40). In this moment, Paula’s love, devoid of outside influences and social pressures, is associated with her nature.

But most of the time Paula dedicates herself to her artist facet. Paula has written a play in which she stars, and she wants it produced. When Paula dances, she becomes “drunk with the physical delight of it” and “it was impossible to restrain herself: the cells in her brain were glowing, the blood racing in her veins; she felt an irresistible sense of her triumph, the triumph of a thing perfectly accomplished, an art perfectly expounded” (47). Cross associates Paula’s artistry with Paula’s individual desires and success. As a dancer, Paula becomes “all artist, and the woman in her forgotten” (48). “Where her art was concerned, Paula was blind and deaf to all else,” and “her instincts fought savagely, unreasoningly for that, trampling on everything that rose in its path. . . . ‘For my play,’ she thought half unconsciously, as another woman might have said: ‘For
my child.’” (50–51). Likening Paula’s art to a mother’s child demonstrates how important Paula’s art is to her. It is her creation that she, in a sense, is trying to birth by getting it produced. Paula’s artistry dominates her character at the expense of other parts of herself.

After Cross introduces two facets of Paula, she shows that in Paula’s environment, she can only fulfill her lover facet or her artist facet. Cross uses Paula’s character to critique the Victorian society that creates either/or choices for women. Paula finds herself being forced to fulfill either her “Nature” by being with the man she loves or her artistic aspirations. As Lynn Pykett explains in *The “Improper” Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*, in Victorian society, women were primarily classified into one of two dichotomous categories: the proper, moral Angel in the House woman or the rebellious, immoral corrupt woman. Lyn Pykett identifies the “proper” Victorian woman as “the domestic ideal, or angel in the house; the madonna; the keeper of the domestic temple; asexuality; passionlessness; innocence; self-abnegation; commitment to duty; self-sacrifice; the lack of a legal identity; dependence; slave; victim” (16). Pykett identifies the “improper” Victorian woman as “a demon or wild animal; a whore; a subversive threat to the family; threateningly sexual; pervaded by feeling; knowing; self-assertive; desiring and actively pleasure-seeking; pursuing self-fulfillment and self-identity; independent; enslaver, and victimiser or predator” (16). Paula cannot be both a “proper” loving wife and an “improper” female artist who seeks success and pleasure.

Furthermore, based on Victorian theories about energy and the sexes, women had a limited amount of energy, which needed to be conserved for pregnancy and
motherhood and not “wasted” on other pursuits. In 1847, Hermann von Helmholtz published a pamphlet, “On the Conservation of Force,” which was quickly translated into English. He presented his ideas in a lecture series in the Winter of 1862–1863. He asserts, “the quantity of force which can be brought into action in the whole of Nature is unchangeable, and can neither be increased nor diminished” (Helmholtz). In *The Principles of Biology*, published in 1864, Herbert Spencer applies Helmholtz’s theory of the conservation of force to the differences of “vital” energy in males versus females and claims that females who study may reduce their chances for reproduction. He claims that “absolute or relative infertility is generally produced in women by mental labour carried to excess” and asserts that “the overtaxing [of upper-class girls’] brains” causes them to have a “deficiency of reproductive power” and “produce[s] a serious reaction on the physique” (*Principles* 485–486).4 Similarly, Henry Maudsley, in *Body and Mind*, published in 1870, asserts, “While woman preserves her sex, she will necessarily be feebler than man” (Maudsley 35). He explains, “The physical and mental differences between the sexes intimate themselves very early in life and declare themselves most distinctly at puberty: they are connected with the influence of the organs of generation” (Maudsley 35).5

Cross highlights Paula’s struggle as she decides what “type” of woman she will be and what part of herself will be suppressed. Reeves, the manager at the Halibury

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4 In his later work, *Study of Sociology*, published in 1873, Spencer boldly reinforces his claim: “That men and women are mentally alike, is as untrue as that they are alike bodily” (373). One difference, he argues, “results from the somewhat-earliest arrest of individual evolution in women than in men; necessitated by the reservation of vital power to meet the cost of reproduction” (373). Due to women’s stunted development, he claims that there is a “perceptible falling-short” of the emotional and intellectual faculties in women (373).

5 Familiar with Maudsley’s work, Charles Darwin in *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, first published in 1871, claims that men are evolutionarily superior to women both physically and mentally, and many of the changes that cause this differentiation take place during puberty (564–566).
Theater, will only produce Paula’s play if she marries him. Confronted with this choice, “A sense of helplessness and weariness of everything came over her” (Paula 69). As she considers Reeves’ offer, “She put her arm through Vincent’s, and let it lean there with a sense of exquisite pleasure. Could the success of any play, the triumph of any art, give her more than this? Art, success, triumph, may have their own rewards, their own pleasure; but the subtlest, keenest, sweetest, most satisfying joys remain forever locked in Nature’s hands” (76–77). The word “but” indicates that Paula’s desire to be an artist is set in opposition to her desire to be a lover. The pleasures and rewards that result from art are finite and, as indicated by the repetition of “their own.” On the other hand, the joy that results from love, which is part of Nature, is infinite and enduring. Paula admits to Vincent, “I belong to you wholly—all that part of me that’s human, much more than I shall ever belong to Reeves” (79). Despite Paula knowing that “Nature’s will” is for her to love and marry Vincent, she does not comply and her love is suppressed.

Reflecting on the Victorian notion that women can only be happy and fulfilled as “proper” women in the traditional Victorian role, Paula views her art as a gift that inevitably hampers any possibility of happiness. Paula asks Vincent, “Don’t you remember how I told you the first day I saw you how gifts are a handicap on the race of life? They are, if the goal is happiness; certainly they are. . . . You are born into the world already apprenticed as it were; your own will and desires go for nothing” (79). She explains that her gift as an artist takes priority over everything else in her life, including the “love” and “happiness” she might be granted if she were a “proper” woman. She goes on to explain that “when any gift is bestowed upon you the
irresistible impulse to use it is given too; that when by any divine power the brain is fertilized, it must produce, just as when a woman has once conceived she must bring forth” (79). Cross continues the birthing metaphor for Paula’s art and associates it with biological processes, suggesting that even though Paula is not creating children, she is creating something—her art. However, birthing art does not comply with Victorian standards for women, who should be birthing children since it was their nature to do so. Cross critiques this narrow Victorian gender role when she has Paula conclude that “There is no happiness for me—there can’t be” and explains that the gods who bestow gifts on people become jealous of them and “strike at the individual and his individual happiness” (80). Showing Victorian women’s limited choices and confined characters, Cross has Paula accept Reeves offer, feeling as though she is “selling [her]self” to him “because it was the necessary price” (81). When she tells Vincent, he warns her that she “can’t set aside [her] own nature” and marry a man who she does not love (82). But Paula “had already set aside her nature, resolved to trample on its impulses and disobey its laws” (82). Paula remains dedicated to her art and her artist facet.

This intense dedication forces her to sacrifice her nature, her love. With her dancing, Paula is “immovable, obdurate even to cruelty. There was but one way in which everything was to be done, every detail managed, and that was the right way. So Paula would have it done, and not otherwise” (83). The inflexibility in the words “immovable” and “obdurate” and the absolutism in the phrases “one way,” “everything,” “every detail,” and “the right way” emphasize the rigid standard Paula upholds with respect to her art. During her engagement to Reeves, who she views as “indispensable to the work,” Paula prepares for her play, and “In all these weeks she was wholly artist.
The woman seemed to have died in her when she parted with [Vincent]” (84). But Paula soon experiences the consequences of sacrificing her love.

Paula thinks about Vincent moments before she marries Reeves. She realizes that “She was about to break the greatest law of nature—the law that a woman shall mate only with the man she loves” (104). In this moment, images of Vincent appear to Paula and “A vast angry presence seemed with her in the room, threatening her. ‘How dare you, how dare you surrender yourself to another, when you are his—his by my will and my laws? My curse upon you forever and ever’. . . . It was the voice of Nature” (104). Cross portrays Nature as vengeful: “Nature was slowly, inexorably, resistlessly destroying the one who had dared to defy her commands” (115). Realizing her mistake, Paula admits to Vincent that “one’s art can not console one for breaking the first law of one’s nature” (118). In these descriptions, love is the most important, natural instinct for Cross’ characters, and the characters should respect and obey it. Denying one’s love results in denying one’s nature.

Paula’s suppression and sacrifice of part of herself, her love, result in her deterioration physically and mentally. As Paula has “the first full, awful realization of having made some great error,” she “felt as if an iron band were cutting into her forehead” and a “terrible, stifled agony” was “within her” making her feel as though she was “literally . . . going mad” (106–107). She tells Vincent, “I am dying; morally and physically” (116). Vincent “saw the hollows beneath [her] eyebrow bone, the hungry fierceness in the wide pupils, the hard, dragged look about the mouth; on it all was the impress, the seal of her thwarted, starved, and driven, but unconquered nature” (116–117). Paula acknowledges, “My cleverness is gone, like everything else” (121). She
falls ill and “knew what her illness was. It was the revenge of her outraged being. Her nature, that she dared to trample on, had risen and faced her now, and she knew it was stronger than she. . . . She had tried to subdue the great natural impulses, to crush them down and make them subservient to one artificial ingrafted desire” (121). Paula’s suppression of part of her character results in unhealthiness and deformity for her mind and body.

When Paula cannot bear the painful consequences of denying her love, she instead embraces it. She leaves Reeves and unites with Vincent. Paula and Vincent’s first kiss soon after they met “had been nature awakened,” and their reunion is “nature satisfied. Relief, infinite confidence and pleasure spoke in it. He felt the influence he possessed over her as he had never done yet, realized the absolute completeness of her love for him. There was no questioning now as she met him, no hesitation no asking for forgiveness. She had found herself, felt sure of herself at last” (136). In Cross’s schema, Paula’s love is an instrumental part of her character, her nature. Once Paula embraces her love, she finds momentary relief.

However, by leaving Reeves, Paula is forced to suppress her artistry, another important part of her character, and it wrecks havoc on her with a vengeance. Cross highlights restrictive Victorian either/or choices women must make. Reeves, a symbol of Paula’s artistry, threatens to kill Vincent if she does not return to him (and thus her artistry). Paula acquiesces. Upon returning to Reeves, Paula is as miserable as ever. On the surface, “[e]verything she did was mechanical, forced, and labored,” but “beneath” this “quiet unmoved exterior she carried a heart that was beating itself out in a blind fury of rebellion” and experienced episodes of “silent, violent crying” (164).
Outwardly, Paula acts mechanical and doll-like and goes through daily motions. Inwardly, Paula desires and burns, yearning to fulfill her love.

This suppression also causes her to escape into her dreams as a coping mechanism: “[S]he fell into an excited sleep, and suddenly the black waves of oblivion rolled apart, and through the gulf rushed up the past, which to her meant eleven happy days. Thenceforward she lived in the night only” (164–165). She dreams about the “eleven happy days” she spent with Vincent. Like several New Woman characters, Paula escapes into her dreams to cope with her unfulfilled, unhappy, unhealthy situation. The results of Paula’s suppression are palpable to her husband: “This was not his wife, not the woman he knew; never in all the days and weeks and months did she look like the one who was sleeping” (165). Paula’s desire to fulfill her love emerges when she sleeps, and her physical appearance changes. Reeves juxtaposes the mechanical, doll-like woman who simply exists during the day with the happy, fulfilled woman who lives in her dreams during the night. Cross demonstrates that prolonged suppression of any part of one’s character results in unhealthiness.

Even when Paula’s husband dies, Cross does not reward her for suppressing and sacrificing part of her character when he was alive. Rather, in the end, Cross has Paula make a second sacrifice to save Vincent’s life. Vincent needs a blood transfusion to survive his illness, so Paula provides the necessary blood knowing full well that she will likely die after the risky operation. On her deathbed, Paula ruminates on the life lessons she learned from Vincent: Her life could have been “different” if she had “but understood when he had told her once so gently that the duty of the human being is not to fight against and rebel against Nature, but to obey her; to try to understand her
commands, and follow them, not to presume to dictate terms to a deity” (216). She claims that Vincent had been wiser than she had been, with “her mad idolatry of the intellect and of her art. . . . She understood now, only she had learned it all too late” (216). Paula understands firsthand that suppressing any part of one’s character leads to the detriment of one’s body, character, and life. Paula finally understands that balance and moderation are key: One must be flexible and fulfill all aspects of one’s character. Unfortunately, as Cross makes clear, Paula’s society does not function in such a way to allow for women to exist fully and completely; instead it requires suppression and sacrifice. Shoshana Knapp claims that Paula’s “strength is devoted to rescuing [her] lover . . . through self-sacrifice” (“Revolutionary” 10). Even though Paula does exhibit strength when she saves Vincent’s life twice, this strength is limited. The first time, she can only save Vincent at the expense of her life metaphorically. The second time, she can only save Vincent at the expense of her life literally.

Paula is never explicitly rewarded for her two sacrifices. Rather, Paula is punished mentally, emotionally, and physically. Victoria Cross condemns traditional Victorian female sacrifice for a male lover in Paula. Furthermore, Paula and readers learn an important lesson from the female protagonist’s sacrifices: Suppressing part of one’s character can lead to an inflexible, narrow life that only requires more sacrifices and will likely result in physical and psychological deformity and death. However, relationships seem to require some type of sacrifice or compromise. Lasting bonds are often maintained by the participants giving something up to allow other participants to fulfill certain desires and to remain connected to each other. The key seems to be sacrificing in strategic ways to avoid suppressing parts of one’s character.
In “The Pleasure Pilgrim,” other characters forced Lulie into a narrow, rigid category that was inescapable. No matter what Lulie did, she was doomed to remain inextricably confined to the category others put her into. Even committing suicide, her final attempt at using an escape mechanism, failed. In *Paula*, societal constraints, specifically binary logic, and other characters forced parts of Paula to be suppressed. In the end, she was no better off than Lulie. Both female protagonists tragically sacrificed their lives.
CHAPTER 2
SELF-SUPPRESSION AND ITS DISCONTENTS: FROM SACRIFICE TO RUIN

Whereas Chapter 1 explored female protagonists who are suppressed by other characters and societal constraints, Chapter 2 explores how several late-Victorian authors show female characters suppressing themselves, including their emotions, despite the late-Victorian thought that emotions should not be suppressed, to demonstrate how exclusionary and narrow Victorian logic was. In several late-Victorian texts, female characters consciously and rigidly suppress facets of themselves. A shared pattern emerges and represents a broader pattern in late-Victorian literature: When a heroine is rigid and suppresses part of her character, whether it be to remain loyal to a particular ideology or to better fulfill another part of her character or self, it leads to physical, psychological, and emotional deformity, and even death. Thomas Hardy in Jude the Obscure (1895) concentrates on Sue Brideshead’s rigidity and suppression of sexuality and New Woman-ness. Olive Schreiner has Lyndall, her feminist heroine in The Story of an African Farm (1883), function inflexibly, suppressing wifedom and motherhood. Similarly, Victoria Cross has Anna in Anna Lombard (1901) suppress motherhood.

_Jude the Obscure_ (1895) by Thomas Hardy

Sue Brideshead, the main female character in Thomas Hardy’s _Jude the Obscure_, meets a horrific end by choosing rigidity and a narrow character when she suppresses parts of herself after experiencing a tragedy. _Jude the Obscure_ traces a young boy named Jude Fawley as he grows up, strives to educate himself, and becomes sidetracked by lust, love, and heartbreak. Arabella, Jude’s first wife, “catches” Jude when she claims to be pregnant with his child; however she turns out not to be
pregnant and leaves him. Jude soon meets his cousin Sue Brideshead, an interesting, intellectual New Woman with whom he falls madly in love. Even though Sue loves Jude, she marries Richard Phillotson, Jude’s old schoolteacher, who promises her a position as a schoolteacher. Sue eventually leaves Phillotson to be with Jude, whom she loves. She bears children with Jude but refuses to marry him. Society repeatedly rejects Sue’s and Jude’s family, and tragedy ensues.

Hardy’s portrayal of Sue Brideshead often takes center stage in the novel, eclipsing Jude. Hardy himself admitted in an 1895 letter, “Curiously enough, I am more interested in the Sue story than in any I have written” (One Rare 43), and he stated in another letter of the same year, “Sue is a type of woman which has always had an attraction for me, but the difficulty of drawing the type has kept me from attempting it till now” (Collected Letters 99). Hardy’s contemporary New Woman author George Egerton was similarly attracted to Sue. In a letter to Hardy, she wrote, “Sue is a marvelously true psychological study of a temperament less rare than the ordinary male observer supposes. I am not sure that she is not the most intuitively drawn of all your wonderful women. I love her, because she lives – and I say again, thank you, for her” (quoted in Dutta 65). Kathleen Blake describes Sue as “complex to the point of being irresistible, mystifying, or for some exasperating” (703). Along similar lines, Cedric Watts refers to Sue as “naturally intelligent and interested in ideas” (154), and Shanta Dutta thinks that Sue “is a fully drawn sketch” and a “mystic of her enigmatic personality” (70).

However, not all reviewers doted on Sue. In fact, some were horrified. As Kathleen Blake points out, in 1896 Yelverton Tyrell called Sue “an incurably morbid organism” (860). And decades later, in 1950, critic Desmond Hawkins referred to her as
“just about the nastiest little bitch in English literature” (17). Almost 60 years later, the mixed reviews of Sue’s character continue. While some critics still see Sue as a fascinating independent New Woman feminist, others view her as a weak, dependent woman who bows to convention. Roxanne Jurta claims that “Sue Bridehead does not seem at all the would-be strong and independent feminist for which she has been taken” (13). Similarly Elizabeth L. Knauer argues that “Sue appears neither modern nor strong, not a New Woman at all” (49).

As this debate about Sue rages on, one thing is certain: Scholars view Sue as an inconsistent, complicated character who is difficult to define. Sally Ledger states, “The references to Sue’s incoherent personality are numerous. . . . What the novel is all about, it seems to me, is that very instability of identity which has troubled so many readers” (183–184). Similarly, William A. Davis Jr. makes note of Sue’s “uncertainty” and acknowledges that a “charge of inconsistency . . . has been brought against Sue for the last one hundred years” (58, 67). Scholar Roxanne Jurta details this inconsistency when she explains that “Sue is characteristically flighty, inconsistent, and fickle, which seems to place her on the side of convention and traditional notions of the feminine,” but on the other hand, “she is intelligent, independent, and modern, which seems to situate her on the side of unconventionality and feminism” (16). Jurta highlights the problems with Sue’s character, which critics continue to grapple with.

Sue’s inconsistencies often result from parts of her character, namely her sexuality, being in conflict with other parts of her character, namely her New Woman-ness. She does not flexibly adapt to these conflicting facets. She attempts to adhere to a strict, narrow New Woman ideology that prizes female intellect and disparages female
sexuality and marriage. To remain true to this ideology, she tries to suppress and obstruct her emotional and sexual feelings for Jude through various defense mechanisms. Eventually, these mechanisms fail, and Sue releases her suppressed emotional and sexual desires for an extended period of time with Jude, bears him two children, and attains happiness. But tragedy quickly catapults Sue into a life of debilitating suppression and religious mania that prizes dogmatic doctrine and laws and disparages female sexuality and emotion.

Hardy first introduces Sue as an intelligent New Woman character. Soon after Jude and Sue meet, he says to her, “you don’t talk quite like a girl—well, a girl who has had no advantages” (Jude 117). Sue is not a stereotypical traditional Victorian woman. Rather, she views herself as “the negation of civilization” (117). Her education and consumption of books rivals that of semi-educated young men, including Jude (118). She has “no fear of men . . . nor of their books” (118). Her education allows her to “mix with” men “almost as one of their own sex” (118) and equally participate with them in philosophical and intellectual debates and discussions. Sue “was not exactly a tomboy . . . but could do things that only boys do, as a rule” (91). Jude describes her as a “riddle” (108) and her behavior as a “conundrum” (109). As a complex woman, she rejects simple, codified classifications and challenges gender stereotypes.

The words “bride” and “head” in Sue’s compound last name, Brideshead, exemplify the conflict Sue experiences throughout much of the novel. Sue subscribes to the narrow logic that she may be either a wife or an intellectual. For her the

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1 Despite the existence of some opposite views, sexuality and intellect were not typically mutually exclusive in New Women, but Sue takes an extreme (and minority) view, which only underscores her rigidity and inflexibility.
categories seem mutually exclusive. As a wife, Sue would be defined by two things: her husband and sex. She would take on her husband’s name and become his property. She would also have to consummate the marriage and become a sexual object. As an intellectual, Sue is defined by her intellectual vigor. Her relationships with men are based on intellectual pursuits rather than lust, and she is treated as an intellectual equal. Up to this early point in the novel, her choice to be an intellectual has allowed her to have purely intellectual relationships with men. She tells Jude, “I have never yielded myself to any lover. . . . I have remained as I began” (119) because she suppresses her “come on” glances (118). So far she has not been sexually attracted to the men she has interacted with as comrades; therefore, she easily ignores her sexual facet and is able to avoid romantic relationships with them. She even avoids a romantic relationship with her future husband, Phillotson, who makes a deal with her: He will send her to teacher training school, and they will eventually run their own school together if she agrees to marry him after her schooling. She agrees, purely out of her desire to further her intellectual pursuits; she is clearly not attracted to him and does not intend to consummate the marriage.

However, Hardy provides subtle hints that Sue is attracted to Jude during her engagement period to Phillotson. For example, when the training school oppresses Sue to the extent that “she had altogether the air of a woman clipped and pruned by severe discipline” (106), she sends Jude a “passionate letter” explaining how “lonely and miserable” she is at the teacher training school and asks him to “come immediately” (104). Sue turns to Jude for comfort and to abate her loneliness. She tells Jude that she “crave[s] to get back to the life of [her] infancy and freedom” (111). She soon runs
away from the training school and goes to Jude (114–115). Upon arriving, she is wet from crossing a river on her way to his apartment and says, “I’m so cold. . . . Can I come by your fire, Jude?” (115). Read literally, Sue’s request indicates that Jude provides warmth and protection for Sue. Read metaphorically, Sue’s request may indicate that Jude begins to thaw Sue’s sexuality, which has been “cold” and dormant up to this point; she begins to experience sexual desire for him.

During this meeting, Hardy foreshadows the flexible kind of relationship that Sue and Jude could have in terms of gender roles. Jude gives Sue his Sunday suit to wear so her clothes can dry. After she changes into it, Jude observes her “sitting in his only arm-chair” and “masquerading as himself on a Sunday” (116). To stop Sue from shivering, Jude gives her brandy to drink, which she “gulp[s] down” (116). The supper and tea Jude serves “fortified her somewhat,” and she became “bright and cheerful” (117). The traditional Victorian gender roles are reversed in this scene—Jude takes on the role of the woman, and Sue takes on the role of the man. Jude becomes the nurturing, domestic housewife and caregiver for Sue: He does laundry, serves her alcohol, meals, and tea, and creates a safe domestic space for Sue where she can rejuvenate and heal. Majorie Garber asserts that cross-dressing indicates a “category crisis” in which there is “a failure of definitional distinction” and “a borderline becomes permeable” (16). Through Sue’s cross-dressing scene, Hardy shows that stereotypical Victorian gender roles and definitions will not apply in a relationship between Sue and Jude. This flexibility exhibits a sense of equality and mutual respect between Sue and Jude. This scene also includes Sue’s first physical sign that she desires Jude. She
“blushed as [Jude] sat down beside her” (Hardy 116), responding to Jude’s close proximity.

This scene begins a series of interactions between Sue and Jude in which Sue vacillates between releasing her desire for Jude and suppressing it. That evening Sue tells Jude that in the past she had lived with an undergraduate in a platonic relationship. She sees that he is “depressed” and asks him with a “voice of such extraordinary tenderness,” “Aren’t you really vexed with me, dear Jude? . . . I would rather offend anybody in the world than you. . . . I care as much for you as for anybody I ever met” (119–120). Sue begins to reveal how much she cares for Jude. However, the next morning when Jude implies that he loves her, she responds, “You mustn’t love me” and quickly leaves him (124). To confuse the situation even more, Jude receives a letter from her the next day that says “If you want to love me, Jude, you may: I don’t mind at all; and I’ll never say again that you mustn’t!” (125). Sue wavers between sharing her feelings for Jude and suppressing them.

Sue’s vacillations between revealing and suppressing her desire for Jude intensify when Jude tells Sue that he is married to Arabella. Sue accuses Jude of being “cruel” by telling her about Arabella and says, “Here I have been saying, or writing, that—that you might love me, or something of that sort!—just out of charity—and all the time—O it is perfectly damnable how things are” (133). Sue is clearly upset about Jude’s revelation and feels slighted by him. When Jude “tried to take her hand,” Sue “withdrew it,” and “she was his comrade, friend, unconscious sweetheart no longer” (133). After hearing about Jude’s relationship with Arabella, Sue suppresses her desire for him. Jude asks, “Do you care for me, Sue?—you know how I mean—I don’t like ‘out
of charity’ at all!” (133). But “Sue did not choose to answer” (133), allowing her to avoid having to directly and verbally confront her desire for Jude. She shifts the focus to Arabella and asks, “I suppose she—your wife—is—a very pretty woman, even if she’s wicked? . . . Prettier than I am, no doubt!” (133). Sue reveals her jealousy when she focuses on Arabella’s beauty and then quickly undercuts it by mentioning Arabella’s evilness. Moreover, she subtly implies her desire to be Arabella, Jude’s wife, when she compares Arabella’s beauty with her own.

As Sue’s marriage to Phillotson approaches, Sue becomes bolder in showing her desire for Jude. When Sue and Jude meet right before her wedding, they shared a “mutual thought that it was the last opportunity they would have of indulging in unceremonious companionship” and “by the irony of fate, and the curious trick in Sue’s nature of tempting Providence at critical times, she took his arm . . . a thing she had never done before in her life” (138). Sue is the active agent who touches Jude in this scene. Yet despite Sue’s burgeoning feelings for Jude, she follows through with her marriage to Phillotson. She even asks Jude to give her away at her wedding, which he agrees to do. Sue stresses the familial connection between herself and Jude: She positions herself as Jude’s daughter, which increases the incest taboo and attempts to dissipate sexual feelings between them. She tries to use her marriage to Phillotson and her familial connections with Jude as defense mechanisms against her sexual attraction to him.

As a married woman, Sue has even more reason to suppress her feelings for Jude. Right after the wedding, she leaves her handkerchief in the Church and returns to find it, and Jude follows her. When they are alone, Sue “looked into his eyes with her
own tearful ones, and her lips suddenly parted as if she were going to avow something. But she went on; and whatever she had meant to say remained unspoken” (140). Her tearful eyes and parted lips that remain silent signal her suppression. Jude picks up on these non-verbal cues and “wondered if she had really left her handkerchief behind; or whether it were that she had miserably wished to tell him of a love that at the last moment she could not bring herself to express” (141). Up to this point, Sue has not yet verbalized her desire or love for Jude; she continues to remain silent.

Sue’s pattern of releasing and then quickly suppressing her desire continues the next time she meets Jude. When they meet, “by an unpremeditated instinct each clasped the other’s hand” (161), showing their mutual attraction for one another. They delve into conversation and soon Jude says, “Sue, I sometimes think you are a flirt” (162). In response, Sue immediately answers, “We mustn’t sit and talk in this way any more. Yes—you must go away, for you mistake me!” (162). Verbally, Sue splits up the “we” (her and Jude) into “you” and “me,” and this split mirrors her demand for him to leave her. The moment Jude verbalizes the possibility of Sue’s affection for him, she retreats.

Sue and Jude meet again when Jude’s aunt dies, and Sue retains her distance from him. “Her hand lay on the table, and Jude put his upon it” but “Sue drew hers away” (168), at this point still suppressing her desire for him. He tells her that the gesture was in friendship and that he has “no feelings of love left in [him]” since he has “seen Arabella” and plans to go back to her (168). Secretly, he hopes to illicit some sort of passionate response from Sue. She “winced at the hit” and asks “How could your heart go back to Arabella so soon?” (168). For the second time, Sue experiences
jealousy for Arabella, which seems to prompt her to finally reveal to him that it is “torture” to “live with [Phillotson] as a husband” and that she is “very miserable” (169). But she quickly warns, “Don’t come near me, Jude, because you mustn’t. Don’t—don’t!” (169). He goes to her anyway and says, “It all arose through my being married before we met, didn’t it? You would have been my wife, Sue, wouldn’t you, if it hadn’t been for that?” (169). Jude directly asks about Sue’s feelings for him. But “instead of replying she rose quickly and saying she was going to walk to her aunt’s grave in the churchyard to recover herself, went out of the house” (169–170). Sue falls into her same pattern: She reveals emotions to Jude and then immediately distances herself from him emotionally and literally by leaving.

The next morning, Sue’s pattern recurs. “Jude seized her hand and kissed it” and says, “Let me help you, even if I do love you, and even if you . . .” (171). She cuts him off and says, “Don’t say it!—I know what you mean; but I can’t admit so much as that. There! Guess what you like, but don’t press me to answer questions!” (171). Sue allows Jude to kiss her hand, but the moment he tries to profess his love for her, she stops him, perhaps in an attempt to suppress her own desires for him. Later that night, they are both drawn to the sound of a rabbit caught in a trap, and they meet through the window of Sue’s cottage. In another attempt to suppress her feelings for him, she says, “You must go in now!” (171). But then, “in a moment of impulse she bent over the sill, and laid her face upon his hair, weeping, and then imprinting a scarcely perceptible little kiss upon the top of his head” (171). She briefly succumbs and momentarily releases her desire for him, this time in an overtly physical way. However, she soon stops herself, “withdrawing quickly so that he could not put his arms round her. . . .” She shut
the casement, and he returned to his cottage” (171). Each time Sue interacts with Jude, she seems to follow this pattern.

When they part ways after Jude’s aunt’s funeral, Sue repeats her pattern again, this time more intensely. As they are about to leave each other, they feel “their tense and passionate moods” and “almost quarreled” about “how far their intimacy ought to go” (172). Specifically, Jude wants to kiss Sue goodbye. She wants his promise that “this kiss would be nothing” because “if in the spirit of a lover she could not permit it” (172). Jude refuses, and they walk away from each other. But they “quickly run back, and [meet], embracing most unpremeditatedly, kissed close and long,” and “when they parted for good it was with flushed cheeks on her side, and a beating heart on his” (172). Sue’s participation in this passionate outburst shows her desire for Jude. But soon after this episode, she vows to suppress her desire again and says, “I have been too weak, I think! . . . It was burning, like a lover’s—O it was! And I won’t write to him any more, or at least for a long time” (174). For each release of passion Sue has, there seems to follow an equal suppression of it.

As Sue’s desire for Jude increases, it seems as though her repulsion for Phillotson increases too. Soon after Sue returns from the funeral, she distances herself from Phillotson, with whom she has not consummated her marriage. Phillotson finds Sue sleeping in a “little nest” under the stairs in a closet (175), and on another night, Sue goes as far as jumping out a window (180) to get away from him. Sue asks her husband if she can live away from him, and he agrees. The day she leaves him, she meets Jude and says “O Jude! . . . I—I am so glad!” as “she clasped his hands with both hers,” and “her tense state caused her to simmer over a little succession of dry sobs”
Despite her excitement to see Jude, she does not give into her feelings for him entirely. When Sue finds out that Jude reserved only one room at the Temperance Hotel for them, she explains that she “delights in being with” Jude as a friend and an intellectual, and she does not “want to risk” what they have with “an attempt to intensify it” by having sex (192). Although she acknowledged that sex “was a risk to come” since she is a woman and Jude is a man, she “trust[s]” Jude “to set [her] wishes above [his] gratification” (192). Sue still experiences an internal struggle between her sexual facet and her intellectual facet and still subscribes to either/or logic. John Kucich explains that “the charged tension between forms of expression and forms of repression” can “together produce a kind of interminable emotional turmoil” (Repression 23). Sue clearly experiences this turmoil. As a New Woman, she tries to suppress her sexual desires and tries to maintain a rigid opposition to being defined as a sexual object.

At the same time that Sue suppresses her sexual desires, she claims to be passionate and sexual. She explains, “People say I must be cold-natured,—sexless. . . . But I won’t have it! Some of the most passionately erotic poets have been the most self-contained in their daily lives” (Jude 191). In her current Victorian society, Sue is able to elude being defined as a sexual object but only at the expense of her sexual agency and expression. After Jude hears her arguments against having sex, he replies that he thinks she is “incapable of real love” (191) and claims, “you [have] so little animal passion in you, that you can act upon reason in the matter, when we poor unfortunate wretches of grosser substance can’t” (205). Jude foregrounds that reason, not emotion, rules Sue. In Jude’s view, Sue has suppressed her sexual and emotional
desires to such an extent that he describes her as “a phantasmal, bodiless creature” who lacks carnal passion (205).

Several scholars differ on how they view Sue’s sexual desires. Michele Ren argues that Sue “apparently has no sexual desires” (121). On the other hand, William Deresiewicz claims that Sue “is a sexually passionate woman” whose “lack of desire for particular men is hardly evidence of a lack of desire in general” (60). Hardy would seem to have sided with Deresiewicz on this point. In a letter to Edmund Gosse, he explained that “there is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue’s nature. The abnormalist consists in disproportion: not in inversion, her sexual instinct being healthy so far as it goes but unusually weak and fastidious” (Collected Letters 99). Sue’s “healthy” sexual desire “weak[ens]” as she restrains it. Like other female characters we will encounter, Sue, argues Maria Antionietta Struzziero, “fears that being possessed sexually also entails being denied an autonomous identity” (470). Similarly, Deresiewicz claims, “Her physical desires pull her in one direction, her intellectual and social desires in the other” (60). Critics who view Sue simply as cold and sexless fail to see that she is caught in narrow New Woman either/or logic: Either Sue can act on her sexual desires or she can retain personal and intellectual autonomy. Based on this logic, Sue must sacrifice her sexual desires or her personal and intellectual freedom.

Only after Jude again prompts Sue’s jealousy of Arabella does she release her suppressed sexual desires for him and enter into a sexual relationship with him. At this point in the novel, Sue’s character becomes more flexible, as she allows herself to act on her sexual desires, which result in her happiness for several years. She bears Jude two children and becomes pregnant with a third child. However, she refuses to legally
marry Jude. Sue critiques the institution of marriage, “dread[ing]” that the “iron contract” would “extinguish” their “tenderness” for each other (Jude 204). After she is intimate with Jude, Sue’s rejection of her sexuality shifts to the rejection of legal wifedom. For a time, Sue and Jude live an intellectually, emotionally, and sexually happy life as unwed partners.

But Sue’s inflexibility makes this happy life short-lived. After Jude’s employer finds out that Jude and Sue are not legally married, Jude loses his job, and Sue cannot find lodgings for herself and her family. People who turn Sue away employ rigid either/or logic: Either Sue is a married pregnant woman who is morally upstanding and will be given shelter, or Sue is an unmarried pregnant woman who is not morally upstanding and will not be given shelter and must be punished. Sue’s rigidity in her refusal to not legally marry Jude and people’s subsequent judgment and treatment of Sue and her family in this Victorian society lead to devastation. Often referred to by critics as “the most depressing scene in Victorian literature,” Father Time, Jude’s alleged son by Arabella, attempts to help relieve the burden on Sue and Jude by murdering their children and committing suicide. During this pivotal scene in the novel, Hardy demonstrates that narrow either/or logic creates an utterly unhealthy society. Jil Larson explains, New Woman “heroines rarely escape punishment of emotionally crushing defeat of some sort, though this could be said to be a mark of the honesty of the fiction, a clear-eyed acknowledgment of all that thwarted even the most progressive of late-century women” and that in most cases “the punishing plot reveals not the author’s beliefs about what the New Woman’s fate should be, but his or her recognition of what it most often was” (161, 168).
As a response to the murder-suicide, Sue rigidly suppresses parts of herself, including her New Woman intellect, and punishes herself with the very religious rules she once rejected before tragedy struck. Sue says to Jude, “We ought to be continually sacrificing ourselves to the altar of duty! But I have always striven to do what has pleased me. I well deserved the scourging I have got!” (Jude 272). In the first sentence, Sue establishes a religious rule that “we”—everyone—should uphold and emphasizes its importance with an exclamation point. In the second sentence, she sets herself apart from “we” with the words “but,” “I,” and “me” and describes how she failed to uphold the rule set forth in the first sentence. In the third sentence, Sue accepts her punishment for not abiding by the rule and again emphasizes the importance of these consequences with an exclamation point. This thinking makes Sue tell Jude, “I don’t think I ought to be your wife—or as your wife—any longer” (274). Based on religious law, Sue claims that she “belong[s]” to Richard Phillotson “or to nobody” (274). Sue fears being punished more, so she decides to stop acting as Jude’s wife and return to Phillotson. Very clear, effective, either/or logic emerges: Either people follow the rules and are not punished, or they do not follow the rules and are punished. Hardy replaces Sue’s suppressive either/or New Woman logic with suppressive either/or religious logic and emphasizes its detrimental effects on Sue.

Sue forces herself to leave Jude and suppress her desire and love for him, which takes a toll on her physically. When she arrives at Mrs. Eldin’s, where she is to stay the night before her remarriage to Phillotson, Mrs. Eldin calls her a “poor little quivering thing” (291). “Poor” emphasizes Mrs. Eldin’s sympathy for Sue, who forces herself to abide by narrow religious rules that contradict her desires. Sue seems smaller and is
trembling, both physical signs of mental and emotional trauma and unhealthiness. These signs continue during Sue and Phillotson’s remarriage scene: “Chastened, world-weary, remorseful, nerves had preyed upon her flesh and bones and she appeared smaller in outline than she had formerly done” (292). Sue’s body diminishes physically, and she develops mental, emotional, and physical weariness when she suppresses her sexual desire and love for Jude. Hardy shows us that static, inflexible logic that requires suppression of basic elements of character leads to unhealthy consequences for those who subscribe to it.

In having Sue remarry Phillotson, Hardy demonstrates the negative results of the narrow, rigid logic Sue uses to define her character traditionally, similar to the narrow, rigid logic she used to define herself as a New Woman earlier in the novel. In the beginning of the novel, Sue is a critical, skeptical, analytical New Woman who revels in intellectual complexities. She rejects the traditional notion of woman as wife and mother, and she suppresses her sexual desires. At the end of the novel, Sue is a religious, dogmatic, fearful woman who views the world in absolute terms of right or wrong. She rejects reason, and she suppresses her intellect and her sexual and emotional desires. In both cases, Sue remains inflexible. Elizabeth Langland rightly observes, “Aspects of her character—Independence from traditional form and beliefs, emotional integrity, her sparkling intellect—are lopped off as if they had never existed” (24). The New Woman facet of Sue’s character we have come to know dies, and the Sue that remains upholds her duty as a religiously devout woman who remains unhappily married to a man she sexually detests. Phillip Mallett explains that Hardy “trace[s] the processes [of] the ‘forced suppression in some direction, unnatural
stimulation in others’, by which [Sue] is fitted into her role as a ‘woman” (197). Sue defines her relationship and her role as “woman” with Jude through love, affection and emotion. However, with Phillotson, she defines her relationship and her role as “woman” through religious law. Both as a New Woman and now as a religious zealot, Sue bows to rigid ideologies that confine and suppress her character. By remarrying Phillotson and having sex with him, Sue binds herself to a life of perpetual punishment and constant suppression.

Like several of his contemporaries, Thomas Hardy demonstrates the problems of narrowly defined selfhood and rigid ideologies through his heroine. He showcases the detrimental consequences Sue experiences when she suppresses parts of herself to remain loyal to her inflexible ideology. Larson rightly explains that Hardy “encouraged his readers to rethink conventional ideas about women and feeling, as difficult as that was during an age just beginning to understand women’s aspirations without fathoming how they could be realized” (170). Hardy does not provide Sue with an escape from her suppression; rather, like D’Arcy and Cross, he leaves his heroine to her fate.

But, unlike D’Arcy and Cross, Hardy arguably begins, through another character, to explore a potential solution to narrow suppressive character in a rigid society. In contrast to Sue, Arabella, a pig farmer’s daughter and Jude’s first wife, does not restrain or suppress her sexual desire; rather, she uses it to get what she wants and adapts her character to various situations. Hardy seems to have a complex relationship with this character. In many ways, he portrays her as a low-class, manipulative, despicable person who takes advantage of people and situations to better her own social and economic situation. Margaret Oliphant called her “a human pig” (139). However, Hardy
also portrays Arabella as a strong survivor. A few recent critics are more accepting of Arabella than Oliphant and see potential in her character. Maria Antonientta Struzziero describes Arabella as “vitaly dynamic, never defeated by even the bleakest circumstances, a sort of creative energy continuously searching for and finding new outlets, to insert the greatest possible indetermination into the flow of life” (468). Similarly, John R. Doheny calls her “a fine specimen of womankind” (71), and James M. Harding notes that Arabella “is by far the least self-destructive character in the novel and the most comfortable with her sexuality” (102). Arabella fully participates in marriage whereas Sue calls the institution of legal marriage “vulgar” (Jude 214). Unlike Sue, who views her sexuality as separate from legal marriage, Arabella views her sexuality as a means to marriage and thus financial security.

Arabella uses her sexual appeal to capture Jude. She metaphorically forefronts her sexuality in her first interaction with Jude when she throws a pig penis at him, and it hits him in the ear (34). Upon meeting him, she “gave, without Jude perceiving it, an adroit little suck to the interior of each of her cheeks in succession, by which curious and original maneuvre she brought as by magic upon its smooth and rotund surface a perfect dimple” (34). Arabella momentarily manipulates parts of her body, in this case her cheeks, to increase her sexual appeal. Michele Ren rightly points out that “Arabella is unafraid to act on her desires” (115), unlike Sue, who wavers back and forth between acting on and suppressing her desires. Similarly, John R. Doheny refers to Arabella as “a fully sensual, sexual woman, as no other woman in the novel is” (65). She actively pursues Jude as a potential lover and husband, and Jude becomes her passive object. Arabella manipulates Jude into marrying her. She has sex with him and becomes, or
claims to become, pregnant. As an honorable, responsible man, Jude marries her, only to find out after the wedding that she is not pregnant.

Arabella uses her sexuality and modifies her body to compete more generally in the marriage market. She wears false hair to increase her appeal, which she reveals to Jude only after their wedding. She “deliberately” and actively “unfastened” her hair, “stoked [it] out” and “hung” it on the mirror Jude purchased for her (Jude 50). Arabella is in control of her body, her desires, and her marriage. Arabella explains to Jude, “Every lady of position wears false hair—the barber’s assistant told me so” (50). In this scene, Hardy substitutes detachable false hair for Arabella’s real hair. We could read the scene, as Jude does, to be highlighting her false and deceitful nature. However, Hardy seems to suggest that there is more going on here. By giving Arabella detachable hair, Hardy draws attention to the use of a woman’s sexuality as a necessary commodity in the current marriage system. That she hangs her hair, her “sexuality,” on a mirror that Jude purchased for her indicates that women must hang their survival, including their financial security, on their husbands. Arabella believed that she “had gained a husband; that was the thing—a husband with a lot of earning power in him for buying her frocks and hats” (49). In this scene, it seems as though Arabella does not reveal her false, deceitful nature; rather, she truthfully reveals herself as she must be in order to function and survive in this marriage market. Indeed, when Jude is dying at the end of the novel, after Arabella has gotten him drunk and remarried him, she tries to “catch” another husband to secure her future and survival.

Arabella, for better or worse, is able to survive and function successfully in the current gender and marriage system. Ren observes that while “Sue Brideshead—the
novel’s New Woman . . . is labeled a fallen woman and is repeatedly thrown out of her various positions, Arabella continues to move about freely” (121). As opposed to Sue, who is all but physically dead at the end of the novel, Arabella is physically, emotionally, and mentally alive, and to some extent, thriving at the end of the novel. Lesley Goodman argues that by taking Arabella’s side, we are “choosing the side of life, freedom, [and] practicality” (173). Harding too acknowledges that the novel “miraculously creates a space for Arabella” (105). Hardy draws our attention to this independent, mobile female character who makes the rigid marriage system work for her. Arabella’s flexibility of character allows her to overcome several difficult circumstances as a lower-class pig farmer’s daughter, a young unwed pregnant woman, a divorcee, and a widow, just to name a few. Jude tells Sue, “you haven’t the least idea how Arabella is able to shift for herself (Jude 211). Perhaps Sue could learn something from Arabella. Although Arabella can never fully escape her socio-economic roots, she demonstrates how women can begin to escape narrow ideologies that suppress parts of their characters. With Arabella, Hardy begins to examine a potential means to accommodate complex, multi-faceted female selfhood while surviving in the current, unfair gender and marriage systems and while waiting for fairer gender and marriage systems to emerge.

The Story of an African Farm (1883) by Olive Schreiner

Unlike Sue, Lyndall, the heroine in Olive Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm never sacrifices or suppresses her feminist facet; rather, she suppresses
wifehood and motherhood to remain loyal to her rigid proto-New Woman ideology.\(^2\) Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) had passionate and polarizing contemporary reviews. On the positive side, an 1888 reviewer claimed, “it is a work with a fresh atmosphere and a novel horizon” (“New Books” 10), and a Lancashire working woman said of the novel, “I think there is hundreds of women what feels like that but can’t speak it, but she could speak what we feel” (First and Scott 121). Edith Ellis called the novel the “forerunner of the Woman’s movement” (1:42). The novel was reported in an 1894 issue of *The New York Times* as having such a “demand in England” that “it [was] necessary to print another edition of 5,000 copies, making in all 78,000 copies issued to date” (“Literary Notes” 3). However, on the other hand, an 1888 reviewer from *The Literary World* called the novel “almost entirely disagreeable” and states “this book will be read and talked about, but a great deal will not be missed by those who skip it” (“The Story of an African Farm” 263). In a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* in 1898, reader Julia G. Fisher asked the editor to explain “the special merits” of the novel that “had such great popularity” and explains that she is “much disappointed,” calling it “senseless drivel, leaving, so to speak, a most unpleasant taste in the mouth” (Fisher BR45). The editor answered these allegations and claimed the work “possesses novel features and has the merit of originality,” and it “inclines a reader to reflect seriously upon human conditions” (BR 45).

As part of these “human conditions,” Schreiner focuses intensely on the development of female character through Lyndall. The story takes place in the Karoo

\(^2\) Despite some views, being a wife and mother was not invariably incompatible with New Womanhood. Rather, Lyndall makes it so and unnecessarily takes an extreme and rigid approach. It is not a New Woman problem but an identity problem.
region of South Africa and follows the lives of Lyndall and Waldo from childhood to young adulthood. Waldo, an intense dreamer, embarks on a spiritual journey in which he contemplates the existence of God. Lyndall, a fierce intellectual, follows her passion for the woman's cause. She becomes pregnant and, fearing the loss of her freedom, refuses to marry her lover. After Lyndall gives birth to a child who only lives for a few days, she slowly deteriorates and dies. Schreiner highlights the importance of Lyndall's 17-year-old character in a letter: “If she had been a full grown woman of twenty or twenty two, the book couldn’t have been written” (quoted in Monsman 595). ³ Schreiner reasons that “Lyndall at 20 would have been much too wise to act as she did, & a fair-haired blue-eyed Lyndall would have been impossible, because then her character would have been different!” (595). Schreiner points out that Lyndall being just a few years older would have drastically changed her character. But Schreiner withholding exactly how Lyndall and her ideologies and life choices would be different at age 20.

In recent decades, many scholars have viewed Lyndall as a proto-New Woman character, but they do not fully explore or speculate about how Lyndall’s character functions in her current society to make the novel possible. Elaine Showalter calls Lyndall “the first wholly serious feminist heroine in the English novel . . . who is not patronized by her author” (*Literature* 199). Sally Ledger claims Lyndall “is unmistakably a prototype New Woman” (2). Ruth Klevansky calls Lyndall “a solitary figure” who “retain[s] a fierce independence of spirit” (19). Wim Tigges states that Lyndall “is unfemininely self-willed (even self-centred) and rebellious” (200). Most scholars agree that Lyndall is strong and, for the most part, consistent in her character as an

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³ Gerald Monsman cites this letter in “Olive Schreiner: Literature and the Politics of Power” and specifies that this “undated letter to W.P. Schreiner” is in the “Olive Schreiner Collection, University of Cape Town Libraries (Manuscript and Archives Department reference BC 16), Leaf 2 recto” (609).
independent, intellectual, freedom-chasing woman, unlike the notoriously inconsistent Sue Brideshead. But scholar Bill Bolin offers a slightly different view when he calls Lyndall “the tyrant” (6). “The tyrant” usually contains negative connotations, but, to a large extent, it can also coincide with scholars’ views of Lyndall as a strong character who remains fiercely loyal to her convictions in a society that expects women to be traditional, dutiful Victorian wives and mothers. This strong, unbending connotation also emerges in “Ralph Iron,” Schreiner’s pseudonym under which she published *The Story of an African Farm* in 1883. Several scholars attribute the pseudonym “Ralph” to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s influence on Schreiner. Showalter explains that Schreiner was “paying homage to her favorite philosopher” by choosing the pseudonym Ralph and the characters Waldo and Em (*Literature* 199). Showalter also speculates that “Iron” indicates Schreiner’s “tone would be ironic” in the novel (199). But perhaps “Iron” draws attention to 17-year-old Lyndall’s unyielding iron will and rigidity as a character who responds in kind to the rigid, iron-like societal expectations she rebels against. Perhaps this relationship of rigidity between the young iron-willed Lyndall and unbending society makes this novel possible.

Rather than reign her iron will over others, Lyndall reigns her iron will over herself when she polices her own character to meet narrow feminist ideals. To remain loyal to intellectual, independent proto-New Woman-ness, she suppresses parts of her character, including wifehood and motherhood. This suppression leads to detrimental consequences. Like Sue, Lyndall physically and mentally deteriorates, and like Lulie, Lyndall dies.
As a young educated woman, Lyndall dedicates herself to feminist ideology and the position of women. She proclaims to Waldo that the position of women is “the only thing about which I think much or feel much—if, indeed, I have any feeling about anything (Story 138). Lyndall’s proclamation functions in two ways: First, it shows that Lyndall is not the stereotypical Victorian woman who is ruled by her feelings; she is not fickle and emotional. Second, it shows that she is, instead, a focused, rational, intellectually rigorous thinker. Lyndall ruminates on the unhealthy consequences that result from the human-manufactured woman’s sphere. She parallels a woman fitting into the woman’s “sphere” to “a Chinese woman’s foot fit[ting into] her shoe, exactly, as though God had made both” (142). But, she claims, God “knows nothing of either” (142). By using the phrase “as though,” Lyndall draws attention to the misconception that God created the woman’s sphere and Chinese women’s shoes. Rather, she claims humans constructed both. She suggests that women suppress facets of themselves to fit into the human-manufactured sphere; similarly, Chinese women bind their feet to fit into their human-manufactured shoes. These acts of suppression cause “the parts” women were “not to use” to “atrophy[y],” and, in some cases, to “drop . . . off” (142). To cover these withered limbs, Lyndall explains, “We wear the bandages, but our limbs have not grown to them; we know that we are compressed, and chafe against them” (142). This “chaf[ing]” suggests that constriction leads to ongoing pain and discomfort. In her 1880 article “What Women Want. A Spirit of Unrest Has Taken Possession of Us,” Jane Hume Clapperton similarly asserts, “so long as society requires of any woman to be ornamental merely and not actively useful, these unfortunates will be stunted in growth and balked of their natural development” (2). Schreiner, through
Lyndall, and Clapperton suggest that women must compress and suppress facets of themselves in order to be traditional Victorian women. However, some Victorian women, such as Lyndall, also suppress parts of themselves to fit their strict expectations of being proto-New Women and New Women.

As part of her proto-New Woman ideology, Lyndall argues that women are often suppressed and exploited in marriage. Lyndall explains to Em, “marriage without [love] is the uncleanliest traffic that defiles the world” (Story 143). She argues that love should not be “bought or sold” like a commodity or “a means of making bread” (147). She explains that if women were allowed to work, they would not depend on marriage for financial security. During this same discussion, Lyndall describes “a man’s love” to Em as “a fire of olive-wood” that “leaps higher every moment; it roars, it blazes, it shoots out red flames; it threatens to wrap you round and devour you—you who stand by like an icicle in the glow of its fierce warmth” (137). Lyndall refers to man and his love six times in this short passage whereas she refers to woman only half as many times. Moreover, the references to man’s love come first in her description whereas the references to woman come last. A short, powerful verb—“leaps,” “roars,” “blazes,” “shoots,” “threatens,” and “devours”—follows each reference to a man’s love. Women exist as passive objects and are consumed by men’s aggressive, active, dangerous love. In Lyndall’s view, men’s love dominates women in traditional marriage. Lyndall explains to Em, “I am not in so great a hurry to put my neck beneath any man’s foot” (138). For her, as proto-New Woman, the marriage contract confines women and dangerous gives control of their lives to their husbands.

4 Schreiner’s description of man’s love echoes Charles Kingsley’s description of “thumos” that, according to David Rosen, Kingsley identified as “the fiery source of manhood, from which sanctified, fierce male behavior arises, as like lava from primitive volcanic roots” (30).
Lyndall experiences harsh consequences when she explicitly makes life choices to rigidly uphold her proto-New Woman ideology and suppress wifedom. Lyndall’s lover R.R warns her, “It is all very well to have ideals and theories; but you know as well as anyone can that they must not be carried into the practical world” (184). But Lyndall rejects the advice R.R gives her. She becomes pregnant, runs away with R.R. but refuses to marry him, and eventually leaves him. He writes to her, “Let me come back to you! My darling, let me put my hand round you, and guard you from all the world. As my wife they shall never touch you. I have learnt to love you more wisely, more tenderly, than of old; you shall have perfect freedom. Lyndall, grand little woman, for your own sake be my wife!” (219). Lyndall’s lover claims she will have “perfect freedom,” but he undercuts this claim in two ways. First, he identifies himself as the subject and demeans Lyndall when he subordinates her as a “little” object. He holds the action whereas Lyndall receives his actions, affection, and protection. Second, he urges Lyndall to marry him for her own social protection. If she depends on him for protection, then she is not perfectly free. He critiques the only action he attributes to her when he asks, “Why did you send that money back to me? You are cruel to me; it is not rightly done” (219). Lyndall rejects her lover’s attempt to secure her financially when she sends his money back to him. He reprimands and judges her and victimizes himself. To live up to her strict proto-New Woman ideology, Lyndall must reject any dependence on a man and avoid infringements on her freedom.

Several New Woman writers debated the Marriage Question in essays, novels, and short stories. Mona Caird’s 1888 essay “Marriage,” published in the Westminster Review, critiqued the current state of marriage and argued for equality in marriage. The
*Daily Telegraph* responded to Caird’s essay with a series titled “Is Marriage a Failure?” that generated thousands of responses from readers. George Egerton’s short story “Virgin Soil” (1894) showcases marriage as suffocating and psychologically and physically deforming for Florence, a young newlywed. Five years after being married, Florence, once a “fresh girl” but now a “hollow-eyed, sullen women” returns to her mother and tells her that “marriage becomes for many women a legal prostitution, a nightly degradation, a hateful yoke under which they age, mere bearers of children conceived in a sense of duty, not love” (151, 155). Casey Althea Corthran explains that “New Woman writers openly claimed that marriage confined women to a limited space of education and experience, forced them to abandon their identities as individuals, and required them to participate in monotonous and demoralizing domestic activities” (4). Lyn Pykett explains that the Marriage Question became “increasingly problematic” and “more polarised” during the second half of the nineteenth century: “At one extreme marriage was seen (by both feminists and anti-feminists) as woman’s highest or most natural calling. At the other it was a form of slavery or legalised prostitution” (144). Many New Woman writers found themselves somewhere in between these two extreme views. Stephanie Forward explains that the majority of reformers, Schreiner included, “did not advocate abolishing marriage as an institution; rather they hoped to transform it by promoting the ideals of equality and freedom of choice” (53). While several proto-New Woman and New Woman writers criticized the current state of marriage in their essays and fiction, they sought to uplift the state of marriage rather than abolish it.

Olive Schreiner, like many New Woman writers, positioned herself as an advocate for marriage reform. In a letter written in 1889, Schreiner reported, “I think
marriage is much the highest condition physically and mentally, though it is not attainable by many of us in the present condition of society. . . . To help any woman to be independent, that is the real Secret of Freedom" (Olive 145). Schreiner argued that a woman’s financial independence and free choice in marriage are instrumental.\(^5\) 

In an 1893 letter, Schreiner pointed to the problematics of traditional Victorian marriage, calling it “a barbarous relic of the past, too primitive and crude and narrow, for the latest men and women to work into it” (229).\(^6\) She viewed traditional Victorian marriage as suppressive and advocated a reconfiguration of marriage that included absolute love. In an 1895 letter, Schreiner asserted that Lyndall, “that poor little child of seventeen tried [to] make right her terrible mistake, and nobly refused to marry a man she did not absolutely love”; furthermore, she claimed that “Lyndall, small child that she was, felt what a sacred and deathless thing true marriage should be that she refused to save her reputation by binding herself for ever to that man” (260). Opposed to temporary unions, Schreiner simultaneously criticized Lyndall for her “terrible mistake” and praised Lyndall for her rejection of R.R, whom Lyndall did not completely love. Schreiner has Lyndall reject marriage to R.R. as a possible remedy to Lyndall’s mistake. Through this rejection, Schreiner valorizes what she thinks Victorian marriage should be—an equal, loving, sacred, loyal relationship between a man and a woman—and demeans what

\(^5\) Schreiner, who was supposed to write a preface to Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), wrote to Karl Pearson in 1886 that she wanted to show the “greatness” in Wollstonecraft’s progressive “view with regard to marriage,” specifically her views of “sex and sex relationships,” and “her action with regard to it” (78). In A Vindication of the Rights for Women, Wollstonecraft argued for the education of women and critiqued the inequalities women experience marriage. She asserted that educating women will lead to happier, more fulfilling marriages, better citizens, and a healthier society overall. Schreiner is also influenced by John Stuart Mill who she called “the purest and greatest soul God has yet given the English Race” (277). In “The Subjection of Women” (1869), John Stuart Mill compared a woman’s position in marriage to that of a slave.

\(^6\) Despite Schreiner’s critiques of marriage and her letter to Havelock Ellis in 1886 claiming that she “shall not marry,” she married Samuel Cronwright in 1894 (72).
Victorian marriage often ends up being, an unequal relationship between a man and woman who do not love each other absolutely.

When Lyndall rejects R.R.’s marriage proposal, she rejects financial security, social protection, and emotional support from him. She responds to his letter by writing, “It cannot be. . . . I thank you much for the love you have shown me; but I cannot listen. . . . I know what I need and the kind of path I must walk in. I cannot marry you. . . . I must know and see, I cannot be bound to one whom I love as I love you. I am not afraid of the world—I will fight the world” (Story 219). Lyndall establishes her agency in this short response when she uses “I” twelve times; it often comes first in the sentence and shows that Lyndall holds the action in her response and in her life. In her rejection of his marriage proposal, “I cannot marry you,” she retains the subject position and subordinates her lover to the object position. Lyndall’s answer is the negative version of Jane Eyre’s famous declaration, “Reader, I married him.” Both Lyndall and Jane declare agency in their utterances, but Lyndall remains fearful that marriage will confine her, unlike Jane who either overcomes or suppresses similar fears by the end of the novel. Gerald Monsman explains, “Having become wedded to the Possession of her own liberty, [Lyndall] cannot acknowledge the practical reasons for marriage in raising her baby” (595). Rather, Lyndall chooses her own freedom over the possible benefits of marriage. Lyndall’s logic requires her to reject threats to her personal freedom, including wifedom.

For Lyndall, motherhood, like wifehood, hinders a woman’s freedom. Lyndall tells Waldo, “I would not like to bring a soul into this world” and explains, “If it lived to be eighty it would always hang like a millstone round my neck, have the right to demand
good from me, and curse me for its sorrow” (Story 159). In Lyndall’s view, a child burdens its mother and controls her time, energy, and effort. Lyndall argues that a child has an unbreakable bond with its mother that allows it to demand help and love from her and blame her for its failures and sadness. She views a child as a curse, like the albatross that hangs around the neck of the narrator in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” marking her and impeding her freedom as an individual. Lyndall sets herself apart from the “other women,” the traditional wives and mothers, who are “glad of such work” (138). For Lyndall, motherhood, similar to wifehood, equates to consuming, ongoing, and inescapable responsibilities for a woman that come at the expense of her personal freedoms.

Relationships to motherhood are complicated for late-nineteenth century New Women writers and feminists. Aselda Josefa Thompson explains that for some New Women writers, motherhood “hindered feminist goals,” for others, it was “an important duty,” and for some motherhood “transcend[ed] the role of woman” (40). But late-Victorian feminist critics often generalized and simplified these complicated, diverse views and claimed that the New Woman threatened to demolish the human race due to her rejection of motherhood. Ann Heilmann explains that anti-feminists feared “the demise of motherhood” (New Woman Fiction 141). Similarly, Sally Ledger explains, “The feeling was, amongst supporters of the establishment, that Britain’s women urgently needed to raise up a strong British ‘race’ in order to sustain the nation’s (supposed) supremacy, and the New Woman was construed (or constructed) as a threat to this national need” (18). Some New Women writers rejected traditional motherhood, but many, like George Egerton and Olive Schreiner, valorized it. Schreiner
wrote in one of her letters that “having a child” is “the one compensation the Gods give woman for being woman,” and she is saddened when “thinking [she] shall have to live all [her] life alone” and “never have a child” (Olive 202).7

Schreiner herself praises motherhood whereas Lyndall’s proto-New Woman ideology requires her to practically, not just ideologically, reject motherhood. At times, Lyndall finds it difficult to suppress her motherly tendencies. Three hours after Lyndall gives birth, her child dies. She speaks about her child’s death to Gregory, who disguises himself as a female nurse. In “an uneven trembling in [her] voice” Lyndall narrates the brief life of her child: “It crept close to me; it wanted to drink, it wanted to be warm” (Story 218). Lyndall distances herself from her child when she refers to the child as “it.” But she immediately acknowledges the basic needs of her child: human bonds, food, and shelter/warmth. By recognizing these needs, she already begins to fulfill her role as the child’s mother. She explains to Gregory, “its feet were so cold; I took them in my hand to make them warm, and my hand closed right over them they were so little” (218). Lyndall’s response to her child’s cold feet subtly demonstrates her desire to be a mother and her ability to nurture and meet the needs of her child, main characteristics for traditional Victorian mothers. Lyndall does not narrate the death of her child, perhaps because it is too painful, but she refers to the child after it is dead. She asks Gregory to “take” her “new grey cloak” and “cover” the “little grave” with it (218). Even after the child’s death, Lyndall nurtures the child and keeps it warm. She also reflects on what might have happened before her child was buried: “They [the

7 Sally Ledger explains that “After the death of her first child, Schreiner—who had three further miscarriages—came to feel hostile towards women who bewailed the burden of motherhood, when other women, like herself, would give almost anything to have a healthy child. Schreiner came to believe that women who had children should feel they were the recipients of a great reward” (77).
people who buried the child] might have kissed it, one of them, before they put it in. It never did any one any harm in all its little life. They might have kissed it, one of them” (218). Lyndall’s repeated desire that someone kissed her child before it was buried demonstrates her compassion for the child, another main characteristic for traditional Victorian mothers. She also notes that the child was not being punished for sinning; rather, it was taken as an innocent soul. This innocence likely increases Lyndall’s feelings of loss and compassion for her child, feelings she must try to suppress to remain loyal to her ideology.

Lyndall exemplifies several conflicting personal and political tensions surrounding feminists’ relationships to motherhood, and in the end, she must reject motherhood, as the particular version of the feminist ideology she subscribes to dictates. Lyndall creates defense mechanisms against her motherly desires for her child, like Sue who creates defense mechanisms against her sexual desires for Jude. Lyndall quickly “harden[s] herself” to her desires to care for her child and declares, “I did not love it; its father was not my prince; I did not care for it; but it was so little” (218). To counter her desires to mother her child, Lyndall asserts her own agency with two harsh, rigid declarations that emphasize her supposed lack of motherly emotions for her child. Even though these two declarations are interspersed with two other, less harsh declarations—a justification about her lack of motherly emotions and a sympathetic observation about the small size of the child—in the end, Lyndall maintains her loyalty to her ideology and rejects motherhood. Ann Heilmann explains that New Woman characters responded to the societal “pressures” to be a wife and mother in different ways: “Some heroines marry and have children, and then start to rebel; others rebel by
rejecting motherhood altogether, or by developing alternative models of mothering which place them in conflict with society” (*New Woman Fiction* 144). Although Lyndall is clearly conflicted, for her, upholding proto-New Woman ideology means rejecting motherhood.

Lyndall experiences several compounding negative psychological consequences from suppressing parts of herself as she attempts to live up to rigid feminist ideals. At the foot of the old German’s grave, she breaks down, admitting, “I am so tired! . . . I am so tired . . . why am I alone, so hard, so cold? I am so weary of myself! It is eating my soul to its core—self, self, self! I cannot bear this life! I cannot breathe, I cannot live! Will nothing free me from myself?” (*Story* 188). During Lyndall’s rant, an omniscient narrator briefly intercedes, noting, “(for we will come to the dead to tell secrets we would never have told to the living)” (188). With this intercession, Lyndall’s impassioned exposition becomes a scene of genuine confession. She confesses her secret feelings of frustration, alienation, and suppression to the deceased old German. Lyndall admits that the inflexible life she tries to lead causes her mental exhaustion and loneliness. By believing in and following proto-New Woman ideology, Lyndall was supposed to free herself from the feelings of restraint caused by adhering to the traditional Victorian female ideology. However, this “free” life as a proto-New Woman also causes her to experience intense feelings of suffocation and restraint, to such an extent that she proclaims she “cannot live!” (188). She repeats, “I am so cold, so hard, so hard” and asks, “will no one help me?” (188–189). Being a staunch follower of feminist ideology causes Lyndall to become “cold,” “hard,” and alone. John Kucich explains that suppression can bind a “collective” together, but it can also create “an isolated
subjectivity” and a “displacement of fusional desire” (Repression 27, 30). Lyndall experiences both: She is bound to the collective proto-New Woman community, but she is also isolated from loving familial relationships. To remain loyal to her feminist ideology, she must remain independent. Like Kucich, Cothran makes an important point when she notes, “the New Woman was, by general definition, a solitary figure” (13). As the passage above suggests, Lyndall, an independent, solitary figure, yearns for help and support. She confesses, “I want to love!” (Story 188). The ideology Lyndall follows prevents her from forming loving parental and spousal bonds.

Lyndall’s loneliness manifests itself in the fragmentation of her character, another result of her rigidity and suppression of character. She looks into the mirror and asserts, “One day I will love something utterly, and then I will be better” (189). This time confessing her secrets to herself instead of to a grave, Lyndall reiterates that something is wrong with her—she is “hard,” “cold,” and lonely—and reasons that love will cure her. She speaks to her reflection in the mirror, “We are all alone, you and I . . . no one helps us, no one understands us; but we will help ourselves” (189). Lyndall’s references to herself as “we,” “us,” and “ourselves” signal her fragmented character. Ann Heilmann theorizes, that “In New Woman fiction, the mirror does not induce the discovery of a personal identity, nor does it serve to affirm a deviant identity . . . instead, it marks the recognition of self-alienation” (New Woman Fiction 168). Lyndall experiences this “self-alienation”; she feels isolated and alone. Lyndall’s fragmented character serves as a coping mechanism: Since she does not have guidance or help from other people, she

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8 Ann Heilmann explains that “Almost half a century before the mirror stage was first theorized by Lacan and Freud, New Woman writers introduced a feminist version of the alienated self. Like other social-problem novelists of the time, they attributed the split self to the existing social conditions, suggesting that collective action pointed a way out of self-fragmentation” (167).
utilizes parts of herself to guide and help other parts. Lyndall continues to talk to herself in the mirror, “We shall never be quite alone, you and I . . . we shall always be together” (Story 189). Lyndall compensates for her loneliness and creates a support system within herself to some extent.

Lyndall’s suppression of wifehood and motherhood and the loneliness she experiences after the death of her child cause her to become irrevocably sick. The landlady at Lyndall’s hotel tells Gregory that Lyndall would not leave her child’s grave, and “[w]hen she did, she had gone to bed and had not risen again from it; never would, the doctor said” (211). The death of Lyndall’s child would supposedly erase, or at least silence, motherhood as a problem in the text. Without a living child to care for, Lyndall would supposedly not have to suppress the mother part of her character. But, as Nancy L. Paxton observes, “Motherhood—with its specter of mortality—remains in African Farm the unsolvable problem for Schreiner” (571). Clearly, Lyndall’s child, although dead, still haunts her, which takes a toll on her body. Physically, Lyndall has become a “shrunken little body,” and Gregory “could feel its weakness as he touched it” (Story 213). Gregory describes Lyndall lying in bed as having “a little white, white face, transparent as an angel’s with a cloth bound round the forehead, and with soft hair tossed about on the pillow” (212). Lyndall’s pale, transparent face indicates physical weakness and frailty. The landlady explains to Gregory, “We had to cut [her hair] off. . . . Soft as silk” (212). When a Victorian heroine has her hair cut off, it usually signifies a loss of innocence, such as the loss of virginity. For Lyndall, Ann Heilmann

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9 The cutting off of Victorian female characters’ hair can also be used as a mark of shame or humiliation and economic status. In Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre Mr. Brocklehurst cuts of Julia’s hair to mark her status as lower class. Or the cutting off of hair may be a mark of independence and the gaining of knowledge, as in George Eliot’s The Mill on the Floss when Maggie takes the scissors into her own hands.
argues, “The loss of her long hair (the sign of her adult femininity, the equivalent of his beard) reflects . . . a loss of sex, even a mutilation” (*New Woman Strategies* 143). While I agree with Heilmann, I think the cutting off of Lyndall’s hair signifies her deterioration more generally. She transforms from a physically healthy, active, strong, rational, intellectual proto-New Woman who lives her ideology faithfully, into a physically and psychologically unhealthy, weak, deteriorating woman who cannot get out of bed. Lyndall’s “tossed about” tresses represent her fragmented character: They represent the parts of herself she attempted to prune away when she suppressed them in order to remain loyal to a strict ideology.

Intense psychological pain accompanies Lyndall’s physical pain. Lying in bed, she tells Gregory, “Other people hurt me when they touch me . . . they hurt me so” (*Story* 213). Lyndall experiences physical pain as well as emotional pain when others “touch” her physically or emotionally. Due to her ideology, she has not allowed herself to create intense, dependent emotional attachments with others. When others, such as her lover and baby, “touch” her and threaten her independence and loyalty to her proto-New Woman ideology, she experiences psychological and physical pain. This pain functions as a defense mechanism to keep Lyndall isolated from other people. It exists because she insists on suppressing particular facets of herself that yearn for love and human connections.

Margaret Lenta suggests that “the absolute separation which [Lyndall] makes between sexual satisfaction and love is causing a split in her own personality” (43). Lenta makes an important point about Lyndall’s split personality. But Lyndall is not split and, with the help of her brother, chops off her own hair.
because of the separation she makes between sex and love; rather, parts of her character are in conflict throughout the novel. Lyndall suppresses certain facets of herself that are not part of the proto-New Woman ideal she subscribes to. While proto-New Women and New Women are able to have fulfilling friendships and companionships, like Sue had with a college student, they are, at times, discouraged from finding loving connections through wifehood and motherhood. Alone and isolated, Lyndall struggles immensely with her agonizing pain, “I cannot bear any more, not any more. . . . Oh, God, God! Have I not borne in silence? Have I not endured these long, long months? But now, now, oh, God, I cannot!” (Story 214). As a tortured martyr who has suffered in silence for her cause, Lyndall can only endure pain for so long.

The pain and loneliness become unbearable, so she momentarily escapes into a hallucination, a key mechanism several proto-New Woman and New Woman characters utilize to cope with their unhealthy, miserable situations. She ruminates “in a voice strangely unlike her own” on the lesson she has learned in her life:

I see the vision of a poor, weak soul striving after good. It was not cut short, and in the end it learnt, through tears and much pain, that holiness is an infinite compassion for others; that greatness is to take the common things of life and walk truly among them; that”—She moved her white hand and laid it on her forehead—“happiness is a great love and much serving. It was not cut short; and it loved what it had learnt—it loved—and—” (220–221)

This passage reads like Lyndall’s wisdom-filled deathbed confession. She takes on a different voice and a different perspective, as though she is viewing herself—her soul—outside of herself. She highlights her emotional life lessons when she speaks of compassion, love, and serving as happiness. She signifies her intellectual facet when she puts her hand on her forehead. Lyndall juxtaposes her emotional life lessons with
her intellect. She tries to convince herself that her life has not ended early because she learned these lessons and loved them. But the passage cuts off at a telling moment: a connecting word followed by a dash and nothing else provides a non-ending to the subject of love. This unconnected connecting word symbolizes Lyndall’s isolation and loneliness. She did not love or serve as a wife and mother. Ruth Klevansky sums up Lyndall’s lesson succinctly when she asserts, “Finally she recognizes that devotion to self is a form of imprisonment” (21). Furthermore, Lyndall recognizes that devotion to narrow, rigid ideology is a form imprisonment. She will leave the world without being connected to anyone.

In the end, Lyndall sacrifices her life to her feminist ideology and finally succumbs to her pain and exhaustion. With her “stiff” “cold” fingers and “white face,” Lyndall pulls a glass before her, lays her head on a pillow, and looks into the glass:

The dying eyes on the pillow looked into the dying eyes in the glass; they knew that their hour had come. She raised one hand and pressed the stiff fingers against the glass. They were growing very stiff. She tried to speak to it, but she would never speak again. Only the wonderful yearning light was in the eyes still. The body was dead now, but the soul, clear and unclouded, looked forth. (Story 224)

Scholars read Lyndall’s death differently. Carole Gerson claims that Lyndall’s death “seem[s] without necessary cause other than the wilting of [her] spiritual strength to continue” (70) whereas Ann Heilman claims, “It is the agony of guilt about not having ‘cared’ enough for her child, and thus having precipitated its death, which is at the heart of Lyndall’s suicidal self-erasure” (New Woman Strategies 143). However, it seems as though Lyndall’s demise and eventual death are more complicated and caused by a lifetime of suppression. Lyndall suffers physically and emotionally from both the death of her child and her rejection of wifehood, motherhood, and loving familial bonds more
generally. Nancy L. Paxton claims, “In her final days Lyndall sees her own reflection in
the mirror as providing a powerfully reassuring sign of her integrity and self-sufficiency,”
and “for Schreiner, Lyndall’s contemplation of the image of the self fosters a healthy
confidence and a necessary ego strength” (572). But based on the description in the
novel’s passage, it seems as though Lyndall’s two sets of eyes and her failed attempt to
speak to her reflection signals that her character is fragmented upon her death, like it
was during her confession of loneliness and weariness to herself in the mirror earlier in
the novel. Her stiffness and rigidity represent the inflexible ideology she loyally follows
to her grave. Scholar Laurence Lerner argues that Lyndall took “things hard” (76).
Rachel Blau Du Plessis claims that Lyndall’s identity as a “‘new-woman’—independent,
outspoken, purposeful, without marital subordination or economic dependence—and
her already constituted psychic makeup” are in “conflict,” and “she is split between her
sensual needs and her feminist ideals” (27). Lerner and Blau Du Plessis make valid
points, and by combining their assertions, perhaps we come closer to approaching
Lyndall’s fatal flaw as a 17 year old: As a young idealist, Lyndall is too “hard” and too
rigid. She suppresses parts of her character that desire loving bonds, including
wifehood and motherhood, in an attempt to remain loyal to her intellectual, feminist
ideals. Lyndall’s narrow ideology leaves her with an inflexible character that yearned for
loving relationships in the last moments of her life.

Lyndall rigidly suppresses facets of her character when she follows narrow and
extremist proto-New Woman ideology, similar to traditional Victorian women who
suppress facets of their characters when they follow narrow traditional Victorian female
ideology. Lyndall suppresses wifehood and motherhood whereas traditional Victorian
women often suppress intellectual pursuits and aspirations to work outside the home. Despite the different parts of selfhood that New Women and traditional women suppress, they are both limited by societal and political restraints, and the results are often the same. Lyndall’s character, like that of a traditional Victorian woman, is bound and constricted, and this constriction results in unhealthy mental and physical consequences. Olive Schreiner leaves readers with Lyndall’s painful deterioration and tragic death.

**Anna Lombard (1901) by Victoria Cross**

Similar to Hardy and Schreiner, Victoria Cross condemns the themes of self-suppression and sacrifice to an even greater extent in Anna Lombard. Whereas Cross shows the negative results of societal constraints and other characters forcing parts of the main female character in Paula to be suppressed, Cross explores the detrimental consequences of her main female character in Anna Lombard suppressing parts of herself. In the novel, narrator Gerald Ethridge, a colonial and ranking member of the Indian Civil Service, tells the story of his English love interest, 21-year-old Anna Lombard, who recently arrived in colonial India. The basic plot is typically melodramatic. Gerald and Anna experience instant attraction when they meet at a party. However, their impending romance is delayed when Gerald is transferred to Burma for a year. When Gerald returns, he learns that Anna has secretly married her Pathan servant, Giada. Anna becomes conflicted because she physically desires Giada but intellectually and spiritually loves Gerald. Giada dies from yellow fever but not before he impregnates Anna. Gerald, still in love with Anna, marries her, and she gives birth to Giada’s baby. Anna falls in love with her child and focuses her energies on motherhood. Meanwhile, Gerald feels neglected by Anna. To resolve the situation,
Anna smothers her baby. She sends Gerald away for about a year so she can grieve and come to terms with what she has done. Upon Gerald’s return, Anna appears as an ideal angelic Victorian wife who loves, obeys, and serves her husband.

This dramatic novel received passionate reviews in the early 1900s. Vanity Fair described Anna as a “pure woman—good, sincere, clean, fit to be admired and beloved” and the Daily News called her “a striking character in the portrait galleries of fiction” (quoted in Dictionary of Literary Biography 83). In 1901 William T. Stead called the novel “a very remarkable story, a novel to set people thinking” and argued, “it is a bold, brilliant, defiant presentation of a phase of the relations of the sexes which I do not remember ever having been treated with the same freedom, delicacy and audacity (595). But not all reviewers were so taken with Anna or the novel. For Sewell Stokes, Victoria Cross became known as “the woman whose novels were read behind locked doors; who had at one time been accused of poisoning the purity of British homes with her sordid writings” (142). A 1901 book review in the Academy condemned the novel as “a flamboyant and thoroughly impure book” and Anna as a “hysterically sexual” heroine (385). William L. Alden claimed that “no man should ever read” this “bold, or rather brazen” novel “before dinner unless he wishes to lose his appetite” since “it is a nauseating book” (BR 15). Despite (or perhaps because of) the disgust and vulgarity associated with the novel, it sold more than six million copies. Even though Cross’ taboo, titillating, controversial novels enjoyed a ravenous readership in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, only a few current critics explore Victoria Cross’ works. Shoshana Knapp views Cross as a feminist who “exemplified . . . a rejection of the legal restriction of women’s freedom and the social constriction of
women’s biological and emotional identity” and who “test[s] and question[s] boundaries” in Anna Lombard (“Revolutionary” 4). Knapp observes, “With Anna Lombard (1901), Victoria Cross tested her readers by breaking more taboos than in all of her early works put together” (10).

As a strong, complex, intellectual heroine, Anna suppresses part of her character when she tries to uphold narrow ideology, and this suppression leads to unhealthy consequences and sacrifices. Cross demonstrates how this pattern negatively affects Englishwomen in the colonies, like women in England. But Cross also highlights and condemns female sacrifice to a greater extent than the other texts discussed so far. Even though Lulie, Lyndall, and Paula die and Sue metaphorically dies, they do not commit infanticide, like Anna.

Gerald, Anna’s future husband and the narrator of the novel, characterizes Anna in terms of a traditional Victorian woman upon meeting her. He refers to her as “a figure in white,” and states that she is “in the fresh, pure, unsullied morning of her youth and virginity” (Anna 6, 13). As he watches her, he views her as a picture that would be called “Innocence,” “Maidenhood” or “Purity” (53). Gerald describes her “heart” as “the softest, tenderest, most compassionate possible” (37). But he also exemplifies her powerful intelligence: “Never had I known in man or woman a brain like this, so clever, so logical, so gifted, so full of force of intellect” (37). Gerald presents Anna as the combination of traditional Victorian female characteristics—purity, innocence, tenderness—and traditional Victorian male characteristics—rationality, logic, and intelligence. She emerges as a balanced, complex hybrid figure that combines attributes from both sexes.
For a time, Anna fulfills different parts of her character in different ways with Giada and Gerald. When Gerald returns from Burma and finds that Anna has secretly married a non-white colonial slave, she explains that she loves both men in different ways: her body feels sexual desire and passion for Giada who is “a beautiful toy,” but her soul loves, “admire[s],” and “worship[s]” Gerald (56). Anna’s relationship with Giada represents the “improper” sexually desiring woman in Anna whereas her relationship with Gerald represents the “proper” Victorian woman in Anna. Anna explains, “If I could kill my love for [Giada] I would . . . but something, some intangible fearful something, binds me to this man, and I can’t lose myself” (67). If she were to “kill” her love for Giada, she would have to suppress her love and sexual desires for him. At this point in the novel, she is unwilling to suppress or sacrifice any part of her character. She controls her agency and successfully maintains her physical, intellectual, and emotional balance. Even though Gerald cannot seem to comprehend Anna’s dual passion, he acknowledges, “indeed, her love for Gaida seemed to have no sort of influence upon her love for, and her relations with, me. It was a thing utterly separate and apart from that self which she gave to me. Within her the two loves, the higher and the lower, seemed to exist together without touching or disturbing the other” (70). Gerald distinguishes between Anna’s “self” when she is with him and Anna’s “self” when she is with Giada. He recognizes her ability to maintain two separate loves simultaneously: Her relationship with Giada does not infringe on her relationship with Gerald, and her relationship with Gerald does not infringe on her relationship with Giada. Anna thus retains independence and fulfills her multi-faceted character, avoiding suppression altogether. However, this nirvana-like state is temporary.
Victorian logic is exclusionary and disallows a woman to be simultaneously “improper” and “proper,” so as a way to critique this rigid system, Cross shows that this state of balance and inclusiveness for Anna cannot be maintained. Anna becomes ill after Giada contracts cholera and dies, leaving her sexually unfulfilled. Shortly after his death, Anna, with a “ghastly face” begs Gerald to “let [her] die” (96) even though she promised him that her “life belonged to [him] now” (97). Gerald reports she cries in “agony,” experiencing “terrible cramps” and then “a writhing, horrible convulsion” (97), all symptoms of cholera. Gerald describes her face as being “blue with the shadow of the disease and drenched in her unavailing tears” and her body as being “cold” and “clammy” (97, 98). This disease serves as a manifestation of the utter deformity and deterioration that accompanies Anna’s forced suppression of part of her character. Cross reverses the stereotypical notion that sex leads to a woman’s physical, spiritual, and emotional downfall: in Anna’s case, the lack of sex leads to her physical downfall. In any case, Anna’s sexual facet is forced into suppression when Giada dies.

As a result, Anna’s sickness prompts her shift from being an active, independent agent to being Gerald’s passive, dependent possession. Gerald nurses her and desperately begs her to “live for” him (97, 98). She survives and vows to him, “I am all your own now for ever and ever” (99). With Anna’s performative utterance, the power dynamic in Anna’s and Gerald’s relationship shifts: She begins to lose her independence and agency while he begins to gain control and security. Gerald explains, “The fact that I alone knew everything, and that there was no necessity for disguise or constraint with me, drew Anna to me, and she clung to me and found comfort in my presence” (101). Like a traditional Victorian male, Gerald wants Anna to
need him and depend on him. The weaker she is and the more she depends on him, the more he seems to understand her and love her. They become “inseparable” (101).

More specifically, Anna becomes an extension of Gerald. She behaves like a proper traditional Victorian wife when she tells Gerald that she is supposed to “give way” to his will since “when two people live together there can be only one will between them” (114). She explains, “Nature has given [woman] the part of submission in the whole drama of love. She can’t take the initiative; she can only respond. She is fitted to do that, and that is where she gets her best happiness. When I marry you I put my will in your hands” (114). Anna uses essentialist Victorian logic of the sexes that declares Nature creates women as submissive and passive in the context of romantic love. Her description describes a typical Victorian marriage with stereotypical gender roles: The inferior woman is supposed to be subservient to her superior husband. Anna conveys woman’s limited role with the phrases “she can’t,” “she can only,” and “she is fitted.” Melisa Brittain argues, “The New Woman is here rearticulated as the Old Woman: the traditional English wife of patriarchal fantasy who thinks that in marriage ‘it is the woman’s place to give way’” (81). Anna clearly distinguishes her English marriage with Gerald from her non-English marriage with Giada. Anna did not lose her agency or her independence or suppress parts of herself when she was married to Giada. She did not become Giada’s submissive wife or “give way” to his will.

Anna attempts to suppress parts of herself and become Gerald’s proper Victorian wife, one made to fail when she turns out to be pregnant with Giada’s baby. Cross quickly shows that suppressing any part of one’s character does not work: Anna’s suppressed love for Giada returns and is released as the physical manifestation of her
love—a child. She revels in mothering her baby and fawns over her child. Gerald describes two competing facets of Anna: “the old Anna, that had belonged to [him], was struggling to awake in this new Anna that belonged to her child” (Anna 130). Based on Victorian binary logic, Anna cannot be both the “proper” ideal Victorian wife and an “improper,” free, independent mother to another man’s child. Dedicating herself “fully” as a wife means neglecting her child and her responsibilities as a mother to another man’s child, and dedicating herself “fully” to her child means neglecting her husband and her responsibilities as a wife to Gerald. She will have to choose.

Anna makes the ultimate sacrifice when she suppresses her love for Giada and her child and kills her baby in a twisted, disturbing attempt to be the “proper” Victorian wife. Cross underscores the extreme narrowness of the traditional Victorian role for a “proper” woman with Anna’s absurd act. After Anna suffocates the child, she tells Gerald, “I have expiated my sins to you at last. I have killed it” (132). Using the pronoun “it,” like Lyndall did with her own child, dehumanizes the child, transforming him into an object that is distanced from Anna. “It” signifies Anna’s love for Giada and her child that she also hopes to “kill” through her act. She feels that she sinned against Gerald, and she owes him retribution. She explains, “One had to be sacrificed, either you or the child. And could it be you? Was this to be your reward for all you have done and suffered for my sake? Had it lived it would have taken all my life” (133). Anna feels an obligation towards Gerald for standing by her when she was married to Giada, for trying to save Giada’s life, and for saving her life. As a “proper” Victorian wife, she wants to nurture and reward him. She admits that motherhood would have consumed her, and she would have neglected Gerald. So Anna sacrifices her child as well as her
fulfilling, enjoyable motherhood facet to resolve these problems. Brittain argues that Anna’s decision to “kill the baby with her own hands” was “a rational one (in the sense that she recognizes her predicament and her need to sacrifice her baby to save herself),” and that “Cross makes Anna an active participant in her return to proper femininity” (903–91). She is caught—like Lulie, Paula, Sue, and Lyndall—in either/or logic. Either she can be Gerald’s wife or she can be her child’s mother. In both cases, Anna serves another person—a typical characteristic of the traditional Victorian Angel in the House. Brittain rightly explains that Cross “makes visible both the racial aspects of the Angel in the House, and the limited options available to colonial women who wished to remain within the pale of British society” (90–91). Even on a familial level, Anna is disallowed from simultaneously being a successful wife to Gerald and a successful mother to Giada’s non-white baby. She must sacrifice one of them so she can completely satisfy and serve either her husband or her child.

But, as we have been lead to expect, Anna suffers more than she anticipates for her sacrifices. The grief mentally and emotionally weakens her. With a “great cry” and “slipp[ing] to her knees” she asks, “Oh, how could I do it? It was my own dear little child, and I loved it so” (Anna 133). Grief-ridden and distraught, Anna second-guesses the murder of her child, emphasizes herself as the child’s mother with “my” and “own,” and reinforces the intense love she feels for him. She confides in Gerald that the grief “is killing” her (135). The grief also deforms her physically. Gerald describes her as a “frail, attenuated spectre” whose hands are “stiff and white” and whose eyes are “vacant” (135). He also refers to her as “a thin, narrow figure in black” with a face “that was colourless and deathlike as a nun’s” (135). Anna’s guilt, grief, and ultimate
sacrifice of her child’s life and her motherhood facet manifest in her ghost-like appearance. Dressed in black and looking deathlike, Anna simultaneously mourns the loss of her child and the loss of her motherhood facet. Not being consumed with motherhood anymore, “Anna or her sad shadow,” Gerald explains, “was my own again” (135). After she murders her child, Anna transforms into a deformed, shell-like version of her former self. In this state, she cannot be a proper, loving Victorian wife to Gerald, so she asks him to leave her for a while so she can work through her grief, ask God for forgiveness, and live a life of penitence. Like Sue, Anna turns to religion to find solace. Anna bids Gerald a “pitiful,” “pathetic,” “pure,” and “unimpassioned” goodbye and promises to send for him when she is healed.

The result is that Anna’s ultimate sacrifice and her dedication to religion seemingly transform her into a perfect traditional Victorian wife when after a year Gerald returns to her. He describes her the first time he sees her: “A figure in white with the sunlight in the eyes and hair. It was the same Anna Lombard I had left a maiden sleeping in the garden. Only now it was Anna awakened, with the look behind the eyes of one who has read all the secrets of Life, and the look above the brows of one who has met Life and conquered it” (137). Anna is the picture of Victorian wifely perfection: She glows with purity. In Gerald’s view, Anna’s fresh looks indicate that she has conquered her grief and guilt. The first time Anna speaks to Gerald, she asks, “Do I please you?” (137). Immediately, Anna establishes herself as an object of Gerald’s judgment. Pleasing Gerald becomes Anna’s central purpose. She vows to her husband, “While you live I will live for you and in you, and when you die I will die with you” (133). Cross creates an eerie sense about this transformed Anna who dedicates
herself completely to Gerald. Her shift from utter independence to utter dependence on Gerald is disturbing. She is a little too perfect as this proper Victorian wife. Anna states, “I have so prayed for God to give me back my good looks to reward you with, and that He has done so is a sign of His forgiveness,” asking Gerald, “don’t you think so?” (138). Like Sue, Anna trades her independence for a submissive position as a proper Victorian wife. Both Anna and Sue turn to religion for absolution, and they both sacrifice parts of their characters to become ideal Victorian wives.

In the end, Anna’s sacrifice results in her seeming non-human with her doll-like appearance and robotic questions that seek Gerald’s approval and her automatic subservience to her husband. Brittain argues that “there is no choice but for the New Woman to re-adopt the role of the Old Woman, who was satisfied with her subordinate and self-sacrificing role in marriage” and that such forced choices can be read as “an avocation of traditional patriarchal imperialism through the assimilation of the transgressive New Woman into its prevailing regime” (82). Brittain also rightly asserts that “this reading is simultaneously undermined by passages . . . which point to the conservative and limiting nature of this position” (82). But there is another important point: Anna is able to occupy the role of the ideal traditional English wife only one year after she murders her biracial child. That is, Cross “recuperates” Anna and places her in this traditional female position as a way to critique the absurdity of the position and its supposed expectations and as a way to critique the racial and economic inequities in the colonies. The horrific summation is that Anna is not officially punished for committing infanticide but is allowed to resume her position as a white, upper class
English wife. As long as Anna acts like an appropriate, doting, Angel in the House figure, her race and class allow her to be “redeemed.”

Anna transforms into a mechanical doll to cope with the parts of herself she suppresses. She has to choose between the man she felt a loving obligation towards and a biracial child she loved. These either/or choices inevitably result in narrow, unhealthy lives because the female protagonists are unable to accommodate all parts of their character in the Victorian gender system. Cross critiques the notion that a woman must choose to fulfill one part of her character at the expense of another part, and she criticizes women who sacrifice parts of themselves or their lives for male lovers. These types of sacrifices oppress women and lead to murder, death, and destructive doll-like versions of character. However, some sacrifice seems unavoidable and necessary for relationships to function. Freely choosing sacrifices that do not suppress the self seems to be key in maintaining one’s own health as well as relationships.

A pattern emerges in late-Victorian literature: Women encounter the problem of rigid, inflexible character and narrow traditional ideology that is based on a faulty definition of woman’s “nature” as well as a narrow version of New Woman ideology that rigidly rejects the entirety of the traditional Victorian female role. Both of these ideologies force women to suppress parts of their characters. Although the female characters suppress different parts of themselves and the circumstances of their suppression vary, they each sacrifice loving relationships or familial bonds. Thomas Hardy, Olive Schreiner, and Victoria Cross do not provide healthy, successful paths for their female characters to escape narrow logics that bind and suppress parts of them, which result in their tragic ends. Sue plummets into deforming and debilitating religious
mania. Lyndall dies tragically alone. Anna commits infanticide. In the end, by
upholding narrow ideology, each female protagonist is forced to sacrifice, in several
cases, her life. While the deaths of these female characters are tragic, the lives of the
female characters who survive seem even more tragic. On the other hand, as we will
see in the following chapters, several late-Victorian authors work to solve these
problems of rigid ideologies and narrow female character by demonstrating how
complex, multi-faceted female protagonists execute strategies to accommodate their
complex characters and lead to successful paths of truth and value.
CHAPTER 3
ROMANTIC LOVERS MASKING: FROM INTRIGUE TO ENDURANCE

Female protagonists discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 have no viable processes that safeguard their multi-faceted characters. Other characters, societal constraints, and they themselves suppress parts of their characters. They remain rigid, unable to adapt to different expectations, desires, and situations, and they are doomed to tragic fates, including dying, becoming deformed, and committing infanticide. Alternatively, female protagonists in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 safeguard their characters and desires via masking strategies. These strategies enable the characters to experience fulfilling relationships and create their desired realities. Judith Butler explains that acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and gists that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. (173)

Butler theorizes that one can generate an identity on the surface of one's body through acts, gestures, and desire. Furthermore, she explains that these acts and gestures must be repeated in order for an identity to form (185). This identity becomes reality. Through repeated acts and gestures, then, the masking strategies that the female protagonists repeatedly enact are true parts of their characters. These masking strategies allow the female protagonists to authenticate their characters, find communal solidarity, and gain personal, social, and political validation.

Henry Harland and John Oliver Hobbes (Mary Theresa Pearl Craigie) explore useful processes and strategies, often represented through metaphorical masking
(sometimes using literal masks), that attempt to solve the problematic coping mechanisms of suppression and escapism discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 3 focuses on characters who use masking as a process to remain interesting and renew themselves and others as they adapt to changing situations and circumstances. Harland has his characters view each other flexibly, which results in their adaptability, constant growth, and evolution as individuals and as partners in romantic relationships. On the other hand, Hobbes’ adaptable female character views her lover too narrowly, trying to force him to conform to her preconceived definition of him and the path to this truth that she sets out for him, which results in the end of their relationship. Both Hobbes and Harland emphasize the importance of accommodating complex female characters, and they both highlight the importance of elasticity when viewing and interacting with other characters. However, where Harland demonstrates the positive consequences of accepting the multi-facetedness of others, Hobbes presents the negative consequences of not respecting the multi-faceted potential of others.

“The Invisible Prince” (1897) by Henry Harland

In the beginning of his career, Henry Harland published novels under the pseudonym Sidney Luska and wrote about Jewish themes. Loren Glass explains that Harland “formulates the pseudonym as a promotional device, correlative situating New York’s Jewish population as an untapped reservoir of consumers” (46). Stephanie Foote makes a similar observation when she states, “One way to make sense of Harland’s fraudulent marketing of identity is to think of him as one of the first people to see and act on the idea that identity is not a social category or an interior experience but a commodity valued and exchanged in the marketplace” (137). Once his identity as
Henry Harland was known, he put “Henry Harland” in parentheses under “Sidney Luska” on his publications (Beckson 15).

But Harland’s use of metaphorical masking goes beyond financial and marketplace concerns. As Loren Glass explains, “Harland was never quite comfortable with who he was,” and “standard biographical sources on him all conflict” (38). Harland aspired to be a literary success, and he used various masking strategies to help him achieve his goal. His merging of fact and fiction in the stories and accounts he told resulted in these conflicting biographical sketches. For example, Margaret Maison explains that he spent a lot of time in Paris “circulat[ing] absurd stories about his cosmopolitan life and connections, claiming, among other fantasies, to have studied for the priesthood in Rome and to be heir to an English baronetcy” (303). He used strategic masking to accommodate different situations, circumstances, and career goals. Beckson explains, “Harland, having propelled himself to the center of the literary world in London, had successfully adopted a new mask of identity—that of the Aesthete in the practical world of journalism. By the turn of the century, he embarked on a new phase of his career as a writer of Anglo-Italian romances, of which The Cardinal’s Snuff-box (1900) is his best known work” (24). In the span of a few years, Harland was the Jewish writer Sidney Luska, an Aesthete, a Parisian, a writer under his own name, and in 1894, the founding editor and gatekeeper of The Yellow Book.

Harland’s fascination with flexible characters permeated much of his fiction, including his short stories “The Invisible Prince” and “Merely Players” and his novel The Cardinal’s Snuffbox. Although Henry Harland was very popular in both America and England when he was writing, he has all but been forgotten today. But Harland’s playful
metaphorical masking process, which is often overlooked in scholarship, is significant and successful for two important reasons. First, this process accommodates complex, multifaceted character and allows one’s character to evolve and be renewed to oneself and others. Second, the masks allow one to create more fulfilling romantic relationships and realities that remain interesting and renewable.

“The Invisible Prince” appeared in *The Yellow Book* in 1897 and later in a collection of Harland’s short stories called *Comedies and Errors* in 1898. In “The Invisible Prince,” Harland uses masking as a process that allows the main male and female characters to gain romantic love and personal fulfillment through their ever-evolving characters. When an unnamed masked woman and an unnamed masked man meet at a masquerade ball, the woman questions the identity of the man; she thinks he is the invisible prince who mysteriously disappeared and re-introduced himself to society as Vincent, a poet. The man is intrigued and curious about the woman’s identity. They engage in witty, clever conversation, unable to “see” each other. They meet again, several months later, and they are not wearing literal masks. They have another witty, clever conversation filled with metaphors and veiled language. Throughout their interactions, they fall in love and eventually agree to marry.

In “The Invisible Prince,” Harland uses the process of metaphorical masking to altogether avoid the problems of narrow, static character found in the texts discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. He forefronts costumes in the opening of his short story to draw attention to this strategic process. The omniscient narrator introduces the main male character as “a man draped in the embroidered silks of a Chinese mandarin, his features entirely concealed by an enormous Chinese head in cardboard” and the main
female character as “a voice” who says, “How do you do, Mr. Field?” (“Invisible” 111). The narrator quickly identifies this “voice” as “a woman’s voice, an English voice” but does not describe it in detail (111). The woman sparks a playful game with the man when she identifies him as Mr. Field. He flirtatiously responds, “How do you do? . . . I’m afraid I’m not Mr. Field; but I’ll gladly pretend I am, if you’ll stop and talk with me. I was dying for a little human conversation” (111). The costumes hide the physical appearances of the characters. Even more importantly, Harland has his characters engage in a process of metaphorical masking that obscures their identities during their first interaction. Although we assume that this man is indeed Mr. Field by the end of the story, he engages the woman in a game of mistaken identity throughout the story. His willingness to participate in a masking process demonstrates three points. First, he is interested in her and therefore pursues a conversation with her. Second, he verbally obstructs his identity in his response, paralleling the literal obstruction of his identity that his costume creates. Third, he enjoys intelligent, witty, verbal exchanges, and his reply to her tests her capacity to keep up with him intellectually. She passes his test when she points out a contradiction: “‘Oh, you’re afraid you’re not Mr. Field, are you?’ the mask replied derisively. ‘Then why did you turn when I called his name?’” (111). Harland metonymically draws attention to the importance of the mask when he substitutes “the mask” for the woman. They become one—the woman is the mask, the representation of the process, the truth. The man avoids the mask’s question and states, “You mustn’t hope to disconcert me with questions like that. . . . I turned because I liked your voice” (111). He plays the victim and then deflects attention from himself and onto her when he compliments her voice.
At this point, Harland’s narrator only briefly and vaguely describes the woman’s voice and her obstructed physical appearance, allowing for flexibility in her character. Her voice is “a delicate, clear, soft voice, somewhat high in register, with an accent, crisp, chiselled, concise, that suggested wit as well as distinction” (112). This woman has depth and uniqueness in her character, but the narrator’s physical description of her remains ambiguous. She has “a pair of blue-grey eyes” (111), “was rather tall, for a woman,” and “one could divine her slender and graceful, under the voluminous folds of her domino” (112). The narrator qualifies this minimal physical description with “rather” and with “one could divine” to imply that one must actively seek to discover her. The obstruction of identity peaks curiosity in both characters, and their witty game continues.

The setting in which the man and woman talk enhances the theme of curiosity and parallels the characters’ ambiguous descriptions and mysterious identities. They sit in a conservatory near a “fountaine lumineuse” that is “playing, rhythmically changing colour. Now it was a shower of rubies; now of emeralds or amethysts, of sapphires, topazes, or opals” (112). These changing colors metaphorically represent the man’s and woman’s complex, flexible characters and their roundabout path to success. Like the “fountaine,” character is not one color or one-dimensional but shades of different colors and multi-faceted. Each color represents a different facet of character, and changing colors represent potentials for new and different facets to develop. Describing the “fountaine” and the winter garden, the woman states, “Fancy arranging the electric lights to shine through a dome of purple glass, and look like stars. . . Then, by day . . . the purple glass is removed, and you get the sun” (112-113). Harland calls our attention to the significance of perspective in this passage. Read as a metaphor, the description
symbolizes character and perception. In certain situations and at certain times, Harland “arranges” and showcases one facet of character through a masking process, signified by the arrangement of electric lights shining through the purple dome at night. In other situations and at other times, he “arranges” and showcases a different facet of character through a masking process, signified by the real sun. The removal of the purple glass represents the masking process and transitioning from showcasing one facet to showcasing another. Spectators will observe this process and these different facets of character as situations change—the purple glass is removed or replaced—and the spectators’ perspectives change. Through this metaphor, Harland suggests that it is vital to observe the world from multiple perspectives and people as multi-dimensional and changing.

Against the backdrop of this fountaine lumineuse, the masked woman and her conversation clearly intrigue the man. Keeping up the pretense of mistaken identity, the man asks her about Victor Field and says he must “look ‘em up” (114). Then, he asks her how she mistook him for Field (114). With this question, he keeps her engaged in the conversation. She “sweetly” responds, “He was standing near the door, over there . . . dying for a little human conversation, till I took pity on him” (114). She distances the masked man from Victor Field when she refers to Field as “he” instead of “you,” but she playfully suggests that the masked man is Victor Field when she describes the location where she found Field (and the masked man) and repeats what he said. She keeps the game going and matches the masked man wit for wit.

She raises the stakes of this game when she refers explicitly to her mask, which only increases the man’s curiosity. She complains, “I’m nearly suffocated, and I’m only
wearing a *loup*” (114). By drawing attention to her costume, the woman draws attention to what her costume obscures—her physical appearance and her identity. He “urged” her “gallantly,” “If your *loup* bothers you, pray take it off. Don’t mind me” (114). As of now, the unfilled curiosity of the man and the woman’s undiscovered potential creates suspense and increases the man’s desire for her.

Nineteenth-century philosopher Alexander Bain discussed the dynamics of pursuit and suspense in his 1868 study *Mental and Moral Science: A Compendium of Psychology and Ethics*. In Chapter IX “Emotions of Action—Pursuit” Bain explains,

> On the mental side, Pursuit supposes (1) a motive in the interest of an end, heightened by its steady approach; (2) the state of engrossment in object regards, with remission of subject regards. Some end is needed to stimulate the voluntary energies; and, by the Law of Self-conservation, the gradual approach towards the consummating of the end heightens the energies, and intensifies the pursuit. (268)

In Bain’s terms, the revelation of the masked man’s and woman’s identities would be “the end.” Their desire for each other will increase as the man and woman postpone this “end.” In *The Emotions and the Will*, published in 1859, Bain explains that “A too rapid approach . . . closes the chase while the powers are yet equal to farther suspense” (221). “As in all other things, Novelty gives zest to pursuit,” explains Bain (*Mental* 270). He continues, “A new game, a new player, a different arrangement of parties, will freshen the thoughts, and re-animate the dubiousness of the issue” (270). In the case of “The Invisible Prince,” if the woman takes off her loup, it would satisfy the curiosity of the man and stunt their desire for each other.

Not wanting their witty game to end, the man and woman continue in their process of metaphorical masking as opposing players in a game. Responding to the man’s request that she remove her loup, she compliments him, “You’re extremely good”
and proceeds to tell him that he would be “sorry” if she removed her loup because she is not “young and pretty” as he is “manlike” hoping; rather, she calls herself “a perfect fright” and “an old maid” (“Invisible” 114). The woman tries to dismiss the man’s expectation that she is physically attractive. He counters with, “Thank you. Manlike, I confess I was hoping you’d be young and pretty. Now my hope has received the strongest confirmation. I’m sure you are” (114). In her attempt to shift focus away from her superficial appearance, she increases his expectation of her beauty. The man refuses to believe the woman, just like she refuses to believe that he is not Victor Field. In this game, they believe the opposite of what they tell each other. Alexander Bain explains, “The excitement of pursuit is incident to Contests. The combatant in an equal, or nearly equal contest, has a stake and an uncertainty that engages his powers and engrosses his attention to the highest pitch” (Mental 270). The masked woman and man compete as equal combatants in a match of verbal sparring, and Harland highlights the importance of suspense during a match like this.

Harland also emphasizes the importance of suspense and flirting when his characters include an inanimate object—a fan—in their game. During their conversation, the woman “laughed a little, and stroked her fan, a big fan of fluffy black feathers” (“Invisible” 115), and the following conversation ensues:

“That’s very jolly,” said he.
“What?” she said.
“That thing in your lap.”
“My fan?”
“I expect you’d call it a fan.”
“For goodness’ sake, what would you call it?” cried she.
“I should call it a fan. . . . I can call a fan a fan, when I think it won’t shock the sensibilities of my hearer.” (115)
In “Books, Fans, and Mallarme’s Butterfly,” Yula Ryzhik traces the history of fans and explains that “Easy to open but retaining a mysterious pli even when its surface is on display, the fan is a coy, flexible instrument. Like the hymen, it represents fusion and separation, desire and fulfillment. It repels and entices, opens and closes, folds and unfolds. The fan is an erotically charged object” (634). The fan draws attention to the man’s and woman’s process of flirtation and metaphorical masking, which functions similarly to Ryzhik’s reading of a fan. Like the “erotically charged” fan, their masking is flexible: it fuses the man and woman together in playful conversation that fulfills each to some extent, but it also separates the characters by obscuring their identities, which creates suspense and perpetuates their interest in each other. Furthermore, the directness with which they both call the fan a fan functions in two ways: First, the male character playfully hints at the erotic associations of a fan when he mentions the potential “shock” to the “sensibilities of [his] hearers.” Second, the directness serves as a warning: Ryzhik explains, “one of the fan’s many functions was to keep secrets” (632). Once the fan is defined and categorized as a fan and the secret is revealed, the interest in the fan dissipates and the conversation about it ceases. Likewise, once the characters’ identities are revealed and defined, the characters’ interest in each other may dissipate and their relationship could likely end. By flirting and enacting a masking process, the man and woman prevent the end to their relationship.

In Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel, D. A. Miller explains that to flirt is “to hesitate between meaning, and not meaning, the gestures to which flirtation gives rise” and that “[i]n its teasing approach to meaning and its avoidance of definitive nomination, flirtation is well qualified to motivate the moment
of narratability” (21). The masked woman and masked man flirt with each other and approach, yet always manage to avoid, sharing their identities. Miller explains, “Generating and preserving a state of half-meaning,” flirting “tends to frustrate the text’s attempt to resolve itself in a decisive configuration of character and even in a final disclosure of significance” (21). In the case of “The Invisible Prince,” flirtation and suspense frustrate on two levels: that of the characters in the story and that of the readers reading the story. Suspense and flirtation between the characters encourage them to continue their witty exchange and encourage readers to keep reading in anticipation that the characters will eventually reveal their identities to each other and, simultaneously, to the readers.

By not revealing their names—not “unmasking” themselves—at the end of the ball, the characters leave their curiosities unsatisfied. After the masquerade ball, the man retains such an interest in the masked woman that he writes a friend, stating that the masked woman has the “reasoning powers of a detective in a novel” (“Invisible” 125). The characters engaging in a process of masking and remaining loyal to that process initiates a relationship of depth for them during their first meeting.

The man and woman meet in public over a year later, and their second meeting is similar to their first meeting. The fact that the man and woman are not wearing literal costumes during their second meeting reanimates their relationship. As in their first meeting, they engage in playful conversation, and the narrator refers to the woman as “a voice.” (126). She identifies the man, “Oh! It’s Mr. Field!” and asks why he is “bowing into a hairdresser’s window” (126–127). With a “touch of irony,” he answers, “I was saluting the type of English beauty. . . . Fortunately, there are divergences from it”
He compares the models in the hairdresser’s window to “imitation marionettes” who are “actors who imitate puppets” and “try to behave as if they weren’t human, as if they were made of starch and whalebone, instead of flesh and blood” (127). Through this comparison, he critiques superficial physical beauty and the extent to which some women try to have “perfect” complexions and hair. The hairdresser’s shop represents the superficiality and commodification of this type of marionette-like beauty.

Juxtaposing these models with the witty woman wearing a “puzzled smile” (127) emphasizes her as mysterious, obscured, and full of potential and depth whereas the models are transparent, shallow, and only concerned with their physical appearances.

The woman’s appearance is still mysterious and ambiguous even though she is not wearing a costume. Her “jaunty little hat of strangely twisted straw” has “an aigrette springing defiantly from it,” and her jacket is “covered with mazes and labyrinths of embroidery” (128). These descriptions parallel her puzzling, complex character and even suggest an element of rebellion. The narrator, who seems to be seeing things from the perspective of the unnamed man at this point in the story, states, “She had an immense quantity of very lovely hair. Red hair? Yellow hair? Red hair with yellow lights burning in it? Yellow hair with red fires shimmering through it?” (128). He either cannot or refuses to specify the woman’s hair color. Instead of her hair being red or yellow, it is both red and yellow. He avoids rigid binary either/or categorization in his description of her, emphasizing her character’s flexibility while avoiding rigidity.

Similarly, she also avoids using binary logic when she speaks. When the man tells her, “I can’t precisely determine . . . whether the sympathy that seems to vibrate in your voice is genuine or counterfeit,” she responds, “Perhaps it’s half and half” (129).
Continuing on with the woman’s physical description, the narrator notes that her skin has “the sensitive colouring, the fineness of texture, that [is] apt to accompany red hair when it’s yellow, yellow hair when it’s red” (128). The flexibility of her appearance contrasts starkly with the waxen doll-like models in the hairdresser’s shop. She remains a mystery, with undiscovered depths in her “pensive,” “quizzical” eyes and her “alert,” “arch,” “witty,” “emotional,” and “somewhat sensuous” face (128–129). The narrator describes her face as “the face of a woman” who has “a vast deal” of “humour” and “mischief in her soul” and “who would love to tease you,” “mystify you,” “lead you,” and “put you off,” but she “would [also] know supremely well how to be kind” (129). He does not describe the physical appearance of her face at length. Rather, he interprets her face as representative of her character and her depth.

During this second meeting, the man and woman connect when they share feelings of boredom and continue their process of masking by playfully becoming metaphorical prisoners. In his article “This is Play,” Stephen Nachmanovitch’s explains that “To play is to open our eyes to different possibilities” and that “play is the way of combinatorial flexibility—the ability to see things from many angles and to change our habits” (12). He claims that “The opposite of play is one-dimensionality or literal-mindedness” (12). The Victorian status quo, with its rules and problematic rigid paths to success and truth, contrasts with the flexible, playful characters who take a roundabout way when getting to know each other. The man confesses to the woman that he is “bored to extermination” when he is “not working or sleeping,” but that “there’s no use trying to play in London” because “it’s so hard to find a playmate” (“Invisible” 130). The woman agrees and claims that she and the man are “fellow-prisoners” in “the
dungeons of Castle Ennui” and that she is “bored to extermination too” (130). As a metaphorical prisoner, the man extends the woman’s prison metaphor. He claims, “Castle Ennui is the Bastille of modern life. It is built of prunes and prisms; it has its outer court of Convention, and its inner court of Propriety; it is moated round by Respectability, and the shackles its inmates wear are forged of dull little duties and arbitrary little rules” (130). The capitalization of the words “Convention,” “Propriety,” and “Respectability” signals their significance in the metaphorical Castle/prison that represents the ideological system of late-Victorian English society. Structurally and symbolically, the heart of this Castle is Propriety, the inner court. Propriety determines Convention: If something is proper, it is deemed conventional, normal, and therefore acceptable and expected whereas if something is improper, it is deemed unconventional, abnormal, and therefore unacceptable and unexpected. The moat of Respectability protects Convention and Propriety: If one is “respectable,” he or she tries to maintain the social status quo of propriety and convention; one does not try to disrupt what is deemed proper and conventional.

Propriety and respectability were at the forefront of nineteenth-century society. Cas Wouters, in Sex and Manners: Female Emancipation in the West, 1890–2000, explains that “The history of manners in Europe and the USA until the end of the nineteenth century . . . can be interpreted as a long-term process of formalizing of manners and disciplining of people” (9). He continues, “In this process the codes of manners became increasingly strict and detailed, while a particular type of self-regulation, a type of personality with a particular, rather rigid conscience formation, developed, spread, and became dominant” (9). Nancy Armstrong in Desire and
Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel explains that the ‘female ideal’ that conduct books represented had “passed into the domain of common sense” in the nineteenth century (63). There were increasingly rigid expectations for social behaviors and discipline in the nineteenth century, and the Castle Ennui symbolizes these rigid expectations.

This focus on strict social behavior and discipline emerges in Jeremy Bentham’s concept of the Panopticon and Michel Foucault’s analysis of it, which parallels the description of the Castle Ennui as a prison. In the late eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham proposed a plan for an architectural mechanism of surveillance, the Panopticon, which is a tower constructed in the middle of a prison. Prisoners are kept in cells that surround the tower. The guards in the tower are able to see into the prisoners’ cells, but the prisoners cannot see into the tower, so the prisoners do not know if there are guards in the tower or not. Foucault explains, “The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen” (288). Even if the tower is empty, the threat that it is not empty always exists for the prisoners, and this threat is supposed to serve as a discipline mechanism that controls the prisoners’ behavior.

Bentham’s Panopticon can be viewed both literally and metaphorically as a mechanism that polices social behavior and is used in other nineteenth-century societal institutions, such as factories, hospitals, and schools. Foucault explains, “The panoptic arrangement provides . . . at the level of an elementary and easily transferable mechanism, the basic functioning of society penetrated through and through with
disciplinary mechanism” (295). Citizens serve as the surveillance mechanism of control as witnesses. If someone engages in illegal acts, witnesses can take legal action against him. Cas Wouters explains that in Victorian society “women came to function as the gatekeepers” of the social sphere, “as arbiters of social acceptance or rejection” (15). They, in essence, became the witnesses who maintained societal control and upheld societal expectations of behavior through various disciplining mechanisms, such as etiquette and manners. “Transgressions against the code of manners,” Wouters claims, “are punished in a variety of ways, ranging from assigning blame by means of gossip to excommunication, all involving a loss of face, respect, or status” (8). In nineteenth-century society, men’s and women’s reputations could be ruined by scandal reported in the newspapers or being gossiped about in social circles. The man in “The Invisible Prince” acknowledges this risk when he claims, “You can only escape from [the Castle Ennui] at the risk of breaking your social neck, or remaining a fugitive from social justice to the end of your days” (“Invisible” 130). The man uses a light, playful tone when he warns about the serious consequences of challenging the status quo and straying from the one predetermined path for a proper life. This playful tone continues as the male character says that in the Castle Ennui/prison, duties stifle creativity and rules are chosen randomly, without reason or purpose. He minimizes the importance of the “duties” and “rules” when he calls them “dull,” “arbitrary” and “little,” and all the while he is “savouring the most exquisite excitement” during his critique (130). The woman “[breaks] out with a merry trill of laughter” and says, “I’m hugely amused” (134). By

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1 As will become evident in later chapters, several other nineteenth-century authors address social policing in Victorian society. In George Eliot's Mill on the Floss, gossiping women ruin Maggie Tulliver’s reputation. In George Meredith’s Diana of the Crossways, a scandalous divorce and an alleged affair that results in gossip almost ruin Diana. In Sarah Grand’s The Heavenly Twins, the threat of scandal and the possible ruin of her parents and family prevent Evadne from officially divorcing her husband.
likening the status quo to a prison, the man and woman draw attention to its powerful
disciplinary status and rigidity as they playfully critique it.

After they finish critiquing the Castle Ennui, they shift the conversation to their
identities, remaining loyal to their masking process, claiming to not know one another as
they simultaneously hint that they do. The continued unknowingness of the woman’s
identity heightens the man’s curiosity and interest in her to such an extent that he
admits, “I have always been anxious to meet [the costumed woman] again, in order that
I might ask her to marry me. I’m strongly disposed to believe that she was you. Was
she?” (137). Her refusal to admit her identity to him at the ball results in an increase in
his curiosity and his desire to know her whereas if she would have revealed her identity
to him, she would have appeased him, and their relationship would have likely ended.
The process of masking that initiated their relationship now sustains it.

The woman refuses to answer him directly, and she continues the game,
retaining the man’s interest. She responds with a hypothetical question: “If I say yes,
will you at once proceed to ask me to marry you?” (137). She hopes that he will tell her
the consequence of one of her potential answers to his question. But he refuses and
answers, “Try it and see” (137). They embark on a round of banter and both evade
direct, clear answers. Postponing her answer, she claims, “I should need further
information, before being able to make up my mind,” to which he responds, “You’re
playing with me like a cat in the adage” (137). These repeated refusals to limit their
flexibility perpetuate their conversation, curiosities, desires, and their relationship.

The continuous masking process allows the characters to play; they test and
gauge each other’s reactions, response times, wit, intellect, and compatibility. Stephen
Nachmanovitch explains that “Play is easy to recognize but impossible to define. We may try to define it, but our definitions will be clumsy, inadequate, and circular. That is because play is about definition. It is meta to ‘ordinary’ activities like aggressing or kissing, but especially, it is meta to the activity of defining. In playing, we are fluidly changing definitions of things” (15). Like the definition of play itself, play allows the man and woman to evade identification, categorization, and codification. Play delays and suspends their names and backgrounds and, in Alexander Bain’s conception, increases suspense, and thus, their desire for this information and for each other. Simultaneously, play encourages the man and woman to bond through their witty exchanges and reveals much about their personalities and social, political, and intellectual views.

The man responds to the woman playfully, extending their exchange. He claims, “One recognises one’s affinity. One doesn’t need a lifetime. You began the business at the Wohenhoffens’ ball. To-day you’ve merely put on the finishing touches” (“Invisible” 140). He admits that he recognizes her playfulness, wit, and personality because she acted similarly at the masquerade ball. With this recognition, he tells her, “Look me in the eye, and tell me you’re not [the woman from the masked ball]” (140). Even in a declarative statement, the man is not as direct as he could be. Instead of demanding that she tell him she is the woman from the masked ball, he demands that she tell him she is not the woman from the masked ball. In a sense, he avoids codifying and defining her as “the woman” through framing his demand in the negative. The woman wittily responds, “I haven’t the faintest interest in telling you I’m not. On the contrary, it rather pleases me to let you imagine that I am” (140). She evades facts and empirical truth in her ambiguous answer and instead focuses on what “pleases” her and what she
will “let” him “imagine.” After they engage in more playful banter about whether she is or is not the woman from the ball, in which they do not reach an answer, she tells him that she must go (141). The lack of a definitive conclusion about the woman’s identity and her declaration that she must leave heightens the ritualistic courtship narrative that they have veiled in witticisms, metaphorical language, deflections, and refusals up to this point in the story.

The woman’s threat results in the man proposing marriage to her. He asks, “Will you marry me?” (142). Typically, a woman would respond to a man’s marriage proposal with some sort of answer, whether it be “no,” “yes,” or “I need some time to think about it.” But in this case, the woman interrupts the usual marriage proposal formula and responds with a question: “Why do you ask?” This woman seems to be anything but a stereotypical Victorian woman who incessantly observes social forms, religiously bows to convention, and adheres to the typical courtship ritual. He reasons, “partly from curiosity” and “partly because it’s the only way” that he may be “sure of seeing” her again (142). The reasons for a man proposing marriage are usually direct, serious, and very clear, unlike this character’s reasons. She claims, “In my horoscope it is written that I shall either never marry at all, or—marry royalty” (142). The woman, like the man, typically avoids binary logic because it often results in limitations. However, in this case, the woman enacts binary logic and threatens to bow to it. But there is a key difference here: binary logic does not rule her character in this instance; rather, she controls binary logic to serve her own purposes. She couches this logic in superstition—her horoscope—as opposed to the context in which one usually finds binary logic—rational science. Thus, she seems to playfully use this logic to try to
create her own reality as she simultaneously challenges the entire foundation of this Victorian logic.

Refusing to end this game of wits, he will not admit that he is the prince. He pleads with her to shirk her horoscope, to which she asks him to “follow [her]” and to “help [her] commit a little theft” (142). She picks a white lilac and says to him, “allow me to make you a receiver of stolen goods” (142) and gives him the flower. Up to this point in the story, the man and woman have had clever verbal exchanges that involved metaphors, mystery, play, humor, vagueness, and evasion. Now, the woman expands their exchanges to include vague, mysterious gestures. He says, “Thank you. But I’d rather have an answer to my question,” and she asks, “Isn’t that an answer?” (142). In her view, this action serves as her answer to his marriage proposal, but he does not understand it. He, mirroring her answer to his question with a question, asks “Is it?” and she answers with another question, “White lilac—to the Invisible Prince?” (142). The woman turns her answer to his marriage proposal into another extended game. She presents her answers to his questions as questions and encourages him to think critically. Finally comprehending her action, he exclaims, “The Invisible Prince. . . . Then you are the black domino!” (142). She responds, “Oh, I suppose so” (143). This answer is likely the most direct answer he will ever receive from her. He responds, returning to the game of identity and telling her she will be “most awfully sold” if she “persist[s] in that preposterous delusion about [his] being Luis Leczinski [the invisible prince]” (143).

The process of masking facilitates and maintains the characters’ interest in each other. As they get to know one another, they avoid several issues in Victorian society
that could have caused problems, including binary logic, categorization, codification, one-dimensionality, strict proper social behaviors, and rigidly following predetermined paths as “proper” Victorians. Their use of ambiguous language, including their clever obscurities, contradictions, and witty metaphors, and their refusals to satisfy each other’s curiosity result in their perpetual curiosity about each other. The depth and focus on character rather than superficial physical appearances creates a strong personal relationship that remains exciting, enduring, and renewable. The man and woman play, flirt, test, and question each other, and they learn that they match each other in wit, intelligence, and cleverness. Throughout these interactions, they remain interesting, ever-evolving, and intriguing to each other. They reject the one predetermined “proper” Victorian path of courtship that supposedly leads to “success.” Instead, they create a more interesting, roundabout path to get to know each other through a masking process that reveals several truths and values, leading to ongoing success and enduring happiness. Unlike the stereotypical Victorian “happy ending,” where the process of courtship merely serves as a means to the goal—the “end”—the characters’ process itself in “The Invisible Prince” becomes more valuable than one codified and identifiable end “truth.”

Harland suggests that in the future these characters will likely continue to make their own healthy, enjoyable, entertaining, renewable realities with each other through the process of masking. Hence, they will continue to evolve as individuals, and their personal romantic relationship will continue to evolve and grow. In the very last line of dialogue in the story, the woman poses a playful question to the man: “Aren’t you ashamed to tell me such abominable fibs?” (143). It seems fitting that the last spoken
line in the story is a playful question that suggests their conversation is not in fact at an end but will continue. In response to her question, “they both laughed and walked on” (143). The flexible characters are still talking, laughing, and walking when they leave us, and we assume that their relationship will continue. Harland provides us with a story that seems to continue, just not in front of our eyes. Harland’s story, like his masked characters, will go on.

“Merely Players” (1897) by Henry Harland

In “Merely Players,” a story that was first published in the April 1897 issue of The Yellow Book and was then published in his collection, Comedies and Errors (1898), Henry Harland again presents characters employing masking strategies and flexibly viewing others who do so. In this story, King Ferdinand Augustus’ ministers urge him to marry a princess with whom he is not personally acquainted. Exhausted from their constant nagging, he finally agrees and marries her by proxy. When the Queen arrives in his kingdom, he pretends to flee his castle but actually “hides” in his palace, representing himself as a guest. At this point in the story, the King and Queen have not yet met. As a guest, the King meets a mysterious, witty, red-haired woman who says she is a woman from the Queen’s court. Eventually, Ferdinand professes his love to her, and she reveals herself to be the Queen, his wife. Similar to the unnamed woman and the unnamed man in “The Invisible Prince,” the Queen and King in “Merely Players” employ masking strategies, which give them time to get to know one another without the pressure of upholding their preconceived roles of King and Queen and their expectations as husband and wife.

In the beginning of the story, Harland establishes the basic problem when King Ferdinand claims that all women are the same. The King says to his friend Hilary,
“Women are a pack of samenesses, and love-affairs are damnable iterations” (“Merely” 20). Hilary challenges Ferdinand, “You can’t pretend that red-haired women are the same” to which Ferdinand rebuts, “The same, with the addition of a little henna” (30). Ferdinand believes that all women fit into his schema of sameness. His descriptions of women and love-affairs create a sense of constraint, routine, and predictability that contrasts with the description of his garden. One “could not perceive the boundaries of the garden” because “in all directions it offered an indefinite perspective,” and the garden landscape includes various “green lawns and shadowy alleys,” “bright parterres of flowers,” “fountains,” and “tall bending trees” (29). The garden’s wildness, growth, and limitlessness contrast starkly with the King’s codified, contained view of women and relationships. The garden symbolizes freedom, variety, and unpredictability, all elements the King craves. At this point in the story, he needs amusement and rejuvenation.

To solve this problem and to spark much needed rejuvenation in the King, Harland creates a mysterious red-haired woman who enacts a masking strategy, representing herself as a member of the Queen’s court. The King sees “a woman in a white frock” who was “picking roses . . . in one of the alleys of the garden” (31). The Queen purposefully positions herself where the King will see her and associate her with the beautiful, unpredictable, boundless garden. Her “white frock” serves symbolically as a blank canvas; she is completely unknown to the King. Having her back “turned towards” the King and wearing “a light scarf,” the mysterious woman sparks curiosity in the King (31). Alexander Bain explained that “mystery[’s] . . . charm is due to the ideal chase that it opens up” (Emotions 222). At this point in the story, the Queen’s masking
strategy includes her unknown identity, her presence in the King’s garden, and her clothing that partially veils her head. The Queen presents herself as this woman of mystery for two reasons. First, she flexibly accommodates her change of situation when she moves from her kingdom to King Ferdinand’s kingdom. By representing herself as someone else, she avoids the pressure of immediately fulfilling her expected role as Queen. Second, she is attempting to capture the King’s interest, similar to how the woman in “The Invisible Prince” captured the unnamed man’s interest.

The mystery woman arouses the interest of the King when he sees her, and he defends her beauty to Hilary. The King “thought her very good-looking” whereas Hilary claims that her nose is “too short” (33). The King asks, “What’s the good of criticising particular features? The general effect of her face was highly pleasing. She looked intelligent, interesting; she looked as if she would have something to say” (33). Unlike Hilary, King Ferdinand does not describe particular concrete physical features of the woman’s beauty. Rather, he views her physical beauty holistically and as an indication of her personality and intelligence. The King continues, “Her figure struck me as exceptionally fine. There was something sumptuous and noble about it. . . . She has remarkably nice eyes—eyes with expression” (33–34). The King continues with his description the next time he sees her: “Her eyes and her mouth, her clear-grey sparkling eyes, her softly curved red mouth, suggested many agreeable possibilities—possibilities of wit, and of something else” (37). He does not explicitly identify these other “possibilities” or the “something else” in her character that attracts him; he gestures towards possibilities of this woman’s character that are beyond his scope. Using the same approach in the description of her character that he does in the
description of her physical beauty, the King is clearly intrigued with what lies beneath 
the woman’s surface. King Ferdinand, like the man in “The Invisible Prince,” describes 
the woman in relatively vague terms. He allows for flexibility and change by persisting 
in his refusal to codify and categorize her physical beauty in strict, descriptive terms. If 
he imagines each and every detail of his ideal woman’s physical beauty and character, 
he will likely be disappointed. On the other hand, if he remains flexible in his ideal, he 
will likely be pleased with what he discovers about the woman and with the discovery 
process itself.

As part of this process, the King learns that the mystery woman has a deep, 
witty, complex character. The woman and King’s first conversation runs like a game of 
contradictions, similar to the game of wit in “The Invisible Prince.” When the King sees 
the woman standing on a bridge over an artificial lakelet and feeding crumbs of bread to 
the carp below, he properly greets her saying, “It’s a lovely afternoon” and “lift[s] his hat” 
to her (37). “Smiling” and continuing to be the mystery woman, she immediately 
qualifies his statement, “But a weary one” (37). He follows her lead and contradicts her 
statement when he claims, “Not a weary one for the carp” (37). The woman raises the 
stakes and philosophizes, “Oh, they have no human feelings” (37). With this assertion, 
she positions herself as a teacher. Following her lead again, the King positions himself 
as an inquiring student who asks, “Don’t you call hunger a human feeling?” (38). 
Masking strategies allow both characters to demonstrate flexibility and adaptability 
during their exchanges. Inverting normal logic, she answers definitively, “They have no 
human feelings,” and takes an abnormal perspective when she continues, “but I never 
said we hadn’t plenty of carp feelings” (38). People usually debate whether or not
animals experience human emotions, not if humans experience animals’ emotions. Her inversion prompts important questions about the differences in humans and animals and signals that she has intellectual depth. The woman’s obscure comments encourage the King’s curiosity.

During their next meeting, the woman’s masking strategy enables her to be honest with the King. She shares her feelings of frustration about the King freely. She calls him “simply intensely selfish and intensely silly,” claiming that “[h]e is a King Do-Nothing” who “shrinks and evades all the duties and responsibilities of his position” and “who takes no sort of interest in the public business or welfare of his kingdom” (50–51). Representing herself as a woman in the Queen’s court, she creates a situation that enables her to clearly communicate her frustrations about the King to the King himself. These types of revelations would likely be impossible if she revealed herself as the Queen or that she knew he was the King since the traditional role of being the King’s wife dictates that she support and obey him, not criticize and challenge him. The King’s and Queen’s masking strategies allow for honesty between them.

After this meeting, a fortnight passes in which the King does not see the woman, and her absence sparks deep, desperate feelings of longing and love in him. Her absence allows him to remember her and re-remember her, and each time he thinks about her, his desire for her increases (57–58). Alexander Bain warned, “uncertainty has always its bad side; namely, terror, or a balance of probabilities in favour of evil. It is only in so far as the mind can sustain the elation of hopeful prospects, that the unknown is an occasion for purely pleasurable suspense” (Emotions 222). At this point in the story, the King’s uncertainty about when and if he will see the red-haired woman
again skirts the line between pleasure and terror. The thought of her excites him; yet the thought of never seeing her again terrifies him. He admits, “for the first time in my life I’m seriously in love, and “[s]he’s done something to the inmost soul of me; she’s laid it bare, and set it quivering and yearning. She’s made herself indispensable to me; I can’t live without her” (58, 59). The Queen’s masking strategy, her honesty, and her absence from the King perpetuate his desire for her and results in him loving her. He develops feelings he would likely not have developed if he knew she was his wife since he refused to even meet his wife.

The King’s feelings for the mystery woman reach their climax when he sees her again. He passionately divulges, “I am in love with you. . . . You are absolutely unique among women. . . . I can see your wonderful burning spirit shining deep, deep in your eyes. . . . There has not been an hour since I last saw you that I have not thought of you, loved you, longed for you. . . . If you could see into my heart, if you could see what I feel” (62). The King cannot fully articulate his feelings with words to the woman because they are so intense, so he gestures towards his feelings with wishes that she could “see” them. In The Dark Matter of Words: Absence, Unknowing, and Emptiness in Literature, Timothy Walsh identifies such instances as “language-as-gesture” (70). Walsh explains, “We are always lapsing into gesture and using words as pointing tools extended toward that which we cannot completely grasp” (70). The King’s “language as gesture” signals his deep love for the woman. The Queen’s masking strategy provides the King with time and freedom from his obligations and expectations as King and her husband, which allow his love for the Queen to develop.
The King’s masking strategy also allows the Queen to fall in love with the King. She explains to the King, “There was a certain person whom I heartily despised and hated; and then, as chance would have it, I was thrown two or three times into his company; and for motives of expediency I disguised my antagonism. In the end, do you know, I found myself rather liking him?” (45–46). Representing herself as someone else, the Queen meets the King on several occasions, albeit with her negative bias of him, without the King knowing she is the Queen. Her negative feelings about him slowly change because of these meetings. Like the King, she too falls deeply in love. At the end of the story, she admits to the King, “I am a married woman, and—I am in love with my husband” (63). The Queen adapts and uses a masking strategy to escape the position the King has predetermined for her as his wife. She employs this strategy to cope with her new situation as the wife of a King who rejects her, and through this process, she creates a new, interesting, renewable reality for herself and the King.

Masking strategies create beneficial and lasting effects. They allow the Queen and the King time and freedom from expectations, duties, and responsibilities so they can meet, talk, flirt, and fall in love with each other and not be inhibited by the predestined roles of husband and wife. Representing themselves as other people allows for the Queen’s and King’s curiosity and interest in one another to develop apart from the pressure of their new significant marriage. In the end, they dismiss their preconceptions of each other. The masking strategies allow for flexible characters that experience honest, deep, genuine feelings for each other. Overall, these strategies enhance and deepen the bonds of love and desire between the King and the Queen and keep them renewed to themselves and to each other.
The Cardinal’s Snuffbox (1900) by Henry Harland

In “The Invisible Prince” and “Merely Players” Harland showcases complex characters that successfully employ and remain so loyal to a masking process that it becomes their reality. He emphasizes the importance of men’s reception of complex, flexible women in his novel The Cardinal’s Snuffbox, published in 1900. Harland’s method in his novel complements multi-faceted female characters, allowing the characters to adapt and evolve. Together, these two elements—women employing a masking process and men viewing women flexibly—result in healthy, fulfilling, renewing relationships.

This late-Victorian novel is narrated by the main character, Peter Marchdale, who moves to Italy where he falls in love with his landlady, the Duchessa Santagiolo, before he fully knows her. Harland critiques the rigid role for a traditional Victorian woman when he suggests that a strictly and narrowly defined ideal woman is not only delusional but also unfulfillable. Furthermore, he critiques the narrow expectations men have for these traditional women. Avoiding this trap, Peter conceives of his “ideal” woman flexibly, and the process enriches who the woman is for him. Peter’s adaptable ideal of the Duchessa results in his feelings for her only intensifying as he becomes more acquainted with her; the reality of their relationship is even better and more fulfilling than his ideal. Drawing attention to the significance of the Duchessa’s character, Harland writes in a letter to John Lane on October 22, 1899 that she is “the best woman I have ever done—and you know my women” (“Yellow Book” 423). As we have seen, Harland’s female characters in “The Invisible Prince” and “Merely Players” are flexible, witty, complex, intelligent, and fascinating, so the fact that Harland’s calls the Duchessa
his “best woman” emphasizes the importance of her in his text and in his critique of Victorian gender norms.

Harland forefronts the importance of spectators, including romantic partners of multifaceted characters, through an art metaphor. Peter asserts, “The eye of the beholder is every bit as indispensable as the hand of the artist. The artist does his work—the beholder must do his” (Cardinal’s 146). In this metaphor, we can view women as the artists who use masking strategies to accommodate their various facets and create beautiful art by doing so and men as the spectators who can choose how to view the art. The artist and the beholder “are collaborators” and “[e]ach must be the other’s equal; and they must also be like each other—with the likeness of opposites, of complements” (146). As “collaborators,” the artist and the beholder of the art have an equal amount of power and responsibility in their relationships to art: The artist imagines and creates the artwork; the beholder defines and interprets the artwork. As Harland explains, “Art, in short, is entirely a matter of reciprocity” (146). Being the beholder, Peter has the responsibility to accept and value the Duchessa’s artwork. Harland demonstrates this theory throughout Peter’s relationship with the Duchessa.

Peter sets up his “standard” of beauty to be quite flexible. He quickly dismisses “the kind of beauty that jumps at you,” calling it “the skin-deep kind,” because it “is the kind you end by heartily tired of” and “it is only an approximation of beauty—it may be only a simulacrum of it” (146). He criticizes physical, superficial beauty and asserts that this superficial beauty does not represent one’s full beauty.

Peter maintains his flexible standard when he begins to describe the Duchessa. He uses positive yet vague phrases to describe her as “exceedingly lovely,”
“exceedingly distinguished,” and “noble-looking,” and he emphasizes her potential when he claims, “she was infinitely more” (148). He cannot fully articulate the Duchessa’s description in words. Rather, she exists beyond words to some extent and beyond complete categorization and codification. He continues, “Her face—her whole person—had an expression! A spirit burned in her—a prismatic, aromatic fire” (148). By not providing a detailed description of the Duchessa’s “expression,” Peter implicitly acknowledges and accepts that her expressions may change and shift. He says, “Other women seemed dust, seemed dead, beside her” (148–149). Peter follows a similar three-step trajectory to the man in “The Invisible Prince”: First, they both condemn superficial beauty. Second, they both describe the women they romantically pursue in flexible terms. Third, they both juxtapose superficial beauty to the beauty of the women they pursue.

In contrast to the typically narrow Victorian categorization for a woman and her role, Peter expands his flexible ideal of the Duchessa to accommodate her infinite potential. Forefronting her potential through a metaphor, he leaves her description flexible: “She was a garden, inexhaustible of promises, of suggestions. With, capriciousness, generosity, emotion . . . they were all there” (149). He does not define these “promises” or “suggestions” but states that they are tireless. He claims, “all the mystery, magic, all the essential, elemental principles of the Feminine, were there: she was a woman” (149). Peter does not define each and every “essential” feminine element that the Duchessa possesses in detail. He sketches a flexible outline or idea of the Duchessa as “a woman” that contains infinite potential. Alexander Bain explained “potentials” in that “uncertainty is the realm of ideal possibility, the scope for imaginative
outgoings. While nothing is decided one way or the other, everything is admissible, and the mind indulges in numerous ideal pursuits, cheered and elated by such a promise well" (*Emotions* 222). Peter takes advantage of his uncertainty about the Duchessa. The elastic outline he creates for her is able to change and shift to accommodate her complexity. Peter's healthy, flexible outline of the Duchessa as an ideal woman contrasts starkly with Mayne’s unhealthy, rigid categorization of Lulie as a coquettish New Woman in “The Pleasure Pilgrim,” discussed in Chapter 1.

When Peter meets the Duchessa, she is even better than what he imagined. For Peter, the Duchessa “was all that he had imagined, and infinitely more” (*Cardinal’s* 167). “She was the substance” whereas Peter “imagined the shadow” (167). The Duchessa’s character surpasses Peter’s expectations and his imagined Duchessa pales when he compares it to the real Duchessa. Peter “had divined her, as it were, from a single angle” but realizes that “there were many angles” to her (167). The Duchessa’s complexity and multi-facetedness supersedes what Peter had imagined to such an extent that, towards the end of the novel, he proclaims, “She is in every way immeasurably beyond anything that I was capable of dreaming” (263). Luckily, Peter’s elastic ideal is able to accommodate the vastness of the Duchessa, unlike the typical rigid Victorian ideal for a woman.

Peter continues with his description of her but realizes that language cannot effectively portray her. He states, “No; the language is not yet invented, in which I could describe her” (263). Similar to the King using “language-as-gesture” in “Merely Players,” Peter uses “language-as-gesture” in the novel, and it functions in three related ways. First, he refuses to codify her rigidly and specifically. The Duchessa’s resistance
to definition anticipates Luce Irigaray’s theory in *This Sex Which is Not One*. Irigaray claims that woman “resists all adequate definition,” and “in a culture claiming to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities . . . [r]igorously speaking, she cannot be identified either as one person, or as two” (26). The Duchessa exists beyond language, resists definition, and exceeds the limits of codification and categorization.

Second, Peter’s use of “language-as-gesture” retains elasticity and openness in the definition of the Duchessa that will accommodate changes and her future facets. Mikhail Bakhtin forefronts openness in one’s living consciousness in his term “unfinalizability,” which he defines as “unclosedness” and “indeterminancy” (53). He explains that people “all acutely sense their own inner unfinalizability, their capacity to outgrow, as it were, from within and to render untrue any externalizing and finalizing definition of them. As long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word” (59). Peter refuses to force the Duchessa to “finalize” herself. Instead, he encourages her “unfinalizability” and “unclosedness” with his elastic sketch of her that will accommodate her growth and changes.

Third, by using “language-as-gesture,” Peter retains depth and mystery in the Duchessa’s character, which allow for her anticipated and unanticipated potentials and truths. George Steiner in *Real Presences* argues that “Speech can neither articulate the deeper truths of consciousness, nor can it convey the sensory, autonomous evidence of the flower, of the shaft of light, of the birdcall at dawning” (111). “Language,” Steiner claims, can “falsify” and “corrupt” rather than “reveal”: “Such
transcendental intuitions have sources deeper than language, and must, if they are to retain their truth-claims, remain undeclared" (111, 112). Peter’s use of “language-as-gesture” as a substitute for his description of the Duchessa indicates that he cannot convey the “deeper truth[s]” of her character in words. Peter would likely tragically limit and misrepresent the Duchessa’s character if he tries to describe and verbalize it, so he does not try.

Critiquing the narrow Victorian expectations for women, Harland emphasizes the importance that others not define women narrowly or rigidly. The Duchessa does not have to suppress any facets of her character to meet Peter’s expectations because his expectations are flexible and able to accommodate her complexity, multiplicity, and adaptability. This strategy makes the Duchessa’s reality fulfilling to both her and Peter. They experience a fulfilling, flexible, renewable relationship. In *The Cardinal’s Snuffbox*, Harland shifts the focus in his story away from the “artist” (the woman) and her artwork (her complexity and use of masking strategies) and to the “spectator” (the man) and his observing and interpreting the woman and her artwork. Ella D’Arcy also focused on the position of the “spectator” in “The Pleasure Pilgrim” through Mayne and Campbell. But unlike Harland’s Peter, D’Arcy’s Mayne and Campbell codify and classify Lulie narrowly and rigidly, and they do not allow her to be flexible, resulting in her suicide.

*Some Emotions and a Moral* (1891) by John Oliver Hobbes

Both Henry Harland and Pearl Mary Teresa Craigie, writing under the pseudonym John Oliver Hobbes, deal with similar themes of flexibility and strategies of masking in their fiction, but where Harland shows the fulfilling relationships that can result from masking and respecting others’ masking, Hobbes shows the heartache that comes when characters do not respect others’ masking.
Like many of her female protagonists, John Oliver Hobbes had a complex and often conflicted character. Vineta Colby calls John Oliver Hobbes “multidirectional” since she had so many interests, including theology, philosophy, language, and music (177). Margaret Maison points out several of Hobbes’ conflicting elements:

Her life presented a confusion of striking and sometimes contradictory images. Divorced and devout, consecrated to God but fascinating to men she shone in public as a bejeweled and beautifully dressed ornament of fashionable society, but in private she toiled as an earnest student of religion and philosophy, and a sensitive suffering artist. A gloss of superficial worldly sophistication hid her intellectual high seriousness; frivolity masked tragedy, and beneath the extravagant tea-gowns and the magnificent mink coats were concealed the sackcloth and the ashes.

\[\text{(John Oliver 1)}\]

Hobbes was a multi-faceted, complex woman who explained that she experienced an internal “conflict between reason and powerful emotions,” and “she thought that the pseudonym ‘Hobbes,’” based on the seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, “would support the rational element and caution her against maudlin sentimentality” (Air-Bird 57).\(^2\) Craigie sought to distinguish her “better self,” John Oliver Hobbes, from the other parts of herself, using the particular male pseudonym to accommodate her facets as a writer and a rational intellectual and to better her situation as an author. She states,

Early in life I decided to give my “better self” a definite name and thus place a limit on its responsibilities. I called it John Oliver Hobbes. My jealousy now of that creature is not to be expressed. However much I enjoy this party, I know perfectly well

\(^2\) Margaret Maison catalogs the various reasons Craigie has given as to why she chose her particular pseudonym: “Once she said, ‘I chose the name of John because it is my father’s and my son’s; Oliver because of the warring Cromwell; and Hobbes because it is homely.’ She sometimes admitted that the philosopher Hobbes had influenced her and that the recollection of the sound sense of this man ‘saved her as a writer from maudlin sentiment.’” Another time she told an American reporter that ‘Hobbes was the ugliest name I could think of’ (John Oliver 7).
it is not for me—but for Hobbes. But for him I never should have been here. I will not say I dislike Hobbes,—but even a woman is human. I have come in on my “better self ticket”: I suppose we all mean to enter Paradise by means of the same deception. (The Life 45)

Hobbes’ first novel, Some Emotions and a Moral, which she wrote when she was 24 years old, received several positive reviews from contemporary critics. In 1901 E.F. Harkins stated, “it is a positive fact that the book was one of the sensations of the day,” (272) and “Mrs. Craigie is not content to paint the body: she must paint the soul also” (232). Hobbes was clearly interested in exploring the depth of characters in her works. In letter to Mr. Unwin in 1904, Hobbes wrote, “As psychological stuff, [my books] are sound, as studies of modern English life, they are the truth” (The Life 259). In her 1935 study, Isabel C. Clarke called this novel “a mature piece of work” and said it was “witty, epigrammatic, unusual, with an undercurrent of profound if sad wisdom” (235–236).

Today, Hobbes’ works have sadly all but disappeared. However, as the scholarly analysis of her work in recent decades suggest, her portrayals of female characters are instructive, not least for lessons they provide regarding flexible character. Mildred Harding claims that John Oliver Hobbes’ novels “brilliantly and wisely illuminate the lives of women . . . living in the cultural storm and stress of the end of an era” and that “In her diverse female characters—sirens, scholars, and artists, lovers and loved ones, saints and sinners, Eves and Liliths, dutiful and rebellious wives and daughters—modern women will surely see their sisters and themselves” (31). Talia Schaffer includes John Oliver Hobbes in her list of “prominent female Aesthetes” and claims that the “typical female Aesthetic text” is “concerned . . . with exploring new models of female identity”
One of these “models of female identity” that Hobbes explores in *Some Emotions and a Moral* is female multi-facetedness and accompanying masking strategies.

In *Some Emotions and a Moral*, Hobbes explores the use of accompanying masking strategies by her multifaceted main female character, Cynthia, and Cynthia’s expectations and ideals for her romantic partner, Provence. Unlike the unnamed man in “The Invisible Prince,” the King in “Merely Players,” and Peter in *The Cardinal’s Snuffbox*, Cynthia rigidly defines expectations for her “ideal” romantic lover, trying to confine him to one particular life path. The novel follows the doomed courtship of Cynthia and Provence. Throughout the story, Cynthia uses masking strategies to accommodate her multi-faceted character and to adapt to changing situations; however, she fails to offer him the same accommodations, remaining so narrow in her ideals and expectations for her lover that she ultimately loses him. Despite loving Provence, Cynthia’s anger towards him prompts her to marry another man, and Provence marries another woman even though he loves Cynthia. After Cynthia’s husband dies, she and Provence vow their love to each other. But she soon realizes that Provence’s social reputation and career will be ruined if they continue their relationship. Cynthia learns an important lesson through her tribulations and sacrifices her personal desires to save Provence’s reputation.

In the beginning of the story, Hobbes has Provence convey that strict ideals and definitions, the foundation of Victorian society, are problematic. Provence asserts to his friend Golightly, “Ideals . . . are the root of every evil. When a man forgets his ideals he may hope for happiness, but not till then” (*Some Emotions* 1). In Provence’s
conception, ideals prevent happiness, and if one does away with ideals, he opens himself up to possibilities that may result in happiness. Provence rejects strict definitions more generally and explains to Golightly, “If I could tell you what I meant by happiness. . . . I should not want it. I have no pretty talent for definitions” (2). Provence seems to imply that once a feeling is defined and codified with particular expectations, it is no longer desirable because those predetermined expectations rob the feeling of potentials that were not predetermined. This logic echoes Harland’s logic in “The Invisible Prince,” “Merely Players,” and The Cardinal’s Snuffbox.

Provence also rejects binary logic, categorically defined either/or choices that usually result from strict definitions. He claims that “girls do not delight me” because “they appear to have no intermediate stage between the guileless chicken and the coquettish hen” and “wives are either too much devil or too much angel” (3). As Lynn Pykett explains, Victorian gender standards and binary logic only allowed women to be one-dimensional, either as loving “proper” wives or as “improper” women. If they did not adhere to their “proper” role, they were automatically deemed “improper” women. Provence critiques this rigid binary system and notes that there are no gradations between these two poles—the “proper” woman and the “improper” woman. He establishes his “ideal woman” as a combination of the two binary poles (3).

During Provence’s travels in “search of new worlds,” he accidentally meets Cynthia, a woman who does not conform to the proper Victorian stereotype for a woman. When Provence gets lost on a walk, he looks over a fence and sees Cynthia. He describes her as “a girl sitting on the lawn” who “was bored and what women call untidy; then . . . she was mysteriously, surprisingly, uncomfortably beautiful” (15).
Seeing her first from the perspective of proper Victorian women, he quickly forms his own, opposite view. Under this first impression Provence challenges ideal superficial beauty, similar to the man in “The Invisible Prince” and Peter. He admits, “I suppose I stared too hard—she looked up, caught my eye, blushed, tugged her dress, which was certainly short, over her ankles and tried to smooth her hair; for she wore no hat” (15). Cynthia is not concerned about tidiness or propriety, as her sitting in the lawn and clothing reflect. Her too short dress, disheveled hair, and hatless head fly in the face of proper Victorian female middle- and upper-class appearance. Her non-conformity intrigues Provence, and after getting directions from her, he “went on [his] way rejoicing” (15).

That night, when he is out for a walk near Cynthia’s house, he meets her for the second time. Provence “stopped short, for She was standing there, a vision in loveliness and white muslin—a fair enough sight to make any man’s heart . . . stand still. She did not seem surprised to see him, but with an indescribable movement of grace and confidence leant a little further over the gate, looked him straight in the eyes for a bewildering moment, and—looked away” (17). Cynthia strategically leans over the gate and makes eye contact with Provence to signal her interest in him. Like Peter and the King, Provence emphasizes Cynthia’s character and cannot accurately articulate in words much of what he admires about her. He says she has an “indescribable movement of grace and confidence” (17). The term “indescribable” is another example of Timothy Walsh’s “language-as-gesture,” which points “toward that which we cannot completely grasp” (70). Walsh explains that “the most subtle lesson of language is precisely the realization of its own limitations, which are recognizable only because we
do have access to what lies beyond those borders” (60). Words, like definitions, constrain and codify, and they often cannot relate the fullness and complexity of the thing they signify. By saying that Cynthia’s grace and confidence are “indescribable,” Provence underlines the difficulty in describing Cynthia fully and completely.

He then resorts to showing that she does not conform to Victorian beauty standards. He describes her as “uncomfortably beautiful, attractive with a beauty which other women might or might not admire, but would at all events rather not see in a rival” (Some Emotions 17). Her beauty does not meet the generally accepted standards of beauty in late-Victorian England. In a sense, she “uncomfortably” serves to challenge or disrupt the codified, accepted standards of beauty. He notes that “there were faults in her face” and specifically describes that her “chin, in spite of its dimple, might have been rounder,” “her mouth with all its fresh redness was a little too wavering” and “her eyebrows were a shade too straight” (17). In this description of Cynthia, Provence uses the stereotypical elements of ideal beauty to indicate Cynthia’s apparent physical flaws, but he points out her “faults” as a critique to the system that has codified physical beauty rigidly. He considers her beautiful, likely more beautiful than he would if she conformed to the proper standards of beauty. Provence’s vague description of Cynthia also breaks binary logic. He states, “She had wonderful hair, neither auburn, nor gold, nor brown, but a suggestion of all three” (17). He is careful not to give any color more dominance than another color when he uses the word “suggestion.” Throughout Provence and Cynthia’s relationship, he describes her flexibly. Before he can say anything, Cynthia is called from inside the house, and she “sighed, smiled with ineffable graciousness on heaven and earth, glanced at the mortal on the opposite side of the
road, and disappeared into the shadow of the garden” (18). Cynthia’s sigh signals her
disappointment that she must leave, and her smile and eye contact with Provence
reinforce her interest in him.

As Provence observes, Cynthia does not conform to proper Victorian standards,
but her sister Agatha, who serves as Cynthia’s foil, does. Agatha is “a good, Christian
young lady” (27) who is “the mainstay” of her father’s parish and so devout that her
father is “perhaps, somewhat afraid” of her. “[S]he copied his sermons in a beautiful
hand” and “was an adept at hunting references” (22). She is an apt helpmate and a
superior manager to her father. She is “simply unequalled at tying a cravat” (22), which
attests to her attention to order and details. The cravat itself, a strip of fabric around the
neck and tucked into open necked shirts, represents Agatha’s categorical, tight-fitting
system of order. Agatha tells Cynthia that Cynthia’s “clothes are always in such sad
need of repair” (26). As a proper manager of the household and family, Agatha is quick
to point out what requires fixing or mending. Even when Cynthia ostensibly upholds
proper fashion standards by wearing a hat, she actually challenges the bounds of
propriety with her questionable taste in fashion; it is so odd-looking that it makes her
sister “[start] a little” (25). Unlike Cynthia, Agatha hopes her household, like herself,
reflects propriety, cleanliness, and orderliness. As a daughter, a sister, and a house
manager, Agatha epitomizes the traditional Victorian role as a proper, obedient,
organized woman.

Like Cynthia’s clothing, her behavior is not that of a “proper” Victorian woman
either. In Provence’s landlady’s view, Cynthia is “fascinating but not altogether what a
clergyman’s daughter ought to be” (27). The landlady explains, “She was gay-hearted,
and never joined in the hymns at church” (27). In response to Cynthia’s father whistling “the opening bars of a Chopin Nocturne,” Cynthia laughs a “curious laugh” that signifies “good health, considerable wickedness, and a fellow-feeling for the ungodly” (22). She also distracts her father from writing his sermons on Thursdays. Cynthia is an unconventional, fun-loving woman who does not conform to proper Victorian standards.

Not being confined by proper standards, Cynthia enacts strategic maneuvers to get to know Provence when she meets him again at a dinner party at her house. She retains “confidence in her own beauty” and “her eyes gleamed with mischief” (28). At this point in the story, she does not know Provence very well, keeps her distance from him, and analyzes him. Before he arrives, she speculates that he would “look too pleased to see her” and that “he must be weak—and she hated weakness” (28). But her analysis upon Provence’s arrival seems to prove her wrong. Provence’s acknowledgment of her was “frigidly courteous” and “his expression was cold, even stern,” which causes him to rise “high in her respect” (28). Cynthia does not realize that upon meeting her Provence has “suddenly grown self-conscious,” which he compensates for by assuming an “unfelt stoicism” (29). Cynthia (wrongly) concludes that Provence is not very interested in her.

Once she comes to this conclusion, she quickly shifts into being understanding and sympathizing with Provence to gain his interest and to get to know him. The conversation at the table “came to a stand-still,” and Cynthia “caught [Provence’s] eye and found it sympathetic” (32). This look of understanding between Cynthia and Provence creates a bond between them: “In a moment the whole aspect of things was changed for both of them. Provence found a mysterious joy in being bored since she
was bored too. Cynthia—more moderate in her emotions—felt that the evening might not prove so dull as she had first feared it would” (32). In this scene, the man is more emotional than the woman, the reverse of stereotypical Victorian gender norms. A shared understanding eases their boredom, and the narrator begins to refer to them in coupled terms (32). Like Provence, Cynthia also rejects rigid definitions when she says to him, “I haven’t got a label” (33). She then asks, “Don’t you think . . . it would be much easier to be good if we left everything to our instincts? Reason—what learned people call reason—seems so much more artificial” (33). Cynthia seems to associate herself with stereotypical Victorian women who are supposedly driven by their feelings and instincts, versus Victorian men who are driven by reason and logic. However, Cynthia challenges this traditional dichotomy by calling reason artificial and reversing the poles of the dichotomy, positioning instincts (women) as superior to reason (men).

Continuing their conversation, she admits, “Do you know . . . I made sure I should see you again” (34). During their second meeting, she purposefully and strategically leaned over the gate, made eye contact with Provence, smiled at him, and sighed when she had to leave as ways to signal her interest in him and encourage him to return. The narrator comments, “This was probably the most unstudied remark she had made that evening—for she found few things more difficult than giving herself to the world, as it were, unvarnished” (34). Cynthia is always employing masking strategies to communicate, to analyze people and situations, and to eventually attain what she wants. Metaphorically, her character is likened to wood, and her performances are likened to varnish. The “varnish” “polishes” and brings out her grains, parts of her
character. An “unstudied” remark is one that she does not strategically plan, practice, and polish.

Cynthia relies on “studied” strategic maneuvers to accommodate her complex character, which defies restrictive one-dimensional categorization. She views “life . . . as a series of situations in which she invariably figure[s] as the heroine,” performing on the stage of life (34). As a “heroine,” she takes her audience, the people in her life, into consideration and cats to them by being “charming,” “graceful,” and “interesting” but not “tiresome” (34). Hobbes includes other references to the stage in her novel to emphasize this play metaphor. At one point, Cynthia waits for “the climax” of the third act (54), and at another point in the story, she meets Provence and says, “On the stage . . . we should have slow music for this situation, and then we should say appropriate things” (91). These references to the stage highlight Cynthia’s attention to her masking strategies throughout the novel.

After the dinner party, Cynthia is ambivalent about Provence and presents herself as indifferent to him as a way to give herself time to decide if she will be Provence’s lover or not. The morning after the dinner party, Provence attends breakfast at Cynthia’s house. Her “white cotton gown of severe simplicity” represents her ambivalence towards Provence at this point in the story. The whiteness signifies innocence, purity, and a state of openness, and the simplicity of the gown signifies that Cynthia is not actively flirting with or pursing Provence as a lover yet. But her gown “did full justice to her figure” (44), which may indicate that Cynthia is not opposed to flirting with Provence or taking him as her lover. Cynthia greets “Provence with an old-fashioned dignity which made him feel almost as though he were meeting her for the
first time,” as she studies him, “‘making up her mind’ about him” (44). On the surface, she “appeared to be deeply absorbed in her father’s discourse on the tendency of modern poetry,” but below the surface, she “was in reality criticising Provence as she had never criticised him before and would never criticise him again” (44). Presenting herself as indifferent allows Cynthia to examine Provence harshly, looking for his flaws and faults without being scrutinized herself.

But instead of finding Provence’s faults, she finds him picturesque and decides to flirt to show her interest in him. In Cynthia’s view, Provence is “looking his best,” like “a portrait by Velasquez” and “picturesque and with a Future!” (44–45). Having decided on Provence’s attractiveness as a lover, his resemblance to an artwork, and his future potential, “Cynthia plunged into open flirtation” with him, and “in one of her quick, expressive movements, she had touched his arm” (45). At first, Cynthia “had lived her amusement with Provence from day to day” in their relationship, “taking small thought for the morrow, and having still less for yesterday” (52). But after some time, “she felt she ought to prepare in some way for the climax,” his proposal of marriage to her (52). And just as she desires, Provence proposes, and she accepts. So far, Cynthia’s adaptations to various situations and her strategic maneuvers bode well for a successful relationship.

Cynthia soon sets her sights on influencing Provence to help create the potential future she wants. Cynthia decides that Provence should take an offer to be an editor from a man named Dobbs, even though Provence just wants to continue writing his novel. Cynthia’s “once cherished ambition” is “to be the wife of a successful man, a man . . . either by his ability or impudence” will “push himself into a prominent position”
(53). She thinks that Provence “was a great deal too much in earnest to care for applause just for its own sake,” and “left to himself, he would probably spend his life trying to realize some crazy ideal, and in the end accomplish nothing” (53). However, she also speculates that under the influence of an ambitious woman, Provence “should make considerable buzz about his name with comparatively little trouble” (53). Cynthia thinks that if she “could get certain notions out of his head,” then she “could make something of him” (53–54). To some extent, Cynthia views Provence as raw material that she can mold into her ideal, successful future husband. Even more than wealth and reputation, Cynthia wants to have a successful husband. After Cynthia and Provence get engaged, she wants to keep it secret until he has “settled everything with Dobbs” because she claims “the only thing that can possibly concern Papa . . . [is Provence’s] prospects” (55). Cynthia pressures Provence to take the position with Dobbs and implies that her father’s acceptance of Provence as her future husband depends on his taking the job.

Cynthia soon turns to other manipulative tactics, including emotional and logical appeals: “For she scented triumph in the distance; patience, a few more smiles, once or twice the suspicion of a tear, sometimes the mere worldly wisdom of ‘What shall we live on?’, the pressure of her cheek against his shoulder—‘To please me . . . ?’” (56). The gesture of putting her cheek against his shoulder symbolically shows her dependence on Provence for protection and financial security. Cynthia uses her womanly wiles—smiles, tears, and affection—to persuade Provence to take the Dobbs job. She employs rational logic when she inquires about their livelihood, and she verbally exploits his desire to please her. Provence finally gives way to her when he
“surrendered one evening” (56). But this surrendering does not last; he changes his mind the next morning. Her confining tactics work temporarily but not permanently.

Cynthia keeps exerting influence and uses even harsher manipulative tactics to force Provence into following the career path she has predetermined for him. She tells him, “I have made a mistake in you. It does not console me to remember that women are usually mistaken—in men” (56). She strategically interprets his momentary agreement on the previous night to take the job with Dobbs as a promise. Attacking his character, she accuses Provence of breaking this promise in the hopes that he will “prove her wrong” by agreeing to take the editorship again. She intensifies the blow by making a stark delineation between men and women—the deceivers and the deceived—and positions Provence as the assailant and herself as the victim who “was too willing to be deceived” (56). Up to this point, Cynthia has rejected traditional gender norms, but she invokes one now. Even on a grammatical level, Cynthia positions herself as Provence’s victimized object when she tells him, “You have disappointed me” (56). She purposefully instigates his guilt when she appeals emotionally to his conscience: “Have I not loved you? Was I not, am I not still, ambitious for you? And you have failed me” (57). The two rhetorical questions she asks Provence and the inclusion of three negatives in those two questions emphasize her love, ambition, and devotion to Provence, however problematic. She tries to make him feel guilty, explaining further, “If I did not know that you had ability I would say nothing—I would not have cared for you in the first place. It is because I see you so indolent, so satisfied to grovel among the nobodies whose only métier is to grovel, that I am heartsick” (57). With this back-handed compliment, Cynthia relates that Provence lacks ambition and is
not living up to his full potential. Yet despite Cynthia’s guilt-inducing strategies, Provence remains firm and states, “I cannot say yes to Dobbs” (58).

Finally, Cynthia resorts to an ultimatum. At this point, she has exhausted several tactics—womanly wiles, emotional and logical appeals, and guilt—and these tactics have all failed to convince Provence to take the editorship. So, she raises the stakes and, in another strategic maneuver, threatens to end her relationship with him. She tells Provence to say no to Dobbs and admits that she might realize she was wrong someday, but until then, she “will never willingly set eyes upon [him] again” (59). This threat is the harshest Cynthia can use, and if it does not work, her relationship with Provence will end. He leaves, and “she waited a few moments, not so much in the hope that he would return, but because she felt that to stand there alone—determined if sorrowful—was not only the most artistic, but the most picturesque thing to do” (59).

Cynthia seems to view her relationship with Provence as a game, and she maintains the view that she is the heroine on the stage of life. She does not crumble under the emotional trauma that she has supposedly just experienced. Rather, she is more concerned with how she views herself and how others view her in the moment. Even at the height of emotional turmoil, Cynthia maintains her resolve. Provence soon returns and says, “It shall be as you say,” and he “felt as though he had signed away his soul” (59). Cynthia “laughed with the gaiety of a child” and said “you goose! Why couldn’t you have given in sooner?” (59). Provence views his concession with the utmost seriousness, whereas Cynthia views it with playfulness.

When Provence leaves a second time, Cynthia playfully celebrates her triumph, not knowing that it will be short-lived. She feels as though “she had done well,” and “the
prospect of marrying a successful writer became daily more pleasing to her” (59). She celebrates the triumph of her influence and the start of her success in “making” Provence into the husband she wants. When she is alone, she “execute[s] a wild but extremely graceful war-dance in front of the long mirror” (61). When Cynthia is “quite breathless” physically, she celebrates her triumph musically: “she flung open the piano—even lifted the top to let out its full volume, and with her foot firmly planted on the pedal she thumped with all her might a barbarian valse” (61).

After Cynthia’s celebration ends, she finally begins to wonder if her expectations for Provence are too rigid and narrow. She “began to have misgivings” and “was not at all sure that she had been right” to force Provence to take the editorship (62), thus constraining and suffocating his potential. She “reproached herself bitterly for her want of judgment” about him (62).

However, Cynthia’s feelings of regret and reproach do not last long because “she had always her boundless self-appreciation to come to rescue in hours like this” and quickly concludes that “Provence himself had been entirely to blame” since “he ought to have shown more firmness” (62). But when Provence shows more firmness in a letter to her, Cynthia becomes enraged. After she reads the letter, in which he refuses to follow the path to “success” that she sets out, she “trembled with anger and was perhaps more truly in love with him than she had ever been in her life. Unfortunately, however, she did not know this” (62). Cynthia is too selfishly preoccupied with getting Provence to do what she wants to acknowledge her respect and admiration for him rejecting her narrow definition of him. Even though she rejects codification and confinement for herself, she wants to impose codification and confinement on Provence.
Although she loves Provence, Cynthia immediately breaks off her engagement to him and accepts a marriage proposal from Edward Cargill, a family friend who has wanted to marry her for some time, thus driving Provence, even though he loves Cynthia, to marry Miss Grace Hemingway.

When Cynthia and Provence meet again after over three years, unplanned at the British Museum, her husband has died, but Provence is still married. Even though Cynthia wears a veil since she is in mourning for her husband, they still love each other. She calls Provence “my dearest” and asks him why he did not write to her (93). The narration reads, “For once in her life she spoke to him from her heart, and he caught a glimpse of the real woman” (93). Ironically, the only time Cynthia is literally “masked” is the only time Provence views her as being “the real woman.” As Mildred Harding notes, “At one moment in the long, tense conversations between Cynthia and Provence in the British Museum, genuine love and anguish broke through Cynthia’s mask” (Air-Bird 63). Provence prefers what he thinks is Cynthia’s “natural” character over what he thinks is her “acting”: “now she was natural it seemed to Provence, in comparison, as though a queen had been playing beggar-maid” (Some Emotions 93). But Cynthia’s literal mask suggests that the “realness” or “genuineness” Provence perceives is yet one more masking strategy, Cynthia’s art being her nature. “As an actress,” Cynthia “was dangerously good,” and “her art was more convincing than the average woman’s nature” (93). As the conversation proceeds, he claims that she “threw on her rags again” (93), but Cynthia’s “rags” reveal various facets of her character, her “natural” facet being yet one more part of her character. When Provence says to Cynthia, “you are just the same” (95), Cynthia responds, “You can’t see very much through this thick
veil,” and she “lift[s] her veil up” (95). During this crucial moment, Hobbes specifically draws the reader’s attention to Cynthia’s literal mask—her veil. She has become inseparable from her masking strategies, which reveal the parts of her character. Cynthia professes her feelings of love to Provence, who feels the same; they start to plan their future together and agree to see each other the next day.

But after Cynthia talks with her Aunt Theodosia, she has second thoughts about her future with Provence because it could harm his reputation. Lady Theodosia sympathizes with Cynthia and encourages her to learn from Lady Theodosia’s mistakes: “I—once—had an influence; I did not use it well. When I thought I was most proving my love, I was most thinking of myself” (105). Up to this point in the story, Cynthia has used her influence selfishly to pursue her own interests and desires. But now she considers the consequences of her actions on Provence and what would be best for him. Lady Theodosia explains, “Sometimes . . . a woman can best show her love for a man by leaving him. . . . Be brave, Cynthia” (105). As a result of Cynthia’s conversation with her aunt, she finds that, having failed to allow Provence the multi-faceted character she claimed for herself, she must now sacrifice her happiness to protect his reputation. She posts a letter to Provence that retracts her statements of love. She strategically deceives Provence to save him, her selfless sacrifice showing that she truly loves him and does not want to ruin him socially. The consequent ruin from her earlier inflexibility is manifest: “when she returned from the post it seemed as though she had lost her beauty. She was like one changed to stone” (106). The amusing, witty, beautiful Cynthia who flirted with Provence when they first met is now a stoic, serious, stone-like Cynthia who sacrifices for him.
Provence, not believing Cynthia’s letter and wanting an explanation, confronts her. She (with ironic accuracy) represents herself as selfish and manipulative, which paradoxically enables her to maintain her honorable sacrifice. She explains to him that “in some way or other I must find amusement. . . . I had been dull so long, and I couldn’t resist the temptation” (114). She forefronts herself as the active subject when she uses “I” three times in this short passage, focusing on her own desires. She goes on to tell Provence that she thinks it “was rather decent” of her to write him and that he should “give” her “credit of trying to put things right” since “it is not often that [she] want[s] to do even that” (114). Cynthia, “smiling and ironical,” maintains her selfishness even when Provence “looked pale and careworn” (114). He responds to her, “I refuse to believe that letter. If you did not speak the truth at the Museum, the whole world is a lie” (114). Cynthia tries to convince him: “No, Godfrey, not the whole world—only me. Besides, I never said I didn’t like you: I couldn’t say that. But there is a difference between liking and loving. I can’t love any one—I have tried. I have no love to give, and I am not worth loving. Believe me; do believe me” (114–115). Drawing attention to herself and her selfishness, as in her earlier confession, Cynthia uses “I” seven times and “me” three times in this short passage. This masking strategy of representing herself as cold, manipulative, and selfish—which was true earlier but only partly true now—allows her to sacrifice her relationship for Provence. She rejects him even though she loves him and always will. She honorably gives up her future with him, but he will never know.

Some Emotions and a Moral had the potential to end happily like “The Invisible Prince,” “Merely Players,” and The Cardinal’s Snuffbox. Like Harland’s female characters, Cynthia is a complex, flexible character that uses strategic maneuvers to
accommodate her complex character and to frequently get what she wants. To a large extent, Provence accepts her complex, multi-faceted character, like the main male characters in Harland’s three texts. But Cynthia is too rigid and inflexible in her expectations and ideals for Provence. As Harding points out, Cynthia “comes vividly alive” as “a complex, sharp-tongued, romantic, mercurial, perverse, and ultimately tragic heroine, doomed to unhappiness by her contradictory, egoistic nature” (58). To some extent, Cynthia certainly is contradictory—she both challenges the proper traditional Victorian role for a woman and also upholds it. She pursues intellectual knowledge and rejects the traditional role as a clergy’s obedient, well behaved, neat and tidy daughter. But throughout most of the story, she bases her actions on her own desires, which includes constricting and suffocating her lover’s character. She wants her husband to be successful but only on her own narrow terms. Still, although her selfishness has foreclosed her own happiness, at the end of the novel, Cynthia strategically foregrounds her selfishness in order to achieve selflessness. She sacrifices to protect the man she loves at the expense of her future with him. A key difference in Cynthia’s sacrifice, as opposed to the traditional Victorian woman’s sacrifice, is choice. Cynthia freely chooses to sacrifice for the man she loves, enacting her multi-faceted character and masking capabilities, whereas Victorian women were expected and compelled to sacrifice for their loved ones.

To some extent, John Oliver Hobbes, like her character Cynthia, lived and performed on the stage of life.³ She too was full of seeming contradictions that made

³ In 1908 at the John Oliver Hobbes Memorial, Lord Curzon said of Hobbes, “there was something phantom-like both in her entrance and exit from the stage. Like an apparition she burst upon the scene in her young prime, flashed across it in a swift trail of light, and vanished into the unseen” (The Life 366).
for a deep, complex character, and she used masking strategies to accommodate her various facets as a wife, mother, divorsee, writer, lecturer, and intellectual.

Both Henry Harland and John Oliver Hobbes used masking strategies in their own lives to accommodate different facets of themselves and different situations, and they both explored masking processes and strategies in some of their fiction. In “The Invisible Prince,” “Merely Players,” and The Cardinal’s Snuffbox, Harland forefronts the importance of adaptable characters and masking processes that make possible their flexibility. Elasticity is a key component in his characters, and he emphasizes positive examples of his characters viewing themselves and especially each other flexibly. Harland demonstrates the positive aspects of using masking processes—happiness, fulfillment, ever-evolving characters, and ever-renewed romantic bonds. The masking strategies Harland’s female characters continually enact accommodate their various facets and new and changing situations while revealing value and truths. The masking processes prompt curiosity and suspense in the females’ romantic partners and set the stage for fulfilling relationships that are easily renewed and rejuvenated. His female characters make their own fulfilling, renewable realities. Like Harland’s female characters, Hobbes’ female character Cynthia in Some Emotions and a Moral uses masking strategies to accommodate her different facets, and she too attempts to make her own reality with Provence. She has the opportunity for a fulfilling relationship, like Harland’s characters, but she fails to view her lover Provence flexibly, which results in the demise of their relationship. The lesson seems to be that masking strategies work well, revealing truths and paths to success, as long as both characters view each other flexibly. As both Harland and Hobbes demonstrate, elasticity with one’s own character
and elasticity in viewing others’ characters are crucial aspects in relationships. Possessing both aspects of elasticity, characters succeed, and without either aspect, characters fail.
WHEREAS Chapter 3 explores how female characters use ongoing masking strategies to initiate and build healthy, intellectually stimulating, romantic relationships that are able to be rejuvenated, renewed, and sustained, Chapter 4 explores how female characters use masking strategies to uphold serious societal expectations in their roles as wives while simultaneously accommodating their complex, multi-faceted characters by fulfilling desires and goals outside of their marriages. Several late-Victorian authors, including George Meredith in Diana of the Crossways, Sarah Grand in The Heavenly Twins, and Mona Caird in The Daughters of Danaus, have their married female protagonists expand beyond the one-dimensional role of a traditional Victorian wife by adapting from situation to situation via masking strategies. These strategies allow them to successfully integrate multiple facets of their characters into their lives, creating more desirable, fulfilling realities for themselves.

**Diana of the Crossways (1882) by George Meredith**

In her 1889 review of George Meredith’s Diana of the Crossways (1882) in Temple Bar, Adeline Seargant asserts,

George Meredith is one of the few novelists of any age or time who see not only man but woman as she is. Daring actually to draw from the life, and to discard the petty superstitions, the debasing traditions of the past, he presents us with a new type of heroine; not the “veiled, virginal doll” of contemporary fiction, but the woman with blood and brains, the heroine, as he calls her, of reality. (208)

In George Meredith’s Diana of the Crossways (1882), Meredith, in a sense, showcases Diana’s process of unveiling: He transforms her from a suppressed, one-dimensional
character into a bold, multi-dimensional “new type of heroine” who enacts masking strategies and seems closer to “reality.”

Diana demonstrates Butler’s theory of identity as well as a shift in female character from narrowly defined to multi-faceted. Diane Elam asserts that Diana “was the flecked heroine of Reality” who was “not always the same” and “one whose purity was not carved in marble”; she is not a “changeless thing” that “defies time and his fellows” (180–181). Similarly, Donald D. Stone views Meredith’s characters as having “fluid, changeable identities” (696). He claims that Diana is an “unfinished character, one who rebels against being frozen in a place by others,” and she “is capable, in short, of continued development” (705). Diana “is in the process of fashioning her own identity, even as she fashions her characters [in her novels]” (705), and her work “‘The Man of Two Minds,’ reflects her growing awareness of human dualism. Diana is ‘at war with’ herself. She is at odds with all those in the novel who dare to fix her in place, confine her, turn her into an object: ‘the woman Warwick’” (705). While I agree with Stone that Diana does not want her position to be fixed or her character to be confined, he, like other scholars, inclines to codify and limit her character to being dual. Diana’s character is more complex; she is multi-faceted. By enacting masking strategies, Diana turns from an exploited, suppressed, and narrowly defined woman, who is forced to uphold the role of an ideal domestic woman, into an unexploited, free, and multi-faceted woman whose character flexes as a writer, an intellectual, and, toward the end of the novel, a wife.

Early in the novel, Diana explains that women are confined into narrowly defined domestic characters. Speaking to her best friend, Lady Dunstane, Diana draws the
reader’s attention to woman’s restrained roles with a gender-grammar metaphor: “We women are the verbs passive of the alliance, we have to learn. . . . We are to run on lines, like the steam-trains, or we come to no station, dash to fragments" (*Diana* 75–76). Under this view, women are to be passive, and they are only allowed to follow predetermined paths, such as being wives and mothers. If women try to actively create alternative paths, they become societal outcasts and are destroyed.

In order to be made to fit this narrowly defined domestic role, Diana is forced by society and her first husband, Mr. Warwick, to suppress facets of her character, which deforms her and perverts her. Diana escapes to her “imagination” which has “become her broader life, and on such an earth, under such skies, a husband who is not the fountain of it, certainly is a foreign animal: he is a discordant note” (53). Meredith, through Diana’s thoughts, indicates that women’s imaginations are no place for husbands—“animal[s],” less than humans—who are not in harmony with women’s imaginations and thus do not belong in their imaginations. During her marriage, Diana loses parts of herself. She only sees

- glimpses of herself . . . the half-known, half-suspected, developing creature claiming to be Diana, and unlike her dreamed Diana, deformed by marriage, irritable, acerb, rebellious, constantly justifiable against him, but not in her own mind, and therefore accusing him of the double crime of provoking her and perverting her—these were the troops defiling through her head while she did battle with the hypocrite world. (115)

The repeated use of “half” in “half-known” and “half-suspected” suggests that her character is in the process of fragmenting. Diana is described as “fragmented” on other occasions as well. For example, when she speaks to Lady Dunstane, Diana explains she feels “shattered,” and she is nostalgic for a time in which she “might have looked back, and seen [her] whole self, not shattered” (129). At this point in the novel, Diana
seems to view herself as an essential core being whom her husband, her marriage, and society deforms and fragments. In her view, she splits into the “developing creature claiming to be Diana”—the fragmented, deformed Diana who has lost her subjectivity, her agency, and even her humanity—and the “dreamed Diana”—the whole, free Diana who has her subjectivity, agency, and humanity completely intact.

At this juncture, Diana claims that, in general, society forces a woman to wear a particular “feminine” “mask of virtue” as a “humbly knitting housewife” that covers over and suppresses her character (117). In *Masquerade and Identity* Efrat Tseelon describes the conventional view of the mask as one that “assumes the existence of an authentic self,” seeing “the mask—real or metaphoric—as covering, on certain occasions, and even deceiving by pretending to be the real self” (4–5), which is how Diana views the exploitative “feminine” mask. Diana, referring to “Woman” in general, thinks “the putting on of [this] mask appears to wither her and reduce her to the show she parades” (*Diana* 117). Diana grapples with woman’s limited agency and choices in a society that forces her into a narrow role that suppresses her character. The words “wither” and “reduce” suggest that women are abated by this “feminine” mask, and thus this withering reduction leads to decay and even death for them. After layers or parts of themselves are stripped down, the women are left only with “the show [they] parade.”

Diana soon realizes that she has a choice about whether she continues fulfilling the traditional role of a Victorian woman or not. She could “play . . . the popular innocent who runs about with astonished eyes to find herself in so hunting a world, and wins general compassion” (117). But she refuses to play this part, claiming that “the world is ever gracious to an hypocrisy that pays homage to the mask of virtue by
copying it; the world is hostile to the face of an innocence not conventionally simpering and quite surprised; the world prefers decorum to honesty” (117). Diana sets up clear binary logic: Either one is a dishonest hypocritical person who acts parts in a hypocritical world or one is an honest non-hypocritical person who does not act parts in a hypocritical world. She associates “the mask of virtue” and playing the part of “the popular innocent” with conventionality, dishonesty, and hypocrisy, whereas she associates “the face of [genuine] innocence” with unconventionality, honesty, and consistency. Furthermore, she recognizes that the hypocritical world values keeping up appearances, such as wearing “the mask of virtue,” more than honesty.

Diana vows to throw off this traditional “feminine” mask, hoping to reveal her “true” self. “In common with her sisterhood,” Diana “owned she had worn a sort of mask; the world demands it of them as the price of their station. That she had never worn it consentingly, was the plea for now casting it off altogether, showing herself as she was, accepting martyrdom, becoming the first martyr of the modern woman’s cause—a grand position!” (117). At this point in the novel, Diana assumes that “throwing off” the “feminine” mask that society forces upon her would reveal an essential, stable, and whole character, “herself as she was.” She also acknowledges that doing so would be social suicide, a sacrifice she is willing to make for “the modern woman’s cause.” Diana asserts, “Let me be myself, whatever the martyrdom!” (117). At this point, Diana views her character as essential and masking as deceptive and detrimental.

But Diana soon begins to question if she has an essential character when she acknowledges her complex character: “She lived with her girlhood as with a simple little
sister. They were two in one, and she corrected the dreams of the younger, protected
and counselled her very sagely, advising her to love Truth and look always to Reality for
refreshment” (138). Diana slowly realizes that she oversimplifies female character.
Diana does not progress linearly or chronologically from girlhood to adulthood, leaving
behind her girlhood; rather, girlhood marks her, and it remains actively part of her.
Originally, Diana’s grown-up self dominates her girlhood self, and Diana still subscribes
to the notion of an essential “truth,” an essential core character. But the hierarchy
between Diana’s grown-up self and girlhood self shatters, and “truth” becomes more
complicated for her: “The woman she was protested on behalf of the girl, while the girl
in her heart bent lowered sad eyelids to the woman; and which of them was wiser of the
truth she could not have said, for she was honestly not aware of the truth, but she was
divided in halves, with one half pitying the other, one rebuking” (187). In the course of
her intellectual maturation, the word “Truth” shifts from being capitalized in the earlier
quote, perhaps signifying an essential Truth, to not being capitalized in the latter quote,
perhaps signifying that either an essential Truth does not exist, or if it does exist, one
cannot fully and completely represent it or “know” it.

The notion of an essential, singular character and the simplistic binary logic used
to distinguish one, stable “true” character from “false” characters is further
problematized when Diana seems to repeatedly emerge as a multi-faceted self. The
narrator’s descriptions of Diana explicitly, and seemingly purposefully, set up states that
contradict one another. After she leaves Mr. Warwick, the narrator refers to her as the
“secret Diana” who was “a wife and no wife” and “a prisoner in liberty” (190). These
seeming contradictions suggest that Diana’s character includes multiple facets—a facet
that is a wife and a facet that is not a wife as well as a facet that is a prisoner and a facet that is free. In fact, because she is flexible and multi-faceted, Diana is able to fulfill multiple roles, including that of a wife, author, friend, lover, and at times, as Sally Ledger puts it, a "surrogate 'husband'" to Emma (136).

Diana’s letter to Emma also points to Diana’s complex multi-faceted self. Diana writes, “One word of her we call our inner I. I am not drawing upon her resources for my daily needs; not wasting her at all, I trust; certainly not walling her up, to deafen her voice. It would be to fall away from you. She bids me sign myself, my beloved, ever, ever your Tony” (Diana 205). Diana refers to herself in both first person and third person, which creates a divergence between “I” and “her.” She constantly switches back and forth from “her” to “I,” “my,” and “myself” and refuses to settle on one pronoun. Her character seems to be complicated further when she refers to “her” “inner I.” But she brings these aspects of herself together when she refers to “our,” a plural pronoun suggesting unity in multiplicity.

Diana is given various names and characterizations, which also suggests that she has a multi-faceted character. Some scholars have made note that Diana’s multiple names signify her multiplicity. For example, Sally Ledger explains that Diana’s “multiplicity is signaled by the number of names used to identify her in the novel,” including Diana Merion, Tony, Antonia, Mrs. Warwick, and Diana Redworth (134–135). Meredith has characters in the novel notice Diana’s multi-facetedness, such as when Dacier, her love interest and political ally, wants to rescue Diana from social scandal and gossip that followed her after she left Warwick: “Tony blushes her swarthy crimson: Diana, fluttering, rebukes her; but Diana is the appeasable Goddess; Tony is the
woman, and she loves him” (378). Diana is both the woman, Tony, and the goddess, Diana, two aspects of herself that, in this moment, are in conflict with each other.

But, as I noted, scholars have often oversimplified Diana’s character as only dual. Waldo Sumner Glock refers to “Diana’s dual nature” (74), arguing that “The pervasive animal imagery makes vividly complex her human nature that otherwise, on the narrative level, would appear simply one more Victorian stereotype of the pure woman, fearful of sexual entanglement” (73). Pervasive animal imagery aside, even at the narrative level, Diana is constantly represented as multi-faceted and fragmented—sure signs of her complexity, depth, and multi-dimensionality as a character—not as “simply one more Victorian stereotype.” Judith Wilt also reduces the complexity of Diana’s character to simple duality when she claims that “the heroine is two persons, ‘Diana’ ‘Antonia’ Warwick,” and “Diana hunts the prizes of the world reserved for intellect, in the male preserves of political action,” while “Antonia writes love stories” (42). Similarly, Robert Baker configures as merely dual Diana’s interactions with her intellectual friend and love interest Dacier: The “Goddess irate” who Dacier “confronts at Lugano is also the ‘Hecate’ who befriended Lord Dannisburgh, and Dacier is both disturbed and intrigued by this duality of aspect” (74). While Glock, Wilt, and Baker rightly point to a duality in Diana, they oversimplify and underestimate her complex character. But, as Luce Irigaray explains, women “are neither two nor one” (26). Simply viewing Diana’s character as something that is codifiable and numerical, two or dual rather than one, threatens to reinscribe the notion of an essential, whole, static character: when her two parts are brought together, they would presumably form her complete character.
The fact that Diana has more than two facets of character becomes apparent when she begins to freely and purposefully enact masking strategies to flexibly accommodate her various facets. There is a pivotal difference in how Diana employs strategic masking with Dacier, compared to how she was forced to mask herself in her marriage with Warwick. With Dacier, Diana has a revelation about her character in the following powerful metaphor: “The race she ran was with a shrouded figure no more, but with the figure of the shroud” (346). In the beginning of the novel, Diana emerged as a “shrouded figure,” forced to suppress and cover over parts of her character and become solely Mrs. Warwick, a traditional Victorian wife. She viewed this masking process as confining and deforming. But she finally takes possession of her own multi-faceted character later in the novel: She becomes “the figure of the shroud.” In this moment, Diana consciously begins to exploit the once exploitative patriarchal tools—the masking process—to liberate herself and engage with multiple facets of her character and in so doing confirms Judith Butler’s theory that gender is performance. Diana becomes who she performs: She is multi-faceted, complex, and changing. She is the representation, the mask. Meredith wrote a letter to J.B. Gilman stating, “I have written always with the perceptions that there is no life but of the spirit; that the concrete is really the shadowy; yet that the way to spiritual life lies in the complete unfolding of the creature” (Letters 910). Here Meredith seems to imply that there is not an “essential,” “true,” one dimensional character; rather there is the ever-fleeting, disappearing, re-appearing shadow. Meredith suggests that character itself is distorted: the “concrete” really is the “shadowy.”
Soon after Diana becomes the “figure of a shroud,” she tests her relationship with Dacier to see if he will be able to accept her multi-faceted character: Becoming a political rival (instead of a political ally as she was to Dacier before), she strategically reveals Dacier’s political secret about the Corn Laws to the press. Consequently, Dacier leaves her; he cannot accept her strategically enacting masking strategies for her own benefit, and he cannot accept her character consisting of multiple, even sometimes conflicting facets. This instance also serves as a lesson to Diana: She learns that she has the power to exploit masking strategies selfishly, as she does in the case with Dacier, or selflessly.

Through this experience, Diana comes to view her character as multi-faceted and, to some extent, flexible, and starts to recover from her depression after Dacier left. She explains to Emma,

> At present, I feel like a wrestler who has had a fall. As soon as the stiffness is over, it’s best to make an appearance, for the sake of one’s backers, though I shall never be in the wrestling ring again. . . . I feel my new self already, and can make the poor brute go through fire on behalf of the old. What is the task?—merely to drive a face! (Diana 427)

Diana acknowledges her ongoing evolutionary process of character and necessary flexibility when she transitions from her “old” self to her “new” self. Diana’s “old” self inexorably marks and influences her “new” self, like Diana’s girlhood self influences her grown-up self. Diana’s facets—the old parts of self and the new parts of self—are unified because they affect each other even as they exist as different parts of her. She begins to view character as an “appearance” and “a face” rather than an essential core.

An instrumental part of Diana’s multi-faceted character is its elasticity and ability to change. Sally Ledger explains that Diana is “difficult to pin down, sharing the
unstable identity of the discursively constructed New Woman of the *fin de siècle*" (134–135). Diana is repeatedly referred to as a “riddle,” a “riddle to the world,” and a “perplexing woman,” (*Diana* 185, 189). Diana emerges as a complex, fluid quandary that represents female authentication. Showcasing her adaptable, complex character, she has the ability to enact masking strategies in different situations and to different people: To Emma, she is a best friend. To Dacier, she is a political rival. As we will soon see, to Redworth, she is a wife, a “glittering shooter of arrows,” and “a fugitive of the wilds” (482) simultaneously. Women, in general, are referred to in this novel as “riddle[s]” and “nature’s original hieroglyphs” (326, 327). Diana, as an exemplary self-validating woman, cannot be categorized or codified into a neat, clean, one-dimensional character.

Whereas Dacier cannot love Diana and her pliable multi-faceted character, Redworth loves Diana in all of her facets. As Emma explains, Redworth “has worshipped [Diana] and striven to serve [her] ever since the day he first saw [her]” (474), and he continues to love her and defend her, knowing her history, including her leaving her first husband and her affair with Dacier. Redworth and Diana’s discussion about sailing during the “Nuptial Chapter” can be read metaphorically as a discussion about their relationship: “He mentioned his fear, and it became an excuse for her seeking protection of her veil,” and she says, “It is our natural guardian” (481). The “veil,” or “mask,” or “shroud” serves as a strategy that accommodates women’s various facets and allows them to move flexibly from situation to situation; it compliments their fluidity. When a gust of wind comes, “the veil did her positive service” (481). With a “veil,” a masking strategy, Diana can deal with life’s circumstances while she takes care
of her own needs. Redworth asks Diana to “raise the veil,” and “the look revealed to him was a fugitive of the wilds, no longer the glittering shooter of arrows” (482). While the text is not clear as to whether she did or did not raise her veil, we can be sure that if she did, another veil would appear. Two metaphorical masks emerge in this brief moment—Diana as the “glittering shooter of arrows” and Diana as “a fugitive of the wilds”—that showcase parts of her character, and we know that there will be more.

Diana finds that masking strategies work; she no longer needs to escape into her imagination like she did during her first marriage. Diana marries Redworth and no longer needs her “spheral realm” that earlier was “far too fine an atmosphere for men to breathe in” (449), a “superlunary sphere” (486) where she “transported herself at will” in order to be “free and safe” (450). Diana no longer needs to escape because facets of her character are no longer suppressed. As Waldo Sumner Glock notes, “the Salvatore heights, and that which they represented imaginatively and spiritually, are no longer the ideal for which Diana had suffered the knowledge of how to live in the valleys of the world” (78). Lois Josephs Fowler asserts that Diana “achieves a calm acceptance of the limitations of her position” and “endures” (32). But Diana does not accept or succumb to her limitations. Rather, she turns her limitations, the once suppressive masking strategies, into her liberation.

Although some scholars have observed that Diana does enact masking strategies, they view them as suppressing her, and they fail to see how she exploits these strategies. For example, Susan Morgan argues that Diana’s masks are falsities, covering over Diana’s “true self,” Diana’s presentation of herself is “false,” and her “gestures too often turn out to be nothing more than a disguise,” and she “wears a mask
for society” while she “veils herself to her friend” (119). Similarly, Gayla McGlamery asserts that Diana is “cut off from her natural feelings and from open discourse with her closest friend [Emma],” and she “plays the actress with those around her” as she “intermittently dons the mask with others and with herself” (479–480), whereby her “deepest emotions remain in repression” (485). Such critics only view the masking strategies as suppressive, like the “feminine” masking strategy Diana is forced to enact during her first marriage, overlooking that masking strategies also end up being the solution to Diana’s problematic multi-facetedness. She can marry Redworth because her character is not suppressed by her marriage, like it was in her marriage to Warwick. As Fowler rightly notes, “Significantly, Diana achieves inner peace before, not after, her eventual marriage to Redworth” (32). She flexibly incorporates the traditional female facet of wife into her character that other New Woman characters, such as Sue and Lyndall, could not incorporate.

Diane Elam claims that Diana “can point to the need for . . . new positions of subjectivity, but she cannot create the new images and positions herself,” and she “is not able to appropriate patriarchal discourse or postulate its alternative” (189). However, the reverse seems closer to the mark: By becoming the shroud, Diana creates new subject positions for herself precisely through appropriating the patriarchal mechanism of masking. She turns the suppressive masking strategies into freeing masking strategies that coincide with her multi-faceted, fluid character. In this respect, Meredith’s Diana of the Crossways gives us, as Lois Josephs Fowler rightly concludes, “a prophecy for feminism”: a “clear view of the forces that were beginning to act on modern woman. [Meredith] establishes the dilemma created by Diana’s efforts to retain
her femininity while struggling to achieve the inner freedom needed for her social and psychological emancipation (35–36). She becomes a wife again, but this time she controls the masking strategy of being a wife.

Diana transitions from a suppressed, depressed, unhappy character into an active, healthy, fulfilled character that enacts masking strategies to accommodate her multi-facetedness. By coming to reject essentialist thinking, she becomes flexible, taking active control of masking strategies that once controlled her, and succeeding in creating her own roundabout path of success, her own healthy reality.

*The Heavenly Twins* (1893) by Sarah Grand

Marilyn Bonnell calls novelist Sarah Grand “the genre’s premier novelist” and calls *The Heavenly Twins*, which was published in 1893 and sold 30,000 copies in its first year, “the most representative New Woman novel” (467–468). Lynn Pykett reinforces that view, noting that it was “for many the prototypical New Woman novel” (7). *The Heavenly Twins* traces Evadne and Angelica from young girls into married women. Evadne Frayling marries Major Colquhoun only to discover that he has had an immoral past in which he might have contracted a dangerous disease, so she refuses to have sex with him. However, she does promise him that she will not take part in public affairs, which in turn causes her to suppress facets of her character. This suppression negatively affects her for the rest of her life. Even after Colquhoun dies and Evadne marries Dr. Galbraith, a caring husband who supports women’s equality, Evadne attempts suicide. Angelica Hamilton-Wells is a strong, active, intellectual young woman, who cross-dresses as a boy at times, and has a twin brother named Diavolo. Angelica marries Mr. Kilroy, a good-natured, upstanding man who loves and respects her and tries to help her further her feminist and political causes. Ann Heilmann claims,
In actual fact both women embrace disguise as a form of self-expression—Angelica openly, Evadne indirectly—and both modes of resistance (silent disobedience and comical subversion) are, initially at least, successful. . . . In her own quiet way, Evadne is engaged in the performance of gender just as much as the twins are, the only difference being that she mimics normative expectations whereas they explode them. (New Woman Strategies 62)

While Heilmann makes a good point, there is an equally important difference between Evadne’s and Angelica’s performances. Evadne accepts a narrow, confined character of the kind I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, and the result is much the same: she escapes into her imagination and becomes a doll-like version of her former self. Angelica, like Diana, also incorporates the traditional facet of wife into her character, but Angelica does not need her imagination as an escape mechanism; instead she enacts masking strategies and offers solutions to the problems and detrimental effects of narrow female character. Evadne allows facets of her character to be suppressed whereas Angelica uses masking strategies, including cross-dressing and becoming a boy, as well as what we might think of as “normative expectations.”

Like the female protagonists in Chapters 1 and 2, Evadne is an intellectual feminist who is complex and multi-faceted. At 18 years old, Evadne was “more an intellectual than a human being, travelling upon her head rather than upon her heart” (Heavenly Twins 20). Grand portrays Evadne as a smart, reasonable, interesting woman who is passionate about learning. Major Colquhoun, Evadne’s future husband, describes Evadne’s face as “fresh,” “young,” “flushed with excitement,” and “full of intelligent interest and of unaffected pleasure in everything,” which “was an unexpected revelation of yet another facet of her manifold nature, and a bright one too” (173). Evadne has a complex character; for example, she is a feminist and an intellectual, and
becomes Colquhoun’s wife. To a large extent Evadne views the world, including her marriage, rationally. After Evadne marries Major Colquhoun and discovers his sorted past—he may have contracted a sexually transmitted disease, such as syphilis, from his past affairs—she refuses to live with him as his wife. She writes to her mother proclaiming, “Major Colquhoun is not good enough, and I won’t have him” (93). She refuses to “submit” to the traditional Victorian position as his wife (95). Rather, she “rebel[s]” and explains, “It seems to me that those who dare to rebel in every age are they who make life possible for those whom temperament compels to submit. It is the rebels who extend the boundary of right little by little, narrowing the confines of wrong, and crowding it out of existence” (95). Evadne rationally condemns Colquhoun’s past behavior and argues that other women should condemn men for their past immoral behaviors. In Grand’s view, women should reject men who behave immorally.

Sarah Grand supported the purity campaign and the education of girls. In her essay “The Modern Girl,” Grand explained that “to keep young people in ignorance is to expose them to every risk” (710). She stated that girls have been kept “in the most perfect ignorance of everything” about sex and marriage, and “for the chief duty of her life she is unprepared” (706, 711). Innocent and ignorant young women often married men who had unsavory pasts that their brides knew nothing about, which put them at risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases. The Contagious Disease Acts required prostitutes to undergo mandatory medical inspections but did not require the same for men who had sex with prostitutes. As a result, many men contracted diseases and infected their wives. In her essay “Man of the Moment,” Grand bluntly stated, “Every woman that marries risks her life” (150). Grand fought to overturn The
Contagious Disease Acts and fought against the sexual double standard for women and men. She explained that a young woman is “expected to have the highest principles in the matter” of sex (“Modern Girl” 711) whereas man has been “allowed to act on his own worst impulses,” and his education made him “morally a weak-willed, inconsistent creature” that has “lower[ed] him altogether in [woman’s] estimation” (“Man” 148).

Grand uses evolutionary discourse to argue that women are morally superior to men, and for the good of the nation, women must hold men up to the same moral standard and help men to become more moral. In “The New Aspect of the Woman Question,” Grand declares that “man morally is in his infancy” and calls him a “child-man” to whom “woman holds out a strong hand . . . with infinite tenderness and pity, upon helping him up” (143). For Grand, New Women were just the women to save men and protect women.

Grand has Evadne uphold her standards when she has Evadne reject her sexual duty as Colquhoun’s wife to protect her health and morality. However, Evadne’s mother, Mrs. Frayling, convinces her to live with Colquhoun to keep up appearances. Mrs. Frayling claims that scandal will ensue for their whole family and Evadne’s five sisters will remain unmarried if Evadne does not live with Colquhoun. After a passionate debate, Evadne finally concedes, “I consent, mother, for your sake—to keep up appearances; but only that, mother, you promise me” (Heavenly Twins 109).

Evadne suppresses her feminist facet, to some extent out of concern for her mother and...

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1 Several of Grand’s contemporaries agreed with her ideas. Like Grand, H.E. Harvey in “Science and the Rights of Women,” critiqued the sexual double standard that “exact[s] a much greater degree of purity from women than [men] can aspire to themselves” (170). Harvey thought that women “may become strong enough to regulate the conduct of men” and that there should be “more liberty” allowed “for women and less for men” (169). Those who opposed the education of women claimed that it would abolish the pure, ideal Victorian woman and corrupt marriage and relationships between the sexes.
family. However, she does not compromise her health or her life—she does not have sex with her husband—which, in turn, forces her to suppress her sexuality and its attendant needs.

She compromises other parts of herself too when she promises Major Colquhoun to stay out of public affairs, a promise she will soon regret. Major Colquhoun asks Evadne to “not mix [herself] up publicly,” “not join societies, make speeches, or publish books, which people know [she] had written, on the social subjects [she] is so fond of” (342). She agrees, not having the foresight to realize this promise may have detrimental effects on her. Even though Evadne wants to join together with other women to promote healthy, moral standards among men and women, she cannot because of her promise to Major Colquhoun. “Evadne had been formed for a life of active usefulness,” but she is “cramped . . . into a narrow grove” after she makes her promise (349). She finds herself reduced to [an] existence of objectless contemplation” for which she “suffered acutely” (349). Evadne does not want to tempt her intellectual curiosity or spark her political concern, so she “[gives] up reading” (349), which causes “her mind to [grow] sluggish” (350). Then, “her bodily health . . . decreased” and “the climate” in Malta lead to “a bad attack” in which she “hovered for weeks between life and death” (350). When her aunt Mrs. Orton Beg arrives in Malta to take Evadne home to heal, Evadne’s “hair had been cut short, her eyes were sunken, her cheeks were hollow; she was skin and bone, and the colour of death” (350), a drastic change from the fresh-faced, passionate, healthy Evadne that Major Colquhoun described earlier. Evadne’s suppression of character negatively affects her mind and body, and she
becomes susceptible to illness. Her mental and physical health is intimately connected: The less she exercises her mind, the more her body is susceptible to illness.

Like some of the female protagonists from Chapters 1 and 2, the weak, sickly Evadne attempts to escape her suppressive reality by living in her imagination. She explains,

My imagination ran away with me. Instead of indulging in a daydream now and then, when I liked, all my life became absorbed in delicious imaginings, whether I would or not. Working, walking, driving; in church; anywhere and at any time, when I could be alone a moment, I lived in my world apart. If people spoke to me, I awoke and answered them; but real life was a dull thing to offer, and the daylight very dim, compared with the movement and brightness of the land I lived in—while I was master of my dreams. (626–627)

Since Evadne’s promise restricts her character and actions in the real world, she creates an imaginary world in which she can be free, active, and have complete control. To Evadne the real world is “dull” and “dim” whereas her imaginary world is full of “movement” and “brightness.” She spends most of her time in her newly created imaginary world and less time in the real world. She is not bound to promises or suppressing her character in her imaginary world, like she is in the real world. However, escaping into her imaginary world disconnects her from people as well as from reality. Eventually, this escape mechanism fails for Evadne, like so many other late-Victorian female protagonists.

Evadne attempts suicide, even after she is released from her promise when Major Colquhoun dies. Evadne marries Dr. Galbraith, who suspects that Evadne’s mind “had been injured by friction and pressure of the restrictions imposed upon it” (662). This injury seems permanent. Evadne does not know how to live in the real world anymore. She is so sensitive to unpleasant events, people, and information, that she
wants to escape the real world permanently, so she attempts suicide. Dr. Galbraith stops her just in time and asks her to “think” (673). She responds,

All my endeavour is not to think. Let me live on the surface of life, as most women do. I will do nothing but attend to my household duties and the social duties of my position. I will read nothing that is not first weeded by you of every painful thought that might remind me. . . . I can be the most docile, the most obedient, the most loving of women as long as I forget my knowledge of life; but the moment I remember I become a raging fury; I have no patience with slow processes; “Revolution” would be my cry, and I could preside with an awful joy at the execution of those who are making the misery now for succeeding generations. (672)

It seems as though Evadne can only be one of two extremes: She can live on the surface of life, live her narrow day-to-day routine of being a wife and mother, and not think about anything in depth, or she can live in the complexities of life, think about the injustices of life, and become a raging revolutionary. Suppressing the intellectual and political parts of her character has led her to lose the capability to live in moderation, between these two extremes. Dr. Galbraith speculates that Evadne has something like “carcinoma of the mind” in which “the whole beautiful fabric is absorbed in the morbid growth, for which there is not certain palliative in time, and no possible prospect of cure except in eternity” (678). Iveta Jusofa rightly notes, “Instead of allowing her character to experiment with the revolutionary alternative and creating a revolutionary feminist discourse, Grand’s narrative strips Evadne of agency, shutting her down into a hysterical space of prelinguistic silence and fantasy, crocheting, child rearing, and husband attending” (17). Evadne’s suppression of key facets of her character has permanent and detrimental effects on her.

Evadne becomes one of the many late-nineteenth century female “hysterics,” like the unnamed hysterical in the famous American short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” by
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, published in 1892. Both Evadne and Perkin’s unnamed narrator have husbands who are doctors, thus these women are doubly bound: As husbands, these men try to encourage their wives to fulfill the traditional role as Victorian wife and mother. As doctors, these men try to treat them as patients with methods, such as exercise of the mind and body in Evadne’s case and the rest-cure in the unnamed narrator’s case. Even though Dr. Galbraith supports women’s causes and is, to some extent, a feminist, he still controls Evadne as his patient. Lynn Pykett rightly observes of Evadne, “the feeling female subject becomes the object of the male, medical gaze” (174).

Unlike Evadne, Angelica successfully accommodates the complexities of her multi-faceted character and avoids suppressing herself and descending into hysteria and attempted suicide. Grand’s formulation of Angelica challenges the notion of a single, linear, codifiable character. She has Angelica imagine that female character spans across time: the characters of past women contribute to and strengthen the characters of present and future women. During a dream, Angelica professes, “I am Judith. I am Jael. I am Vashti. I am Godiva. I am all the heroic women rolled into one, not for the shedding of blood, but for the saving of suffering” (*Heavenly Twins* 296). Angelica views her character as layered, enhanced in part by women in history. Women, as demonstrated through Angelica, become more complex through time because heroic female characters from the past combine or are “rolled into one” to create current female character. Within Angelica’s layered character, past characters
influence and still exist in the present.\textsuperscript{2} And present facets of character will influence and exist in the future.

People with multiple personalities were being explored by psychologists during the late nineteenth century. Grand conceptualizes Angelica’s character as psychologically multi-faceted, allowing for various, seemingly “opposite,” facets to exist simultaneously.\textsuperscript{3} Consistent with John Kucich’s observation that “self-contradiction” was the psychological state Grand “associated with the greatest moments of self-discovery, and with the greatest powers of critical awareness” (“Curious” 196–197), Audrey Fessler explains that Angelica’s “notion of consciousness is both vastly expanded—to contain ‘opposites’ like married and unmarried, male and female—and radically destabilized” (47–48). The use of such contradictions or opposites challenged the foundation of Victorian binary gender logic in which males defined themselves in opposition to females. As Kucich notes, “New Woman writers were often polarized by the extreme positions they took on questions of sexuality, morality, motherhood, divorce, work, and cross gendered conduct (like smoking, or riding bicycles). But Grand seems to have resisted such polarization” (“Curious” 195–196).

Angelica constantly employs masking strategies to develop and demonstrate her multi-faceted character, such as when she cross-dresses as the Boy and has many nightly liaisons with the Tenor in Book IV.\textsuperscript{4} Fessler rightly asserts that “the performative

\textsuperscript{2} For a detailed analysis of how time functions in \textit{The Heavenly Twins}, refer to \textit{Time is of the Essence} by Patricia Murphy.

\textsuperscript{3} For example, Elaine Showalter explains that in the late nineteenth century, Dr Morton Prince treated two patients—Miss Beauchamp and B.C.A.—who both had three personalities (\textit{Sexual} 120–121).

\textsuperscript{4} Anna Maria Jones claims critics have focused too much attention on Angelica’s masquerade because they have been biased by their contemporary contexts, and, in fact, “book four represents a far less utopian space for the novel” (228–229). Jones also asserts that “Angelica’s nocturnal cross-dressing” is a
nature of gender emphasized in Book IV implies that, for Grand, all gender conduct is performed” (47–48). Similarly, Heilmann argues, “Grand posits gender as an essentially fluid category, a performative act which, with its imaginative interplay of impersonation and identification processes, resembles the work of the actor and writer” (*New Woman Strategies* 45). Although Fessler and Heilmann explore how Grand portrays gender as fluid, thus challenging the traditional gender categories, they focus their readings of Angelica too narrowly. While I agree that Angelica’s approaches to gender and sexual hegemonies are instrumental, her approach to character, more generally construed, is even more significant. Angelica offers an approach to multi-faceted character that includes but is not limited to gender. After the Tenor realizes Angelica is the Boy, she tries to explain, “I tell you I was a genuine boy. I moved like a boy, I felt like a boy. I was my own brother in very truth. Mentally and morally, I was exactly what you thought me . . . having once assumed the character, I began to love it, it came naturally” (*Heavenly Twins* 456). Grand’s repeated use of first person emphasizes the character’s agency as Angelica and as the Boy; Angelica and the Boy both exist as parts or facets of Angelica. Moreover, by using the word “naturally,” Grand implies that Angelica is the “character” she takes on, prefiguring Judith Butler’s formulation that “there need not be a ‘doer behind the deed,’ but . . . the ‘doer is variably constructed in and through the deed’ . . . [which] produce[s] the effect of an internal core or substance” (181). Not only is Angelica not confined to that particular part of her character, her character is continually adaptable, transforming through her performance. Angelica is able to showcase each part of her character through masking strategies. Ann Heilmann

“selfish escape . . . from real world and ‘knowledge of life’” (236). But Grand offers empowering, sustaining mechanisms through which multi-faceted character can exist, flourish, and function.
hypothesizes that “the metaphor of the masquerade” in “the New Woman novel of the 1880s to 1910s reconfigured the Amazon heroine as a middle-class daughter, often with artistic aspirations, who, frustrated with the narrow domestic role to which she is confined, seeks spatial and mental expansion by disguising herself as a man” (“(Un)masking” 85). However, Angelica does not merely “disguis[e] herself as a man”; she effectively is a man, containing elements of what is defined as “male” or “masculine.”

The Boy, of course, is only “one side” of Angelica (Heavenly Twins 483), and she has several other parts, including that of a musician. While Angelica performs the Boy, the facet of violinist also emerges: “The Boy played with great technical mastery of the instrument,” and “he possessed that sympathetic comprehension of the masters’ ideas which is the first virtue of a musician” (398–399). Angelica as woman and wife is also an admirable musician, as even her husband acknowledges (482). The narrator describes her as a “genius,” asserting that it would be “a credible thing for her to take her violin, and make it what it was intended to be, a delight to thousands” (541).

Angelica’s flexible character is not confined by gender: She is both a male violinist and a female violinist.

Understanding that her character is not one-dimensional and rigid but multi-faceted and flexible enables Angelica to adopt even traditional femininity as Mr. Kilroy’s wife. After Angelica confesses her relationship with the Tenor to her husband and he forgives her, “her heart expanded, her eyes filled with tears and overflowed,” and “she threw herself impetuously into her husband’s arms, and kissed him passionately, and clung to him,” sobbing “Don’t let me go again, Daddy, keep me close. I am—I am
grateful for the blessing of a good man’s love” (551). Demonstrating traditional wifely femininity, Angelica is emotional, dotes on her husband, and looks to him for protection and guidance when she calls him “Daddy.” Numerous scholars have argued that Angelica conforms to traditional femininity at the end of the Book V when she assumes the role of Mr. Kilroy’s wife: Ann Heilmann asserts that Angelica “recant[s] her rebellious feminism, and ultimately converts to male-identified femininity” (*New Woman Fiction* 135–136). Likewise, John Kucich notes, “Angelica’s cross-dressing project thus seems to be the failed, misguided female version of these male privileges” (“Curious” 201), and Patricia Murphy argues that Angelica is so “trapped by cultural expectations that she become[s] a conventional wife” and that her “efforts to alter her gender destiny within Victorian culture” were “ineffectual” (149). Anna Marie Jones sees that “The revolutionary potential of Angelica’s epiphany is seriously undercut” at the end of the novel (230), and Meegan Kennedy concludes that “Grand sketches out a position often more conservative than the stereotypical New Woman” (263).

But traditional femininity is only another part of Angelica’s complex character. Femininity is not re-imposed upon Angelica; rather, she chooses to show that facet of herself. Enacting a masking strategy to showcase traditional femininity does not diminish, demean, or erase her other facets. As Audrey Fessler rightly explains, “Angelica’s ‘wifehood’” is yet another “form of costume-wearing” (49), in which Angelica is her costumes. Like the Boy and the musician, Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe is another part of Angelica, just as she is also a politician who her husband obliges “by delivering some of her speeches in parliament lately, with excellent effect” (*Heavenly Twins* 567).
Angelica writes political speeches, and being Mr. Kilroy’s wife allows her speeches to be heard in parliament, a space usually dominated by males.

Grand herself used elements of traditional femininity to create a particular view of herself. In an interview with Sarah A. Tooley, Grand accused, “Want of taste in dress on the part of many women who advocate what are called advanced views, has thrown back the woman’s cause by fifty years” and claimed, “Everyone who takes part in the movement ought to be particularly careful in dress and manners; and I am sorry to say that the manners of some are simply disgraceful; so utterly wanting in tack and ordinary politeness” (New Woman Reader 165). Grand distinguished herself from women who have “want of taste” and “disgraceful manners” and presented herself as a woman who has fashionable taste and who gives proper and appropriate attention to manners and politeness. She elevated her traditional femininity through her observance of and avocation for these social rituals. She advocated traditional femininity again when she stated to Tooley that women “should always consider their homes and families first of all” (165). Heilmann explains that this “strategic deployment of femininity,” which Grand also uses in some of her essays “exhorted feminists to be mindful of their ‘duty to be prepossessing’ and rebuked the older generation of women’s rights activists for alienating the public with their careless appearance and brusque manners” (New Woman Strategies 19). Grand portrayed herself as a particular type of feminist: one who did not dismiss traditional femininity completely but rather one who integrated elements of traditional femininity in with feminism.

Masking strategies can be found in Grand’s own life as well as in her fiction. Heilmann notes that “Within the space of three years [Grand’s] representational
strategies had advanced her from literary terrorist – an ‘aboriginal,’ ‘shrieking,’ ‘anarchist woman’ – to that of an authority known for her high moral tone and ‘feminine’ ethics which could be held up as a standard to which other women writers ought to aspire” (26). The “performance of selves,” argues Heilmann, “underpinned Grand’s conflicting ideological positions, enabling her to move seamlessly from male ventriloquism through feminine subversion to feminist populism” (43). These strategic “performance of selves” also allowed Grand to fulfill various aspects her own character, including the traditional facet that believed in marriage, motherhood, and the British nation, as well as the feminist aspect that believed in the education of girls and boys and in the equality of the sexes. Like Grand, Angelica remains flexible; this elasticity allows her to transition from situation to situation smoothly. Like Grand, Angelica successfully navigates her world, accommodating different facets of her character and changing circumstances through masking strategies.

Masking strategies and a flexible character provide Angelica with freedom from exclusive male/female binaries. Acknowledging the contradictions in being both a male and a female, the two poles of the gender binary, Angelica begins to challenge and deconstruct gender binary logic: “In separate sections of my consciousness each separate clause exists at this moment, however contradictory, and there is no reconciling them; but there they are” (Heavenly Twins 461). These “separate sections” and “separate clause[s]” coincide with Angelica’s different facets of character. Grand creates Angelica as multi-faceted, flexible character who strategically uses masking as an alternative to upholding narrow, rigid character and through her suggests “an alternative to the notion of a stable, unified consciousness that develops in a linear
direction over time . . . consciousness composed of states of being that binary logic would categorize as mutually exclusive opposites” (Fessler 47). Through her masking strategies, Angelica is careful to prevent categorization, codification, and colonization of her complex character. Explaining to the Tenor how she is both Angelica and the Boy, Angelica asserts, “I see all the contradictions that are involved in what I have said and am saying, and yet I mean it all” (*Heavenly Twins* 461). Referring to her character, she explains, “I can’t understand it myself, and I don’t want you to try” (461). Angelica understands her multi-faceted character and masking strategies enough to function, but she refuses to dissect her character to the extent that it becomes, in turn, static and codifiable. She outlines masking strategies through which she remains flexible and able to change, but she does not standardize them or provide hard and fast rules about them. Angelica poses a key question, “Is it human to be always the same?” (489) The main female characters of Grand’s novel—Evadne negatively and Angelica positively—imply that it is not.

**The Daughters of Danaus (1894) by Mona Caird**

Like Angelica in *The Heavenly Twins*, Mona Caird’s married protagonist Hadria in *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) attempts to use masking strategies to navigate her marriage and her world and tries to fulfill various facets of herself, including being a wife, mother, intellectual, and musician, but Hadria is not as successful as Angelica. As Lisa Surridge notes, “In her expository writings of the 1890s, Caird argued that history teaches us the unexpected variety of social customs and should make us question any idea of an essential ‘human nature’” (139). In the novel, Caird explores the effects of society on female character and challenges the notion of an essential character. The novel traces Hadria from a young girl into a grown, unhappily married mother. Through
Hadria’s actions and discussions, as well as discussions among other characters including Professor Theobold, Miss Du Prel, and Professor Fortescue, Caird begins to demonstrate that female multi-facetedness and masking strategies lead to finding personal authentication and communal solidarity.

Early in the novel, Hadria shares several parallels with narrow New Woman protagonists, such as Schreiner’s Lyndall and Hardy’s Sue. Caird portrays her as rebellious and rigidly against convention, one who always “overturn[s] orthodox views” (*Daughters* 30). In the beginning of the novel, Hadria is forced to stay at home with her parents while her sister Algitha leaves home to participate in charity work, and at home, Hadria’s “mind had no space, or stretch, or solitude” (45). Caird immediately establishes Hadria’s problematic mental narrowness and confinement in the domestic sphere. But Hadria also remains more flexible than Lyndall or Sue. She is shown to be malleable, even though she remonstrates to herself that she “fall[s] below her own standard, is “hypocritical with herself,” and “play[s] herself false” (419). She acknowledges that she “rebel[s] against the beliefs of others,” “sin[s] against [her] own,” and admits “how little one knows oneself” (419).

Caird suggests that not knowing oneself completely may in fact allow for growth and change, whereas knowing oneself completely can result in stasis and codification. In several instances, parts of Hadria emerge that she does not completely know; these parts begin to signify her different facets and complex character. When Professor Theobald, with whom she almost has an affair, asks her to go away with him into town, she hears voices, including “imps” and her “other selves” discuss if she should go (410). It seems as though Hadria’s indecisiveness in this situation is indicative of her multi-
facetedness—some facets want to go with Theobald while others do not. Other characters make note of Hadria’s different, even contradicting parts as well. Miss DuPrel, Hadria’s friend and an author, sees at least two facets of Hadria—that facet of Hadria that includes her “northern heart” as well as that facet of Hadria that the “South possesses” (57). Similarly, Professor Fortescue thinks that Hadria “had at least two distinct natures,” one that was “greedy and pleasure-loving careless and even reckless” and the other one “deep-seeing and aspiring” (90). At this point, Hadria has not yet worked out strategies to successfully cope with her various, often conflicting, parts of character, but we do see Hadria’s elasticity.

Caird, through a few of her characters, offers several theories about masking strategies and multi-facetedness. Professor Theobald, who views all humans as “enigma” (226), explains, “We like to fancy the qualities of character inherent, while really they are laid on by slow degrees, like paint, and we name our acquaintance by the colour of his last coat” (232). In Professor Theobald’s hypothesis, each coat of paint represents a different facet of character—character building upon character, layer on top of layer, like Angelica’s character builds upon other female characters from the past. This layered paint metaphor represents a masking strategy that accommodates complex character. For Professor Theobald, people are what they appear to be in that moment—the top coat of paint. But they are never limited by the top coat; rather, they can always add another coat of paint, enriching their characters and adapting to different situations with each additional coat. Miss Du Prel’s conception of character is similar to Theobald’s conception, just not as blunt. She claims, “Life to character is like varnish to wood . . . it brings out the grain” (232). Miss Du Prel believes that life
experiences enhance one’s character. These experiences act like “varnish,” intensifying the “wood”—the character that is already present. For Theobald, life experience expands character by adding layers to it. For Miss Du Prel, it enhances the character that is already present. Similar to her characters’ views, Caird shared the view that society and life experiences affected character. Lisa Surridge claims, “Rather than seeing women as biologically fixed in a particular role (as did eugenic feminists . . . Caird argued that social relationships were socially constructed. Crucially, too, she saw them as eminently liable to change” (129).

Hadria’s good friend and champion Professor Fortescue offers a third view of character, focusing on one’s attainment of stability in a changing world:

It is because of the infinite variety of type and the complexity of modern life which the individual is called upon to encounter, that a sort of fancy dress has to be worn by all of us, as a necessary shield to our individuality and our privacy. We cannot go through the complex process of adjustment to each new type that we come across, so by common consent, we wear our domino, and respect the unwritten laws of the great bal masque that we call society. (385)

Professor Fortescue describes “modern life” as complex and having various types. From his perspective, people need to don “fancy dress” to encourage and accommodate their elastic characters in this changing, complex world. It may seem as though Professor Fortescue’s conception of character has traces of an essentialist character—the “individuality” and “privacy” that is “shield[ed],” but this is not necessarily true. He implies that characters can change, though they cannot change for “each” and every “new type” that people “come across.” If characters constantly changed for “each new type,” people, and thus society, would exist in chaos. Strategically masking oneself in “fancy dress” allows people to accommodate their various facets and adapt in a
changing world. This “fancy dress” provides their characters with momentary stability so they can function and fulfill particular roles, such as that of a wife, mother, politician, friend, and intellectual, at particular times. It also allows people flexibility to change their “fancy dress” to accommodate new developing parts of themselves and fulfill new roles as their realities change; it avoids the pitfalls of narrow, codified, static character.

As an unhappily married woman and mother who feels confined, Hadria begins to experiment with masking strategies when she discusses child-rearing with her husband’s sister Henriette. Henriette disagrees with Hadria’s “troublesome” views on children’s moral training and hygiene (279). By Henriette’s standards, Hadria is not a good mother. For example, Henriette “laid stress upon” the importance of “fresh air” whereas Hadria “believed in fresh air” in “moderation,” and having it in the house was “going a little too far” (280–281). Analyzing this interaction between Hadria and Henriette, Ann Heilmann argues,

Playing the part of the mother who poses a health hazard to her children, Hadria gains Henriette’s ready consent to take charge of domestic affairs during what she intends to be her permanent absence. Throughout the scene Hadria makes a show of working on and bending over a piece of embroidery – an ironic marker of her performance, since what on the face of it appears to be quintessential prop of the superfluous lady, implicitly points to the intricate ‘art’ involved in enacting ladyhood. (New Woman Strategies 221)

Similarly, Patricia Murphy claims, “Hadria performs a kind of ‘masquerade of femininity’ that Luce Irigaray theorizes as a way to recuperate lost desire (This Sex 134), but it is a strategy that exacts a high cost; women ‘participat[e] in man’s desire’ Irigaray cautions, ‘at the price of renouncing their own’ (133)” (Murphy 174). This scene is the first time Hadria begins to explore and exploit masking strategies. Posing as a “bad” mother ensures that Henrietta will take care of Hadria’s children and points to the authentic part
of Hadria that wants to be free of her children. At the end of the conversation, Hadria, acknowledging the “selfishness” in her request, asks Henriette to substitute as a mother to Hadria’s biological children, and Henriette eventually agrees (Daughters 281). Hadria begins to learn how masking strategies can serve her multi-faceted character, in this case accommodating the facet of her character that wants to be liberated from biological motherhood. Thus free from her duties and obligations as a biological mother, Hadria can move to Paris.

When Hadria moves to Paris, she is able to adapt to different situations and fulfill different roles with her multi-faceted character. She is a caring mother to young Martha, an orphan whose mother got pregnant out of wedlock and died. Hadria adopted Martha, brought her to Paris, and supports her both emotionally and financially. Hadria also becomes an employer; she hired Therèse, a nanny for Martha. Additionally, Hadria becomes a valued musician. M. Thillard, who took interest in Hadria’s music after he heard her play, claims, “There is genius in that work” (314–315). Hadria trains strenuously with M. Jouffroy, who demanded she remain “faithful” to her “work” (316).

In Paris, Hadria is able to showcase various parts of her character and be a mother, an employer, and a musical genius. Heilmann claims that “Hadria speeds away from the constraints of wifehood” and “this masculine temporality makes way for an impressionist synchronicity of ‘unity’ and ‘multiplicity,’” which “set[s] the scene for her Parisian experimentation with a plurality of roles (flaneuse, student, composer, journalist)” (New Woman Strategies 231–232). She transforms “from wife to artist, mythical subject to modern woman, dreamer to creator” when she moves to Paris (231–232). In Heilmann’s analysis, Hadria can only fulfill her multi-faceted character in Paris; she
remains one-dimensional in England. Heilmann sets up dichotomies between her terms. The first terms—wife, mythical subject, and dreamer—indicate Hadria as traditional and imaginary in England, and the second terms—artist, modern woman, and creator—indicate Hadria as modern and real only in Paris.

But Hadria is multi-faceted in England too, even if to a lesser extent than in Paris. She is a wife, a biological and adoptive mother, a musician, an intellectual, and a dancer. For example, when she dances, “Some mad spirit seemed to possess her,” and “It would appear almost as if she had passed into a different phase of character. She lost caution and care and the sense of external events” (Daughters 136). Like Angelica who becomes the Boy, Hadria becomes the dancer, an authentic part of her character. These various facets allow Hadria to find personal authentication and flexibility.

When Hadria’s mother falls ill and Hadria feels forced to return to England, she again feels confined. Hadria begrudgingly enacts a masking strategy to present “proper” womanliness as a matter of social form and acceptance. She goes through the “proper” motions, such as attending Church, to please others, but she feels apathetic and realizes that “she had not enough faith to make it worth while to stand alone” (464). Enacting this “proper” womanliness allows her to see that “the same savage story was written” on weary female “labourers” and “better dressed women” (465). She is privy to “revelation[s] of the bewildered, toiling, futile existences that were being passed beneath a smooth appearance; of the heart-ache and heroism and misplaced sacrifice” (466). Women, including Lady Engleton, begin to confess their unhappiness to Hadria after she begins to authentically perform the part of a proper woman and share the same
experiences as other women. This masking strategy generates common sympathy between women. Hadria yearns for the time of sisterhood (467) and acknowledges its deep importance for the freedom of women. That the women acknowledge and share in masking strategies seems to be a first step towards creating a strong community to work for greater freedoms.

Caird’s implicit argument seems to be that women can begin to use masking strategies to their advantages and to the advantages of others, as Hadria began to do, both individually and collectively. Early in the novel, life is likened to a drama when Algitha, Hadria’s sister, asserts that she wants a home, not necessarily a husband, because she wants a “roomy stage for her drama” (25–26) that she can only get when she marries. In the novel Algitha is the only consistently happy, fulfilled, working female feminist who is also a wife. Caird seems to be suggesting that if women begin to view life as a drama, perhaps they can begin to exploit masking strategies—as proposed in Professor Theobald’s, Miss Du Prel’s, and Professor Fortescue’s theories about character—to accommodate their multi-facetedness and flexibly navigate their world and its expectations. Enacting masking strategies, like Diana and Angelica did, would allow these married female characters to work, to some extent, within the established gender system, creating bonds and communal solidarity and gaining greater personal and collective authentication.

Miss Du Prel encourages Hadria to shape Victorian female character from within the traditional system rather than overhauling the system from the outside, like Lyndall and Sue try but fail to do. Miss Du Prel explains to Hadria that one should “bend a little, rather than have to break, in the end” (111). Bending is better than breaking because
“the world was made up of compromises. Good was mixed with evil everywhere” (111). Systems, like the traditional Victorian gender system that constrains women, cannot be completely changed without leaving behind traces or residue from the previous system. It is perhaps easier and more effective if the traditional gender role could be revamped, not completely replaced by an entirely foreign and new role. Miss Du Prel explains, “The domestic idea, as Hadria called it, might be, in its present phase, somewhat offensive, but it could be redeemed in its application, in the details and ‘extenuating circumstances’” (111). Transitioning the traditional Victorian gender system by degrees rather than breaking with the system altogether allows for more choices and options for women—they can still be wives and mothers if they so chose.

Rather than altogether excluding motherhood, an important marker in traditional female character, Caird shapes it into a significant facet of Hadria’s multi-faceted female character. Caird reinforces this view with Professor Fortescue, who views women as complex, multi-faceted beings who society should allow to be wives and mothers in addition to other facets of character: “It has always seemed ridiculous that a woman could not gratify her domestic sentiments, without being claimed by them, body and soul” (425). Several scholars emphasize the importance of choice for Hadria in this situation. Patricia Murphy notes that Hadria “advocates a woman’s right to a genuinely free choice to rear children” by “adopting Martha Jervis” (152) and notes that she “brings only Martha of her three children to France, transforming motherhood from an unavoidable duty to a volitional act that can be balanced with other interests” (170). Similarly, Ann Heilmann explains, “Conceived out of wedlock, Martha represents a challenge to the system of sexual and procreative impositions. . . . Hadria hopes to turn
her into a strong, healthy and self-confident individual ready to fight for women’s rights (DD, 246). A miniature iconoclast, Martha delights Hadria” (New Woman Strategies 232). Lisa Surridge states, “That the novel erases Hadria’s biological sons in favour of her adoptive daughter is hugely significant, as it overturns the Victorian generational family narrative,” and “Martha represents Hadria’s voluntary motherhood, as opposed to the social or biological necessity of motherhood emphasises in eugenic or evolutionary discourses” (135). Hadria is called “inconsistent” (Daughters 188) when she adopts Martha, yet Hadria has a true, free relationship with Martha because Hadria was able to freely choose to adopt her (240). Thus she is even more connected with Martha than with her biological children, who were forced upon her by her husband and the societal expectation that married women reproduce. Like Meredith and Grand, who make wifehood a part of Diana’s and Angelica’s characters, Caird makes motherhood—freely chosen motherhood—a part of Hadria’s character. Hadria is not excluded from the “traditional” female character as, for example, Schreiner’s Lyndall is. Hadria serves as an example of multi-faceted female character that seems to require budding flexible masking strategies—espoused through Professor Theobald, Miss DuPrel, and Professor Fortescue—to function successfully and happily in her life and in society.

George Meredith’s Diana and Sarah Grand’s Angelica overcome and Mona Caird’s Hadria begins to overcome restrictive one-dimensional characters as traditional wives and find their true selves, fulfilling their multi-facetedness through the use of masking strategies. These female characters turn the liability of suppressive or supposedly duplicitous masking into an advantage. Each woman is adaptable and develops masking strategies in various contexts and situations. These strategies
accommodate her facets and allow her to gain personal, social, and/or political validation. In Hadria’s case, it allows her to find a community for her true multi-faceted self. Here multi-dimensional characters trump narrow, rigid characters. These married female protagonists learn to adapt to marriage and work to create desirable realities for themselves. They experience happiness, validation, and community, unlike the female protagonists discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 that were doomed to madness and death.
CHAPTER 5  
WOMEN OUTCASTS MASKING: FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING  

Whereas Chapter 3 focused on female protagonists building healthy romantic relationships using masking processes and Chapter 4 focused on married female protagonists upholding their roles as wives while simultaneously fulfilling other parts of their complex characters through masking processes, Chapter 5 focuses on how single female characters who would likely be society’s outcasts avoid such fate, remaining part of proper society and succeeding in society through using masking processes. Henry Harland in “A Light Sovereign,” Anthony Trollope in *The Eustace Diamonds*, and Henry James in *The Portrait of a Lady* create female characters who enact masking processes to retain access to proper Victorian society and create better and “higher” realities for themselves and their loved ones in a society that is not set up to help them. Against the odds, these female characters take and maintain control of their lives and realities, being active agents in dealing with their circumstances and finding success and security through masking strategies.

“A Light Sovereign” (1893) by Henry Harland  

Whereas Henry Harland shows in “The Invisible Prince,” “Merely Players,” and *The Cardinal’s Snuffbox* that female characters using ongoing masking strategies can result in fulfilling, renewable romantic relationships, he shows in “A Light Sovereign” that a politically marginalized female character using masking strategies can result in power and liberation. Henry Harland’s complex female character in his short story “A Light Sovereign” (1893) enacts strategies of masking that accommodate changing political situations and allow for political gain. The story is narrated as a flashback by Mr. Arthur Wainwright, who, at the time he experiences it, unknowingly witnesses Mathilde, the
Grand Duchess, exploit masking strategies to gain political power. Mathilde is the legitimate heir to her grandfather’s throne, but the Grand Duke’s brother Conrad, “covetous of her rights,” makes attempts on her life. After her grandfather, the Grand Duke Otto, dies, Mathilde disappears. But the narrator unknowingly meets her as she goes about using various masking strategies that allow her to gain her rightful throne. Only in the end of the story does the narrator recognize her and her masking strategies.

Mathilde’s complex character, represented through her masking strategies, defies strict traditional gender categories, including when she presents herself as Sebastian Roch at a political rally of the Grand Duchess’ supporters. The first time Wainwright sees Sebastian, he describes him as “a young man with a pointed black beard, rather long black hair . . . who somehow looked as if he might be a member of the guild to which [Wainwright] belonged, the ancient and questionable company of artists” (“Light” 157–158). At first glance, Wainwright feels a connection with Sebastian. Upon meeting him, Wainwright claims that he “was a handsome young fellow” (160). Enacting a masking strategy, Mathilde successfully represents herself as a man and gains access to her supporters in the crowd. Being at a political rally, Sebastian and Wainwright start to discuss politics. Sebastian calls the princess’s supporters “chicken-hearted” and complains that “the princess’s friends fight only with their throats. Otherwise, the present complication might never have risen” (159, 158). Being Sebastian allows Mathilde to criticize her supporters, something she could not do as Mathilde for fear of her supporters turning against her. When the army starts to disperse the crowd, Sebastian tells Wainwright they should leave, but Wainwright rebuts, “And prove ourselves also chicken-hearted?” (160). Sebastian tellingly
responds, “Oh, discretion is the better part of valour” (160). Discretion is instrumental in Mathilde’s masking strategies, though at this point in the story, Wainwright has no idea that Sebastian is Mathilde.

At the rally, Sebastian and Wainwright get arrested, a shared experience that bonds them. Wainwright signifies this growing bond with Sebastian by first referring to Sebastian as “my young man,” then “my friend,” and finally “my comrade” (160, 161, 163). When the men hear that they are required to spend the night in the courtyard of the Castle of St. Michael, Sebastian proposes that they “seek distraction in an interchange of ideas” (163). Wainwright tells Sebastian he is a painter, and Sebastian tells Wainwright he is a fiddler, with Wainwright responding, “I suspected we were of the same ilk,” and Sebastian replying, “I, too, seemed to scent a kindred soul” (164).

Enabled by Mathilde’s masking strategy, an authentic sense of community forms between the two men. Sebastian Roch experiences genuine kinship with another man that Mathilde would not be able to experience with the constrictive power dynamics between a political leader and the public as well as the constrictive gender dynamics between a woman and a man. Sebastian speaks English “uncommonly well,” with “scarcely a trace of foreign accent” (165). He tells Wainwright that he “learned it as a child” and has “relatives in England” (165). Mathilde creates for Sebastian a particular way of speaking, social and political views, and a history and family. Sebastian and Wainwright reaffirm their manly bond by smoking cigarettes together.

Their bond leads them to a more intimate discussion about politics. Wainwright asks Sebastian what he thinks happened to Mathilde when she disappeared, to which
Sebastian responds that he “know[s] nothing about it” (166). Sebastian uses this opportunity to say,

I am not of her partisans. She has no worse enemy than I. . . . I don’t think she’s made of the stuff for a reigning monarch. She’s too giddy, too light-headed; she thinks too little of her dignity. Court ceremonial is infinitely tiresome to her. . . . She was born a Bohemian, an artist, like you or me. I pity her, poor thing—I pity everyone whose destiny it is to inhabit this dreary Principality—but I can’t approve of her. (166)

In this instance, Mathilde’s masking strategy allows her to reveal true critiques, fears, and insecurities about herself as the Grand Duchess, opinions and feelings that she would not be able to reveal as the Grand Duchess for fear of undermining herself as a leader. Sebastian also reveals that “unless [Conrad] has killed and buried [Mathilde], she will contrive by hook and crook to come to her throne” (168). By being Sebastian, Mathilde is doing just that through methodical masking strategies. As Sebastian, Mathilde is able to safely observe and participate in the political sentiment among the people, staying connected to the people and cognizant of what is going on politically and publicly while planning her next move.

Mathilde’s masking strategy becomes even more complex and layered when Mathilde disguises herself as a monk. Wainwright sees a man “clad in the garb of a Franciscan monk” with “a pointed black beard . . . and a pair of flashing dark eyes” and quickly identifies him as Sebastian (173). Wainwright believes that Sebastian had become a monk, thinking “It must have been a swift conversion” (173). He sees Sebastian, dressed as a monk, walk into Conrad’s courtyard and then thinks Sebastian is “one of Conrad’s spies” (173–174). Harland has Wainwright demonstrate the significance of context and its influence on changing perspectives and views. One moment Wainwright believes Sebastian is a converted monk, and the next moment he
believes Sebastian is a spy. Wainwright soon hears that Conrad was found dead, stabbed with a knife in the heart right after he met with a Franciscan monk, who was only allowed to meet with Conrad after begging to see him and writing something on a slip of paper that was delivered to Conrad. When Conrad is found, the “monk had vanished” and “they could find no trace whatever of his whereabouts” or “the paper he had sent in to the prince” (175). Mathilde’s masking strategy successfully gains her access to Conrad, her rival, who has tried to kill her and take the throne. By disguising herself as a monk and killing Conrad in “self defense” (189), which she ambiguously alludes to at the end of the story, Mathilde is able to protect her legitimate line to the throne. Mathilde expands her masking strategy when she makes Sebastian, who is disguising himself as the monk, disappear and strategically places herself, as Mathilde, imprisoned in Conrad’s home. The public reports: “shut up in an inner apartment [of Conrad’s], they have found the Hereditary Grand Duchess Mathilde, alive and well. Conrad had been keeping her a prisoner there these two weeks” (176). Representing herself as Conrad’s prisoner likely gains her sympathy and support from the public, the opposite of what she would get if she were deemed the murderer of Conrad. To some extent, she has been Conrad’s prisoner since he tried to kill her, which stopped her from moving about freely in public.

Although we may think that Mathilde is finished enacting masking strategies since she gained political power, she is not. She becomes “a magnificently uniformed young officer” who arrives at Wainwright’s home and arrests him for conspiring with Sebastian (179). Wainwright describes the officer as “the face of a stranger . . . a very florid face, surmounted by a growth of short red hair, and decorated by a bristling red
moustache,” and “his eyes were overhung by bushy red eyebrows” (180). When they arrive at the palace, the officer, “turning to his subordinates,” demanded that they “conduct this gentleman to the Tower chamber” (186). By being an officer, Mathilde is able to closely observe and actually take part in important security matters as an authoritative officer. She can ensure that her soldiers obey her orders and experience firsthand the quality of her security. Wainwright is not actually under arrest; rather, he is brought to the palace to meet with Mathilde and provide her with some amusement.

When Mathilde enters the Tower chamber, Wainwright recognizes her as both Sebastian and the red-haired officer. He “saw the face” of the Grand Duchess “and heard the voice” of the red-headed officer; “all was clear,” and “he forgot [himself] and exclaimed aloud, ‘Sebastian Roch!’” (188). He does not realize until the end of the story when he meets Mathilde that she is able to be Sebastian and an officer through masking strategies. When Mathilde asks him what he said, he quickly replies, “Nothing, madame. I was about to thank your Highness for her kindness, but—” (189). Mathilde interrupts him, saying “But your mind wandered, and you made some irrelevant military observation about a bastion rock. It is, perhaps, aphasia” (189), to which he answered, “Very probably” (189). Mathilde’s interruption signals to Wainwright that she does not want her masking strategies revealed or discussed. More specifically, revealing her strategies to the public could lead to Mathilde likely being punished and losing her powerful position for lying, impersonating, and murdering. Furthermore, revealing her strategies could codify them, minimizing and even inhibiting their usefulness for Mathilde in navigating her world. We can bet that she will continue to employ her masking strategies in the future.
Even though others may see Mathilde’s masking strategies as deceptive, they actually function to reveal several truths for her: gaining her rightful throne, communicating authentic feelings and insecurities, experiencing authentic communal bonds, and contributing firsthand to her army. Masking strategies serve Mathilde in her roundabout journey to success. Her complex masking maneuvers and her elastic character allow her to flexibly pivot from situation to situation, surviving and thriving in her politically chaotic world. In “A Light Sovereign,” Harland shows how masking strategies can be used to lead to the political success of a marginalized character whereas he shows how they can be used to lead to romantic happiness in “The Invisible Prince,” “Merely Players,” and *The Cardinal’s Snuffbox*. Harland showcases that masking strategies are effective in different contexts and can be used to create success in various ways.

*The Eustace Diamonds (1871) by Anthony Trollope*

Anthony Trollope has his widowed main female character use similar, though less extreme, masking strategies as Harland’s Mathilde to navigate a society that is not set up to help her. An 1872 review in *The Ladies—A Journal of the Court, Fashion, and Society* read, “Mr. Trollope has builded [sic] the tower of his literary achievements yet three volumes higher. . . . *The Eustace Diamonds* may fearlessly invite comparison with any of Mr. Trollope’s earliest and best known novels” (“Mr. Anthony” 118). Other reviews were lukewarm about the novel and its characters. A review in *The Guardian* of the same year claimed, “‘The Eustace Diamonds’ is a lively story in Mr. Anthony Trollope’s usual style, not better than its predecessors, and if we say not worse, it is because we do not wish to allow too much weight to our own weariness of his old characters” (*Guardian* 54). Another review in *The Guardian* claimed that “If he has
been successful in adding some new characters to his repertory, there are none among
them which have a sufficient force and individuality to win for themselves an abiding
station in English literature” (“Eustace” 1614). But even this reviewer noted that the
main female character, Lizzie Eustace, “is admirably drawn” (1614).

More recently, some scholars have explored how Trollope upholds the traditional
Victorian role of woman while others have explored how Trollope subversively
undermines this role. Ramona Denton calls Trollope “no feminist” and explains that “he
opposed the women’s rights movement to the end of his life” for fear that “it would breed
divisiveness and competition between the sexes” (7). And even though Trollope
“recognized that there would always be ‘ladies’ who, through some accident of fortune
are thrown up on their own resources,” he argued that “such exceptions . . . received far
more attention than those millions of women who fit easily into” the traditional,
dependent role (7). However, Lynette Felber recognizes that “Trollope is often praised
for his creation of strong and complex female characters” (844). In a time in which
women’s rights were being brought to the forefront of the public consciousness, and
debates raged on about the biological and social implications of women and their
“natural” roles, Trollope remained ambivalent about the roles of his female characters.
He both reinforced and challenged traditional female roles in his novels and highlighted
the tensions surrounding the Woman Question. Trollope “did not write for posterity; he
wrote for the day, the moment,” writes Henry James (Partial 132). Trollope’s creation of
his female characters, such as Lizzie Eustace, emphasized “the moment” Victorian
women found themselves in. Generally, Victorian women had two choices: to marry
and become the traditional, proper wife and mother, or to not marry and try to fend for
themselves in a society of people who viewed them as a threat to the social fabric of proper Victorian society.

In *The Eustace Diamonds*, Trollope’s Lizzie, like several other late-Victorian female protagonists, finds ways to cope with similarly narrow choices and circumstances. *The Eustace Diamonds* follows the ambitious, manipulative Lizzie Eustace in her pursuits to keep a diamond necklace that her now deceased husband owned and to find a new husband who will support her. As a widowed single mother, she sets her sights on various suitors, including Lord Fawn, who is engaged to Lizzie for a short time; Frank Greystock, who is Lizzie’s cousin; Lord George, who is Lizzie’s disappointing confidant; and Mr. Emilius, who is a manipulative clergyman Lizzie eventually agrees to marry. We also meet Lucy Morris, a poor Angel-in-the-House governess who becomes engaged to Frank Greystock; Lucinda, an independent, athletic, intelligent young woman who becomes engaged to a man she despises; and Miss McNulty, an unmarried woman who must rely on the charity of her friends for survival.

Through Lizzie, Trollope demonstrates masking strategies that allow Lizzie to adapt to different situations with her very flexible character. To some extent, these strategies even allow Lizzie to manipulate and change her circumstances to create a better reality for herself. Lizzie retains agency throughout the novel and a significant amount of control over her reality through these strategies as she avoids the unfortunate painful journeys and endings of the female characters discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.
One of the first masking strategies Lizzie enacts in the novel is when she represents herself as a romantic lover, who reads poetry to Sir Florian during their courtship in a flashback scene. “By himself he could never read a line” of poetry, but when “it came from her lips[,] it seemed to charm him” (*Eustace* 6). During their poetry readings, she “[sat] very near to him, almost in the dark, with a shaded lamp throwing its light on her book” and “told him of such wondrous thoughts—such wondrous joys in the world which would come from thinking!” (6). Lizzie’s close proximity physically to Sir Florian and the intellectual intimacy she shares with him results in his finding “a new pleasure” and being “astonished to find how sweet a thing was poetry” even though he once “ridiculed it” (6). He comes to view Lizzie as a “divine . . . creature, whose voice to him was that of a goddess!” (6). Part of Lizzie’s successful masking strategy is that she is able to modulate her voice to suit the circumstances. Her voice “was powerful when she called upon it for power; but, at the same time, flexible and capable of much pretence at feeling” (14). Lizzie “could bring” her voice “to a whisper that would almost melt your heart with tenderness,” as she does in the case of reading poetry to Sir Florian, and “she could raise it to a pitch of indignant wrath” (14). She is “quite correct in modulating these tones” (14) and purposefully does so. She is so adept at adapting her body and voice that she could have been “an actress had fortune called upon her” (14). Scholar Jen Sattaur explains that “Lizzie uses the associations of poetry with romantic sensibility and the physicality necessitated by the act of reading, to seduce her admirer” and argues that “there is nothing inherently deceptive about Lizzie’s tactic, except that it is a tactic” (41). This masking strategy drives much of Lizzie’s plot throughout the novel. She uses what she has available to create the reality she desires.
In this case, she desires to be Sir Florian’s wife because he was wealthy, and “it had been indispensable to her to settle herself well” (*Eustace* 38–39). It works: Sir Florian “did believe in Lizzie Greystock, thinking that intellect, purity, truth, and beauty, each perfect in its degree, were combined in her” (5). He marries her, and she gains financial security.

But Sir Florian’s death threatens Lizzie’s security and financial future since she is now an unmarried woman in Victorian society, so she strategically presents herself as loving widow and concocts a story that her husband gave her a diamond necklace before he died. When Mr. Camperdown, the Eustace family lawyer, demands the return of the necklace to the Eustace family and claims that it is a family heirloom, Lizzie thinks to herself that “She could swear that her husband had given [the diamonds] to her” permanently; she “could invent any form of words she pleased as accompanying the gift” since “no one else had been near them then” (37, 38), even though “she knew well that the thing was not really her own” (49). Presenting herself as a pitiable loving widow, she tells her friend, Miss Macnulty, “They want me to give them up—but my husband gave them to me, and for his sake I will not do so. When he threw them round my neck he told me that they were my own—so he did. How can a woman give up such a present—from a husband—who is dead? As to the value, I care nothing. But I won’t do it” (40). Lizzie positions herself as the victim of “they,” Mr. Camperdown and the Eustace family. Societal conventions do not automatically protect Lizzie, so she portrays herself as someone society would accept and protect: an unselfish widow who tries to fulfill her dead husband’s wishes. The fulfillment of this wish would allow her to keep the diamond necklace and retain sympathy from others. As Lizzie tells her story,
she works herself up into tears, which helps to “produce some amount of belief in Miss Macnulty’s mind” (40–41). She repeats versions of this story several times throughout the novel (46, 81, 114). Although Lizzie is able to produce sympathy for herself with her story and how she tells it, she admits that she is “absolutely, alarmingly ignorant, not only of the laws, but of custom” with respect the ownership of the diamond necklace (41). She acknowledges her weakness and begins to look for help by continuing to use one of her strengths—masking strategies.

To help Lizzie cope with a possible impending Eustace-family lawsuit to get the necklace back, she represents herself as caring and family-oriented, required elements for Victorian wives, to assist in her search for a future husband who will help protect her and the necklace. As a Victorian woman, Lizzie is dependent on men and cannot protect herself. Lizzie wants a “lover” who “would protect her jewels for her—would guard them against a score of Camperdowns” (41). She turns her attention to Lord Fawn who “was at any rate a peer” and “had a position” as “one of the Government, and his wife would, no doubt, be able to go anywhere” even though “he was as stupid as an owl” (62). In Lizzie’s view, Lord’s Fawn’s position and the social flexibility she would attain as his wife outweigh his stupidity and the fact that he is not wealthy, especially since “it was becoming essential to her that she should marry” (62). When he visits Lizzie at her house, she asks after his family “with a pretty eagerness,” for “Lizzie could be very prettily eager when she pleased” (61). She portrays herself as family-oriented and caring, knowing Lord Fawn is close with his family. Then, Lizzie swiftly steers the conversation to her wealth, knowing full well that Lord Fawn must marry a woman who has money. She brings up her child and claims that “they tell me the poor little dear will
have forty thousand a year when he’s of age; and when I look at him in his little bed, and press him in my arms, and think of all that money, I almost wish that his father had been a poor plain gentleman” (63). Lizzie’s “almost wish” that her son’s father was poor functions as bait for Lord Fawn, who as a poor man could fulfill that “almost wish.” Then strategically, “the handkerchief was put to her eyes” (63) to showcase her traditional compassionate maternal attachment to her son and the emotional turmoil that being “rich” creates for a Victorian woman who is not educated about business or finances.

Lizzie’s masking strategies are successful, and Lord Fawn takes the bait that Lizzie sets before him. He says, “Ah!—I myself am a poor man—for my rank I mean” (63). She replies, “A man with your position, Lord Fawn, and your talents and genius for business, can never be poor” (63). Her praises move him, causing him to profess his love and propose to her. She accepts his proposal “in her lowest whisper,” saying “Coming from you it is doubly precious; first, because of your character. . . . Secondly, because I can love you” (65). In this case, Lizzie’s masking strategy, with her soft, seductive, “lowest whisper” voice, the same whisper she used to capture Sir Florian, gains her a necessary fiancé. She then “moved towards him gently, and almost laid her head upon his breast” (65). The closeness of Lizzie’s head to Lord Fawn’s breast shows a sweet intimacy and her potential to be dependent on him. In response, Lord Fawn “put his arm round her waist—but it was first necessary that he should once more disembarrass himself of his hat . . . and then her head was upon his breast” (65). This scene could be read as Lizzie becoming subordinate to Lord Fawn, an appropriate relationship for a man and woman who intend to marry, because her head does not reach his breast until he reciprocates. But her gesture is part of her masking strategy
and actually functions to control Lord Fawn’s gestures: she chooses to refuse to put her head on him until he reciprocates. She withholds as a tactic, establishing the implicit rule that if he wants her to put her head on his breast, he must perform certain gestures. Lizzie rewards Lord Fawn for following her lead and, more importantly, retains control over him.

Some critics fail to see any purpose in Lizzie’s masking strategies. For example, Shirley Robin Letwin claims that “at no time did Lizzie stop to think of what she hoped to gain; one lie led to another, without play or purpose, and each only added to Lizzie’s difficulties” (99). But Letwin seems to underestimate Lizzie’s difficult circumstances and her current unstable reality as a Victorian widowed mother with limited choices. Lizzie enacts various masking strategies to manipulate her circumstances and other people so she can create her own desired reality, a secure future for herself and her child, something very difficult for a Victorian woman who plays by the rules and follows the “proper” Angel-in-the-House predetermined path to do. Dagni Bredesen rightly argues that “Lizzie constructs her fictions to achieve her own ends” (118). Part of Lizzie’s “own ends,” Jen Sattaur explains, is “her desire for a husband, and her desire for a husband is itself attributable to nothing more than her need for fiscal security and her desire for a comfortable life” (48). Through her masking strategies, Lizzie gains her “own ends,” a fiancé who brings her closer to her desired goal.

To further solidify her recent engagement to Lord Fawn, Lizzie strategically represents herself as an ideal daughter-in-law in several ways when she prepares to meet her future mother-in-law, Lady Fawn. Lizzie “was very anxious . . . to win golden opinions from Lady Fawn” (Eustace 73). First, Lizzie “dressed richly, but very simply”
and her “long lustrous lock was tucked up” (73). Her fairly conservative appearance mirrors what Lizzie thinks Lady Fawn will consider appropriate. Second, knowing that Lord Fawn must marry a wealthy woman, Lizzie makes sure that “everything about [her] room betokened wealth,” and she keeps her diamonds “upon her fingers” (73). Lizzie demonstrates her wealth through her home, her dress, and her jewelry, communicating her supposed financial stability to Lady Fawn without inappropriately discussing finances with her. Third, to appeal to her religious future mother-in-law, Lizzie “put away the French novels,” which Lady Fawn might view as too risqué, and “placed a Bible on a little table, not quite hidden, behind her own seat” before Lady Fawn arrived (73). Lizzie sets the stage, arranging her props in preparation for Lady Fawn’s arrival. During their meeting, Lizzie “stretch[es] out her hand backwards and clasp[s] the book which lay upon the small table,” and she says “there; that shall be my guide. That will teach me how to do my duty by my noble husband” (75). As part of strategically representing herself as an ideal daughter-in-law, Lizzie portrays herself as a devout Christian whom the Bible will guide in wifehood. Fourth, Lizzie is passive and agreeable during their meeting. She tells Lady Fawn in a “perfect” voice, “When he asked me to be his wife, the first thing I thought of was whether you would come to me at once” (74). Maintaining her representation as an ideal daughter-in-law, Lizzie takes a passive object position throughout her statement and gives the active subject positions to Lord Fawn and Lady Fawn. She only allows herself to take a subject position, “I,” when she thinks about someone else, in this case, Lady Fawn. She wants Lady Fawn to think that she will be a caring wife who will put her family first.
Lizzie’s tactics are successful enough for Lady Fawn to invite her to Fawn Court, and she happily accepts. Lizzie exclaims, “Oh, I should like it so much!” and claims that “Of all things that which I most desire now . . . is to know you and the dear girls—and to be loved by you all” (75). As Lizzie parts with Lady Fawn, she continues her masking strategy, reiterating that she is a sweet, loving, family-oriented future daughter-in-law who wishes to be accepted into her new family. Once again, she positions herself as an object and Lady Fawn and her daughters as the subjects who ostensibly hold the power to love or reject her. But Lizzie herself sets up this dynamic through her masking strategy and thus retains substantial control over it.

During this time, she continues to try to gain Lord Fawn’s sympathy and support as she represents herself as a sympathetic widow. Lizzie questions Lord Fawn about her situation with the diamonds and the Eustace family: “They oughtn’t to ask me to give them back—ought they? If you had been married before, and your wife had given you a keepsake—to keep for ever and ever, would you give it up to a lawyer? You would not like it—would you, Fredric?” (81). She asks Lord Fawn a series of three sequentially arranged leading questions that encourage him to agree with her about how she handles the situation. Each question contains a dash that acts as a bridge between the answer to the question, which she prioritizes by saying it first, and the question itself. This bridge guides Lord Fawn to the correct answer. For example, Lizzie provides the declarative answer to her question—“they oughtn’t ask me to give them back”—before she actually poses the question—“ought they?” Lizzie’s second question is hypothetical, and she positions Lord Fawn in the hypothetical situation when she uses versions of “you” four times in the short question. She tries to make the
situation more personal for him so he will understand and sympathize with her. The third question returns to the structure of the first question: a declarative statement that answers the upcoming question. She refers to Lord Fawn three times in this very short question and keeps it personal, like she does in the second question. Lizzie’s malleable gestures and voice, all part of her masking strategy, accompany her questions. She “put her hand on his,” (81) signifying compassion and sympathy, two elements she hopes to convey to Lord Fawn and receive from him. She “was looking up into his face as she asked the question,” signifying a sense of trust (81) and suggesting that he holds power over her. But the fact that she places her hand on his suggests that she in fact retains control and power over him and the situation. She had “tears in her eyes, and the tone of her voice was perfect” (81).

At the same time, Lizzie tries to bond with Lord Fawn’s sister Augusta by representing herself as a loving sibling and friend. In an attempt to foster a “tenderest friendship” with Augusta, Lizzie “talk[s]” to her “in such a manner as to seem to include Lord Fawn in every topic discussed” (111). When Lord Fawn sets up a time to speak to Lizzie, she, “with her hands clasped,” purposefully portraying a sense of anxiousness and tenseness, immediately confides in Augusta. Lizzie asks her, “What is he going to say to me?” in an attempt to create sisterly confidence (112–113). To emphasize a connection between herself and Augusta, Lizzie tells Lord Fawn, “I do so love Augusta,” describing her as “so true and genuine—and so full of spirit” (113), thus, as Ayelet Ben-Yishai rightly notes, “recogniz[ing] the truth of community as the powerful yet pliable force that it is” (107). If Lizzie can integrate herself into the Fawn family through Lady
Fawn or Augusta, her engagement to Lord Fawn will more likely lead to marriage and a secure future.

During Lizzie’s interaction with Augusta, the narrator emphasizes Lizzie’s desires for certain qualities and how she goes about trying to showcase those qualities. The narrator explains:

She desired to be the possessor of the outward shows of all those things of which the inward facts are valued, by the good and steadfast ones of the earth. She knew what were the aspirations—what the ambition, of an honest woman; and she knew, too, how rich were the probable rewards of such honesty. True love, true friendship, true benevolence, true tenderness, were beautiful to her—qualities on which she could descant almost with eloquence; and therefore she was always shamming love and friendship and benevolence and tenderness. She could tell you, with words most appropriate to the subject, how horrible were all shams, and in saying so would be not altogether insincere—yet she knew that she herself was ever shamming, and she satisfied herself with shams. (Eustace 112)

Lizzie’s satisfaction and happiness result from having the outward display of certain qualities that were highly valued in Victorian society rather than the qualities themselves, and “shaming” and enacting masking strategies allow her to have these outward shows to the extent that, at times, other characters, such as Sir Florian and Lord Fawn, treat her as though these qualities are parts of her character. She casts “other people in roles, as she does herself,” and “everything and everyone must be made to seem other than they are” (McMaster 96). Most scholars today do not like Lizzie because of her “shaming.” Shirley Robin Lewtin, explaining that “apart from money, there was nothing in the world that she hesitated to manipulate” and “other people were merely material for her changing fancies,” calls Lizzie “inhuman in the strict sense of having no conception of human personality” (104). Zubair S. Amir is more delicate in his critiques of Lizzie, calling her “one of the most inveterate and gifted liars
in Victorian fiction” and “one of the most enigmatic” (187). But Lizzie’s circumstances as a financially insecure, unprotected widowed Victorian woman and mother require strategies to help her cope and function in her world of limited choices. By representing herself as having highly valued Victorian qualities, Lizzie is able to pass in society and uphold decorum. Masking strategies help Lizzie to create her own reality and self-created truths that help her survive in her restrictive world.

Up to this point in the novel, Lizzie’s masking strategies are effective to some extent. She plays the romantic lover to Sir Florian long enough for him to marry her and to Lord Fawn long enough for him to propose to her. She also presents herself as a widow to gain sympathy and as family-centered to appeal to Lord Fawn’s family. Ramona Denton argues that “Lizzie represents Trollope’s insight into the complexities of female selfhood” and contends that “Trollope suggests that Lizzie’s rapid shifts in identity are one way she has of holding at bay the schizophrenic qualities of her existence. By playing a succession of roles she may be, equally, a ruthless woman of property, a distressed maiden, an adroit seductress, a bereaved widow, a doting mother, and a passionate, abandoned lover” (12). Lizzie is able to “satisfy . . . both her own fantasies of selfhood and those demands that society makes upon a woman” (12) precisely because she successfully enacts masking strategies. These strategies allow her character to flexibly accommodate different public and personal situations and circumstances. The narrator explains that “Lady Eustace was a woman of whom it might almost be said that she ought to wear diamonds” and claims that “the only doubt might be whether paste diamonds might not better suit her character” (Eustace 141). The narrator’s deprecating tone and multiple qualifiers clearly signal his dislike of Lizzie.
Despite this opinion, paste can be momentarily molded and adapted into certain shapes, and like paste, Lizzie can momentarily adapt herself, including her appearance, voice, and gestures. She retains agency in her own life and often attains her goals with this strategy.

In addition to adapting herself, Lizzie is also able to create and adapt her “truths.” She turns to her cousin, Frank Greystock, for protection from Mr. Camperdown since she is not yet married to Lord Fawn. She repeats “the lie” about her ownership of the diamonds to her cousin “with increased precision” (129). Lizzie claims that “Sir Florian, in putting the trinket into her hands had explained to her that it was very valuable, and that she was to regard it as her own peculiar property” (129). “With all the confidence of a practising barrister,” Frank responds to her, “if it was an heirloom, he couldn’t do it” (129). Lizzie adjusts her story accordingly and claims, “He made it over as an heirloom to me” (129). As Lizzie repeats her story to different people, she adapts it to meet the situation. But Frank objects, “That’s nonsense, dear Lizzie” (129). So Lizzie answers his objection by using to her womanly wiles: “She smiled sweetly on him, and patted the back of his hand with hers” (129). Again, Lizzie resorts to her smiles and her touch. Retaining control of the situation, Lizzie “was very gentle with him, and bore his assumed superiority with pretty meekness” (129). She lets Frank think that he is her superior and that she is weak and vulnerable, and it works. Frank does not accuse her of being deceitful; rather, he explains to her that Sir Florian “could not make it over as an heirloom to you. If it was his to give, he could give it to you” (129). Perhaps unaware of doing so, Frank offers Lizzie an adaptation of her story—that the necklace was in fact Sir Florian’s to give to her and not an heirloom. Without hesitation, Lizzie
integrates this adaptation into her story when she answers, “It was his—certainly” (130). By telling and retelling her story and each time adapting it to circumscribe legal pitfalls, it becomes more difficult for others to challenge.

She creates her own versions of the truth to help her maintain control of her difficult circumstances. As Zubair S. Amir notes, Lizzie’s “effort to re-narrate, and hence redefine, an originary scene of physical and social transmission” of the Eustace diamonds “depends much more on producing plausible stories than it does on persuading anyone that they are actually true” (190). Amir goes on to explain that Lizzie’s stories “unsettle rather than replace avowedly authentic ones,” and the “stories seek to modify the apparent ‘truth’ of the matter” (190). Along similar lines, Ayelet Ben-Yishai argues that “Lizzie’s strength is her ability to change the terms of the debate and to create a different factual situation from the same events, and subsequently to make her narrative the most socially desirable and effective one” (112). Amir emphasizes Lizzie’s process of creating different versions of the truth by telling and re-telling stories, and Ben-Yishai emphasizes the strength Lizzie gains through this process. In Walter M. Kendrick’s view, “Truth for Lizzie is the strategic furtherance of desire. Her idea of truth lacks the fixity of repetition, the infinite repeatability of true statements” (144). For Lizzie, truth, like her character, is not fixed and static. Rather, it is malleable, and she molds it to serve her own interests. Lizzie’s control over her circumstances and her power to create the reality she desires lie in her ability to tell and re-tell her malleable “truths.”

Lizzie continues to represent herself as a vulnerable family member to Frank when Lizzie’s future marriage to Lord Fawn is in question, since he disagrees with her
handling of the diamonds. She tells Frank that she wants “someone to guide” her that she “can trust” (Eustace 157). Highlighting her perilous situation and vulnerability as a single woman without family, she explains to Frank, “I have no brother, Frank; do you ever think of that?” (157). Lizzie knows that she needs male protection. Christoph Lindner rightly points out that Lizzie “figures both as a good herself and as a subject desiring goods, as at once a commodity and a consumer” and “not only does she simultaneously uphold and subvert established constructions of the feminine in this way, but she does so knowingly, calculatingly, and (most importantly) duplicitously” (49). As a case in point, Lizzie initiates a chain reaction with Frank to get this protection: she “put out her hand to him,” an action that explicitly requests the receiver to grasp her hand. In response, “he clasped it, and held it tight in his own” (Eustace 157). Even though it may seem as though Frank retains the action and has control in this situation, Lizzie has set the situation in motion with her first action. The chain reaction continues: “and then, after a while, he pulled her towards him” (157). Again, Frank ostensibly has control over the situation since he is the active agent in the scene. But Lizzie encourages Frank to pull her towards him because she does not pull her hand away when he holds it—she is purposefully and strategically inactive. And even when he pulls her towards him, she subtly controls the situation. Lizzie positions herself just so: “In a moment she was on the ground, kneeling at his feet, and his arm was round her shoulder, and his hand was on her back, and he was embracing her” (157). Although Frank retains the active subject position in the scene, and Lizzie retains the object position, she plans these predetermined positions for both of them. She physically moves her body in a symbolically subservient position to Frank, emphasizing her
supposed weakness and need for a strong protector. She represents herself as a traditionally vulnerable Victorian woman, which she is, in an effort to get the male protection and support she needs. As the final touch, “her face was turned up to him,” a gesture she uses to suggest that he should be her protector. Her strategy works, “and he pressed his lips upon her forehead” (157). Lizzie masterfully choreographs this scene with her cousin to get what she wants. She positions herself as a vulnerable, passive woman and him as a strong, active protector through her words, her actions, and her purposeful inaction. Lizzie attains her goal of having Frank become her protector.

Just as quickly as Lizzie is able to enact this masking strategy with her cousin, she shifts out of necessity. Lizzie shows her dependence on her cousin when she falls into this questionable position of kneeling before him, “which a moment or two might be wanted for recovery” (157). When a servant enters the room unexpectedly, “she was able to be standing on her legs before she was caught,” and “the quickness with which she sprung from her position, and the facility with which she composed not her face only, but the loose lock of her hair and all her person, for the reception of the coming visitor, was quite marvellous” (158). Instantaneously, Lizzie shifts, presenting herself as a composed, proper Victorian woman. Victorian decorum necessitates that proper women behave certain ways with men, so Lizzie makes sure to uphold socially acceptable behaviors in the public eye. She remains active, aware of her surroundings, and adapts to changing situations moment to moment. Her composure attests to her comfortable capability to shift quickly as she enacts her masking strategies.
At this point in the novel, Lord Fawn urges Lizzie to return the diamonds to the Eustace family, so with Frank as her protector, Lizzie decides to break off the engagement with Lord Fawn and pursues Frank as a husband instead. With Lizzie’s new desire set in place, she strategically acts jealous with Frank, accusing him of caring more about Lucy, Frank’s intended bride, than about her. “Dissolved in tears” and “hysterical,” she exclaims, “Oh Frank!” and “threw herself upon his breast” (214). Lizzie manipulates Frank through stereotypically feminine emotions and shows her dependence on him by leaning her head on his breast. Symbolically, her gestures again indicate that she needs Frank for support and protection. He answers, “Dear, dear Lizzie” and “embrac[es] her” as her protector (215). She asks, “Frank, you’ll be true to me?” and he answers, “I’ll be true to you” (215). Frank promises to be there for Lizzie, just as she desires.

To try to further secure her relationship with Frank, Lizzie dissuades Lucy from marrying him. Before Lizzie and Lucy meet, Lizzie “studied the part she was to play with all possible care—even the words which she was to use” (516). Like a seasoned actress, Lizzie practices her gestures and lines as she represents herself as Frank’s lover. When Lucy arrives, Lizzie confesses that she loves Frank and then asserts, “Lucy, though he is engaged to you, it is me he loves” (517). Lizzie knows full well that Frank loves Lucy but wavers in his promise to her because both he and Lucy are poor, so Lizzie uses their unfortunate circumstances for her benefit. She asks Lucy, “Are you doing the best for him—a man in his position, without money, ambitious, sure to succeed if want of money does not stop him—in wishing him to marry a girl with nothing?” (518). Lizzie attempts to capitalize on Frank’s unfortunate financial prospects,
Lucy’s poverty, and Lucy’s unconditional love for Frank. Lizzie’s interaction with Lucy results in Lucy’s uncertainty about the fulfillment of her engagement to Frank; she begins to think that he will not marry her because she is poor (518). Lizzie is aware that Frank is more likely to marry her if Lucy breaks off her engagement with him.

Lucy appeals to Frank very differently from how Lizzie appeals to him. Lucy remains a stereotypical, constant, passive, honest Victorian woman throughout the novel. For Frank, and many other characters, in the novel, “There was a reality and a truth about [Lucy], which came home to him, and made themselves known to him as firm rocks which could not be shaken” (101). Frank associates “a reality” and “a truth” with Lucy and metaphorically likens them to “firm rocks” that are unshakeable, unlike Lizzie, who had “no reality about her” (496). Lucy lives and functions in the reality where she finds herself, barely surviving; she does not try to create a higher, better reality. She fulfills the role as a proper, unmarried young Victorian woman by being the “most unselfish little creature” and “the humblest little thing in the world in regard to any possible putting of herself forward or needful putting of herself back” (22). Lucy waits for Frank to profess his love to her and propose, and only then does she reciprocate his feelings.

Taking no control over their relationship and no action, Lucy silently and submissively pines for him throughout their courtship and their engagement. She admits to Lizzie that “he does not see me” and “he does not write to me” and claims, “You may tell him from me—for I cannot write to him myself—that he may do whatever is best for him” (518). Lucy transfers the only action she considers taking with Frank to Lizzie. As a proper Victorian woman, Lucy passively waits for Frank to contact her.
Lauren M. E. Goodlad explains that Lucy represents “idealized femininity” (106), and Margaret Markwick describes Lucy as “the stereotype Angel in the House, modest, practical, intelligent, capable of great application, with high moral scruples, faithful to her errant lover” (61). Like a proper Victorian woman, Lucy restrains and suppresses her desires. Her only ways to survive in this current world are for Frank to uphold his promise to marry her or to continue to rely on charity from others. Lizzie calls Lucy “tame” and distinguishes herself from Lucy when she asserts, “It does not suit me to be tame. It is not my plan to be tame” (Eustace 124). Lizzie will not be tamed by anyone or anything.

Despite Frank’s inattentiveness and his rude, improper treatment of Lucy, she maintains her view of him as upstanding. Lucy remains true to her love for Frank, and “she could not have loved the man, or at any rate confessed her love, without thinking well of him” (216). Lucy cannot both openly love Frank and think unwell of him because these two feelings are mutually exclusive for her. Her consistent Victorian character and outlook do not allow her to “think good and evil at the same time” (216). For Lucy, someone is good or bad; he cannot be both good and bad, and she cannot love someone who is bad. Lucy views the world and the people in it through a system of strict codification and binary exclusiveness. Her static, consistent character parallels her consistent, codified view of the world and other people. As Juliet McMaster explains, “there is a certain active quality about Lucy’s passive endurance. Having a reality and a centre of self, Lucy can be fully happy, as she is when Frank declares his love, but she can also suffer fully” (84). But we should not overestimate this “active quality.” As Walter M. Kendrick notes, “Most of the time Lucy is quietly waiting, while
Lizzie is noisily making herself notorious” (149). Lucy’s happiness depends on Frank: She is happy when he takes action to show he loves her; she is miserable when he does not. Lucy remains inactive, waiting for her desired reality and hoping to survive, whereas Lizzie remains active, creating her desired reality and guaranteeing her survival.

After wavering between Lizzie and Lucy, Frank chooses to marry Lucy. “Good as [Lizzie’s] acting was, it was not quite good enough,” and Lucy was able to succeed “because she was real” (Eustace 521). “Lizzie . . . knew that she was paste,” which “in rough usage betrays itself,” and she “knew that Lucy was real stone,” “a diamond” that “you may knock about” but “not even scratch it” (521). Lucy’s constant character does not change. Even when circumstances, situations, and people around Lucy change, her character remains the same. On the other hand, Lizzie’s excessively adaptable, flexible character is ever-changing. When circumstances, situations, and people around Lizzie change, she changes immediately. Lizzie enacts masking strategies time after time, whereas Lucy rejects strategies. Frank’s choice to marry Lucy results in Lizzie being able to “see—or half see—that Lucy with her simplicity was stronger than was [Lizzie] with her craft” (171). In the end, Trollope does not doom Lucy to the same fate as the protagonists discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Rather, he rewards her misery, patience, and consistent, proper character with a marriage to Frank. But Jane Nardin rightly warns that “Lucy’s painful experiences, in conjunction with the implausible triumph that concludes them, hint that the angel in the house is an outmoded ideal—influential in fiction, powerless in reality” (He Knew 183–184).
Lizzie does not want to become a “stone” like Lucy. Rather, she wants “to act a little better, so that the paste” will be “as good as the stone” or “at least seem to be as good” (Eustace 521). Several scholars argue that Lizzie does not have a “real” self. Robin Shirley Lewtin asserts that Lizzie “had no coherent self to express” (104), and Jane Nardin agrees, arguing “No real self underlies her externals; she is whatever she thinks it most advantageous to be” (He Knew 208). Along similar lines, Walter M. Kendrick views Lizzie as “the signification without significance, meaningfulness without meaning” (138). But perhaps Trollope is questioning the Victorian notion of having one consistent, static, always identifiable self through his flexible character Lizzie who employs various masking strategies. Throughout the novel, she has clear goals and clear desires, and she expresses herself in different ways at different times to achieve them. Lizzie’s rejection to become a “stone,” or a character with a consistent, static, unbending self, suggests that her masking strategies and her elastic character do have useful elements, such as having control over one’s reality and being able to adapt to various situations.

Whereas Lucy has waited to get the reality she desires by adhering to the proper, acceptable, narrow path for Victorian women, Lizzie continues to actively make her own reality through a roundabout, wider path. All is not lost for Lizzie and her future. For a short time, she turns her attention to Lord George for help. Once again, she uses her vulnerability and her persistence to get what she wants, if only momentarily. In need of a confidant, she says to Lord George, “But I can trust you” as “she clung to him and implored him” (Eustace 410). And again, “clinging to [Lord George’s] arm, Lizzie asks him, “You will be true to me—will you not?” (411) She asks Lord George the same
question that she asked her cousin, and she uses the same strategy—answer before question—that she used with Lord Fawn. Lord George agrees to be her confidant.

But when Lizzie is unable to get a hold on Lord George, she adapts, employing strategies to accommodate her changing circumstances. She tells the police that her diamonds were stolen during a robbery even though they were not. A short time later, the diamonds really are stolen. Planning her next strategy, she asks herself how she plans to act and react to the police and other people when they find out that she lied about the diamonds being stolen in the first robbery. As a way to develop the appropriate strategies, she offers question after question to herself without answers. First, she wonders, “in what way would she conduct herself when the police should come to her on the following morning—the police and all the other people who would crowd to the house?” (420). Then, she ponders, “how should she receive her cousin Frank?” and “how should she look when the coincidence of the double robbery would be spoken of in her hearing?” (420). She quickly moves on to asking “how should she bear herself when, as of course would be the case, she should again be taken before the magistrates, and made to swear as to the loss of her property?” (420). Clearly, Lizzie ruminates on different future situations and scenarios that she will inevitably encounter and plans the carefully constructed strategies she will use in each situation. For example, Lizzie chooses to represent herself as ill and “refused to leave her bed” when the police arrived the next morning (420).

As she copes with this situation, Lizzie discusses and debates with herself, which accentuates her complex character and “ever-shamming.” “In defending herself to herself,” she “felt that, though cruel magistrates and hard-hearted lawyers and pig-
headed jurymen might call her little fault by the name of perjury, it could not be real, wicked perjury, because the diamonds had been her own” (570). In this short passage, two parts of Lizzie emerge—that of the defender and that of the one needing defending. She minimizes her “fault” by calling it “little” and distinguishes it from “real, wicked perjury.” She tries to position herself as a victim when she calls her accusers “cruel,” “hard-hearted,” and “pig-headed” and, once again, claims ownership over the diamonds. She tells herself that “she had defrauded nobody—had wished to defraud nobody” (570). She explains to herself that “it had suited her to give—an incorrect version of the facts because people had troubled themselves about her affairs” (570). She takes the position of the victim again when she claims that “and now all this had come upon her!” (570). Ayelet Ben-Yishai rightly claims that “Lizzie knows that the common is unstable and that the common law, based as it is on commonality, has an ability to shift its dogmas and communities, much like gossip. In this understanding, ‘fact’ is less an empirical object and more of a process of creating” (113–114). For Lizzie “facts” are flexible and able to change. Using reason, Lizzie swiftly shifts from being a perjurer to a victim in only a couple of moves: First, she moves from acknowledging a fault to distinguishing that fault from perjury and fraud. Then, once she makes that distinction, she is able to view herself as the victim of other people. Lizzie constantly enacts masking strategies to the extent that she never seems not to enact them. These strategies help her navigate difficult situations and attain her desires in a society that is unkind and unfair to unmarried women.

At the same time that Lizzie deals with the police and court, she meets her match in Mr. Emilius, a manipulative clergyman. Mr. Emilius frames his position in life and his
accomplishments so they appeal to Lizzie. Like Lizzie, he manipulates people and situations, and like Lizzie, he studies the parts he plans to play. Before he proposes to Lizzie, he “studied his speech, and having studied it, he knew how to utter the words” (*Eustace* 594). He begins by detailing his accomplishments that she will find attractive, much like Lizzie did on several occasions with Lord Fawn, Lady Fawn, and Frank. He claims that his profession “is the grandest which ever filled the heart of man with aspirations” and asserts that he is “known as the greatest preacher of [his] day,” “can move the masses,” and “can touch the hearts of men” (594). With his high, admirable position, he boasts that he “can choose [his] own society among the highest” in London (594). He also lies and says he is only thirty-two when in fact he is over forty (594). Knowing that Lizzie has lied about the diamonds and that her social reputation is therefore hanging in the balance, he frames his proposal with appeals to Lizzie’s desire for social rank. He asks, “Lady Eustace, will you share with me my career and my fortunes?” (594). He claims that his “career” and “fortunes” would allow Lizzie to pass freely through highest English society if she were his wife. During his speech, “he did not blush, nor stammer, nor cringe” (594). Mr. Emilius has practiced his speech so much, just as Lizzie does with her speeches, that he is able to control his voice and his complexion.

The narrator reveals that despite these targeted appeals and accomplishments being false, they attract Lizzie. The narrator reports that Mrs. Emilius “was a creature to loathe—because he was greasy, and a liar, and an impostor” (594). As Mr. Emilius details his accomplishments and his social station, Lizzie “almost liked his squint” and “certainly liked the grease and nastiness” (594). Moreover, “presuming, as she naturally
did, that something of what he said was false, she liked the lies” (594). What most Victorian women would find physically and morally disgusting and repulsive, Lizzie finds appealing and attractive. There was “a certain manliness in him” and, unlike Lord Fawn and Lord George, “he was not afraid of the woman” (594). In response to his speech, “Lizzie made him a speech as long and almost as well turned as his own” (595). Lizzie and Mr. Emilius approach each other very similarly.

During the same time as Lizzie’s courtship with Mr. Emilius, she must go to court, where she showcases traditional characteristics of a proper Victorian woman. The magistrate asks Lizzie if she gave “false evidence” about the first robbery—that her diamonds were stolen—“knowing it [was] false” (599). Conveying ignorance and vulnerability, she replies, “I was in such a state, sir, from fear, that I did not know what I was saying” (599). She accompanies her reply by “bursting into tears and stretching forth towards the bench her two clasped hands with the air of a suppliant” (599), emotional and physical gestures that signify her humbly pleading to the superior magistrate for understanding and sympathy. Lizzie wins over the magistrate and the public, who, “from that moment,” are both “altogether on her side” (599). The “general feeling” is that Lizzie is “a poor ignorant, ill-used young creature” who is “so lovely” (599). She successfully presents herself as a traditional Victorian woman who is vulnerable and ignorant and gets what she desires—sympathy. Although Lizzie’s reaction for the court may be seen as manipulatively deceptive, it reveals truths about her and her situation: Lizzie is vulnerable as an unmarried widow and mother, and she is ignorant about the laws regarding property and heirlooms. The public’s reaction reveals that Victorian women showing themselves (genuinely or not) adhering to gender
norms by showcasing (genuinely or not) traditionally “feminine” qualities are more likely to be accepted by society than those who do not.

When Lizzie is summoned from Scotland to the trial of the thieves, Mr. Benjamin and Mr. Smiler, she feigns illness to avoid testifying (and lying) about the diamonds being stolen during the first “robbery.” Lizzie finds a doctor who is “satisfied” that she is too ill to travel and provides her with a certificate that states that she has “pulmonary debilitation . . . which, with depressed vitality in all the organs, and undue languor in all the bodily functions” could result in her death if she travels (628). Employing a masking strategy that reinforces another aspect of traditional gender norms—women are the weaker, frailer sex—Lizzie again represents herself as a traditional Victorian woman. The doctor provides authoritative evidence that Lizzie is ill, lending credence to her excuse. The narrator accuses the doctor’s report of being false and explains, “There are certain statements which, though they are false as hell, must be treated as though they were true as gospel” (629). Trollope draws attention to the absolute authority and power of Victorian medical doctors. People put so much trust in doctors that their declarations are taken to be true and correct even if they are false or incorrect. To better coincide with the doctor’s description, Lizzie changes her appearance from one who “had begun to use a little colouring in the arrangement of her face” to one who “in the honour of her sickness” became “very pale indeed” by using “translucent pearl powder” (638). For “when she did paint, she would paint well” (638). This “paint” signifies two things: First, Lizzie uses props, such as makeup, to change her appearance and create physical aspects of her masking strategies. Second, the process of painting represents Lizzie’s process of masking—she adapts herself,
including her character, her emotions, and her appearance to manipulate different situations and people. Lizzie successfully avoids the trial, and once again, “Lizzie triumphed in her success” (634).

Towards the end of the novel, the narrator states that Lizzie “has been our heroine” (634). Given the narrator’s negative commentary about Lizzie thus far, it seems likely that the narrator sarcastically calls Lizzie “our heroine.” However, there is some validity in viewing Lizzie as a type of heroine. Lizzie copes differently and more effectively with her circumstances than three other female characters in the novel. Like Lizzie, both Lucinda and Lucy find themselves with limited choices in the confining marriage market. First, Lucinda tries to force herself to suppress her feelings and marry a man she despises. On the morning of her wedding, she absolutely refuses to marry the man and goes “mad” (559, 590). To some extent, Lucinda follows the trajectory several female protagonists, including Lyndall and Anna Lombard, followed in Chapter 2. Second, Lucy painfully endures as Frank ignores her and his promise to marry her for most of the novel. Third, Miss McNulty, unsuccessful in the marriage market, becomes a permanent house guest who must rely on others to live. Lucinda, Lucy, and Miss McNulty are all powerless slaves to their circumstances. Unlike these three women, Lizzie manipulates her circumstances by enacting various strategies; these strategies influence other characters around her and reveal certain truths about both Lizzie and about the limiting state Victorian women find themselves in. Through constantly employing masking strategies, Lizzie avoids the fates of these three women. Margaret Markwick rightly notes that “Given the lives of Lucy, Miss McNulty, and Lucinda, with these as Lizzie’s alternative choices of lives available to her, no wonder
she decides to play the game her way; and no wonder we are drawn to champion her cause” (62). Lizzie repeatedly avoids the detrimental fates of other female characters in several late-Victorian novels. She takes her fate into her own hands and often gains her desired results. Furthermore, Lizzie is not treated like a typical Victorian villain or anti-heroine: She is not reformed or punished; she is not doomed to die from moral corruption, not put in prison, not committed to a madhouse, and not even socially marginalized for lying or manipulating people or situations.

To some extent, Trollope seems to reward Lizzie for her challenges. She views herself as persevering because “she still had her income, and she had great faith in income” (Eustace 637). In her opinion, she has a viable marriage proposal and sees “no reason why she should not love Mr. Emilius” (637). She likes Mr. Emilius’ “coal-black, glossy hair” and “his hooky nose” (638). She likes that “he was popular, and with a rich titled wife, might become more so” (638). Like Lizzie, Mr. Emilius “had a grasping ambition about him,” which, “combined” with “a capacity, too . . . would enable him to preach himself into notoriety” (638). Lizzie believes her marriage to Mr. Emilius will raise her social standing. Most importantly, however, Lizzie believes that “she might be sure, almost sure, of dictating her own terms as to settlement” if she marries him (638).

However, several scholars view Lizzie’s marriage to Mr. Emilius and her end as tragic. Lynette Felber claims that “her marriage to the repulsive Emilius . . . reveals her desperation and unworthiness” (839). Similarly, Christoph Lindner asserts, “That Lizzie ends up with no choice but to marry this sleazy, loathsome scavenger calls attention to her bankruptcy in both social and economic terms. In short, Lizzie is now damaged goods, as Mr. Emilius intuitively appreciates” (50). Like Felber and Lindner, Ramona
Denton argues that “the sins she commits in her lusty power-play justify even her punishment of marriage to the ‘greasy’ Reverend Emilius at the novel’s close” (12). Walter M. Kendrick calls Lizzie’s ending “spiteful” (136), and Jane Nardin states that “her reputation is in a tatter when the novel ends” (*He Knew* 44). But these scholars do not seem to view Lizzie’s marriage and her end from Lizzie’s current perspective.

Part of what attracts Lizzie to Mr. Emilius is his “greasiness,” and she views her marriage to him as a reward. She finds his character, like hers, flexible, and he too creates the reality he desires. She admires and relates to him. It seems as though Lizzie has finally met her match. Like Lizzie, Mr. Emilius “schem[es]” and “crav[es] . . . money” (*Eustace* 640). She knows full well that he “follow[ed] her in the hour of her troubles, because he might then have the best chance of success” (640). Like Lizzie, he uses and manipulates circumstances that present themselves to him to make his reality better. Lizzie understands Mr. Emilius, and “she liked” his schemes and “approved [of] his proceedings” (640). “She liked lies, thinking them to be more beautiful than truth” (640–641), completely contrary to what a proper traditional Victorian woman should like. For Lizzie, “to lie readily and cleverly, recklessly, and yet successfully, was . . . a necessity in woman, and an added grace in man” (641). Through lying, Lizzie copes with, survives, and navigates through her limiting world as a widowed Victorian woman and mother. These lies also reveal certain truths about Lizzie, such as her vulnerability and Victorian women who find themselves in predicaments similar to hers. In several instances, representing herself, whether deceptively or truthfully, as a traditional Victorian woman leads to success. Mr. Emilius’ schemes and lies only make him that much more attractive to Lizzie. Lizzie and Mr.
Emilius may remain flexible and ever-changing, and thus interesting, to each other because of their lies and schemes.

Of all the female characters in the novel, Trollope seems to give Lucy and Lizzie suitable rewards. But Lucy pays heavily for her happy ending. She has passively and patiently suffered through most of the novel, like an ideal, proper Angel-in-the-House Victorian woman. Lizzie, however, controls her actions and often her circumstances throughout the novel. She utilizes her flexible character and enacts masking strategies, both impromptu and premeditated, to accommodate various situations and manipulate different characters. The narrator claims that “Lizzie Eustace was very false and bad and selfish—and, we may say, very prosperous also” and that she “earned” her “brilliant future” (169, 18). Despite the narrator’s likely tone of sarcasm, his claims are worth noting and taking somewhat seriously. Lizzie remains an active agent who creates a better reality for herself in as much as Victorian societal constraints allow. Trollope gives her a husband who will flex right alongside of her.

Not only did Trollope write about flexible women, he experienced them in his own family life. Anthony Trollope’s father failed to provide financially for his family, and his mother quickly learned that “a strong woman married to a weak man cannot practice wifely submission if she wants her family to survive” (Trollope 12–13). “In public,” Anthony Trollope’s mother “was a conventional lady absorbed in angelic ministrations to others,” but in private, “she was a hack writer desperately producing whatever would sell” (12). With the help of “his mother[,] he learned to look beneath the conventional surface a woman presents to the world for some hidden, unfeminine talent or desire. Her character taught him to qualify, but not wholly to reject, contemporary views of
women” (12–13). Trollope’s mother, who had a flexible, complex character, enacted masking strategies to cope with her difficult circumstances. Masking strategies enabled her to be a nurturing Victorian woman as well as a business woman and author who wrote to support her family.

We see a dramatized version of the flexible, multi-faceted female character in Trollope’s *The Eustace Diamonds*. Trollope states, “*The Eustace Diamonds* achieved the success which it certainly did attain, not as a love-story, but as a record of a cunning little woman of pseudo-fashion, to whom, in her cunning, there came a series of adventures, unpleasant enough in themselves, but pleasant to the reader” (*Autobiography* 298). And with this “cunning little woman” came much more—demonstrations of masking strategies that enabled Lizzie, a potential societal outcast, to succeed in different situations within her constraining society and to create her own better reality.

**The Portrait of a Lady (1880–1881) by Henry James**

Whereas Anthony Trollope’s Lizzie uses masking strategies to create a better reality for herself, Henry James’ Madame Merle, another potential societal outcast, in The Portrait of a Lady, published in 1880–1881, uses them to make a better reality for her daughter. Henry James’s The Portrait of a Lady follows Isabel Archer for several years, from being a young, independent woman to a married, suppressed wife. Her Aunt Touchett’s unmarried friend, Madame Merle, encourages Isabel to marry Gilbert Osmond, Madame Merle’s secret past lover, and become a mother to her and Osmond’s illegitimate daughter, Pansy, who lives with him. Isabel marries Osmond, unaware of the previous relationship between him and Madame Merle and unaware that Madame Merle is Pansy’s birth mother, only to become aware of these secrets later.
She ends up following the same trajectory that the protagonists in Chapter 2 follow: she suppresses herself, becomes wretched, wishing for death. One reviewer in 1882 viewed Isabel as "ever remaining intrinsically the same," claiming that she “preserved her cherished illusions and her distinct and winsome individuality" (“Editors” 474). Similarly, another reviewer asserted that “one can only wish that [the novel] had painted for us a lady on somewhat less exclusive lines" (“The Novels” 66). Isabel’s unchanging, inflexible character represents a trend in late nineteenth-century literature discussed in Chapter 2. In fact, an 1882 reviewer in Atlantic wrote,

one may fairly take [Isabel] as representative of womanly life today. . . . The fine purpose of freedom, the resolution with which she seeks to be the maker of her destiny, the subtle weakness into which all this betrays her, the apparent helplessness of her ultimate position, and the conjectured escape only through patient forbearance,—what are these if not attributes of womanly life expended under current conditions? (109)

Madame Merle, an unwed mother with an illegitimate child, would likely be shunned by Victorian society, like Hardy’s Sue Bridehead. But unlike the authors discussed in Chapter 2, James creates for Madame Merle an alternative to this fate. To create a better reality and future for her daughter, he has Madame Merle enact strategic maneuvers by flexibly adapting from situation to situation, representing herself in different ways to different characters, and often enacting masking strategies while appearing to play by the rules of society. Ultimately, she attains her goal of securing her daughter’s future both financially and emotionally.

Like many of the other female protagonists in previous chapters, Isabel Archer, “our heroine” (Portrait 34), is an educated complex young woman who has a strong, “ridiculously active” imagination (39) and “possess[es] a finer mind than most persons among whom her lot was cast” (52). An 1881 reviewer described Isabel as “often so
much of a lady that one ceases to think of her as a woman, not from worldly or social ambition, but from an emotional temperament too thin to disturb its intellectual impressions” (“The Novels” 65–66). Isabel’s cousin Ralph tells her that she is “of course so many-sided” and “the most charming of polygons” (Portrait 133). Isabel, similar to Thomas Hardy’s intellectual Sue and Olive Schriener’s Lyndall, is skeptical of marriage in the beginning of the novel and reasons that “a woman ought to be able to live to herself . . . and that it was perfectly possible to be happy without the society of a more or less coarse-minded person of another sex” (55). She proceeds to turn down two marriage proposals: She rejects Lord Warburton, a friend and neighbor of her uncle in England, because he “failed to support any enlightened prejudice in favour of the free exploration of life” she desires (101), and she rejects Caspar Goodwood, her friend and suitor from America, because she “like[s] liberty too much” and is very fond of her “personal independence” (142). Independence is of the utmost importance to Isabel, who admires her friend Miss Henrietta Stackpole for her independent lifestyle as an American journalist and an intelligent, witty woman. For a time, Isabel is able to retain her independence.

Early in the novel, Henry James’ draws attention to the idea of independence, perspectives, and flexibility. Isabel’s American aunt, Mrs. Touchett, describes the “American” point of view as “shockingly narrow” and claims that “there are as many points of view in the world as there are people of sense to take them. You may say that doesn’t make them very numerous! . . . My point of view, thank God, is personal!” (61). Mrs. Touchett rejects the notion that one’s nationality should determine one’s view; she argues that individualized points of view are broader than national points of view.
James contrasts American female characters’ independence with English female characters’ restrictiveness. On Miss Henrietta Stackpole’s journey to England, she reports: “I felt cramped—I felt something pressing upon me; I couldn’t tell what it was. I felt at the very commencement as if I were not going to accord with the atmosphere” (81). Henrietta alludes to England’s rigid rules and strict gender and socioeconomic systems. For the English, “everything” is “pretty well fixed” and “settled beforehand” (59). She vows that England will not suppress her and says, “But I suppose I shall make my own atmosphere. That’s the true way—then you can breathe” (81). Like Mrs. Touchett advocating for “personal” points of view, Henrietta claims that she can make her own personal rules when she is in England.

One character who creates a better reality for her daughter and seems to function within the established rules by employing masking strategies is American-born, English-raised Madame Merle. A couple of decades ago, as William G. Sayres noted in 1992, studies dedicated to exploring the character of Madame Merle were “far and few between” (231–232). Up to that point, scholars who studied Madame Merle described her fairly narrowly as “Isabel’s dark pseudo-benefactor” (Monteiro 81), “secretive, devious, worldly, and perhaps tragic” (Stafford 119), and as a “single-minded strategist and victor” (Sayres 231). In her 1990 article, Beth Sharon Ash gives Madame Merle more attention, claiming Madame Merle’s life “is lived entirely on the surface” and “for Madame Merle, an essential self—the sequestered domain of interiority—is a fiction” (146).

Since then, several scholars have given Madame Merle more attention and some have expanded on Ash’s view of her. Laurel Bollinger views Madame Merle as a
character that “has eliminated any meaning at all” (151) and is “pure representation” (152). Similarly, Lee Anna Maynard reads Madame Merle as “a shell of a person” (137), and Sigi Jottkandt reads her as “a question mark” (“Portrait” 80). But William T. Stafford and Patrick Fessenbecker view Madame Merle differently. “The undeniably manipulative and allegedly villainous Madame Merle is the most intricately rendered character in The Portrait of a Lady,” argues Stafford. He continues, “She is the energizing force” and “propels almost all the significant action” (117). Fessenbecker also acknowledges the intricacies of Madame Merle’s character and claims that “she does have a core self, a care generating volitional necessities: it is her desire to secure by any means necessary, a good life for herself, her former lover, and her daughter” (89). These more recent studies focus on Madame Merle in one of two seemingly diametrically opposed ways: either as a surface character who lacks definition or as a complicated character who drives the novel. But these two views of Madame Merle do not have to be mutually exclusive. Madame Merle showcases different aspects of her character through masking strategies. These strategies allow her to be both a character who may appear to lack definition and an instrumental, complicated character who drives the plot of the novel. We might be tempted read each representation of her character as superficial and lacking in definition, but each representation functions complexly as a strategy with the ultimate result of Madame Merle successfully attaining a secure and desirable future for her daughter.

Madame Merle purposefully chooses Isabel as a suitable mother for Pansy and starts to put her plan in motion. By being friends with Isabel’s aunt, Madame Merle gets to know Isabel even before she meets her. She knows Isabel is wealthy and comes
from a good family. Furthermore, choosing Isabel to be Pansy’s mother will allow Madame Merle, a family friend, contact with Pansy whereas choosing another woman to be Pansy mother would likely not. The first time Isabel (and readers) meet Madame Merle, she is playing a piano, presenting herself as an educated woman who engages in the arts. When Isabel returns home to Gardencourt, her aunt and uncle’s English estate, upon the news of her uncle’s death, she witnesses an unknown “lady at the piano” who “played remarkably well” (Portrait 151). Her playing “showed skill” and “feeling” (151). Upon meeting Madame Merle, Isabel says to her, “I know nothing about you but that you’re a great musician” (153). At this point in the novel, Madame Merle gains Isabel’s attention by strategically being present at the piano when Isabel arrives. She likely knows that Isabel, an educated, intelligent woman, would appreciate music, and this appreciation would begin to foster a relationship between the two women. The initial step of Madame Merle meeting Isabel and creating the foundation for a friendship is a success.

Encouraging a relationship with Isabel, Madame Merle also represents herself as an artist more generally in their early interactions. “Of painting she was devotedly fond” (166), and “she was usually employed upon wonderful tasks of rich embroidery, cushions, curtains, decorations for the chimney-piece” that demonstrated “her bold, free invention” and “the agility of her needle” when she “was neither writing, nor painting, nor touching the piano” (167). Isabel notices that Madame Merle “was never idle” and that if she was not engaged in an artistic endeavor, she was “either reading (she appeared to Isabel to read ‘everything important’), or walking out, or playing patience with the cards, or talking with her fellow inmates” (167). Madame Merle accomplishes the next step of
drawing in Isabel’s attention even more by showing that she is artistic, intelligent, and interesting.

At this point, Isabel admires Madame Merle and is drawn to her. Isabel describes her as “charming, sympathetic, intelligent, cultivated” as well as “rare, superior, and preeminent” (163). Furthermore, Isabel admires her because Madame Merle “knew how to think” and “knew how to feel” which was “indeed [her] great talent, her most perfect gift” (163–164). Her charm, intellect, and ability to feel attract Isabel as an admiring friend. She views Madame Merle, “on the whole,” as the most “agreeable and interesting figure” (163). Ralph, Mrs. Touchett’s son and Isabel’s cousin, reinforces Isabel’s views, explaining to Isabel that Madame Merle is “so welcome wherever she goes,” and she is “the one person in the world whom [his] mother very much admires” (155). Mrs. Touchett likes her so much that “if she were not herself . . . she would like to be Madame Merle” because “she does everything beautifully” and is “complete” (155). Madame Merle’s premeditated strategies thus far function to create closeness with Isabel, a main component in Madame Merle’s plan to make a better future for her daughter.

Madame Merle remains interesting to Isabel and other characters in the novel because her character is flexible. Her “angles” have been “rubbed away” (167). Isabel “found it difficult to think of [Madame Merle] in any detachment or privacy” because “[Madame Merle] existed only in her relations” to other people (167). Madame Merle explains to Isabel that “there’s no such thing as an isolate man or woman; we’re each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances” (175). She continues, “What shall we call our ‘self’? Where does it begin? Where does it end? It overflows into everything
that belongs to us—and then it flows back again” (175). Through Madame Merle, James theorizes that “the self” is not completely and clearly definable, and the boundaries or the limits of “the self” are not explicitly identifiable. Madame Merle explains that “One’s self—for other people—is one’s expression of one’s self; and one’s house, one’s furniture, one’s garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps—these things are all expressive” (175). She theorizes that “the self” is often represented and defined by its surroundings, including people, places, things, and circumstances. Gert Buelens notes that “Serena Merle never wavers in her faith in the power of the metonymical—her belief that persons’ surroundings may perfectly stand in for them and show them in a much better light than anything they do or say” (21-22). Similarly, Sigi Jokkandt explains that “Merle’s sense of self is no fixed or prior entity that finds expression in the representations of her famous ‘things’” (9) and rightly asserts, “For Merle, the self is a fluid concept, constituted by . . . signifying representations. . . . Accepting the arbitrary nature of signs, Merle puts them to work for herself, and understands their power for creating meanings. . . . Understanding the self as a product of representational structures, Merle is free to choose and select the meanings she finds useful” (Acting 9). He explains that she is “not confined by a concept of essential selfhood” and that she “can use the structures of representation to create her self and her world” (10). Like Lizzie, Madame Merle is able to change and adapt in different situations and portray herself in different ways through masking strategies.

James juxtaposes Madame Merle’s concept of self with Isabel’s. Isabel responds to Madame Merle, “I think just the other way. I don’t know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs
to me is any measure of me; every thing’s on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one” (Portrait 175). Isabel uses three negatives in this short passage and describes herself as “not pliable enough” (167). For most Victorian women, life was confining and limiting as they were supposed to be “proper” wives and mothers. Whereas Madame Merle uses “everything” to her advantage and defines and expresses herself through different things and people, Isabel does not. Rather, she views everything as a limiting obstacle and does not express herself through different things and people. Gert Buelens explains that for Isabel, “one’s context is a social imposition that stands in the way of true self-realization” (18). Similarly, Jottkandt asserts that Isabel “clings to a concept of essential identity, and it is the representations that fail to represent her that she objects to”; she reasons that representations only “inhibit her self’s expression” (Acting 9). Jottkandt succinctly and rightly explains that “Where Isabel rebels against the limits of representation, seeking a more profound presentation of herself (although she is unable to say what this would be), Merle finds possibilities in those very limitations” (9). Madame Merle’s view and her elasticity allow her to strategically create particular realities she desires, whereas Isabel’s view does not.

Madame Merle puts her flexible theory of “the self” into action when she implements the next part of her plan by introducing the idea of Gilbert Osmond to Isabel. Madame Merle “place[s] Mr. Osmond near the top of the list” of people that Isabel should meet and describes him as “an old friend” that “she had known” for “these dozen years” and as “one of the cleverest and most agreeable men . . . in Europe” for “he was altogether above the respectable average” (Portrait 210). Her description, in
combination with Isabel’s trust in her, influences Isabel to think very highly of Osmond even before she meets him.

At the same time, Madame Merle represents herself differently to Osmond as that of a confidant. She wants to find a wealthy woman who will marry him and be a loving mother to Pansy. Madame Merle and Osmond know each other much more intimately than they let on to others. Being past lovers and the parents of Pansy, they share a goal of finding her a wealthy, caring mother. Madame Merle tells Osmond that she “admire[s]” Isabel, and he will “do the same” since “she’s as bright as the morning” and fulfills his requirements of being “beautiful, clever, rich, splendid, universally intelligent and unprecedentedly virtuous” (206–207). She states, “I want you of course to marry her” (209). In this instance, Madame Merle speaks to him directly and explicitly about her desire. Her elasticity allows her to shift between different representations of herself, which are determined by the people around her and the situations she finds herself in as well as the situations she creates.

In the presence of Pansy, Madame Merle portrays herself as Osmond’s good friend. When nuns drop Pansy off at Osmond’s house, Madame Merle arrives and Osmond claims that she “is a great friend of ours” (202). Upon Pansy’s arrival, Madame Merle explains to her, “Perhaps some day . . . you’ll have another mother” (203). Being Osmond’s “friend” gives Madame Merle access to Pansy and allows her to subtly and quietly prepare Pansy for a new mother when she tells Pansy to try not to think of missing mother Catherine, one of the nuns at the convent where Pansy has been staying.
As Madame Merle influences Isabel strategically, plots with Osmond, and prepares Pansy for a new mother, she represents herself to Osmond’s sister, the Countess Gemini, very differently when she threatens the Countess not to interfere in her plan of Osmond and Isabel marrying. Madame Merle fears that the Countess might expose the secret that Madame Merle is Pansy’s mother (454). She tells the Countess Gemini, “I advise you not to agitate yourself. The matter you allude to concerns three persons much stronger of purpose than yourself” (230). The Countess Gemini clearly understands the threat and accuses, “You’re capable of anything, you and Osmond . . . together you’re dangerous—like some chemical combination” (230). Madame Merle warns, “You had better leave us alone then” (230). Putting the onus on the Countess with the first word “You,” she orders the Countess not to meddle; the direct declarative statement clearly reinforces Madame Merle’s implicit threat that harm will come to the Countess if she continues to involve herself. For Madame Merle’s plan to succeed, her secret must be kept so she can keep strategically representing herself and functioning as a proper Victorian woman to Isabel and Isabel’s family. The Countess Gemini understands Madame Merle when she responds with an emphatic, “Ah, you are dangerous” (230). Madame Merle represents herself as potentially destructive to the Countess, which results in the Countess Gemini’s silence until years after Isabel and Osmond marry.

Soon after Madame Merle thwarts possible exposure by the Countess Gemini, she poses, to Mrs. Touchett, as ignorant about Osmond and Isabel’s budding relationship in order to maintain her plan of Isabel marrying Osmond. Mrs. Touchett asks Madame Merle if it has occurred to her that Osmond is courting Isabel, to which
Madame Merle responds, “You make me feel an idiot, but I confess it hadn’t. I wonder . . . if it has occurred to Isabel” (235). Adapting and reacting quickly to another potential obstacle to her goal, Madame Merle proceeds to tell Mrs. Touchett that she will interfere to stop any potential lovemaking between Osmond and Isabel, which prevents Mrs. Touchett from interfering. But rather than discourage Osmond and Isabel, Madame Merle encourages them to be together, the complete opposite of what she promises Mrs. Touchett. In this instance, the “proper” path—honesty—would not be effective in achieving a proper future for her daughter. Madame Merle does not lie simply for the sake of lying or out of “evilness”; rather, she lies out of necessity. Lying to Mrs. Touchett prevents her from discouraging Osmond and Isabel’s romantic relationship. Madame Merle’s fostering of their relationship and protecting it from being threatened or discouraged will likely result in Osmond and Isabel marrying. This marriage will, in turn, result in Isabel becoming Pansy’s loving mother and, thus, provide a secure and successful future for Pansy. Lying to Mrs. Touchett reveals Madame Merle’s precarious state as an unwed mother and her desperation to ensure a secure future for her daughter. It also reveals how much she loves, admires, and respects Isabel, someone she wants as her daughter’s mother.

Madame Merle quickly shifts to being Osmond’s confidant again when she discusses Osmond going to Rome with Isabel. Osmond tells Madame Merle, “[Isabel] wants me to go to Rome with her. . . . She proposed it” (243). Madame Merle responds, “I suppose you mean that you proposed it and she assented” (243), and he answers, “Of course I gave her a chance. But she’s encouraging—she’s very encouraging” (243). It is evident that Madame Merle knows Osmond very well because she immediately
knows his sly, unscrupulous temperament. Despite Osmond’s slyness, the fact that Isabel accepts Osmond’s proposal to go to Rome with him signals that Madame Merle is one step closer to her goal of Isabel and Osmond being together. Madame Merle “rejoice[s] to hear it” but she also warns Osmond not to “cry victory too soon” (243). She knows there is still work to be done to solidify the relationship, and she orders Osmond, “Of course you’ll go to Rome” (243). Osmond responds, “Ah . . . it makes one work, this idea of yours!” (243). With this response, Osmond acknowledges his role in Madame Merle’s masterful scheme. Her plan works, and Osmond and Isabel are soon engaged.

Madame Merle’s plan works so well that Isabel thinks she marries Osmond of her own volition because of her own reasons and feelings. Isabel feels “a more primitive need” that “gratified infinite desires” and overcame her “high estimate of independence” as well as “her incipient conviction that she should never marry” (297). The need to marry Osmond outweighs Isabel’s need for independence. She thinks of Osmond as “her lover, her own” and believes “that she should be able to be of use to him” (297). More specifically, Isabel likes that she is able to provide financially for Osmond if she marries him—“she was not only taking, she was giving”—unlike the impact she would be able to have with either Lord Warburton or Caspar Goodwood (297). She also plans to cater to her husband’s desires and help him reach his goals. She tells Ralph, “I hope it may never be my fortune to fail to gratify my husband’s” (292). Isabel plans to become a supportive wife who fulfills her husband’s needs and helps him reach his goals.
After Isabel and Osmond marry and Madame Merle has given Pansy an ideal mother, Madame Merle focuses on getting Pansy a suitable husband. She poses as a friend to Ned Rosier, Pansy’s suitor and the man Pansy loves, with the secret intent of preventing a relationship between him and Pansy. As in the case with Mrs. Touchett, Madame Merle purposefully deceives Rosier so she can ensure a successful future for her daughter despite Madame Merle’s scandalous history that would normally doom her and her daughter to tragic fates. Madame Merle asks Ned Rosier, “Do you wish me to intercede?” (302). He does, so she vows, “Leave it to me a little; I think I can help you. . . . I'll do my best. I'll try to make the most of your advantages” (304–305). She refers to herself five times in this short passage, which suggests that she has sufficient power and influence to help him successfully attain his desired future bride. Madame Merle warns Rosier not to ask Isabel for help: “Don’t set [Mrs. Osmond] going, or you’ll spoil everything . . . be very careful, and let the matter alone till I’ve taken a few soundings” (305–306). Isabel’s primary concern for Pansy is that she is happy, and since Rosier makes her happy, Isabel would encourage the relationship. On the other hand, Madame Merle’s primary concern for Pansy is that she attains a secure future, so she discourages Pansy and Rosier’s relationship while she prevents anyone else from encouraging the relationship. She tries to ensure that no one else will interfere with her plan to keep Pansy and Rosier apart. Even though Madame Merle vows to Rosier that she will try to bring Pansy and him together, she does the opposite. Madame Merle tells Isabel, “I don’t think [Rosier] a paragon of husbands” and vows to “wash [her] hands of the love-affairs” between him and Pansy (345). Madame Merle tells Isabel that Pansy marrying Lord Waburton “would be better than marrying poor Mr. Rosier”
By enacting masking strategies, Madame Merle makes her own path to a successful, comfortable future life for her daughter and avoids pitfalls along the way. William G. Sayres explains, “Merle’s attempts to protect Pansy and influence her future are pervasive and suggest, particularly in retrospect, a consistent maternal objective of the artful scheming necessitated by her disadvantaged position” (232). Madame Merle adapts to situations as they change by enacting masking strategies, representing herself in different ways to different characters to ensure that her desires for her daughter become reality.

Madame Merle purposefully distances herself in public from Osmond and Isabel after they marry to help her carefully avoid accusations of meddling and potential speculations about her relationship and history with Osmond. This distance also gives Isabel and Pansy a chance to bond. Madame Merle makes herself not “of the inner circle” even though she “had known Gilbert Osmond and his little Pansy very well, better almost than any one” (Portrait 338). Madame Merle is “often on her guard” and “never spoke of [the Osmond’s] affairs till she was asked, even pressed” because “she had a dread of seeming to meddle” (338). She is strategically passive or active, depending on what best fits particular situations, to help her achieve her goal.

When Madame Merle is alone with Osmond, she shifts back into the role of his confidant, as she did when she and Osmond schemed about Isabel. For a brief moment, Isabel observes Madame Merle and Osmond together without them knowing it. Isabel notes “a sort of familiar silence” between them, and it “struck Isabel . . . that he was sitting while Madame Merle stood; there was an anomaly in this that arrested [Isabel]” (342). Isabel perceives a sense of intimacy in the physical positions of her
husband and her friend, and she finally has a glimpse of who Madame Merle is when Madame Merle is alone with Osmond. Isabel realizes that her friend manipulated her, and the Countess Gemini reveals that Madame Merle is Pansy’s mother. Juliet McMaster explains that “One of the major ironies of the novel, of course, is that Isabel, who has been so fanatic in her quest for freedom, and her determination to create her own destiny, in fact finds that her choices have all along been determined, and her expressive gestures composed, by others,” and Isabel finally realizes that “she has been instrument rather than agent” (57–58).

At this point in the novel, Osmond constrains Isabel, which results in her grave unhappiness. Ralph “saw how [Osmond] kept all things within limits; how he adjusted, regulated, animated their manner of life” (331), and this includes his wife Isabel, whom he suppresses. Osmond wants to control every aspect of his life, including his marriage and wife, so he undermines Isabel, taking away her independence and devaluing her opinions, trying to shape her into an obedient wife who conforms to his particularly high, rigid standards. Osmond’s narrowness and suppression of Isabel are detrimental to her: “In Isabel’s mind to-day there was nothing clear; there was a confusing of regrets, a complication of fears” (340). She has a “deep distrust of her husband” and found her marriage to him to be a “narrow alley with a dead wall at the end” with “restriction and depression” (356). She lived in “the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation” (360). Isabel plainly admits to her close friend Henrietta Stackpole, “Yes, I’m wretched” (407). Beth Sharon Ash notes that “Whether deemed ordinary, remarkable, or deviant, [Isabel’s] life is above all tragic” (126). Isabel reasons, “now there was no use pretending, wearing a mask or a dress, for [Osmond] knew her
and had made up his mind” (357). Unlike female protagonists in Chapters 3 and 4 and unlike Lizzie and Madame Merle, Isabel does not, in order to escape her narrow, constrained situation, enact masking strategies to flexibly adapt her character to different circumstances.

The Isabel of the beginning of the novel is very different from the Isabel, married to Osmond, at the end of the novel. “The free, keen girl” that Isabel was before her marriage “had become quite another person . . . she represented Gilbert Osmond” (331). Before her marriage, Isabel took “a great delight in good-humoured argument, in intellectual play,” but “she appeared now to think there was nothing worth people’s differing about or agreeing upon” (330). Before her marriage, “she had been curious,” but “now she was indifferent” (330). Ensnarled in a constraining, suffocating existence with Osmond, Isabel ultimately fails to meet his expectations of her as his wife. In her narrow role as his wife, Isabel disengages from her former interests and from the world.

Several critics focus on Isabel’s wretchedness and suppression, specifically within feminist and psychological contexts. In Beautiful Boredom: Idleness and Feminine Self-Realization in the Victorian Novel Lee Anna Maynard notes that “the beautiful and brilliant girl” who “desired knowing, seeing, and doing for herself above all else,” has now become a “stately and impressive woman” who “now craves nothing so much as the ignorance, blindness, and passivity found most permanently in death, that long boredom” (138–139). This “reversal,” she explains, is “indicative of how distraught and despairing she is” (138). Similarly, Colm Tóibín claims that James “was fearless in his depiction of the play of her consciousness; her high ideals and her need for freedom are confronted with repression and dark restriction” (264). Izzo Donatella also explores
James’ creation of Isabel’s interiority and argues that it is a response to “men’s patriarchal authority” and that “women’s subjection . . . lies deeper than the laws excluding them from suffrage, and their liberation is not only a matter of winning political rights” (353). Even an 1881 review noted that “the shadow of convention lies somewhat heavily on Mr. James’s women . . . it usurps oppressively the offices of virtue and of duty” (“The Novels” 84). Several critics note Isabel’s psychological suppression and subjection that she experiences in her marriage with Osmond and in the larger context as a Victorian wife who seems inexorably doomed to her fate.

Despite Isabel’s distress, she comes to understand the better reality Madame Merle is able to make for Pansy. Madame Merle is successful in her plan—Isabel and Pansy love each other, and Isabel is able to provide financially for Pansy. William T. Stafford explains that Madame Merle has “most unequivocally achieved what she finally set out to achieve—a loving and generous caretaker for her unacknowledged child” and “that no one else in this novel so movingly, if ambiguously, ‘wins’—certainly not Isabel, not Ralph, not Warburton, not Goodwood” (121). Madame Merle’s flexible character and her strategic maneuvers help her attain her goals. An 1881 book review in The Academy called Madame Merle “the most ambitiously conceived character in the book” (Ashcroft Nobel 398). And the narrator calls her the “cleverest woman in the world” (459). She is able to create a better, more financially stable and loving reality for her daughter Pansy through flexible adaptation to different, changing situations. Isabel and Madame Merle follow two very different paths that have very different results. Madame Merle’s flexibleness and strategic planning allow her to be and remain an active agent
throughout the novel, whereas Isabel’s narrowness and circumstances have doomed her to an inactive, object position.

Part of Madame Merle’s success may be that James never fully reveals her character. In his notebooks, he recorded, “I am not sure that it would not be best that the exposure of Mme Merle should never be complete, and above all that she should not denounce herself. This would injure very much the impression I have wished to give of her profundity, her self-control, her regard for appearances” (Complete Notebooks 15). Madame Merle’s success hinges on her elasticity as a character and representing herself to certain characters in certain situations. Her ability to flexibly adapt, keep up appearances, and strategically plan and execute her plans prevent her from being codified, categorized, and viewed as a static and one-dimensional character or as an outcast. Referring to a general idea, James writes, “The whole of anything is never told; you can only take what groups together. What I have done has that unity—it groups together. It is complete in itself” (18). Madame Merle is one character in whom the whole is never told.

Henry Harland’s Mathilde, Anthony Trollope’s Lizzie Eustace, and Henry James’ Madame Merle are all single female characters who are potential outcasts and who find themselves in constricting, dire circumstances: Mathilde’s life is at risk, Lizzie is a widowed mother, and Madame Merle has an illegitimate daughter. In a Victorian society that has strict expectations for a woman to be a “proper” Angel in the House, these women would likely meet very negative ends, such as poverty, social ostracism, and death. As women who would be denied access to the “proper” path to success and pushed to the margins of Victorian society, where they would be unable to achieve
happy, successful ends, these female characters take matters into their own hands. They avoid these dark fates by flexibly adapting to each situation, enacting masking strategies when necessary, to create better realities for themselves and their loved ones. Although these women do not take the narrow path deemed “proper” and “right” by Victorian society’s standards, including always being honest and truthful, they are compelled by their constraining circumstances to lie and be duplicitous in certain situations as a means to overcoming challenges that would likely prevent them from achieving their successful ends. Through their characters’ elasticity and adaptability, they are able to successfully function within the confines they are given to achieve success, reaching their goals, whereas the female characters discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, who do not deceive, enact masking strategies, and adapt to different situations, are not.
CHAPTER 6
MASKING IN MODERNISM: THE SHIFT TO MODERNIST FEMALE IDENTITIES

Modernist texts, like Henry James’ *The Golden Bowl*, Ford Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier*, and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* emerge out of late-Victorian concepts, such as female character being multi-faceted and adaptable, yet also differ in key ways. In these early Modernist texts, female identity emerges as still multiple and complex, as in late-Victorian texts. But now it is much more chaotic and more unknowable than in late-Victorian texts, partly because for early Modernists, identity and character had no anchor in a world in chaos with the breakdown of numerous “old” Victorian codified stable paradigms, an erosion of the idea of a cohesive (if multi-faceted) identity, and loss of faith in unifying values and institutions in the wake of soul-shattering World War I. In several ways, James, Ford, and Woolf approach the concept of identity differently: James extends late-Victorian masking strategies, emphasizing the fluidity of female identity and masking strategies to accommodate different and changing situations. Expanding on the consequences of characters’ inflexibility discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, Ford focuses on the extreme results of rigidity in the Modernist world if suppression and oppression are left unchecked. Most unlike the late-Victorian texts, Woolf emphasizes the ambiguity and at times unknowingness of one’s identity as she explores and acknowledges particular, fleeting moments of clarity, completeness, and community that occur *in medias res* in her novels.

*The Golden Bowl* (1904) by Henry James

Henry James approaches Modernist female identity by extending the strategies various late-Victorian authors in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 explore. James makes female
identity even more fluid than late-Victorian flexible character, and this fluidity along with masking strategies help his main female character in The Golden Bowl keep up appearances. In 1905, a reviewer for The Academy called The Golden Bowl “the most important work, in point of bulk and complexity, which [James] has issued for some time” and wrote that the novel is “close-packed, full of matter, elaborate with remarkable and meticulous precision of labour” (128). However, the reviewer went on to state that “the intellectuality overpowers the sensuous and objective traits proper to a novel, until one has the impression of reading an abstruse treatise of psychology rather than a tale” (128). In a 1914 issue of The North American Review, reviewer F.M. Colby agreed and claimed, “With Henry James we have a sense of getting into people too far—not into their spirits, but into their brain cells—and we feel rather like a bacillus,” but he went on to write that with James’ “method,” “many strange and shining things are brought to the surface” (633).

Some of these “shining things” include James’ complex characters and their complicated interactions with each other. The Golden Bowl follows Maggie Verver and her relationships with her husband, Prince Amerigo, her father, Adam Verver, and her friend and father’s wife, Charlotte Stant. The Prince and Charlotte engage in an affair. When Maggie’s father decides to move to America with Charlotte, which would put a stop to the affair, Maggie’s flexible identity and masking strategies allow her to overcome her pain and to accept and support her father’s decision. She wants to protect him from the pain of his wife’s extramarital affair. Maggie is her father’s loyal daughter and protector, Charlotte’s friend, and the Prince’s loving wife. Remarkably, masking strategies allow Maggie’s identity to morph as necessary to accommodate
changing circumstances without any debilitating or even negative emotional or physical consequences.

In the beginning of the novel, James shows that Charlotte enacts masking strategies to create her desired reality. Henry James portrays Charlotte as a character who “always dressed her act up” in that “she muffled and disguised and arranged it” (Golden 39). Charlotte flexibly navigates various situations and circumstances. In the past, she had an affair with Prince Amerigo in Rome. Once she returns to America, she must search for a wealthy man to marry if she hopes to be rich. Charlotte morphs from Amerigo’s past mistress into “a domestic resource” who “had become” for Mr. Verver, Maggie’s father and Charlotte’s future husband, “practically a new person” (152). Charlotte adapts and represents herself as an indispensable helpmate. After Charlotte demonstrates her domestic aptitude, she soon tells Mr. Verver, “I’m so awfully unattached. I should like to be a little less adrift. I should like to have a home. I should like to have an existence . . . I want to be married” (165). Eventually, Mr. Verver fulfills Charlotte’s desire and marries her. She creates the reality she desires as the wife of a wealthy husband. But Charlotte is a “master of shades” (417) and attempts to create another reality she desires simultaneously by having another affair with the Prince after she is married, and all the while, she continues to be Maggie’s best friend.

Early in the novel, Maggie also showcases herself as a wife and daughter. She becomes such a strong support system for the Prince that “It was present to Maggie that the Prince could bear, when he was with his wife, almost any queerness on the part of people, strange English types, who bored him, beyond convenience, by being so little as he himself was” (124). Maggie becomes “practically sustaining” for her husband.
(124), whom she desires. She is also an important support system for her father. They have a particularly close relationship as father and daughter. When Maggie and her father are together, they experience “serenity, innumerable complete assumptions,” and a “confidence solidly supported” (127). She is a loving daughter, who in her father’s house “would still always . . . be irremediably Maggie Verver” even though she is married (248). She even playfully states that she and her father were “married” before she married the Prince (131). Henry James refers to Maggie and her father as “our pair” and explains that they “were only blissful and grateful and personally modest” and “not ashamed of knowing, with competence, when good things were good and when safe things were safe” (127). For some time, Maggie “had been able to marry without breaking . . . with her past,” specifically without giving “up her father by the least little inch” (314). Maggie had “a resemblance to her father, at times so vivid and coming out” (247). The relationship between Maggie and her father is built on love, respect, kindness, and a genuine desire for each other to be happy and protected from harm. Maggie is loving, dedicated, and kind as both a daughter and a wife.

Two other characters that are alike are Charlotte and the Prince, and their likeness results in another affair. Henry James portrays Charlotte and the Prince as thinking alike, saying the same things to other characters, and communicating with each other without speaking (209). The “old feelings” that they experienced in their former affair “come back,” and they begin another affair (231). Right before they kiss, the Prince and Charlotte discuss trusting each other. The Prince says, “It’s sacred,” and Charlotte repeats this phrase to him in a whisper, and then “their lips sought their lips, their pressure their response and their response their pressure; with a violence that had
sighed itself the next moment to the longest and deepest of stillness they passionately sealed their pledge (240). The repetition of the word “their” and the parallel structure in the beginning of the sentence emphasizes Charlotte and the Prince’s likeness. Even when Charlotte and the Prince are separate, “a mystic golden bridge” is “between them” (250). When they are together, he feels “as a congruous whole,” and she says, “I feel it as you always make me feel everything, just as you do; so that I know ten miles off how you feel” (252, 275). They seem “meant for each other,” and “no union in the world had ever been more sweetened with rightness” (273). Charlotte’s identity as the Prince’s lover clearly emerges.

However, Charlotte conceals much of her emotional reality to avoid the immediate destruction of two marriages. She is “extraordinary” at “observ[ing] the forms” which include “two thirds of conduct” (298–299). She effectively transitions between her various representations of herself, depending on who she is with and her situation: At home, she “does her part” and “works like a horse” (304) to fulfill her role as Mr. Verver’s wife. When she is with the Prince, she is his lover and companion. When she is with Maggie, she is a friend. Charlotte’s observance of forms helps maintain stability in her marriage and the Prince’s marriage even though for the past two years, she has not been Mr. Verver’s “undividedly” and the Prince has not been Maggie’s “undividedly” (303–304). Despite Charlotte’s success in observing forms and shifting from role to role, her affair with the Prince still threatens Maggie and Mr. Verver.

In the beginning of the novel, Maggie is not as adept as Charlotte in adapting and shifting from role to role. Maggie quickly learns that her identity as a daughter and a wife must evolve, and she must flexibly adapt to accommodate various circumstances
and changing situations, like the affair between the Prince and Charlotte. After Maggie discovers the affair, she becomes a protector of her father to accommodate the situation and to shield her father from pain. At first, Maggie “reminded herself of an actress who had been studying a part and rehearsing it,” but she soon finds herself able to “improvise, to speak lines not in the text” (335). Henry James continues this theater metaphor to describe Maggie when the narrator explains that “It was this very sense of the stage and the footlights that kept her up, made her rise higher . . . all the while . . . heroically improvising” (335). James’ focus on improvising emphasizes Maggie’s evolving ability to quickly respond appropriately to changing circumstances while maintaining appearances. James draws attention to Maggie’s strong skills of improvisation again when the narrator notes that “Preparation and practice had come but a short way; her part opened out and she invented from moment to moment what to say and to do” (335–336). She becomes so comfortable with her adaptability and her masking strategies, representing herself in different ways to different people, that she is able to transition seamlessly from moment to moment. Her goal is “to bring about a difference, touch by touch, without letting either of the three [the Prince, Charlotte, and her father], and least of all her father, so much as suspect her hand” (336). At this point in the novel, if the affair becomes known, relationships between Maggie and the Prince and between Charlotte and Maggie’s father would come to ruin. By keeping the fact that she knows about the affair secret and flexibly adapting to the situation by representing herself as a loyal daughter to her father, a loving wife to the Prince, and a friend to Charlotte, Maggie is able to keep up appearances. Jonathan Freedman, who focuses on analyzing the novel through game theory rightly states that Maggie “thinks”
before she acts, which is “a strategic assessment that leads to the formation of a plan of action,” and she “anticipates, assesses, strategizes” (102). Flexing from situation to situation, she secretly and determinedly works to end the affair between the Prince and Charlotte.

At the same time, Maggie develops her identity as a princess, wife to a prince. “The little princess in Maggie was drawn out and emphasized” after Maggie was married to the Prince for some time (Golden 363). The public has particular expectations of princesses, and Maggie “felt herself for the first time in her career living up to the public and popular notion of such a personage” (363). Maggie is flexible and “was learning . . . to fill out as a matter of course her appointed, her expected, her imposed character” (363). The princess identity, despite its being forced upon her at first, becomes part of Maggie’s identity. Similar to becoming comfortable in her identity as her father’s protector, Maggie becomes comfortable in her identity as a princess. She upholds her social duties and “invited for the later hours after her dinner a fresh contingent, the whole list of her apparent London acquaintance” (363). Hosting social engagements is “a thing in the manner of little princesses for whom the princely art was a matter of course” (363). Maggie’s successfully fulfills her expected duties in this role. The repetition of the word “little” to describe Maggie as a princess emphasizes that this identity is not her only identity; it does not consume her. Rather, her “little” princess identity leaves plenty of space for other identities.

Maggie transitions smoothly from one representation of herself to another when circumstances warrant it. She quickly shifts from a princess to her father’s protector. After knowing about the affair between the Prince and Charlotte for a short time, Maggie
concocts a test for them to find out if they are still having an affair, and she gets clear results: “Amerigo and Charlotte were again paying together alone a ‘week-end’ visit which it had been Maggie’s plan infernally to promote—just to see if this time they really would” (391). After the Prince and Charlotte go away together and it is clear to Maggie that they are still having an affair, she reveals that she is “unhappy,” “jealous,” and “tormented” to her friend Fanny (392) but will do whatever is necessary to prevent her father from knowing about the affair. The trust Maggie has in Fanny allows her to reveal her feelings about her husband’s affair to her. Fanny responds to her, “What I’ve always been conscious of is your having concealed about you somewhere no small amount of character; quite as much in fact . . . as one could suppose a person of your size able to carry” (392). Fanny realizes the depth and complexity of Maggie. Critic David M. Craig notes that “Maggie’s discovery of the intimacy between Charlotte and her husband changes the character of her performance from a mode of discovery to an attempt to arrange and control the drama” and that “life becomes a performance for Maggie, a matter of striking poses and attitudes, of assuming roles” (139, 138). Maggie demonstrates her flexibility as “she was learning almost from minute to minute to be a mistress of shades” (Golden 417). Maggie learns to quickly adapt to various and changing circumstances. Each “shade” represents one of Maggie’s identities. She comes to understand that “when there were possibilities enough of intimacy there were also by that fact, in intercourse, possibilities of iridescence” (417). If we consider that Maggie’s character is iridescent, then when other characters view her from one static position or perspective, they see only one of Maggie’s identities. If Maggie or the character viewing her shifts positions or perspectives, then a different identity is
revealed. Maggie develops and showcases appropriate representations of herself that best suit different situations and help her create her desired reality.

Some scholars, such as Walter Wright, do not give Maggie enough credit. Wright calls Maggie “a wholesome, sensitive, ignorant girl” and claims that there are “remarkable . . . forces” that “come to her rescue” (64, 67–68). In this view, Maggie does not have or exercise agency; rather, outside entities act to change situations. Other scholars, such as L.A. Westervelt, acknowledge Maggie’s important role in coping with and stopping the affair between her husband and Charlotte. Westervelt claims that Maggie “work[s] within society’s sophisticated conversation forms while defending her family” and “creat[es] . . . herself by her use of language” (147). He explains that “Maggie acquires knowledge that does not crush her, but allows her to fashion a new, fuller version of herself” (147). Westervelt gives Maggie her due credit and focuses on her use of language as a means of creating an updated, more encompassing version of herself. Maggie develops various flexible representations of herself to solve her predicament.

As Maggie’s circumstances change, she does too; she becomes more efficient and more confident when she adapts to accommodate situations. James traces her development with a theater metaphor. She started out like “some young woman of the theatre who” is given “a minor part in the play” and quickly “master[s] her cues with anxious effort,” which results in her being “suddenly promoted to leading lady and expected to appear in every act of the five” (Golden 464). This metaphor emphasizes Maggie’s mastery of adapting to keep up appearances as she simultaneously works towards the reality she desires. She tells the Prince that she has “ceased . . . to be as
[she] was” and strategically reveals that she knows about the affair between him and Charlotte (459). She is no longer naïve, unaware of her husband’s extramarital affair, and she is no longer passive. Westervelt explains, “Maggie . . . sees herself as Charlotte and the Prince do, but she finds that definition too restrictive and rebels against it, destroying it and substituting her newly created version of herself” (157). Freedman rightly notes that Maggie wants “an acknowledgement of the change in her, an acknowledgement that will facilitate the construction of a new marital relation of equals” (108). Maggie tells Fanny, “[The Prince] had to see that I’m changed for him,” specifically “the idea of me that he had so long been on with” (Golden 469). Maggie evolves into an adaptable character, showing different identities at different times as a means of encouraging her husband to be loyal and faithful. This reality she desires hinges on the Prince recognizing and acknowledging that she changes, so she reveals that she knows about his affair as a way of demonstrating how adaptable she has become in dealing with it and keeping it a secret. Maggie explains, “It became a question then of his really taking in the change—and what I now see is that he’s doing so” (469). Once the Prince accepts that Maggie has changed, they combine forces and “mak[e] so good a show” for Charlotte and “to every one” (470).

Throughout this ordeal, Maggie maintains a friendship with Charlotte, who becomes suspicious that Maggie knows something about the affair, which she does. Charlotte asks her, “Have you any ground of complaint of me?” and tells Maggie she looks “perplexed and worried” (493). Maggie maintains her composure and responds, “All I can say is that you’ve received a false impression. . . . I’ve not felt at any time that you’ve wronged me” (494). She demonstrates her agency by positioning herself, “I,”
first in the sentence, and she demonstrates Charlotte’s lack of agency and forced position of passivity by putting her later in the sentence and identifying her as someone who “received.” Even Charlotte’s passive position as “receiver” is in past tense; she no longer has control over the affair with the Prince or over her life more generally since her husband has decided to move to America. Maggie continues, “You must take it from me that I’ve never thought of you but as beautiful, wonderful, and good” (495).

Throughout her interchange with Charlotte, she “marvelously . . . kept it up—not only kept it up but improved on it” (495). If Maggie revealed that she knew about Charlotte’s affair, Maggie’s father would be hurt and his marriage destroyed. So to protect her father, Maggie pretends to be ignorant of the affair when Charlotte pries. Maggie maintains her friendship with Charlotte and masterfully keeps up appearances as she simultaneously gets control over Charlotte and the situation.

However, Maggie’s control over the situation comes with a price. Once Maggie convinces her father to move to America, they have a “desire just to rest together a little as from some strain long felt but never named; to rest as who should say shoulder to shoulder and hand in hand, each pair of eyes so yearningly . . . simply daughter and father” (498). Maggie’s relationship with her father has been the most important relationship in her life. Her father moving to America is no small sacrifice for Maggie, as demonstrated in one of her “little lapse[s] of consistency” when she wishes, just for a moment, that her father would save her so she did not have to sacrifice her close proximity to him (491). But she does not reveal the affair between the Prince and Charlotte to her father and does not allow him to save her. Despite the fact that Maggie’s father is moving out of the country, they will “always and ever” have “each
other; each other—that was the hidden treasure and saving truth” (499). The repetition of “each other” reinforces the strong bond between Maggie and her father. But Maggie recognizes and respects the fact that both she and her father have other obligations and roles too now. After all, “They were husband and wife—oh so immensely!—as regards other persons” (498). Maggie must reprioritize her relationships and focus on her marriage instead of her relationship with her father. L.A. Westervelt rightly explains that “Renewing her commitment to her marriage involves giving up her intimacy with Adam . . . she accepts her responsibility as wife and substitutes the prince for Adam in her primary family circle with the Principino” (159). Similarly, Diana-Gabriela Lupu refers to Maggie’s “struggle to obtain an autonomous identity” throughout the novel and “the pain and the difficulty which accompany the painful process” when she must “break with the family” (362–363). As a loving daughter, Maggie protects her father, and in the end, she sacrifices her close physical proximity with him to protect her marriage and her father’s marriage.

Maggie evolves as a character who flexibly adapts to accommodate various situations throughout the novel by sacrificing and protecting her father, yet critics diverge in their analysis of Maggie and her effectiveness. Some critics focus on Maggie’s limitations and failures. Priscilla L. Walton claims that “while her revisions are liberating, they do not change or modify the oppressive social structure in the text” (144). Walton goes on to conclude that “Book I of The Golden Bowl commodifies and objectifies its female characters; Book II, for all its pluralizing, leaves those female characters in the same situation in which they found themselves in the first Book—leashed and reduced” (152). Jonathan Freedman concludes that Maggie has failed
when he states, “it seems to me absolutely clear in the final lines of the book that she has achieved, more or less, nothing” (112). Walton and Freedom underestimate Maggie and overlook her successes whereas other scholars do not. David M. Craig focuses on Maggie’s influence on other characters when he states, “it is her emergence in the social drama of the novel that affects the performances of the other participants” (138). Mary M. Hubbard also points out Maggie’s influence when she views Maggie as a “manager” and refers to “her successful takeover of the management of [her] marriage” (23). L.A. Westervelt compares Maggie to the character of Isabel in The Portrait of a Lady and argues that “James takes Maggie beyond Isabel” because Maggie is “less a victim” even though she “has been wronged by her husband” (158). Westervelt makes an important point, and comparing these two characters reveals the evolution of James’ engagement with complex female characters.

In both The Portrait of a Lady and The Golden Bowl, the main female characters gain experience and knowledge, and they both transform and change in certain ways. In The Portrait of a Lady, Isabel ends up suppressing herself, and Madame Merle enacts strategies, sometimes involving deception, to create a stable, secure life for her daughter Pansy. But appearances are not maintained in The Portrait of a Lady: Ralph finds out that Isabel is miserable, Madame Merle’s secret that she is Pansy’s mother is revealed, and Osmond is revealed to be selfish and cruel. However, in The Golden Bowl, Charlotte and Maggie almost seamlessly transition from representation to representation based on their situations, circumstances, and needs, and appearances are maintained. These adaptable representations become instrumental, conscious identities. James has Maggie refer to her own changes, whereas he has other
characters refer to Isabel’s changes. Maggie’s “ability to preserve an appearance” and consistently maintain various identities, including that of a protective daughter, allows her to stop the affair between the Prince and Charlotte as she simultaneously protects her father (Golden 465). Two marriages are saved.

Although some scholars may view Maggie as limited and restricted because she is still married to the Prince at the end of the novel, Maggie purposefully and consciously works to change her marriage to make it what she wants it to be. At the end of the novel, Amerigo tells Maggie, “I see nothing but you” (579). Charlotte, or any other woman for that matter, no longer takes the Prince’s attention away from Maggie or threatens Maggie’s marriage. She gets what she desires—a husband whom she desires and who desires her. By the end of the novel, Maggie fluidly shifts her identities to successfully keep up necessary appearances, which is important for Maggie and her family to function. In Maggie’s case, keeping up appearances and embracing multiple identities serve to help her create her desired reality. She creates a better, loving, happy life and future for herself, whereas other late-Victorian female protagonists, including Olive Schriener’s Lyndall, Thomas Hardy’s Sue, and Sarah Grand’s Evadne, are doomed to either death or to living out their days in mental or physical agony and suppression. Maggie’s keeping up appearances protects and maintains relationships between other characters too. If we view Maggie’s family as a microcosm of society, keeping up appearances is necessary for the functioning and maintaining of family as well as society.

*The Good Soldier* (1915) by Ford Madox Ford

Whereas Henry James offers a positive, workable approach to Modernist female identity, Ford, instead, expands the negative consequences of suppression that several
authors in Chapters 1 and 2 demonstrated. Many late-Victorian characters experienced madness and death as a result of rigidity and suppression. So too do the suppressed Modernist characters in Ford’s *The Good Soldier*. Rigid characters cause the destruction, madness, and death of the people they interact with and try to control. The novel, published in 1915, and reissued in 1927, explores themes of narration, perspective, sex, gender, and complex character. It is narrated by one of the main characters, John Dowell, who recollects the time he and his wife Florence spent with Edward Ashburnham, a much-decorated retired soldier, and his wife Leonora. Throughout the novel, Dowell describes the friendships and drama between the characters. Like several of the female characters in the novel, he is drawn to Edward and cares for him. Dowell details Edward’s numerous affairs with various women, including Florence; Maisie Maiden, a young naïve married woman; and Nancy, a young, innocent girl who becomes the ward of the Ashburnhams after being abandoned by her mother and leaving her alcoholic father. Dowell is an unreliable narrator who often contradicts himself and does not follow a linear time-line when recounting events.

Despite this, certain patterns of psychology, character, and suppression emerge in the novel. Ford could have been talking about the characters in *The Good Soldier* when he referred to the complexity and multiplicity of human character in James Joyce’s work in his essay, “A Haughty and Proud Generation,” published in 1922 in *Yale Review*: “The mind of every man is made up of several—three or four—currents all working side by side, all making their impress or getting their expression from separate and individual areas of the brain. It is not enough to say that every man is homo duplex; every man is homo x-plex” (716).
Ford’s intense exploration of the complexity of human character in *The Good Soldier* may be one reason that he wrote in his dedicatory letter to the novel, “I have always regarded this as my best book—at any rate as the best book of mine of a pre-war period (288–289). In a 1915 review of *The Good Soldier*, Rebecca West stated that the novel contains “extreme beauty and wisdom,” “all sorts of acute discoveries about human nature,” and has “a force of passion which so sustains the story” (39). In 1920, Lawrence Marsden Price included *The Good Soldier* in his list of Ford Madox Heuffer novels that “may be regarded as intimate studies of the psychology of the modern man” and stated that this novel “shows his powers at their full development” (448, 449).

Decades later, critics continue to focus on the psychological themes in *The Good Soldier*. In an article published in 1984, Miriam Bailin makes note of “the realism” of the novel’s “psychological complexity” (80). Scholars mention the “duality” (Lid 48) and “dual characteristics” (Leer 68–69) of various characters in the novel. In his extensive 1996 study of Ford, Max Saunder calls *The Good Soldier* “Ford’s most sustained virtuoso performance” and his “most complex and profound exploration of the dual perspective” (406). Saunders goes on to claim rightly that “The novel . . . insists on the complexity of human character, its contradictoriness and instability. It presents all these aspects as equally true, equally inescapable” (407). Indeed, what Ford does in *The Good Soldier* is to take further the multi-faceted female character that we have seen addressed by several late-nineteenth century authors.

In *The Good Soldier*, Leonora is so rigid and controlling that she suppresses the “currents” of several other characters. This constriction results in their ruin. The consequences of suppressing and stifling multi-faceted identities are more extreme in
this Modernist novel than in the late-Victorian texts. While Lyndall and Sue’s rigidity causes them to collapse in on themselves, Leonora’s monstrosity spins outward, affecting others’ character in the newly problematic, chaotic world. Her rigidity causes several deaths, including those of Maisie, Florence, and Edward, and it also causes Nancy’s madness.

Like several characters previously discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, Leonora suppresses her emotions and thus parts of her character. Numerous scholars make reference to Leonora’s icy rigidity. John A. Meixner calls her “strict” and a “convent-educated Roman Catholic” (154) with an “unfeminine hardness” (162). Robert H. Huntley refers to her “temperamental coldness” and “unfeminine nature” (170, 181), and Timothy Weiss notes her “emotional coldness” and “inflexibility” (86). Rose De Angelis describes Leonora as “playing the cold and calculating administrator” (436), and similarly, Norman Leer sees her as “cold and businesslike,” claiming her coldness results in Edward’s numerous affairs (76). When Leonora thinks about the affair between her husband and Florence, she, with her eyes “enormously distended” and “her hand with a singular clawing motion upwards over her forehead,” has the “face . . . of a person looking into the pit of hell and seeing horrors there” (Good Soldier 38). But when anger towards her husband and his extramarital affairs arises, she squelches it quickly: “And then suddenly she stopped” and “was, most amazingly, just Mrs. Ashburnham again” whose “face was perfectly clear, sharp and defined” (38). The narrator describes Leonora as “a woman of strong, cold conscience” who had “rigid principles” (46, 47). From a young age, she “had been drilled—in her tradition, in her upbringing—to keep her mouth shut,” so she is skilled at “preserv[ing] an unchanged
Leonora’s rigidness causes her to suppress her feelings of rage towards her husband, constricting her character. In the texts discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, suppression of female characters results in dire consequences, such as madness and death. But in Leonora’s case, her rigidity results in the psychological constraining of another character—her husband.

Edward is not a common philanderer who uses and takes advantage of the women he has affairs with. Rather, he is a dedicated, decorated soldier who was recommended for the Victoria Cross award twice, a caring landlord, and a delusional romantic who often falls in love with women he has affairs with. His generosity as a landlord and his romantic affairs, relationships in which he is often taken advantage of, buying expensive gifts for his mistresses, bribing a young woman’s family, and being blackmailed by one of his mistresses’ husbands, result in debt. When Leonora finds out that she and her husband are in debt, she takes complete control over their finances and implements strict frugality. She does not replace two of the maids who leave; she reduces her and Edward’s clothing budget, and she spends less on the dinners she hosts than in past years (98). These frugal decisions result in “Edward [beginning] to perceive a hardness and determination in his wife’s character” to the extent that “he seemed to see a net closing round him” (98). R. W. Lid explains, “More and more Leonora disapproves of Edward’s handling of the estate” so “she tries to curb what she regards as excesses” (72). But Leonora goes further, constricting Edward’s life to a greater extent. She stops Edward from being an understanding “good landlord and father of his people” when she and her attorney “become the trustees . . . of all Edward’s property” (Good Soldier 111). As Norman Leer points out, Leonora’s “taking
over [Edward’s] estate deprive[s] him of his role,” which is “a telling blow to Edward’s
. . . self-esteem” (80, 82). Ann Barr Snitow notes that other characters too view
Leonora as controlling and inflexible: Her “strength of character increasingly seems to
[Dowell] like an iron vise that destroys what it seeks to hold in place” (181). Leonora
even controls Edward’s job when she forces him to be “transferred to a part of his
regiment that was in Burma” (Good Soldier 111). Leonora “rule[s] with a rod of iron,”
and Edward “becom[es] more and more estranged from her” and “regard[s] her as” both
“physically and mentally cold” and “wicked and mean” (100). At times, she makes
Edward so uncomfortable that “he would almost shudder if she spoke to him” (100).
Leonora’s rigidity and her constraint of and control over Edward results in alienation and
unhappiness.

Leonora restrains other characters as well, including Mrs. Maisie Maiden, one of
Edward’s mistresses. After Edward has two disastrous affairs, one with the Grand
Duke’s mistress who blackmailed Edward and one with a servant girl whose family was
“determined to ruin” him, he became “completely cured of philandering amongst the
lower classes,” which “seemed a real blessing to Leonora” (48). Edward’s next love
interest is Maisie Maiden, who in fact Leonora herself procured for him, serving as in
Rose De Angelis’ words, “an erotic facilitator for Edward” (439), is “so submissive”
(Good Soldier 41) that “Leonora had accepted” her “almost with a sign of relief” since
“she could trust her not to rook Edward for several thousands a week, for Maisie had
refused to accept so much as a trinket ring from him” (48–49). Maisie was also ill, so
she could not “be taken on expensive jaunts” (49). Without Maisie knowing, Leonora
“paid [her] expenses to Nauheim” and “handed over the money to [her] boy husband”

even though “Maisie would never have allowed it” if she knew (49). Leonora also simultaneously serves her own interests when she manipulates and uses Maisie for her own purpose. The narrator reports that “on the voyage from India, Leonora was as happy as ever she had been in her life” because “Edward was wrapped up with a child [Maisie]” (49). Leonora constrains Maisie into one particular role, that of a mistress to Edward, resulting in Leonora’s happiness.

But this purchase and constraint of Maisie also leads to Maisie’s death. After Leonora exploits Maisie for Edward, Maisie dies on the boat “in the effort to strap up a great portmanteau” (56). The narrator describes that “grotesquely,” Maisie’s “little body had fallen forward into the trunk and it had closed upon her, like the jaws of a gigantic alligator” (56). The circumstances and description of her death serve as a metaphor for Leonora’s restraint of and power over Maisie. Her “little” body does not stand a chance against the “gigantic” ruthless “alligator” Leonora. Leonora closes her jaws around Maisie and constrains her to one specific function; Maisie has no choice but to be consumed by Leonora, and it kills her.

Maisie writes a letter to Leonora that Leonora does not find until after Maisie dies. She asks, “How could you buy me from my husband? . . . You paid the money for me to come here. Oh, how could you?” (55). Leonora treats Maisie like an commodity that can be purchased and used. The letter impacts Leonora enough to make her admit to Florence, “I killed her. . . . I ought never to have brought her from India” (54). Maisie’s letter reinforces that Leonora is to blame for her death, after brutally constraining her into the role of an adulteress.
By contrast, Dowell’s wife Florence successfully creates the reality she desires and adapts from situation to situation by being flexible and enacting masking strategies before Leonora intervenes and stops her. Florence asserts herself when she “[tells] her aunts that she intend[s] to marry [John Dowell],” (59) who meets her requirements of being a wealthy “gentleman of leisure” and can provide her with “a European establishment” (58). Almost immediately, Florence’s desires come to fruition, and she marries Dowell. Florence controls and creates the reality she wants.

As Dowell’s wife, Florence poses as a sick, fragile woman. She tells Dowell, “I may be ill, you know . . . my heart is a little like Uncle Hurlbird’s” (61). Florence takes control of her marriage and her husband, who “got . . . directions how to behave to [her]” from her and from “the ship’s doctor who discreetly suggested to [him] that [he] had better refrain from manifestations of affection” (62–63). Uncle Hurlbird’s history and the ship’s doctor help Florence represent herself as “a rare and fragile object” to control her husband (65). If Florence did not enact this masking strategy, posing as a sick wife, she would be required by society’s standards to uphold the narrow role as an ideal wife, obeying, supporting, and being subordinate to her husband. Furthermore, she would be required to consummate her marriage with Dowell. By posing as a sick, fragile woman, an acceptable role that does not challenge the gender dichotomy that designates women as frail and weak compared to men, Florence escapes the narrow role as an ideal wife. The narrator reports that his wife “was out of [his] sight most of the time” and that the doctor “impressed upon [him] that what Florence needed most of all were sleep and privacy” and that he “must never enter her room without knocking, or her poor little heart might flutter away to its doom” (64). Michael Levenson claims that the
“characters” in the novel “persistently engage in characterization, but more often to
disguise, than to reveal, the secrets of personality” (375). In Florence’s case, playing
the sick frail wife allows Florence to receive all of the financial securities that a good
marriage affords and simultaneously allows her to retain her privacy and independence.
Through Florence, Ford draws attention to the limited choices and narrow roles “proper”
women have that necessitate such escape strategies.

This privacy allows Florence to be a mistress to Jimmy and Edward. Before her
marriage to Dowell, Florence had an affair with Jimmy, and this affair continues after her
marriage. When Florence “was sick of Jimmy,” she “take[s] on Edward” as a lover
(Good Soldier 65). Florence posing as sick to Dowell and having the doctor confirm that
she cannot have sex mitigates any concerns Dowell may have about his wife having an
affair since he thinks she is too unhealthy for sex. Furthermore, Florence is careful to
keep her healthiness and her affairs secret from her husband by consistently posing as
an ill woman to him. Paul B. Armstrong argues that Florence is able to “gain the power
that comes from being more knowing than known” (214). He explains that “For
Florence, to know means to be more subject than object, more acting than acted upon,
whereas to be known means to have the powers of her subjectivity transcended by and
made subservient to someone else” (214). Florence takes a stereotypical role of a
fragile Victorian woman and uses it to her advantage.

But Leonora puts an end to the reality Florence has created for herself. On the
night everything changes for Florence, Edward and Nancy attend a concert. At first,
Florence stays behind, but Leonora says to her, “I wish you would go with those two. I
think the girl ought to have the appearance of being chaperoned with Edward in these
places” (71). At this point, Leonora knows that Edward is in love with Nancy, but Florence, who is having an affair with Edward and loves him, does not, so Leonora wants Florence to witness it firsthand. Leonora’s plan works. Florence attends the concert and sees that Edward loves Nancy. She returns “running . . . with a face whiter than paper and her hand on the black stuff over her heart” only to find her husband talking with a man named Bragshawe, who reveals Florence’s affair with Jimmy (72). It remains unclear whether Leonora knew Bragshawe was in the lounge or not when she encouraged Florence to attend the concert, though it seems likely she did know. Either way, Leonora instigates the moment when Florence’s heart is broken and her flexibleness stopped. Florence’s secrets and affairs are revealed, and her social reputation is ruined. She can no longer pose as an ill woman who cannot have sex with Dowell, and any possibility of running away with Edward is squelched. She can no longer enact masking strategies or keep up appearances. She commits suicide and is found “laying, quite respectably arranged, unlike Mrs. Maidan, on her bed” holding “a little phial that rightly should have contained nitrate of amyl, in her right hand” (72). Leonora is the catalyst to both Maisie’s and Florence’s downfalls and deaths.

Leonora’s rigidity results in the demise of Nancy too. Nancy is a young, angelic-like girl who is innocent, happy, obedient, and wants to please her guardians. Edward does not want to sully Nancy’s innocence, and he realizes that his happiness could only come from her moving back to India, as planned, and their loving each other from afar. Leonora quickly realizes that Edward is in love with Nancy and that Nancy could love Edward too, so she manipulates the situation and constrains Nancy to prevent Edward’s happiness. Leonora tells Nancy repeatedly “that she must belong to Edward” and that
Leonora “was going to get a divorce; she was going to get a dissolution of marriage from Rome” (153). However, Leonora never intends to get a divorce. She tells Nancy that “she considered it to be her duty to warn the girl of the sort of monster that Edward was” and proceeds to tell her about Edward’s affairs (153). Leonora uses her relationship with Nancy to manipulate Nancy’s perception of Edward. Calling Edward “violent, overbearing, vain, drunken, arrogant, and monstrously a prey to his sexual necessities,” Leonora speaks “of the agonies that she had endured” because of him (153). Leonora’s plan works. After “hearing of the miseries her aunt had suffered . . . the girl made her resolves” that she could never love Edward, which was Leonora’s goal (154). Dowell suggests that Nancy “certainly had” loved Edward before “Leonora had got to work upon his reputation” and that Edward “let Leonora take away his character . . . and damn him to the deepest hell” (155, 156). Leonora sabotages Nancy’s future by constraining her to a particular role—that of Edward’s savior. She tells Nancy, “You must save Edward’s life; you must save his life” (153). Wanting to save Edward’s life and please her aunt, Nancy agrees and tells Edward, “I will belong to you to save your life. But I can never love you” (154). Nancy soon leaves for India, and leaves Edward thinking that she could never love him. In this “fantastic display of cruelty,” Leonora manipulates and constrains both Nancy and Edward (154).

Leonora’s manipulations and suppressions of Edward and Nancy result in triumph for her and detrimental consequences for them. Once Nancy leaves, Leonora wears a “triumphant smile,” and “it was enough for her to have got the girl out of the house and well cured of her infatuation” (159). Nancy sends a telegram to Leonora and Edward that reads, “Safe Brindisi. Having rattling good time. Nancy” (162). After
receiving this telegram and believing that Nancy can never love him, Edward tells Dowell that he needs “a bit of rest,” looks to heaven, and vows to wait for Nancy there (162). Being hopelessly in love with Nancy and thinking that his love is unrequited, Edward does the only thing that will give him peace: He commits suicide. Edward’s suicide results from Leonora constraining his relationship with Nancy and destroying his chance for happiness with her. Upon hearing about Edward’s death, Nancy goes mad. When Dowell first sees Nancy in her madness, he hears her “repeat . . . the word ‘shuttlecocks’ three times,” and Dowell explains that before she went mad, “the poor girl said she felt like a shuttlecock being tossed backwards and forwards between the violent personalities of Edward and his wife” (160). Nancy’s madness results from Edward’s suicide and Leonora manipulating her and constraining her into the role of a loveless savior to Edward. Dowell claims that Edward and Nancy “found themselves steam-rolled out” (152) and “punished by suicide and madness” for being the “villains” (160). But he complicates this use of the word “villain” when he claims that they “were sacrificed” to Leonora (160). He explains, “In order to set [Leonora] up in a modern mansion . . . it was necessary that Edward and Nancy Rufford should become . . . no more than tragic shades” (160). And tragic shades they became, in the forms of suicide and madness. Ann Barr Snitow rightly explains that “The characters in the novel who feel strongly are defeated by this world of exhausted repression” and that they “are robbed of flexibility and completeness by the debilitating madness of their time” (163, 182). Leonora represents this ultimate suppression that robs other characters, including Edward, Maisie, Florence, and Nancy, of their flexibility and completeness as she forces them into constrained situations and roles that result in death and madness.
Unlike Edward and Nancy, Leonora flourishes at the end of the novel. Dowell reports, “Leonora survives, the perfectly normal type, married to a man who is rather like a rabbit” (Good Soldier 152). Dowell ambiguously deems Leonora “the heroine” and calls her “the perfectly normal, virtuous and slightly deceitful heroine” who “has become the happy wife of a perfectly normal, virtuous and slightly deceitful husband” and who “will shortly become a mother of a perfectly normal, virtuous, slightly deceitful son or daughter” (160). Being the heroine, Leonora gets her “happy ending” (160), but being the “heroine” and “normal” also involves destroying others. Dowell ruminates that “society can only exist if the normal, if the virtuous, and the slightly deceitful,” such as Leonora, “flourish and if the passionate, the headstrong, and the too-truthful,” such as Nancy and Edward, “are condemned to suicide and to madness” (160). Max Saunders explains that Ford “render[s] his own times in terms of his own times” in that he “us[es] the manners of [the] society to penetrate that society, at the same time as [he] makes those manners seem outmoded, useless” and “makes them deeply expressive of the anguish and desire they are meant to restrain” (434). That rendering, Saunders argues, results in an “attitude to the society” that “is truly dual, wanting to expose its hypocrisy, but recognizing its true integrity in the very process of its disintegration” (434). Dowell emphasizes tensions between traditional Victorian ideology and newly developing Modernist ideology when he questions oversimplified dichotomies and suggests more complex relationships.

In the late-Victorian texts discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the female characters are restrained and suppressed by others and by societal constraints or they restrain and suppress themselves. In all cases, the female characters themselves suffer detrimental
consequences, such as death and madness. However, in *The Good Soldier*, Leonora does not simply suppress or restrain herself. She also rigidly controls, manipulates, and constrains other characters, including Edward, Maisie, Florence, and Nancy, and these characters suffer detrimental consequences. Unlike the characters in Chapter 2, Leonora does not suffer. Instead of the consequences of Leonora’s rigidity and suppression being turned inward towards her, Ford turns them outward, showing that Leonora drives other characters to madness and death in world that is becoming globalized. Ford draws attention to the changing, chaotic Modernist world, where technology was advancing, convention was being overturned, and traditional Victorian roles were being challenged. This instability lead to unstable individual and communal identities and a sense of vulnerability as the world was becoming more connected. In the novel, Leonora takes advantage of this vulnerability, reining her iron will over other characters and leading to their destruction. Ford shows how people in the Modernist world were, to some extent, more connected with each other through new advancements and developing technologies, but, paradoxically, he shows how people were also more alienated from each other and more vulnerable, with their unstable identities and unclear roles. Despite Leonora living a normal, happy life with her new husband and becoming a mother at the end of the novel, she has functioned as a monstrous character that suppresses other characters and divvies out death to Maisie, Florence, and Edward and madness to Nancy. Ford warns that the old ways, as shown through Leonora, will have grave consequences in the new world.

*Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) by Virginia Woolf

James and Ford both extend late-Victorian ideology about multifaceted female character in different ways, and Virginia Woolf expands it further, even breaking with it
at times as she ushers in a new Modernist idea of identity. Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, published in 1925, follows the life of upper-middle-class character Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway as she prepares to host a large party. Woolf focuses on interactions between Clarissa, her husband, Richard Dalloway, her daughter, Elizabeth, her former romantic interest, Peter Walsh, her friend, Sally Seton, and several other characters, in the new Modernist world that emerged after World War I. She explores themes of aging, alienation, and identity, often through the character of Clarissa Dalloway. Discussing *Mrs. Dalloway* in her diary, Woolf explained that she “dig[s] out beautiful caves behind [her] characters” (*Writer’s Diary* 59). Contemporary critics of Virginia Woolf and *Mrs. Dalloway* also focused on her creation of character. In his 1934 essay “Toward Virginia Woolf,” John Hawley Roberts wrote that Woolf’s “meaning is elusive” and “her wit, her psychological subtlety, her style . . . obscure her chief attribute—her conception of character in fiction” (587).

Decades later, critics are still fascinated with Woolf’s characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In 1978, scholar Daniel Alright claimed that Woolf’s “characters . . . are undefined, some would even say unreal; but she has in *Mrs. Dalloway* . . . extended as significantly as any writer of the twentieth century the boundaries of the human character” (123). Critic Kenneth Moon views the novel “primarily” as “a search for the whole Clarissa” (273) whereas Jeremy Hawthorn, author of “Together and Apart,” asserts that “Clarissa Dalloway is seen as an individual whose identity varies according to the situation in which she finds herself” (41). He explains that “at different times, and with different people, she appears to be a different person,” and “the reader feels that in
spite of the multiple, even contradictory, aspects of her personality which are revealed to him, Clarissa Dalloway is there, distinct, unique” (41).

Hawthorn’s view of Clarissa illuminates an important transition period between late-Victorian and early-Modernist notions of identity. For many late-Victorian female protagonists, multi-faceted character is unified to some extent. When shifting between different representations of herself, the heroine seems to comprehend or at least recognize the other facets of herself. In some early-twentieth century literature, these “facets” seem to become so pronounced and individualized that they become identities within themselves; these multiple identities are no longer clearly unified like they were in late-Victorian texts. Rather, when they do become momentarily unified, they are unified in medias res. Woolf, who helps create this modernist theory, views identity, particularly female identity, as more complex. In her diary, Woolf wrote, “‘I’ rejected” and “‘we’ substituted . . . ‘we’ the composed of many different things . . . we all life, all art, all waifs and strays—a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole—the present state of mind?” (279). She also argued that novels should focus on this complex identity or character. In her essay “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” published in 1924, Virginia Woolf referred to “the different aspects” that “[character] can wear” (6) and “believe[d] that all novels” should try to “express character” and “not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire” (9).

In Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf upholds her belief. She portrays Clarissa complexly and, at times, paradoxically. Clarissa’s character is rigid and flexible, defined and undefined. Like late-Victorian female protagonists, she shifts to adapt to different situations and people she encounters. However, unlike late-Victorian female
protagonists, Clarissa’s various facets of identity become so individualized that her identity is multiple, and her multiple identities are only temporarily unified at certain moments, not continuously as with late-Victorian female protagonists.

Virginia Woolf has Clarissa Dalloway, like many other late-Victorian characters, reject simple categories and definitions in the beginning of the novel. She refuses to “say of any one in the world now that they were this or were that” (Mrs. Dalloway 8). Woolf repeats the same notion, specifying that Clarissa “would not say of Peter, she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that” (8–9) and draws attention to Clarissa’s adamant rejection of confining labels. In Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject, Makiko Minow-Pinkney explains that “identity” to Clarissa “is not true; it is impossible for her to be one thing and not the other” (62). On the other hand, Shalom Rachman, in “Clarissa’s Attic: Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway Reconsidered,” acknowledges that Clarissa has different “sides” to her but argues that she has a true, real self, an “essential nature” that is “Lesbian” (10–12). But Clarissa’s character seems considerably more complex and elusive than Rachman suggests. Clarissa takes her rejection of categorization a step further when she describes that she “felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on” (Mrs. Dalloway 8). She specifically rejects the exclusiveness of categories. Her refusal to use confining categories coincides with her ambivalent feelings about herself. She simultaneously feels young and old, included and excluded in life. Woolf highlights Clarissa’s separate Modernist identities as metaphorically sliced apart from one another.
These paradoxical identities defy simple categorization and represent the chaos in the Modernist world. Even though Clarissa “held herself well was true; and had nice hands and feet; and dressed well,” she felt that “often now this body she wore . . . with all its capacities, seemed nothing—nothing at all” (10). Clarissa views her body as something that she wears and, therefore, as something that can be put on and taken off. This view seems to be an extreme version of Professor Fortescue’s theory of multi-faceted character in Mona Caird’s *Daughters of Danaus*. He describes different facets of character as clothing, which allows for elasticity in one’s character. Clarissa extends this theory to include her physical body itself, but at times Clarissa even questions the very existence of her body, and views it as “nothing.” The identity of her body is often disconnected from her other identities.

At times Woolf describes Clarissa as almost invisible since Clarissa has already married and had children. For Clarissa, there would be “no more marrying, no more having children,” and “she had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown” (10–11). As with many Victorian women, the acts of marrying and having children define Clarissa. But once Clarissa completes these acts, she feels as though she cannot be seen, defined, or known. Once she becomes “Mrs. Dalloway,” she is “not even Clarissa any more” but solely “Mrs. Richard Dalloway” (10–11), as exemplified by the title of the novel. In this moment, her wife and mother identity as Mrs. Dalloway is cut off from her other identities as Clarissa. Thus, for Mrs. Dalloway in this moment, marriage and aging result in the erasure of the individual identities of “Clarissa.” Nancy Taylor in “Erasure of Definition: Androgyny in *Mrs. Dalloway*” asserts that “Her talents as a woman of society become meaningless because she sees herself as fused into her
husband’s identity with nothing separate or distinctly her own” (369). Similarly, Claudia Barnett in “Mrs. Dalloway and Performance Theory” argues that “Clarissa’s removal from herself began with her marriage; since that time, she has undergone a gradual process of erasure culminating in invisibility. In becoming Mrs. Dalloway, she has become not Clarissa and not-not Clarissa” (66). Taylor and Barnett make an important point in this instance; however, there are times when Clarissa acknowledges that other identities exist. For example, Woolf distinguishes Clarissa’s identity as a wife from Clarissa’s identity as an individual later in the novel, and during this distinction, Clarissa acknowledges her individual identity. Woolf writes, from the perspective of Clarissa’s thoughts, that “there is a dignity in people; a solitude; even between husband and wife a gulf . . . that one must respect . . . for one would not part with it oneself” because it would be impossible to do so “without losing one’s independence, one’s self respect,” which is “priceless” (Mrs. Dalloway 120). Clarissa is able to at least temporarily distinguish her identity as Mrs. Richard Dalloway, wife and mother, from that of Clarissa, independent individual. Her identities are aware of each other in this moment, unlike earlier in the novel when she feels that her identity of Clarissa as an independent individual is subsumed by her identity as Mrs. Richard Dalloway.

Clarissa’s identity as a wife contrasts starkly with the independent Clarissa who sexually desires other characters. Before her marriage to Richard, Clarissa remembers the moment that “Sally . . . kissed her on the lips” as “the most exquisite moment of her whole life” and that “the whole world might have turned upside down” (35). She refers to herself as “being in love” and seeing Sally as “all light, glowing” and her voice as “beautiful” and “like a caress” (35). Clarissa does not experience this type of desire and
passion with her husband. Richard “could not bring himself to say he loved her” even though he does (118). Since their daughter Elizabeth was born, they have lived celibate lives, with Clarissa sleeping in the attic. Mrs. Dalloway is the proper Victorian wife who only has sex with her husband to procreate. Since then, she and her husband have kept a respectful distance from each other; their relationship is not intimate or passionate. This identity of Mrs. Dalloway, wife and mother, is what most people see, as Jennifer Poulos Nesbitt in Narrative Settlements: Geographies of British Women’s Fiction between the Wars notes: “People do not see the Clarissa that loved Sally . . . but a well-dressed married woman” (33). Clarissa flexibly shifts from being a desiring woman to being a celibate, proper wife and mother, but Woolf warns that aging effects flexibility; it diminishes Clarissa’s elasticity. Clarissa “feared time itself, and read on Lady Bruton’s face, as if it had been a dial cut in impassive stone, the dwindling of life; how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years” (Mrs. Dalloway 30).

“Her” likely refers to Lady Bruton; however, ambiguously, it could also refer to Clarissa or women in general. In any case, Woolf seems to suggest that flexibility and the ability to adapt to different situations deteriorate as one ages. Thus, it becomes more difficult to successfully develop and shift between multiple identities as women age.

In previous chapters, flexibility and masking strategies allowed female protagonists to successfully accommodate various facets of their characters and create desired realities, and this success often involved other people’s desire for the female protagonists. For example, in The Eustace Diamonds several men desire the young widowed Lizzie Eustace. Lizzie attains a suitable fiancé as well as a cousin who
protects her in several instances. In *The Heavenly Twins*, the tenor desires a friendship with the youthful boy, Angelica. Angelica attains the intellectual intimacy that she craves. In these examples, youth is an important aspect of the characters’ representations of themselves that attract other characters to them. This attraction or desire from other characters allows the female characters to sustain their representations and attain their goals and desired results more easily. But youth does not last, and Woolf, through Clarissa, suggests that aging results in a decrease in one’s appeal to others. When Lady Bruton does not invite Clarissa to lunch, Clarissa “feel[s] herself suddenly shrivelled, aged, breastless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of the window, out of her body and brain which now failed” (31). This inflexibility and the decrease in being desirable to others hinder the influence female characters have on other characters and hinder the female characters from achieving their goals and creating their desired realities.

However, Clarissa’s official and socially acceptable identity as the older, married, and established Mrs. Dalloway affords her certain opportunities. As a wife and mother with a home and wealth, Clarissa has the circumstances that allow her to be a successful hostess, one of her identities that emerges clearly and distinctly in the novel. Peter calls Clarissa “the perfect hostess” (7), and she has “perfect manners, like a real hostess” (61). Natalia Povalyaeva in “The Issue of Self-Identification in Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* and Cunningham’s *The Hours*” goes so far as to claim that Clarissa’s parties are “the most important elements of her identification” (271). Shannon Forbes agrees that “the adult Clarissa clearly performs the role of the ‘perfect hostess’” (39) and goes on to argue that “Clarissa longs for a Victorian, unified, stable, and ordered sense of
self” but recognizes this “impossibility” causing her to “re[y] entirely upon her performance of her role in the city to act as a substitute for the self for which she longs” (43). Ultimately, Forbes concludes, Clarissa “result[s] in emptiness, a lack of fulfillment, and ironically, virtually no self at all” (39).

But at times, Clarissa can actualize particular identities or selves and uses them to shape her world. Clarissa’s hostess identity helps her make “a world of her own wherever she happened to be” (Mrs. Dalloway 75–76). “Every time” Clarissa hosts “a party [...] she had this feeling of being something not herself” (170–171). During much of the novel, her hostess identity is identifiable and distinguishable from her other identities. Clarissa is also an artist, as several scholars have noted, as she prepares for her parties. She chooses who to invite, what to wear, and what to include in the setting. As a hostess, Claudia Barnett calls Clarissa “a 20th-century artist” (58) and claims that “she is always performing” (62). Similarly, Genevieve Sanchis Morgan views Clarissa’s parties as “performance art” and explains “by carefully selecting flowers, moving chairs and pillows, arranging the props on the mantle, and having the room’s doors removed, Clarissa treats her drawing room as a stage set for a performance” (268). Furthermore, Clarissa “dons a costume for her party—her green mermaid dress” (268). Blanche H. Gelfant also sees “the party” as “Clarissa’s creation” and “her equivalent to a work of art” (88). Jacob Littleton explains, “She sees a way for her to act to strengthen collective being through her parties. Her parties are her art” (42). Clarissa “controls the party’s physical aspect: when it is to occur . . . who will come . . . what the scene will look like” (43). As an upper-class wife, Clarissa is the gatekeeper to social affairs. She has the economic and social means to create and choreograph parties, her art. To an
extent, Clarissa emerges as multiple selves that are sometimes distinguishable and sometimes indistinguishable from one another.

Clarissa’s parties allow for and encourage her guests to showcase identities that they do not have the opportunity to showcase in everyday life. During her parties, “every one was unreal in one way; much more real in another way” (Mrs. Dalloway 171). The shift in identities accounts for the simultaneous feelings of “unreal” and “real.” The guests’ every day identities are momentarily subsumed to their party identities, so it is “unreal” for their everyday identities and “real” for their party identities. The identities guests showcase at Clarissa’s parties were encouraged by “partly their clothes, partly being taken out of their ordinary ways, partly the background” (171). In this setting, her guests, “say things [they] couldn’t say anyhow else, things that needed an effort” and it was “possible to go much deeper” (171). Furthermore, these “party identities” encourage connections between people that they would not normally experience in their everyday life identities. She thinks it is a “waste” and a “pity” for certain people to not be together, and as a hostess, she is able to bring individual people of her choosing together, such as “so-and-so in South Kensington,” and “someone in Bayswater,” and “somebody else, say, in Mayfair,” through her parties (122). Clarissa’s parties serve as “a refuge for the lonely to come to, perhaps; she had helped young people, who were grateful to her” (37). Fey Chen and Chung-Hsung Lai explain that “Her party allows people to temporarily forget about their disjointed selves” (242) and come together. Her parties serve as a temporary refuge from isolation and alienation. She encourages community and connections between her guests.
Through Clarissa, Woolf shows that at certain times, one must connect with others in order to know oneself. Clarissa “felt herself everywhere. . . . She was all that,” and “to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them” (Mrs. Dalloway 152–153). In this view, an individual’s identities are not solely determined by the individual. Rather, other people influence and contribute to his or her identities. For example, Clarissa’s identity as a passionate, desiring woman is developed when she meets and interacts with Sally, and Peter also “made [Clarissa] see herself” (168). Clarissa even has “odd affinities . . . with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter” (153). In Clarissa’s conception, various identities are revealed or enhanced to some extent by other people.

Several scholars agree that relationships with other people are significant for the characters’ identities in Mrs. Dalloway. Fey Chen and Chung-Hsung Lai assert that Woolf views “a self” as “not a unified, identifiable entity, but” as “always exist[ing] in relationship with others” (242). In several examples, identities depend on one’s relationship to others, such as Clarissa’s identity as a wife, Mrs. Dalloway, to her husband. Jeremy Hawthorn agrees with Chen and Lai that relationships are important, but he views identity in the novel differently too. Hawthorn states, “Virginia Woolf seems to be fascinated by the fact that a human being’s distinctness only reveals itself through contact with other people” and goes on to state that “the novel suggests, paradoxically, that human beings are possessed of a central irreducible core of identity, which exists independently of other people” (43). Scholar Margaret Blanchard explains this seeming paradox that Hawthorn describes. She concludes that for Woolf, “a genuine unity between persons, moments of convergence . . . create oneness out of
multiplicity without destroying the uniqueness and integrity of each separate being” (297). In Blanchard’s view, relationships serve a vital function for Woolf’s characters—they build community. Each character contributes to this community without sacrificing his or her individualized identities. Clarissa’s identity as a hostess and her parties serve this purpose of creating community. The community is completely dependent on the participating individuals, in this case the party goers, and together multiple individuals can create something unique that has a sense of wholeness and oneness when all of the members come together.

A similar sense of wholeness occurs within individual characters, like a microcosm of a community: The individual is the community, and the multiple identities of the individual make up the community. In other words, the multiple identities of the individual are the members of the community/individual. Woolf describes Clarissa alone in her dressing room: “Clarissa . . . plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there . . . collecting the whole of her at one point (as she looked into the glass), seeing the delicate pink face of the woman who was that very night to give a party; of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself” (Mrs. Dalloway 37). In this moment, Clarissa’s identities come together and are aware of each other; they combine to create “the whole of her,” her community. The passage continues, “That was her self—pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together” (37). Clarissa’s identities form “one point,” one whole being seemingly at random, in media res. Clarissa “tried to be the same always” by “never showing a sign of all the other sides of her” to others, but “she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one
woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point” (37). She recognizes that she has several different identities, and some of her identities seem to contradict some of her other identities. For example, the identity of Clarissa as passionate woman who desires another woman sexually seems to contradict to her identity as a wife to Mr. Dalloway. But in this moment, all of her identities, including the contradictory ones, meet and are aware of one another.

Clarissa often attempts to keep these contradictions and her multiplicity concealed from others. Blanche E. Gelfant argues that the “clearly focused image” of Mrs. Dalloway represents a unified and static self, the person she can produce whenever she needs a recognizable social mask. But she knows that her social image conceals ‘incompatible’ aspects of her personality which could be refracted into divergent and contradictory images” (86). Gelfant goes on to claim that “Mrs. Dalloway creates herself from moment to moment—this explains in part the ‘fluidity’ of her personality” (90). Similar to Gelfant’s view, Jean Wyatt engages with Kristéva’s notion of “self as process” and identifies Clarissa as “mov[ing] from being a receptacle for fluctuating intensities—joy, love, hate, fear—to a socially defined unitary personality” and argues that “the fluctuating, unbounded self . . . comes naturally and fills her with vitality” while “she must labor to create a unified ego” (123). Gelfant refers to Clarissa’s multiplicity as her having different “aspects of her personality,” and Wyatt refers to it as “fluctuating intensities,” but it seems more accurate to view Clarissa as having multiple identities.

In certain moments, Clarissa herself exists as a “meeting-point” where her multiple identities converge together in coherent but fleeting moments. In other
moments, she creates a “meeting-point” for other characters, such as the characters that attend her parties. Clarissa exists as “a radiancy no doubt in some dull lives” (Mrs. Dalloway 37). At times Clarissa serves as a community within herself for her multiple identities, and at times Clarissa serves as the artist and hostess of a community outside of herself for other characters. Coming together as a community, whether one’s multiple identities make up that community or multiple individuals, alleviates feelings of isolation and alienation brought about by the Modernist world and its chaos.

To the Lighthouse (1927) by Virginia Woolf

Similar themes of identity emerge in Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse, published in 1927. The novel follows Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, their children, and a few of their friends as they vacation at a lake house. Like Clarissa, Mrs. Ramsay provides stability in a Modernist chaotic world that alienates and isolates people. She provides connections for the characters, both in her individual interactions with them and in bringing them together as a community. She provides hope, comfort, and support to others. However, Mrs. Ramsay dies unexpectedly, and the other characters are left disconnected, yearning for relationships.

In the beginning of the novel, Woolf has Mrs. Ramsay describe disconnection and isolation. Mrs. Ramsay asks Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley, a young academic and admirer of Mr. Ramsay, to imagine the person working in the Lighthouse being “shut up for a whole month at a time . . . to have no letters or newspapers, and to see nobody; if you were married, not to see your wife, not to know how your children were” (To the Lighthouse 5). Using four negatives in this short passage, she draws attention to the negative feelings isolation creates. She tries to have her listeners empathize with isolation’s victim when she uses “you” and “your.”
Mrs. Ramsay remedies feelings of disconnection for the people in her life. For example, when her children complain about and do not want to interact with Tansley, leaving him feeling “snubbed,” she reaches out to him, asking him to join her on an errand in town. During the errand, they talk and share, and Tansley feels “flattered” and “soothed” (10). Mrs. Ramsay’s family also seeks her out for comfort. When Mr. Ramsay feels like a failure, and “it was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him,” he goes to his wife (37). She provides a healing sanctuary for him: “Flashing her needles, confident, upright, she created drawing-room and kitchen, set them all aglow; bade him take his ease there” (38). Mrs. Ramsay is an ideal Victorian wife who nurtures and restores her husband. Mr. Ramsay was “filled with her words, like a child who drops off satisfied . . . at last, looking at her with humble gratitude, restored, renewed” (38). Mrs. Ramsay provides a loving connection and a supportive environment for her husband, who, in turn, is rejuvenated. For a time, Mrs. Ramsay revels in this healing connection with her husband: “there throbbed through her . . . the rapture of successful creation. Every throb of this pulse seemed . . . to enclose her and her husband, and to give to that solace which two different notes, one high, one low, struck together, seem to give each other as they combine” (38–39). The words “enclose,” “struck together,” and “combine” make this relationship sound symbiotic. However, the repeated qualifiers “seemed” and “seem” suggest different. By giving so much to her husband and their connection, “there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent” (38). When Mrs. Ramsay renews her husband, she is depleted, causing her to “fold herself together, one
petal closed in another, and the whole fabric fell in exhaustion upon itself” (38). This seemingly symbiotic relationship is parasitic, with Mrs. Ramsay being the host for Mr. Ramsay.

Mrs. Ramsay’s energy is finite, so fulfilling other characters’ needs and providing connections for them leads to her being exhausted and needing rejuvenation. She needs a break from “all the being and the doing” and finds a short time when “for now she need not think about anybody” (62). Finally finding herself alone, “She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of... To be silent; to be alone... one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others” (62). Her exhaustion prompts her desire for being alone, unencumbered with the needs of others, and she connects with a hidden, undefined part of herself. She ruminates, “this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. When life sank down for the moment, the range of experience seemed limitless... Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by. Her horizon seemed to her limitless” (62). Detaching from others allows Mrs. Ramsay to feel free and open to new experiences and possibilities. At certain times and in particular situations, Mrs. Ramsay adapts to fulfill the needs of other characters, such as Mr. Tansley and Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Tansley knows Mrs. Ramsay as a caring woman who makes him feel included. Mr. Ramsay knows Mrs. Ramsay as his supportive wife who will give him sympathy. But these identities of Mrs. Ramsay do not encompass her entirety.
Mrs. Ramsay’s different identities come together only in medias res. She thinks to herself, “This core of darkness could go anywhere, for no one saw it. They could not stop it, she thought, exulting. There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability. Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience . . . but as a wedge of darkness” (62–63). The “core of darkness” represents Mrs. Ramsay’s different identities coming together, unrestrained by anyone or anything. Mrs. Ramsay claims that one finds rest “as a wedge of darkness” and “on a platform of stability,” two seemingly contradictory images. But this “wedge of darkness” does not necessarily equate to absence; rather, it can represent a clandestine platform that provides momentary stability and a meeting place for her various identities coming together. She continues to think, “Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity” (63). Mrs. Ramsay takes solace in this private sanctuary, detached from others, from her roles, and from fulfilling others’ needs. Moderation seems key here—spending time connected with other people and spending time alone are both necessary for a healthy life.

Similar to Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay is enhanced and often defined by her connections with other characters, so when she is detached from others, she often creates attachments with inanimate objects: “It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one” (63). Although Mrs. Ramsay enjoys her isolation, she inevitably seeks out connections, substituting
inanimate objects for people. During this period of deep rumination and aloneness, she “could not help attaching [her]self to one thing especially of the things [she] saw. . . . Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at—that light, for example” (63). Mrs. Ramsay attaches herself to various objects and, in a sense, absorbs them to the extent that she feels like she becomes the objects, which shows the extent to which Mrs. Ramsay immerses herself in connections. But these connections can be potentially harmful, especially connections with objects. By having Mrs. Ramsay essentially lose herself in an inanimate object, Woolf seems to be critiquing the culture of consumerism, specifically people being defined by the objects they purchase. This type of consumer-identity formation automatically casts people into different classes, limiting their identities based on what they can and cannot afford to buy. Furthermore, substituting objects for people in identity-forming connections leads to isolation and alienation and the loss of community. With Mrs. Ramsay looking at the light, the narration continues,

And it would lift up on it some little phrase or other which had been lying in her mind like that—“Children don’t forget, children don’t forget” . . . when suddenly she added, We are in the hands of the Lord. . . . But instantly she was annoyed with herself for saying that. Who had said it? Not she; she had been trapped into saying something she did not mean. (63)

Mrs. Ramsay’s unintentional statement startles her, showing that there are parts of herself that she does not know; she is fragmented. Her intense attachments to objects likely lead her to automatically recite something she has heard repeatedly even though she does not believe the message. Although connections are necessary and help define the identities of the people experiencing the connection, Woolf seems to warn
that there is a point at which attachments, especially with objects, can become destructive, altering identities into something unrecognizable.

Woolf goes on to reiterate the importance of connections between people, not between people and objects, as the novel progresses. In the beginning of Mrs. Ramsay’s dinner-party, “Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate” (83). At first, the guests experience a sense of disconnection and isolation. Mr. Bankes, one of the guests, thinks, “How trifling it all is, how boring it all is . . . compared with the other thing—work. . . . He felt uncomfortable; he felt treacherous” sitting next to Mrs. Ramsay and “feel[ing] nothing for her” (89). Similarly, Tansley, another guest, “felt extremely, even physically, uncomfortable” (90). Mrs. Ramsay feels this disconnection in her guests, “And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her. Again she felt . . . the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it, and so, giving herself the little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating” (83). Mrs. Ramsay starts several conversations with her guests and encourages them to talk to each other. She soon orders that the candles be lit, and once they are, “the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candlelight. . . . Some change at once went through them all, as if this had really happened, and they were all conscious of making a party together in a hollow, on an island; had their common cause against that fluidity out there” (97). Mrs. Ramsay “now felt her uneasiness changed to expectation” (97). The moods of her guests shift from isolation and discomfort to connection and comfort. The lighting of the candles represents the previous Victorian era, a time without such an extreme influx of technological advancements and without the change and chaos of the Modernist world. Now, Mr.
Bankes thinks that the meal is “perfectly cooked” and that Mrs. Ramsay is “a wonderful woman” (100). In this moment, “All his love, all his reverence, had returned” (100).

Mrs. Ramsay reflects on this moment,

> Everything seemed possible. Everything seemed right. Just now (but this cannot last, she thought, dissociating herself from the moment while they were all talking about boots) just now she had reached security; she hovered like a hawk suspended; like a flag floated in an element of joy which filled every nerve of her body fully and sweetly . . . for it arose . . . from husband and children and friends. (105)

Sitting together with the community she created, Mrs. Ramsay momentarily breaks from the conversation, appreciating the mood and the moment of joy. These feelings of possibilities and rightness are temporary, captured in this moment of union. Here, with these people, she notes that “there is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out . . . she had the feeling … of peace, of rest” (105). After meeting everyone’s needs and making everyone feel comfortable, Mrs. Ramsay feels peace in this dinner-party environment that connects guests and provides solace for them. She too finds solace in this traditional routine of hosting a dinner-party.

As the novel continues, we abruptly learn that Mrs. Ramsay dies, and her family and friends do not return to the house until years later. Upon returning to the house, Lily Briscoe, an artist and family friend, “felt cut off from other people. . . . She had no attachment here, she felt, no relations with it . . . as if the link that usually bound things together had been cut, and they floated up here, down there, off, anyhow. How aimless it was, how chaotic, how unreal it was, she thought . . . Mrs. Ramsay dead” (146). Mrs. Ramsay comforted, guided, and most importantly, connected people. She was the “link” who “bound” people together. Lily recalls a specific memory of Mrs. Ramsay and
thinks, “That woman sitting there writing under the rock resolved everything into
simplicity; made these angers, irritations fall off like old rags; she brought together this
and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite [. . .]
something—this scene on the beach for example, this moment of friendship and liking—
which survived, after all these years complete” (160). Mrs. Ramsay embodied several
traits of an ideal Victorian woman; she was compassionate, nurturing to others and
provided a community for them. She was familiar stability in a new world of change and
chaos.

Unlike several late-Victorian female characters who come to clearly understand
their multi-faceted identities and work to adapt to their changing situations, using
masking strategies when necessary, Modernist female characters, such as Clarissa and
Mrs. Ramsay, do not clearly understand their multiple identities all the time but still use
them to accommodate themselves and adapt in an ever-changing world. These various
identities are not necessarily compatible with one another, and each identity may not
comprehend or even be aware of every other identity all the time. They only come
together momentarily and in medias res, providing temporary stability, and they
disperse and return to isolation just as quickly. This spontaneity allows early twentieth-
century female characters to develop and use different identities quicker than their late-
Victorian predecessors, but their identities are less stable and less knowable; in a
sense, the characters are less complete, seeking out moments of stability and
community when they can. In the “Conclusion” to The Renaissance: Studies in Art and
Poetry published in 1873, Walter Pater refers to “that continual vanishing away, that
strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves” (236). As a Modernist,
Virginia Woolf perpetually weaves and unweaves Clarissa and Mrs. Ramsay as she explores, expands, and, at times, explodes the notions of “identity” and “community” in her novels.

The Modernist era reined in with it an intense period of questioning nearly everything traditional, from religion, literature, philosophy, and art to gender conventions. These traditional systems and the modes of thinking they perpetuated were scrutinized as outdated, unable to keep up with the rapidly changing, chaotic Modernist world. As James, Ford and Woolf expanded and challenged late-Victorian notions of female identity by varying degrees in their Modernist novels, they each responded in different ways in their texts to this new world. Henry James in *The Golden Bowl* shows how some conventional notions, such as self-sacrifice, could provide some stability in the chaotic Modernist world. James has Maggie flexibly adapt, shifting among various representations of herself, to changing circumstances and freely choosing self-sacrifice to successfully keep up appearances, maintain relationships, and gain a happy ending for herself and her father. Alternatively, in *The Good Soldier*, Ford takes the consequences of suppression to an extreme degree: Instead of having the consequences of Leonora’s rigid character and suppressive control implode inward on herself, causing her to self-destruct like several late-Victorian female characters in Chapter 2, Ford has the consequences of Leonora’s suppressive control explode outward as she selfishly destroys anyone who gets in the way on her path to success. Ford warns how destructive outdated modes of thinking could be in a world that was, day by day, becoming more connected and globalized. Woolf demonstrates the importance of relationships in this Modernist world in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the
Through Clarissa and Mrs. Ramsay, she theorizes that Modernist identity in this unstable, chaotic world is often unknowable and multiple, with each identity being alienated from and even unaware of other identities, a stark shift from late-Victorian identity that was multi-faceted but knowable and united. Woolf shows the importance of bringing characters together to experience a sense of community and stability, if only temporarily in medias res. James, Ford, and Woolf draw attention to the instability of the Modernist world, extending some late-Victorian concepts of character and masking strategies while demonstrating just how differently identity functioned in this new world compared to the Victorian world.
A pattern emerges in late-Victorian literature: Female protagonists who use masking strategies and processes “succeed” whereas female protagonists who do not, and instead suppress aspects of their characters, “fail.” Those female characters who use processes of masking to accommodate their multi-faceted characters are rewarded with fulfilling, purposeful, happy lives and relationships as well as personal and political freedom. On the other hand, those female characters who suppress themselves, rejecting the use of masking strategies, or who are suppressed by others, experience death, tragedy, loneliness, and madness.

Masking strategies allow female characters to flexibly move about their world, creating their own desired realities while simultaneously flexing from situation to situation. Their willingness and ability to adapt themselves to different characters, representing themselves in various ways at various times, allow these flexible female characters to maintain their traditional, expected roles while they simultaneously fulfill their own desires. These characters take a more roundabout path to success, enjoying the journey to such an extent that the journey itself, the experiences of the characters from moment to moment, often becomes the truth, the meaning, rather than simply a means to an end goal.

Rigid characters that do not use masking strategies are confined to a life of unhappiness, deterioration, and exhaustion. Constricted by their own rigidity or the rigidity that others force upon them, their inflexibility prevents them from successfully fulfilling their desires or experiencing fulfilling, happy lives. They are often bound so
strictly by their narrow ideology that they sacrifice their mental and physical well-being to it, and in several cases, their lives.

Both similarities and differences arise in the transition from late-Victorian female characters into Modernist female characters. Like late-Victorian female characters, Modernist female characters are also portrayed as multi-faceted and often use masking strategies, remaining flexible and adaptable to different situations. However, in some cases the multiple facets of character become so individualized that they become multiple identities that are, at times, not even aware of each other. In the new, chaotic world, Modernist female characters crave community for stability, like several of the late-Victorian female characters.
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