LADY LIBERTY: INTERTEXTUAL PERFORMANCES OF GENDER AND NATION

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores how a variety of artistic representations of the Statue of Liberty have worked over the past half-century to reflect aspects of nation through the gendered performances of a particular set of American women as ideal constructs, objects for commodification and consumption. The first inquiry explores the play entitled Miss Liberty, written by Robert E. Sherwood, with lyrics and music by Irving Berlin, and first produced in 1949. Although conceived as an historical play loosely based on fact, the play provides a unique perspective on women's roles in society during the late 1940s. On the one hand the play forces nostalgic ideas of nationalism and outmoded views of women, while on the other, exposes a mid-twentieth century response to rising feminist thought and behavior. The second exploration discusses construction of the feminine ideal as presented through the popular film Miss Congeniality and the ritual of the national beauty pageant. As the bodies of the contestants conflate with those codes established by/for Lady Liberty in the film, they drive a more complex impulse that refashions women as adornments for a national concern. Consequently, this film works to strengthen our relationship with our most revered national icon, formalizing further our collective gender-driven national mythologies, and ultimately memorializing limiting conditions of feminine performance, agency, and ideals of American womanhood. The final chapter brings the themes investigated in the previous two chapters together in an original solo performance that both explicates and further parodies what I see as a national phenomenon. My scripted performance of Liberty Now builds upon our national construction of women as nation through the blending of "Miss Liberty" images with live performance. Designed to first perform the narrative currently in play and then to pull the audience into a complicit forum to deconstruct our national narrative, the satirical play of resistance within Liberty Now anticipates a utopian-like place (or point of imaginative speculation). To do so allows for the possibility of innovative and tangible, but most profoundly, equitable future narratives for women.

I lovingly dedicate this work to my dear son Jason,

and to my mother and father—

all sources of inspiration, light, and joy in my life.

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INTRODUCTION

Liberty remains "a powerful symbol precisely because of the ways she can be used," making her our country's most "valuable and multivalent commodity."
—Barabara Babcock and John Macaloon

Groundwork

The groundwork for this study began during my attendance in two concurrent graduate seminars, Gender & Sexuality in Performance and Key Debates in American Cultural Studies. While the latter seminar provided a landscape from which to explore America's relationship to one of its primary icons, the Statue of Liberty, the former allowed me the opportunity to revisit a couple of key feminist postmodernists, namely Judith Butler and Linda Hutcheon, in connection with modes of performance. The unity of these two seminars sparked for me an eye-opening perspective about women and notions of national identity and personal agency. As I began to investigate through a variety of textual sources the dynamic role Lady Liberty plays within America's popular culture avenues and arenas, a visual pattern of Liberty's fleshed representations materialized. As "fleshed" I mean that drawings, paintings, and implicit and explicit performances surfaced in which viewers were forced to recognize Lady Liberty as a woman and not as traditionally exemplified through the steel statue we know. What is more, from this visual starting point a unique performative turn emerges. The culmination of my research also resulted in the construction of a solo performance in which I bring forward my findings of what appears to be a preeminent continuous conflation between the icon of Lady Liberty and particular American women, one that is likewise a distinctly exclusionary formation hardly reflective of the diversity of women in this country. Consequently, the purpose of my study is to explore how a variety of artistic representations of Lady Liberty has worked over the

past half-century to fashion and reaffirm the gendered performances of a particular set of American women as ideal representatives of the nation, ideal feminine constructs, and ideal products for commodification and consumption.

As the embodiment of the ideological concept of freedom, the Statue of Liberty exists in a liminal space bordered by often-dichotomous notions of idealism or abjection. Hearkening back to ancient civilizations' ideal visions of goddesses as fertile and all-powerful with perfectly proportioned often-nude bodies, Lady Liberty's earlier form was significantly reworked by the nineteenth-century sculptor, Auguste Bartholdi (The Statue). Retaining the fertility but eliminating the power and overt sexuality, he produced an icon that would neither challenge the then current social hierarchy nor insult existing Victorian sensibilities. However, a subtle yet detectable shift in the statue's representations over the past century reveals an increasingly re-sexualized icon. As a result, throughout the ensuing decades, the two-and three-dimensional personifications of this coded national icon through paintings, illustrations, parade, theatre, and film have served to heighten both its figurative and metaphorical centrality to the American ethos with a most fascinating result. Originally, the intention was that the Statue of Liberty would primarily reinforce the abstract values of liberty and nationhood. However, when coupled with other intentionally placed socio-political signifiers, Lady Liberty works in very enlightening ways, both intellectually and emotionally, to complicate and trouble our perceptions of her.

What is more, it is my view that the co-opting of her image as a way to advance personal, corporate, and national ideologies has become conflated with our modern perceptions of women. The way we view these conflated images, however, most often goes to reinforcing existing patriarchal hegemony and sometimes misogynistic attitudes towards women. Additionally, Lady Liberty has come to reinforce how women see themselves, both in a positive and negative

manner. I also believe that as artists and authors move to reconfigure the icon as no longer the green architectural iron maiden but as a “fleshed” artistic representation, Lady Liberty works to fashion the gendered performances of particular American women through strongly positioned idealistic lenses that perpetuate stereotypes resulting in often unattainable expectations of how women should look, act, and move through our contemporary society. Illuminating and defining the operations of a variety of these modes of construction is important because it will hopefully expose the cultural processes that continue to reify the notion of only white, middle/upper class, feminine women of child bearing age as ideal commodities to continue to represent and sell our country and its values both at home and abroad.

On the larger national scale, historically the linking of women and nationalism has helped to both stabilize women’s relationship with their homeland and solidify the ideals of womanhood that would ultimately fashion them as symbols of the nation. The resulting images of women, George Mosse explains, “embodied both respectability and the collective sense of national purpose” (90). The virtues of chastity and modesty for women would also fortify all of the classes of society with a common aim (90). The body of the idealized woman would reflect the ruling elite both internally and externally—beauty and control being paramount. Those women who fell short of the ideal would be labeled as a menace to both society and nation (90). As protectors of “normal” society and the overall health of the country, women of the nation as exhibited through the female national symbol (i.e., Marianne in France, or Liberty in the United States) helped to fix women in their place (97). Further as exemplifiers of order, restfulness and respectability it was demanded upon women that they also play the additional roles of defender and protector of the people, and the traditional and passive role of woman and mother, all while serving as custodians of tradition, keeping “nostalgia alive in the active world of men” (97).

While one might be tempted to profess “we’ve come a long way, baby,” I hardly see Liberty representatives as projecting a twenty-first century vision of American women. Consequently, I see this study being of crucial interest to contemporary women of all classes, races, ethnicities, ages, and body types. Particularly because every American woman either self-identifies or is identified by and through markers rising from both our cultural constructs of nationhood as well as inherent complicity. However, in reality only a few women actually correspond to the ideal set of codings that demarcate who might perform as America’s supreme national representatives. As a result, Lady Liberty is hardly a representation of the diversity of women within our nation today. To the contrary, her enfleshed representation excludes ethnic and racial minorities, women of the lower classes, heavyset women, women over a certain age, and women who do not conform to descriptions of beauty and gender as reflected in the mass media and popular culture where these images reign.

Theories of Feminism and Gender

Certainly, the advents of women’s suffrage and later women’s and gender theories and academic programs have created an opportunity for women’s individual and collective growth. However, the road has been long and remains unavoidably constructed from elements that both continue to dictate how we as women perform our gender and by theorists who disagree about some of the basic questions concerning gender and display. As an ideological movement that has never been either clearly defined around a central organization, a particular set of leaders or political party, or even an agreed upon principle of collective action, feminism and feminist readings have relied upon a diversity of individual practices (Harris 9-11). Adding to this point, Elin Diamond proposes, “the passionate analysis of gender in material social relations and in

discursive and representational structures" is perhaps a shared goal of "all theories that call themselves 'feminist'" (306). Consequently and with this in mind, I focus on the proposition, as Joan Acker does, that the production of gender stems from socially produced patterns and processes that distinguish male from female and feminine from masculine, ultimately sustaining American social practices and structures (West and Fenstermaker 53).

As I begin, however, I must first point out that in Staging Femininities, Geraldine Harris supports the idea that "*all* feminisms, in practice, must to some degree depend on remarking and upholding the binary relationship between male and female, since they are concerned with the oppression of women as group, class or identity category" (12). In concurrence then, I believe it imperative to recognize the existing hierarchical structure of hegemonic heterosexuality in which those identifying as white male have constructed a systematic sexual subordination of women based upon inequality. However, in her introduction to Undoing Gender, Butler cautions, "The feminist framework that takes the structural domination of women as the starting point from which all other analyses of gender must proceed imperils its own viability by refusing to countenance the various ways that gender emerges as a political issue, bearing a specific set of social and physical risks" (9). What is more, she emphasizes one's sense of gender and individual agency develops as a result of the social norms that support and enable the definition of self (7). Norms, Butler reminds us, that are usually implicit as "they operate as the normalizing principle in social practice," and are "discernible most clearly and dramatically in the effects they produce" (41). While I recognize the social structures at work in America rely upon embodied examples, I must also note that oppressed women's complicity and complacency (whether conscious or subconscious), also play a significant role in fashioning the environment for the continuation of their own oppression.

For this reason, I approach my study from a social constructionist and postmodernist view of feminism, and will be drawing from primarily the representative theories and approaches set forth by Judith Butler, Candace West and Susan Fenstermaker, and Linda Hutcheon. My focus upon the practices and processes, relations and structures for this study are most evident when explored through a variety of performance and performative cultural modes and devices that refrain from conflating sex with gender in order to concentrate on the social construction of women based upon visual cues and performative modes of comportment. Consequently, my resulting work relies heavily upon postmodernist feminist theories arguing against a fixity of gender and for a gender reliance upon its performance and performative "doing" of identity and display (Lorber 265). I do realize my focus on gender as socially constructed may automatically label my argument as founded upon a hidden essentialism by my feminist colleagues. However, I feel my use of Butler's insistence upon an inherent fluidity of gender and sexual boundaries should dissuade any notions of essentialism.

Judith Lorber explains in her book, Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics, that gender is both a social status and a personal identity. "Through the processes of gendering," she continues, "gender divisions and their accompanying norms and role expectations are built into the major social institutions of society, such as the economy, the family, the state, culture, religion, and the law—the gendered social order" (9). Postmodern feminism, she explains, places the focus mainly upon the deconstructing of these cultural productions, "neglecting the more iron-bound and controlling discourses embedded in organizational, legal, religious, and political texts" (273). As a result, and based upon these premises, this work begins with the recognition of a feminist view maintaining the existence of a vital intersectionality between race, ethnicity, gender, and class as significant in the building of a society that feeds the idealism espoused by

and/or through Lady Liberty images represented via both traditional performance and a variety of performative modes (73-74).

Additionally pertinent is the intersection of gender, race, and citizenship as laying "groundwork for a structural analysis of the status of women beyond the family and the economy" (84). Accepting the idea "that there are prevailing normative conceptions of appropriate attitudes and activities for particular race categories," and granting "that accountability allows persons to conduct their activities in relation to their circumstances," I draw from the ethnomethodological work of Candace West and Susan Fenstermaker who "also see race as a situated accomplishment of societal members" (58). From this perspective, they contend, "race is not simply an individual characteristic or trait but something that is accomplished in interaction with others" (58). What is more, as Whiteness is now regarded as an entitled form of privilege, "the accomplishment of race renders the social arrangements based on race as normal and natural," legitimizing a longstanding American way of organizing social life (59). The privileged status afforded via racial stratifications creates and maintains the social environment required for the perpetuation of Lady Liberty's representations as naturalized.

Likewise, my utilization of postmodernist feminist deconstruction allows me the opportunity to study a variety of texts from an array of angles as I seek to expose the gender and social discourses embedded within them (Lorber 269). For example, Amelia Jones, in her Feminism and Visual Culture Reader, assembles writings addressing issues of the feminist perspective within the arts, film, architecture, and popular culture. Driven by politics, then, she contends feminism and visual culture primarily focus on "cultural forms as informing subjective experience" (Intro.1). Following this order of thought, West, citing Joan Acker, explains further how the production of images, symbols, and ideologies can "'justify, explain, and give

legitimacy to institutions,'" constituting a material process just as do "'the [mental] internal processes in which individuals engage as they construct personas that are appropriately gendered for the institutional setting'" (West and Fenstermaker 53). Whether the institution of class or marriage as exemplified in the play Miss Liberty, or ideals of color and feminine display found in the pageant experience in the film Miss Congeniality, or attempts to deconstruct and dismantle exclusions and Otherness in the performance of Liberty Now, each seeks to expose the institutions and personas that perpetuate inequity for American women.

Reaching out to include those routinely excluded within the spaces of the "ex-centric," as Hutcheon might promote, centrally positions this study's issues of class, gender, race and nationality (A Poetics 134). What is more, promoting the idea that feminism and visual culture deeply inform one another, linking visual modes and the philosophy that feminism "demands a political and/or ethical stance toward cultural experience," also includes aspects of sexual orientation and ethnic identifications (A. Jones, Intro.1). Because constructionist theory places its emphasis on organizational practices, it restores the concern with "'the structure of social institutions and with the impact of historical events' that characterized earlier class/caste approaches, and facilitates the simultaneous documentation of gender, race, and class as basic principles of social organization" (West and Fenstermaker 53). As a result, I cannot ignore issues of class, but rather must actively embrace and spotlight the reality of Lady Liberty as a white middle/upper class representation and confirmation of the dominant culture. Working from Elizabeth Spelman, Margret Andersen, and Patricia Hill Collins' conception that sexism, racism, and classism are "interlocking" coefficients within the category of experience, West and Fenstermaker in their key essay, "Doing Difference," also propose, as do I, no person can experience one without the other (45-46).

On another note, the "doing" of difference often finds additional substance and weight when perceived through of lens of the parodic form. However, Hutcheon reminds us: "Parody depends upon recognition and therefore it inevitably raises issues of both the competence of the decoder and the skill of encoder" (A Theory xvi). What is more, the degree of the visibility of the signals most often determines our ability to read a given text. Hutcheon's book, A Theory of Parody, picks up and explores in detail this particular postmodern form. Her explanation regarding the encoding and decoding of intent lend considerable weight to this study when attempting to establish the conflationary episodes I will be analyzing. For example, Miss Liberty works subliminally more as a re-visitation to Berlin's early career when he found greatest successes with "spontaneous, risqué parodies" (Bergreen 28). Unfortunately, the attempted satire by the production's "ill-matched creators" (493), aided by rewrites from Moss Hart, only come out dry and lifeless, creating a parody of late nineteenth-century experience that could not find exactitude with its postwar audiences. However, Hutcheon's discussion of musical satiric parody still buttresses and propels my analytical focus toward the analysis of the play script Miss Liberty. In her essay, "Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern," Hutcheon also argues for both an inherent nostalgic nature within parody and an existing connection between parody, nationalism, and chauvism. This information is key in my analysis of this play script as exemplar. For it appears to my mind to reflect quite vividly these and Hutcheon's additional supposition positing a postwar nostalgic longing for a more idyllic past that is contingent upon impulses of a "rejection of the here and now" (Irony). And in the case of the film Miss Congeniality, the coding for the construction of femininity, acquired by the audiences' familiarity with beauty pageants as modes for the construction of America's personal and political ideologies, remains especially reliant upon the reader's cultural and ideological frames of reference. Coded and

decoded on a conscious level, the parodic satire works pragmatically to both deconstruct as it reifies the embodied performances of the feminine, revealing how those women excluded ultimately shore up the performances of those included as legitimate national representatives.

Lastly, the concepts, definitions, and uses/performances of irony provide a substantial grounding from which to launch my analysis of several two-dimensional works as they relate to my solo performance Liberty Now. The nuances within parody are at issue in a very real way for this study. Especially since parody, Simon Dentith tells us, can be both a conduit for criticism and serve the function of reordering elements within hierarchical structures (32-33). My readings, however, are additionally contingent upon use of parodic forms as vehicles for the transference of those concepts. What is more, for some feminist scholars, myself among them, there is a growing speculation concerning the existence of an uneasy additional parallel between women and parodic form. For example, advocating for a form of "gender parody," Butler explains that authorial and intentional complications instigated through the parodic mode can disrupt inscribed "norms" of sexuality. Additionally, she clarifies, "Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of a hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization" (Gender Trouble 176). As a result, I will argue that perhaps the more recent generation of performances of Lady Liberty does not so much reflect a stability of our national, cultural, and social identities of women but rather introduces through a continued conflation the conflict, tensions, and contradictions that have come to represent how American women perform both their gender and nationhood.

Lorber provides this study with another significant element when she writes the following key statement: "If social construction feminism puts too much emphasis on institutions and

structures and not enough on individual actions or agency, postmodern feminism has just the opposite problem. Its emphasis is on agency, impression management, and presentation of the self in the guise and costume most likely to produce or parody conformity" (273). This is just as I would have it as I work with the theories of Linda Hutcheon.

General feminist theory and practice, Hutcheon writes in A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction (1998), have made particular and significant use of parodic intertextuality (16). Further, parody illuminates the emergent paradoxes revealed when one accepts the "fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapable political" nature of postmodernism (4). What I find most intriguing about the Lady Liberty/woman conflation is that it appears to move and reveal itself as a result of this paradox. To continue, Hutcheon explains how paradoxes are created "when modernist aesthetic autonomy and self-reflexivity come up against a counterforce in the form of a grounding in the historical, social, and political world" (ix). For example, postmodern art is at its root contradictory; so just as it works to install order, it likewise works to disrupt and demystify those everyday processes that help us to structure and assign meaning to our lives (7). Adding to that, postmodern art in particular affirms and then intentionally undermines such principles as value, meaning, control, and identity. Finally, Hutcheon espouses parody as a perfect postmodern form, "for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (11). Women artists' use of parody to challenge male heterodoxy and to implicate and critique, she continues, is distinctly paradoxical and postmodernist (16). Building upon these three primary theorist and theories, West's social constructivism, Butler's gender construction, and Hutcheon's parodic, turn I also take an important cue from noted Jill Dolan who reminds us all it is best to work within an arena of "playful pluralism" with regard to feminist approaches (3). And by working within a framework

of plurality, I am hoping that my study will find a balance from which to examine Lady Liberty's conflationary scheme.

Performance/ Performativity

This study applies the terms performance, performative, and performativity as separate but related modes of exchange. Performance will include both the process of performing such as in a theatrical stage play and solo performance, and as Peggy Phelan promotes, as an identifier of performance art that centers on the body of the artist as a frame of/for representation. I am secondly dealing with the performative notion of cultural performances and everyday life, most notably championed by Victor Turner and Richard Schechner. As a means to deciphering socio-political, cultural, and historical differences based on race, gender, sexuality, and class, performatives include experiences such as rituals, dance, celebrations, and political events. Finally, I am drawing from the philosophical turn of performativity that has come to prominence through the work of J. L. Austin, Judith Butler, Amelia Jones, and Andrew Stephenson. From their theories of performativity, I will explore as performative forces, iteration, gender construction, and the intersubjectivity and interpretation of visual art respectively.

Richard Schechner explains the differences between what "is" performance and what constitutes "as" performance. On one level, I will be addressing what "is" performance, which according to Schnechner is dependent upon how an event is received and placed within a cultural arena (Performance 31). The performances of actors on stage and in film are solidly positioned here, for these performances are, promotes Schechner, "bounded events marked by context, convention, usage, and tradition" (42). "The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior," Marvin Carlson adds, "raises the

possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as 'performance,' or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself' (What 70). To explain, Carlson's view of performance mandates the existence of a "consciousness of doubleness" which is an awareness of performing *for* someone made by the performer of the action (Performance 5). For example, as I will explicate, Maisie's mannish gender performance in Miss Liberty is a situated accomplishment designed to temporarily provide her with security. During Miss Congeniality, Gracie Hart's informed reconstruction and performances of femininity allow her the opportunity to infiltrate a social space otherwise not available to her. And my performance in Liberty Now as I will also argue creates a zone of complicit performances of gender and nationalism that both I and the audience might knowingly enter.

"To treat any object, work, or product 'as' performance—a painting, a novel, a shoe, or anything at all," Schechner tells us, "means to investigate what the object does, how it interacts with other objects or beings, and how it relates to other objects or beings. Performances exist only as actions, interactions, and relationships" (Performance 24). In attempting to address the diverse and often oblique intersection between performativity and performance Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick introduce us to a performative dimension and definition for common usage. As they contend, "the stretch between theatrical and deconstructive meanings of 'performative'" has come to include everything from actor expression to subtleties of a signifier (2). The latter might encompass both J. L. Austin's notion of speech-acts, which through their enunciation are performative, and Derrida's argument giving rise to the theory of a wider range of performatives proposing scripted iteration as performative (Parker and Sedgwick 4). According to Joseph Roach, while performance "frequently makes reference to theatricality as the most fecund metaphor for the social dimensions of cultural production, it embraces a much

wider range of human behaviors" (46). "Such behaviors may include what Michel de Certeau calls 'the practice of everyday life,' in which the role of spectator expands into that of participant. De Certeau's 'practice' has itself enlarged into an open-ended category marked 'performative,'" which may apply to everything from a play to war to inferred iteration (Roach 46). Parker and Sedgewick reveal that more recently the theory has taken the term "onto a populous and contested scene in which the role of silent or implied witnesses … or the quality and structuration of the bonds that unite auditors or link them to speakers, bears as much explanatory weight as do the particular speech acts of supposed individual speech agents" (7).

Drawing from Schechner's notion of the "restored behavior" as something that is repeated, rehearsed, or recreated, Roach looks at the repetitive nature of the behavior as something that cannot be performed the same way. Hence, the act must be recreated at each appearance, giving rise to "'repetition with a difference'" or as he would have it, variations on a theme (Roach 46). The theme, performed as a social memory, results in bodily knowledge, habit, and custom (47). Through what he calls "genealogies of performance" Roach approaches "literature as a repository of the restored behaviors of the past," which is, "at least partially visible in contemporary culture" (48). The performative may be a cultural act such as a funeral, or a critical perspective as exampled by Roach's use of restored behavior, or a political intervention as proposed through the writings of Judith Butler. Most importantly, however, "performative thinking," according to Schechner, "must be seen as a means of cultural analysis" (Performance Studies: The Broad 8). My analysis, therefore, focuses on these terms of the doing, behaving, and showing of performance and performativity, further utilizing their development as metaphors and as analytic tools for my social and cultural explorations and interventions (Carlson, Performance 6).

However, I think it essential to note the element of performativity is a rather broad term that also includes notions of the construction of social realities, including gender, race, and identity, and in which there is a collapse between the "fictive" and the "real." Performatives are of two types: the first, like a speech act (a promise, for example), is usually clearly marked, and the second, which is often difficult to pin down, consists of such things as a concept or a pervasive mood or feeling (Schechner, Performance 142). In addition, Butler in Gender Trouble, contends gender is in fact a socially constructed "performative" mode employing mimesis and stylized discursively motivated acts or actions that achieve naturalization through the process of constant repetition (146). The positing of gender as socially and culturally constructed creates norms that subsequently maintain the status quo.

On another front, West and Fenstermaker in their essay, "Doing Gender," argue that "'doing gender involves a complex of perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of manly and womanly 'natures.'" Rather than conceiving of gender as an individual characteristic, they envision it "as an emergent property of social situations" (43). As West and Fenstermaker point out, most of those in Western societies "take for granted in everyday life that there are two and only two sexes," naturalizing the ideas male and female (54). In order to define someone as belonging to a particular group, a rather loosely defined set of criteria based upon appearances such as deportment or dress often dictate one's perspective (55). Consequently, regardless of individual physiological indicators, societal members continue to see a world populated by only two genders. Gender, they argue, "is a situated accomplishment of societal members, the local management of conduct in relation to normative conceptions of appropriate attitudes and activities for particular sex categories. From this perspective, gender is not merely an individual attribute but something that is accomplished

in interaction with others" (55). "Gender is obviously much more than a role or an individual characteristic," however, "it is a mechanism whereby situated social action contributes to the reproduction of social structure" (56). Another considerable cultural mechanism arises from performative representations, both two and three dimensional.

Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson's book Performing the Body/Performing the Text has as its focus the performative nature of art production and reception (Introduction 1). "Artistic meaning," they explain, "can be understood as enacted through interpretive engagements that are themselves performative in their intersubjectivity" (1). Within the intersubjective space, both artist and viewer react to and from positions of desire, projection, and identification. "As classed, raced, sexed, and gendered (fully socialized and embodied) subjects," they further clarify, "both artist and interpreter are imbricated within any potential determinations of meaning" (1-2). The notion of the performative highlights the open-endedness of interpretation, which must thus be understood as "a *process*" stemming from the viewing or embodied reception of visual arts (2). Meaning, then, remains in flux and equally contingent upon social and personal contexts and readings as interpretation becomes a complicit performance between artists and spectators (2). I think some interesting and undoubtedly significant readings occur from this prospect when considering possibilities of influence Lady Liberty might have had upon those who view her—of either gender. The body, Jones and Stephenson argue, "is known and experienced only through its representational performances—whether presented 'live,' in photographs, videos, films, on the computer screen, or through the interpretive text itself" (8). As a result and in using the notion of performance and performativity within this more radical context, I believe this study attains more nuanced readings because of the supply of a variety of texts.

While my readings of particular performatives develop one layer for audience reflection, the audience adds to the complexity by reading through their own performative engagement. Bert O. States, in his discussion of the notion of performance as metaphor, brings up an interesting observation. Drawing from the phenomenological conclusions presented by Mikel Dufrenne in which the reader of the text becomes the performer of the work and can engage meaning-making vicariously and through imagination, he reflects upon the idea that what the reader is doing is essentially comparable to what the actor does on stage, except "that enactment takes place in a mental space" (Performance 117-18). As a significant example and point of departure for my own work I cite the essay of Fionna Barber entitled, "The Politics of Feminist Spectatorship and the Disruptive Body: De Kooning's *Woman I* Reconsidered" (127). As she explains, contemporary feminist art history makes specific links between visual art and actual violence against women. Subsequently, Barber sets out in her essay to promote the idea that "rather than being static or predetermined, meaning in visual culture is something continually enacted through the operations of art historians, critics, and other interested viewers. Interpretation, in this view, becomes an ongoing, performative process" (127). What is more, because of "the fact the body in the painting is seen to be female," there results a homologous reading between perceptions of the painted body and a physical body (129). Although Barber's reading is limited to the discussion of only the violation of the painted body to a real body, for my own purposes I expand this notion to include both negative and positive readings and behaviors.

Just as Butler's articulation of re-iteration figures the possibility for disruption of the norm, Barbara Bolt in her book Art Beyond Representation also sees "the possibility and capacity of performativity to engender transformation" (156). For if the singularity that launches iteration is subject to variation without losing its identity, as she proposes, then a genus or

species comes into being (156). Following this course of reasoning and as a result, I am able to read all of the different representations of Lady Liberty as each an individual re-iteration of a cultural norm, namely one provoked via the statue that stands in the New York harbor.

W. B. Worthen, working from Roland Barthes's definitions of texuality which separate conceptions of the written text into delineations known either as "the *work*" or "the *text*," explains the former as a "vehicle for authorized cultural reproduction" while the latter is "the field of production rather than interpretation" (italics his, 11). And while the work is "'normally the object of a consumption,'" the text is a field of play and practice that is self-consciously performative (12). The textualization of performance renders "the sense that performed events operate discursively, and that meanings arise from the slippage and interplay between signifying formalities" (12). As a means to grounding the relationship between text and performance, the text lives as "the signifier of the essentially performative nature of the play" (12-13). What is more, "both texts and performances are materially unstable registers of signification, producing 'meaning' intertextually in ways that deconstruct notions of intention, fidelity, authority, [and] present meaning" (20). While the American landscape is rife with examples, I have chosen to focus this study by utilizing as exemplar a perspectival snapshot methodology. Consequently, this study draws upon a variety of texts: the body, two-dimensional representations, written work and spoken, in the attempt to expose a unified theme surrounding the conflations of women and the Liberty icon.

Forms of Liberty: National Amalgamations

As emerging Western nations were attempting to provide identifiable symbols for their respective peoples, the ideal of classical beauty fashioned by Greek revivalism would find its

place next to the national flag and various national monuments. The national stereotypes for classical male and female bodies and behavior would also become the nation's symbols of self-control and purity respectively (Mosse 16). As Mosse explains in his book Nationalism and Sexuality, the rise of nationalism emerged in tandem with the modern codes of conduct regarding the body (1). In order to establish controls coupled with restraint and moderation, he continues, "society needed to reinforce the practical techniques of physicians, educators, and police. But their methods had to be informed by an ideal if they were to effectively support normality and contain sexual passions. In a most timely fashion, nationalism came to the rescue. It absorbed and sanctioned middle-class manners and morals and played a crucial part in spreading respectability to all classes of the population" (9). Consequently, nationalism and respectability would consign each citizen to her or his place in life. What is more, and as Miss Liberty reveals, the distinctly dichotomous labeling of "man and woman, normal and abnormal, native and foreigner," maintains the then socio-political status quo while buttressing society against "any confusion between these categories" that might result in cultural "chaos and loss of control" (16).

Historically, the linking of women and nationalism has helped to both stabilize women's relationship with their homeland and solidify the ideals of womanhood that would ultimately fashion them as symbols of the nation (90). As David Hackett Fischer reveals, there have been many faces of Miss Liberty throughout American history. Initially, America's primary and mostly stoic goddess of liberty heralded from the Roman Republic. As a woman of maturity, she had become a well-known figure throughout early modern Europe (234). Consequently, there would be little difficulty for the inhabitants of the new nation to accept the familiar icon as their own. However, another early national image came in the form of a youthful bare-breasted native

woman bedecked in feathers sitting on a tortoise shell. Initially, both artists and explorers of Europe would portray "America as a dusky aboriginal female accompanied by tropical fauna and cornucopias of abundance—an image of exotica and erotica, of untold treasure and pleasure waiting to be ravaged" (Babcock and Macaloon, Everybody's 87). By the end of the American Revolution, however, the two iconographical forms began to merge, creating a younger Columbia: a feminine image of youth and virtue; the young Mother of the Republic now carried "an American flag or a shield with the national arms, or a bald eagle" (Fischer 234). "By the early nineteenth century," Barbara Babcock and John Macaloon explain, "this wild woman has metamorphosed into a plumed Greek goddess of Liberty who became interchangeable with Columbia, a more mature and dignified female representing the political body of the nation" (Everybody's 87). This newer softer image of innocence and hope would again be challenged by yet another representation in the early nineteenth century. Some artists felt the necessity to combine Columbia's image with those of the Roman goddess of wisdom and war, Minerva. Costumed with helmet and spear, many felt she would be better able to defend the American nation and soon became a familiar figure taking up residence on many of our private structures and public buildings (Fischer 234-36). During the mid-nineteenth century, America witnessed the emergence of another compilation of new faces collectively known as "Miss Liberty." Far from the grim warrior image of Lady Freedom, or the more matronly Columbia, Miss Liberty was "young, pretty, and sexy in a virginal way. Miss Liberty was an all-American girl, innocent and pure, the girl next door, an ordinary young person with democratic attitudes, egalitarian manners, and popular tastes" (239). An entity devoted to events within the American homeland, she was lively and carefree, fashion forward and content to live without worry. This is the Miss Liberty we see costumed as the buxom Victorian beauty, and later, the Gibson girl (239-41).

During the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, two-dimensional representations of Miss Liberty, also referred to as Lady Liberty, were replaced with more frequency by cartoons and prints of the Statue of Liberty. As print media exposed a new dimension of the statue to the American public, it also forced national bureaucrats to take a good look at the real thing. It seems the Statue of Liberty saw very little care after her 1886 unveiling, and by 1901, the rapidly decaying icon needed major repair (422). However, it was not until 1916 that President Woodrow Wilson would take up the issue of restoration, salvaging the icon as an emblem of his New Freedom program and newly instituted Progressive movement (422-23). Shortly thereafter, following refurbishment and the installation of new lighting making it even more visible to the American public, the statue would prove essential to Wilson's burgeoning war effort (423). The war furthered the icon's participation in national propagandas as the building of human flags, Liberty Bells and Statues of Liberty became a national obsession (435). Additionally, living tableaus made of soldiers and citizens fashioned enormous replicas of the Statue of Liberty that were then photographed from the air and copies distributed throughout the world (435).

Also by the time the United States entered the war in Europe in 1917, the name Miss Liberty will had moved closer to a synthesis with and synonymous recognition with the Statue of Liberty, transposing "the girl next door into an Amazon warrior" (433). Ideological and racial purity transformed the "Mother of Exiles into the Guardian of the Gates" in order to fend off invading hordes of unwelcome Irish, Jews, Negroes, Italians, Slavs, and others. Once under control and by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the elder and more stoic Mother image would be replaced with the younger and more vibrant image of Miss Liberty (Vecoli 48-49). Miss Liberty was in fact designed as a part of the Preparedness Campaign,

"which was designed to ready the American people militarily and psychologically for war" (53). The United States entered World War I on the side of France, conscripting the statue into national service as "Miss Liberty became the principal motif of patriotic propaganda" (53).

However, "In World War II even more than World War I," Babcock and Macaloon point out, "the statue became *the* symbol of patriotism, the nation's feminine complement to masculine affairs of state. She was everywhere and everything that was being fought for. It was then that she became, as past President Ronald Reagan reminded us, 'everybody's gal'" (94). As WWII publications began to invoke with more frequency the image of the Statue of Liberty as the national icon for freedom, representations of her shifted back from depictions of an iron matron to the fuller and more youthful figure in an attempt to represent the roles American women were now performing as freedom fighters on the home front. Once again, both national symbols were put to work for the causes of liberty and freedom, with the posters of Miss Liberty poised in the traditional Statue of Liberty pose becoming significant instruments of American sovereignty (Fischer 522). It is at this point, it could be argued, images of Miss Liberty and the Statue of Liberty appear to merge solidly in the psyches of the American public. Additionally, WWII just as quickly brought about an altogether new and more revealing representation of Miss Liberty. One of the most popular forms would come with the appearance of WWII Nose art—images painted on the fuselages of our military aircraft. One particularly infamous portrait depicts a full-length nude woman posing as the new incarnation of the Statue of Liberty (Fischer 545-46). No longer portrayed as a cold and indifferent statue, but rather as a woman of flesh and feeling, the new iconic hybrid of Miss Liberty engaged a tangible reification that would become evident throughout the remaining decades of the twentieth century and on into the next. What is more, by setting up of a clash of womanly ideals, this image comes to represent both the sexy and sweet

virginal girl just as it portrays the strength and naughtiness made public through women's emerging agency and sexual freedom.

Joel Foreman in his book The Other Fifties: Interrogating Midcentury American Icons points to the years 1945 to 1950 as a period of cultural transition revealing a gradual "unmasking" of traditions and value systems (4). In addition, many feminist cultural historians also see this period as an incubator for the future feminist movement (4). In opposition, however, as Joanne Meyerwitz relates, "studies of postwar culture found that government propaganda, popular magazines, and films reinforced traditional concepts of femininity and instructed women to subordinate their interests to those of returning male veterans" (3). Consequently, the newly fashioned Miss Liberty works to reveal the struggle, resistance, instability, and transformation of the post war cultural climate, one reflective of a long-standing contradictory socio-political logic in this country with regard to women. To explain further, Denize Kandiyoti of the Department of Developmental Studies at the University of London argues that together women often exist ambiguously as "both co-citizens and as the privileged custodians of national values." The ambiguity, she stresses, "often lies at the heart of woman's inability to achieve the status of fully franchised citizens" (492). On the one side of this contradiction, there is support for women's popular sovereignty and individual expansionism, but on the other, there is the need to reaffirm authentic cultural values that curtail women's agency.

As an essential ingredient for domestic control, postwar calls for nostalgic impulses were found in much social and political propaganda. Consequently, it is important to understand that there are varieties of meanings attributed to the idea of nostalgia. Most currently, some suggest nostalgia stems from a need to return to an earlier time, a sort of homesickness. Appositionally, others such as theorist Hutcheon propose nostalgia rises from the sad fact we cannot in fact

return to that early moment. Yet others ascribe nostalgia as a bittersweet recall. For Janelle Wilson however, nostalgia might be characterized by a myriad of meanings that ultimately epitomize notions of ambiguity and contradiction (23). Even more so, nostalgia, Wilson emphasizes, "reveals what we value, what we deem worthwhile and important" (26). Additionally, nostalgic impulses provide citizens with clear-cut opportunities to examine and juxtapose past and present identities of self and the collective (35). However, the impossibility of regarding the individual and society as strictly separate also consequently fashions a history in continual flux as private interests work on behalf of the community or country (39). Adding to the volatility, the selective nature of nostalgic memories having the propensity to imbue "the past with more stability than occurred in actuality" (39), also gives rise to the safer illusion of historical constancy in the post-WWII era's rapidly changing society.

Propelled by the neo-Marxist notion that collective memory may be conceptualized as ideology, Wilson emphasizes that "nostalgia is especially likely to exist when a society is under pressure, providing a framework for people to think about what is going wrong and what should be done about it" (45). In this instance, she continues,

> nostalgia is ideological to the degree that images of the past are appealing (albeit distorted) and individuals buy into past visions with a great deal of critical appraisal. Rather than deal with reality today, we can retreat to a comfortable past that never existed or that belonged to someone else …. Nostalgic conceptions of the past contribute to a tacit acceptance of the status quo (including, for example, unmarked privileges associated with whiteness, masculinity, bourgeois backgrounds, and heterosexuality). In this way, we see how nostalgia can be

> reinforced by hegemonic leadership and can facilitate making and re-making meaning, which serves the interests of the dominant group in society. (45)

Consequently, the accomplished social structure, resulting in reification propelled by the dominant ideology and encapsulated within the numerous collective memories vying for position within the culture, turns to nostalgia as the most effective "vehicle for maintaining the status quo" (42-43). For Americans, the national values propelled on the East coast via the live theatre of Broadway soon traversed the country to find expression through a formidable media center in California. With the rise of Hollywood in the early part of the twentieth century came the opportunity to prepackage and sell nostalgia as a commodity. As a newly founded vessel for national myths dished out by the dominant culture, consumers could easily choose which nostalgic resources on which to attend (30). Operating in the tandem public and private domains, the collective nostalgic force created would, by mid-century, eventually "serve the purpose of forging a national identity" to express patriotism (31). Consequently, where better to express the resulting patriotic impulse than through the nostalgic pretext offered via Miss Liberty's staged opening. Further, Irving Berlin and Robert Sherwood's classically nostalgic vision of women bolstered by Bartholdi's creative impulse perpetuates the virgin/whore dichotomy and the resulting social performances women have been relegated to execute.

Miss Liberty and the Building of a National Ideal

The inquiry of Chapter II explores the development of women and icon as national representatives as presented through the 1949 playscript Miss Liberty. The narrative tells of a journalist who goes to France in 1885 and returns to America with the woman (Miss Liberty in person) whom he proceeds to "sell" to the American public as the person inspiring Bertoldi's

vision of the Statue of Liberty. Although written as an historical play loosely based on fact, Miss Liberty also gives us a unique perspective on women's roles in society during the late 1940s. Conceived for the fiftieth anniversary of the raising of the Statue of Liberty and coming on the heels of WWII, this script arrives at a time when historically American society was attempting to push women back into the home sphere as wives and mothers in a national campaign to revive the long held but disappearing separation of the public and private spheres.

When making a routine visit to his London office in late 1948, Berlin received a message from his friend of thirty years, Robert Sherwood. The American playwright was then living in London and presented Berlin with a newly hatched idea for a Broadway musical. As Sherwood explained, he wanted to elaborate on the historical facts surrounding the arrival of the Statue of Liberty from the French people. Concocting the story of the New York publishing rivalry as impetus for sending a newspaper man to Paris in search of the woman who inspired the creation of the statue, he tells how the "demi-mondaine straight out of a lithograph by Toulouse-Lautrec" would be "feted as the living symbol of liberty" (Bergreen 486-87). Although titillated by the idea, Berlin's subsequent research would throw the proposed story off track, revealing that the most likely inspiration for the Statue was Batholdi's mother (486). As a result, Laurence Bergreen writes, "Sherwood struggled to make something interesting out of the rivalry between Bennett and Pulitzer" (486). Regardless of any possible ensuing struggle, Bergreen points out "the moment seemed exactly right for a show such as Miss Liberty, for this was the high summer of postwar American imperialism" (487). Unfortunately, both men found collaboration difficult and Berlin composed most of the score prior to receiving the book from Sherwood, meaning the songs needed special attention as they attempted to integrate them into the story (487). Sherwood also added to the difficulties by refusing at first to change a word of the original play text.

However, when Moss Hart, the play's director, threatened to walk off the project because of Sherwood's refusal (493), Sherwood finally relented, letting Hart help him rewrite the script (494). Unfortunately, none of the songs in Miss Liberty would become a hit. Furthermore, it would be the first time in Berlin's history of songwriting that an entire score had flopped (496).

Hosts of writers readily acknowledge the conservative forces constraining post war America, yet there are a number of cultural historians that see the era as an incubator of a number of dissident movements attempting to effect change, including the women's movement (Foreman 4). Residing in a liminal space between cultural shifts, then, Miss Liberty appears on the one hand to be forcing, through playfully nostalgic ideas of nationalism, outmoded views of women, while on the other, exposing a mid-twentieth-century response to rising feminist thought and behavior. As the first and only well-known script about the Lady Liberty project, it also provides us with a distinctive vision of the linking of women with our national icon during the postwar period of cultural transition often given to the "unmasking" of traditions and value systems (4). Consequently, my focus on Miss Liberty is my attempt to locate the play's struggle, resistance, and instability on the theatre stage where a nationalist criterion for women's bodies and social conditioning set up in previous decades finds ultimate exposure.

Miss Congeniality and the National Symbolic:
Construction of the Feminine Ideal

The second "snapshot" of this study discusses the use of gender construction and specifically the construction of the feminine ideal as another significant element of the national representative. The text of the popular film Miss Congeniality provides this study with an unabashed look at the naturalized process of feminine construction through the cultural and

social ritual of the national beauty pageant. Written by Marc Lawrence, Katie Ford, and Caryn Lucus, Miss Congeniality tells the story of a female FBI agent who must go undercover in the Miss United States beauty pageant to prevent the bombing of the event. This satiric parody, ripe with performances of gender norms, also forms a significant thread of the American national tapestry. Fashioning a "National Symbolic" for the collective subjective, the constructions of individual identity and performance find further illumination when buttressed by our greatest national icon—the Statue of Liberty.

Prior to the inception of the first beauty pageant in 1921, pageants performed by women suffragists led the way as both civic entertainment and reform. As elaborate theatrical events consisting of tableaus and short scenes showcasing women's contributions, pageants also allowed women to portray historical figures such as "virtue" or "justice." With the advent of the Miss America Pageant, however, women not only continued to represent national ideals but were also relegated to representing a particular state, pitted against each other, and judged on their physical attributes. Interestingly, in 1921, Kimberly Hamlin writes, "the year after women gained the right to vote, the Miss America Pageant [had] become one of the most prominent and recognizable symbols of women in America" (27-29). The Miss America pageant, as the oldest national pageant, today "sees itself as a forum for promoting a kind of eternal feminine code for the 'typical' American woman" according to white, middle-class norms (Banet-Weiser, Miss 69). The most recent and sexier Miss United States pageant established in 1987 fashions itself after its progenitor, which shortly after World War II transformed the icon of Miss America into an emblem of patriotism and a living shrine as the ideal of American womanhood (Scholfield 60). As the pageant contestants emulate Lady Liberty in representing the values of a sector of American women as all-inclusive, the tracing of bodies on display within Miss Congeniality

provokes a reminder of Susan Banet-Weiser's precautionary note that, "The beauty pageant is not simply, then, about the feminine body, but also about the feminine national(ist) body" (Miss 71).

The film's positioning of women as hardly conflicted with their own gendered performances provides a telling revelation about the extent to which women will go to maintain illusions of self. While the capacity "for self-management is decisively coded as male," Bordo proposes, "by contrast, all those bodily spontaneities—hunger, sexuality, the emotions—seen as needful of containment and control have been culturally constructed and coded as female" (Unbearable 205-06). As a supreme truism for the beauty pageant world, in Miss Congeniality the film's satiric frame works to highlight, via Gracie's transformation, each of these three constructions of her new hyper feminization. Specifically, its pertinence resonates when considering Peg Zeglin Brand's draw upon author Eleanor Heartney's suggestion that beauty, like pornography, "can be a double-edged sword" capable of both "destabilizing rigid conventions and restrictive behavioral models" just as much as reinforcing them (3). Consequently, this film may serve to further the debate over whether beauty victimizes women or provides for "an avenue of self-realization by which women become empowered agents" (3).

Current scholarship in the study of nationalisms claims that "an idealized concept of the 'nation' actually needs women to sustain is cultural and political currency" (Banet-Weiser, The Most 8). The forum of the pageant as a "political space of the nation" becomes a space for both individual and collective representation, desire, and fantasy. Articulating prevailing expectations about who and what 'American' women are and should be, the Miss United States pageant process also creates a narrative for the nation "through promises of citizenship, fantasies of agency, and tolerant pluralism" (Miss 71). As the pageant merges discourses of femininity and

nation, the individual body of the contestant metaphorically "stands in" for the nation at large (Miss 71). Many see the pageant contestant as effectively construed as the construction of a liberal and liberated citizenship, one dedicated by democracy and self-agency (17). When coded within the parameters of the pageant, the female body carries a particular but often broad-based message of national ideology. However in the case of Miss Congeniality, the ideological frame narrows to include specific performances of gender and femininity as the recoded bodies of the contestants conflate with those codes established by/for Lady Liberty.

Liberty Now: Intertextual Articulations of a Nation—
Disruptions of the Ideal

The final "snapshot" and chapter of my study brings the elements investigated in the previous two chapters together as a solo performance that both explicates and further parodies what I see as a national phenomenon. The performance of Liberty Now builds heavily upon the commodification and consumption of women through the blending of the performatives of visual rhetoric with the immediacy of live performance. It also works to fashion significant moments of disruption that point to American standardizations of patriarchical hegemony: sexism, racism, ageism, and classism.

Liberty Now is noticeably reliant upon the intertextual readings provided by the juxtaposition of visual images projected on a back screen with a variety of performed *tableaux vivants*. I have chosen the *tableaux vivants* format not only because of its historical significance in American culture but for its feminist roots as well. Initially, *tableaux vivants*, as a nineteenth-century performative genre, involved the staged enactments of well-known sculptures and paintings into literally "living pictures" (Fisher 28). Originally presented primarily in the venues

of erotic vaudeville, or in homes as forms of domestic entertainment, or as amateur theatre, participants (of one or more people) would freeze into poses generally lasting from two to twenty minutes. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, this artistry was also frequently seen as an educational aid, with critics often recommending the form as a means to cultural improvement (McCullough 144). Although commonly under the direction of women, earlier *tableaux vivants* most often sustained repressive Victorian concepts of womanhood. For example, the agency of women's self-display was "often restricted to the 'embodiment' ideals of Art, Justice, and Liberty, 'standing in' for moral teleologies as living sculptures" (Fisher 28). However, under the control of later progressive women, *tableaux vivants* became a tool for change and those same themes that once "objectified" women now aided in promoting women's suffrage through more progressive representations depicting "woman as agents rather than objects" (28).

Integrating two-dimensional representational performatives with the world of three-dimensional presentation allows me as an artist-scholar the opportunity to flesh out more fully the theories and conjectures that propel this thesis. In the case of the conceptualization and the presentation of my performance entitled Liberty Now, that process takes on added dimension as I seek to put into play some the ways in which the two dimensional might provoke and reflectively resonate within the three dimensional—the inanimate inciting the animate. The Statue of Liberty has always been an icon for the people and most often co-opted as a commodity. As such, individual, national, and corporate entities have utilized her image since her unveiling to sell products and/or make statements. That being said, however, representations depicting the fleshed Lady Liberty have managed to sell much more than her stony counterpart, namely the often conflicting ideals of motherhood, sexual norms and their alternatives, racial hegemony, class consciousness, and of course, patriotism.

The third perspective of this study ties together performatives of Lady Liberty with American women as they are seen, used, and perform as national commodities for consumption. The purpose here is to show how race, class, and feminine ideal merge with Lady Liberty within and on the framed platforms of a variety of two-dimensional texts ranging from art works such as posters and paintings, to advertising packaging and editorial cartoons. According to Nicholas Mirzoeff, visual culture "is a tactic with which to study the genealogy, definition and functions of postmodern everyday life from the point of view of the consumer, rather than the producer" (3). What is more, "visual culture does not depend on pictures themselves but the modern tendency to picture or visualize existence" (5). Within the visual, meanings are created and contested; in other words, "seeing is not believing but interpreting" and "visual images succeed or fail according to the extent that we interpret them successfully" (13). Moreover, visual culture develops the "ideas of culture" in a political fashion, creating a place for individuals to define and express individual and group identities (24). Purveyed through the parodic postmodernist lens, however, there surfaces an overwhelming volume of imagery that is paradoxically positively and negatively coded. While my research has uncovered a vast amount of imagery, I will narrow my field substantially to what I believe to be a few representational works in order to make my points.

From the sketch perspective of editorial cartoons I will explore two examples of the feminine gender no longer serving as merely objects of protection as exampled above, but rather in her most recent role as national protector. The first editorial visits ideas of motherhood, both personal and public, that have gone awry. The second visual focuses on gender reconstruction as a means to enact modern roles of the guardian. The third example takes a look at the objectification of Liberty/woman in a 1985 painting by New York artist Husdon Talbott. The

fourth visual concentrates on the use of the Liberty statue to reverse our perspectives of ethnic and class oppression in the painting The Gleaners by T. F. Chen. And the fifth and final visual completes this portion of my study with an example from new media in which the appropriated image of Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake at the Super Bowl becomes an extreme example of intertextual paradox and parody that simultaneously merges and explodes notions of performance and performativity with regard to issues of femininity, race, class, and nationhood.

The artworks included in/as my performance (both two- and three-dimensional) continue to address, at the very least, issues surrounding the advancement and restrictions placed upon women's personal and public agency. However, while the visuals/slides within this work may be read on one level as representational and reinforcing of the various hegemonic positioning of women within this society, I also believe those same visual images will work conversely as a caustic disruption of those cultural conventions. What is more, through the exploration of the myth and the use of archetypal imaging, I work as an actor/image creating stills within an active and shifting narrative. There is a constant juxtaposition of the live persona/character with the image reflected beyond it. This doubling paradox intimately intertwines the lived experience with the visual, working both as a tool of reinforcement and antagonism, simultaneously conflating and reifying hegemonic ideals, and blatantly reaffirming the representations and expectations embodied by/through the conflated state of Liberty/Woman.

Finally, drawing upon the notion that "the viewing or embodied reception of visual artworks is a *process* that can be engaged as performative" (Jones and Stephenson 2), my push toward using the audience as complicit "performers," engaging with my "own embodied specificity" and "habits of seeing and desiring," should aid in the determination of meaning and social value of the product (Butt 2). With an activity between stage and audience in mind, this

performance seeks to address and question the use/exploitation of the individually gendered voices (both physical and psychic) that are created by one's distinct positionality within a/the/our culture. As is designed, however, these spect-actor voices will be heard (or not) through the employment (or not) of individual cameras provided upon entrance to the performance. Consequently, I/they might create a new visual representation of the conflation of woman and icon. The question is, then, will their latest reading fashioned from the newly devised hermeneutical device of the camera evoke and/or inspire them to see alternative perspectives and/or options resulting in the form of new actions that will deliberately re-vision and affect the level of women's agency? My hope is that the interplay of texts in all the varying forms—physical and psychic, auditory and written, visual and tactile—as they unite with the dramatic space, real and imagined, will parlay a dialogical experience for the spectator that will reverberate long after leaving the performance space.

Through this performance, I seek to inspire an audience to not only recognize the existence of a multilayered conflation between women and Lady Liberty, but choose to understand and accept their own complicity in the reification process. I also solicit answers to my questions asking what the conflation reveals about women's agency in today's America. How has it changed in the past century? And what does the Lady Liberty myth give to women's agency and how does it limit it? Are the ongoing conflated performative representations reflecting our culture or challenging it? What do these parodic postmodernist works and performances reveal about our culture's relationship to Lady Liberty today? And finally, do the embodied performances of Lady Liberty ultimately strengthened our relationship to the icon and ideas of freedom, thereby giving rise to more democratic performances of woman and nation?

Building a Liberty for the Future

As I began my research into issues and myths surrounding the icon of Lady Liberty, I heard predominately two things from my colleagues. The first, that it would be a fascinating topic for exploration, especially the conflationary notion of the icon and American women. And second, that I should be able to find a considerable amount of extant research as a foundation on which to build my own research and theories. While the former remains solidly intact, to my amazement, the latter was far from bountiful. Certainly, I found plenty of historical references on the subject of the building of the Statue of Liberty and much research about the connections between women's bodies and land acquisition. But beyond that, my trail drew rather cold. I thought it interesting when searching for play scripts and films that deal with Lady Liberty as a distinctly fleshed and gendered performance in some way, that the two that I will be using for my primary study were all that surfaced. Nonetheless, while limited in number, I still believe these texts, when coupled with historical and print media examples and the exploration of performance, will be able to convincingly portray the parallels and constructions needed for the investigation of the conflation surrounding Lady Liberty and the performances of American women.

Likewise, my research unearthed only a smattering of journal essays discussing the conflation of the icon of Lady Liberty and women's gendered identity and/or performance. And few discuss the possibility of Lady Liberty influencing how women are perceived and consequently how they perform their gendered identity. One essay, however, entitled "Checking in the Mirror: Liberty Weekend's Patriotic Spectacle" by Simone Davis appears in the Journal of American Culture (1996). In the essay, Davis points to Lady Liberty's elitist positioning, the lack of racial and minority inclusions to the 1986 centennial event, and its connection to the

commodification of both the icon and women. Another valuable source, “Taking Liberties, Writing from the Margins, and Doing It With a Difference,” an essay by Barbara A. Babcock, also discusses the Statue of Liberty and the events of her Centennial as monumental reasons why we need cultural analysis from a feminist point of view. Much of this is also reiterated in her 1994 essay co-authored with John J. Macaloon titled, “Everybody’s Gal: Women, Boundaries, and Monuments.”

In her 2000 essay entitled “Lady Liberty’s Allure: Political Agency, Citizenship and The Second Sex,” Sharon Krause asks a couple of extremely important questions: “Why is Liberty a lady? [And], What does the gendered character of the symbol tell us about the character of American citizen-ship (2)?” As she explains it, “Lady Liberty makes the abstract ideas of liberty and equality alluring, symbolically engaging the desiring element in the human psyche that is so crucial for motivating the actions that uphold those ideas” (2). While an interesting premise, it seems as though Krause prefers not to recognize women’s ongoing inequity. Why? “Lady Liberty’s allure,” she continues, “thus calls attention to the relationship between gender and American citizenship but ultimately turns our gaze beyond gender to political agency more generally and to the fruitful pairing of partiality and higher purpose that supports it” (17). This too is problematic for me, especially since during the last twenty-five years representations of Lady Liberty have become increasingly more sexualized, leaving me to ask how the more sexualized Liberty works to create a new national narrative.

Finally, when searching for extant research and discussions linking women’s and gender issues with parody, the reflections of Judith Butler, Linda Hutcheon, and Lydia Rainford have proven quite fruitful. As such, the reading of these texts within my study hopefully will work to expose and/or reaffirm how representations and performances of Lady Liberty tend to destabilize

culture and construct gender identities through appropriation. What is more, in exposing the reproductions of parodic patriarchal constructions of gender and normative gender ideals as well as the female gender's connectedness to the nationalistic icon of Lady Liberty, I am hoping to spark a renewed and healthy discourse about this topic.

What messages media send out to contemporary audiences about gender and the impact of those images is at the heart of David Gauntlett's book Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction. Working from a base establishing the given equalities and inequalities of gender within our culture, ideas of "masculinity" and "femininity," and various other axes of identity construction such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality, this work has been beneficial in shaping my opinions surrounding the marketing of Lady Liberty simultaneously as object and woman. In addition, Featuring Females: Feminist Analyses of Media, has been a vital source for discussions about media's influence on women and girls in today's culture. This work of Ellen Cole and Jessica Henderson Daniel has import for my discussions about Lady Liberty's transposition into various films, stage productions, and performances. Author Mary Wiseman contends in her essay, "Gendered Symbols," that "the most pervasive effects of artworks on ideas about women are indirect" (241). Moreover, they are indirect because the viewer uncritically accepts and reacts to the work "as they are interpreted by the culture at large" (244). Realizing this and as the representations of women's bodies continue to play a central role in the making of art (whether on the page, canvas, reel, or stage), we cannot ignore how women's identities disseminated through these visual discourses ultimately perform (consciously and unconsciously) within our society.

Consistently perpetuated as both the subject and object of commodification and consumption, the female body can hardly resist the verities of meaning so readily applied to and

about it. “If no ‘meaning’ is taken,” Stuart Hall proposes, “there can be no ‘consumption’” (123). That is hardly the case here. To my mind, this notion may easily include *all* experiences of meaning and subsequent consumption reflected in/through a work. What is more, it carries even more resonance with the continuation of Hall’s premise that emphasizes the idea that meaning leads to articulated practice (123). Appreciably, “It is at the connotative *level* of the sign,” he points out, “that situational ideologies alter and transform signification” (128). Wiseman puts it another way: “An interpretation is adequate or *true to a work* if a case can be made for it, and a work under a given interpretation is *true to a viewer’s experience* if the feelings, beliefs, and attitudes caused in a viewer by a work under its accepted interpretations accord with those caused by her experiences in general” (242). Consequently, it appears the resulting perceptions created by representations and performances of Lady Liberty, whether they jibe with the artist’s original intentions or not, often end up as either negative images reinforcing the negative ways women are looked at, interpreted, and used, or as constricting images that preclude a decided portion of American women from political and personal identification with the icon and the benefits enjoyed through inclusion. As such, there exists a wide range of modes, as exemplified by this study, capable of a more dangerous transference of personal and cultural identities, just as the conflation between image and experience, of representation and/to presentation proliferates American cultural divisions. Bringing this all too visible yet apparently invisible discussion to the table in a more expanded framework hopefully will both serve to energize discussions of national and personal identity and illuminate the ability of performance (parodic or otherwise) as a means to negotiating a fresh perspective from which to approach gender politics.

CHAPTER I

MISS LIBERTY AND THE BUILDING OF A NATIONAL IDEAL

The body is always an embodying
of possibilities both conditioned and
circumscribed by historical convention
—Judith Butler

Introduction

The development of conflationary depictions of women and the Statue of Liberty icon as a national representative appears to coalesce actively around the mid-twentieth century. The 1949 playscript Miss Liberty, lyrics and music by Irving Berlin and the book by Robert E. Sherwood provides us with a fascinating example of this conflationary process. Conceived during wartime by author Robert E. Sherwood, Miss Liberty was an attempt to narrate what the Statue of Liberty means to native and new Americans. The resulting story, however, may not have been one Sherwood or his cohort and play's composer Irving Berlin intended. A newspaper interview with Berlin prior to the opening of the production in July, 1949 reads: "Noting that it does not try to be unconventional or set new trends, he [Berlin] said he would be perfectly happy if it is no more than a 'good, old-fashioned commercial smash hit'" (Nichols). Much to his chagrin, however, Miss Liberty was not a resoundingly successful play. To the contrary, it would be his first big flop (Bergreen 496). With this evidence in mind, I was left wondering what might have led to this play's unpopular result. Was the play exhibiting outdated collective memories of America's history with immigration and women? Was it trying too hard to satisfy and document America's need for a national mythos? Or was Miss Liberty a case of nostalgia gone wrong as the present and the past collided on the stages within our nation's theatres? For me, all three

questions appear pertinent and together their answers result in a rich exploration into American playwriting and audience reception.

The narrative tells of a journalist who goes to France in 1885 and returns to America with the woman (Miss Liberty in person) whom he proceeds to "sell" to the American public as *the* woman inspiring Auguste Bartholdi's vision of the Statue of Liberty. Although written as a history play loosely based on historical facts, this script also gives us a unique perspective on women's roles in society on a national scale during the late 1940s. Conceived for the fiftieth anniversary of the raising of the Statue of Liberty, and coming on the heals of World War II, this work arrives at a time when historically American society was attempting to push women back into the domestic sphere as wives and mothers in a national campaign to revitalize the long held but faltering separation of the public (male) and private (female) spheres. However, the play's opening also ironically coincides with rising, yet constrained, feminist currents that would infuse the ideas of the second wave feminist movement to come (Tarrant 2). Residing in a liminal space between cultural shifts, then, Miss Liberty appears on the one hand to be forcing outmoded views of women through playfully nostalgic ideas of nationalism, while on the other, exposing a not-so-subtle rise of anti feminist thought and behavior. Serving dual purpose, with its viability spanning nearly a century, the first and only well-known script about the Lady Liberty project, Miss Liberty provides us with both a distinctive vision of one process of naturalization linking particular women with our national icon and the merging of America's first and second wave feminist moments.

Returning first to the late nineteenth century, Bartholdi's era of inspiration sets the stage as the French sculptor becomes aware of American women's growing quest for authority. Fueled by the birth of feminism and propelled by the early suffrage movement (promulgated by such

forerunners as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Victoria Woodhull) women's pursuits, however, would, according to American hegemony, need taming. Although drawing upon his own national icon Marianne, made famous by Delacroix's nineteenth-century painting Liberty Leading the People (La Liberté guidant le peuple) (Babcock and Macaloon 86-87), Bartholdi also realized the wild youthful strength of the French icon as unsuitable for social interests across the sea. How better for the nineteenth-century Frenchman to "symbolically and retroactively" contain the "semiotic chaos" propelled by Marianne than to fashion an alternative image of docile maturity (86-87). Consequently, Bartholdi's more subdued maternal image relieves any conscience parallels that might be made when comparing the figure of Delacroix's Liberty to that of the Statue of Liberty. In addition, the maternal image fashioned in the form of the statue would "domesticate" any blossoming revolution (read feminism) by monumentally reinterpreting Liberty "'as a chaste mother for their 'sister republic'" (86-87). One of the most frequently proposed inspirations for Bartholdi and prototype for the Statue of Liberty speculates the woman as being the sculpture's own mother (Silverman 25). Kaja Silverman expounds upon this notion suggesting, "what we are all culturally encouraged to see—is a fantasmatic mother, capable of effecting our imaginary union not only with her, but with the entire nation" (26). "But one does not give away one's mother," Barbara Babcock and John Macaloon argue (86-87). They continue: "Shared matrilineal filiation first requires a wedding. Between her conversion from revolutionary virago to chaste matriarch at home and her installation as virgin mother of America (and her ensuing career of promiscuity there), Liberty has to pass as a bride across the Atlantic. As beloved daughter of France, she was given in marriage to the foreigners" (86-87).

But what about the alternate and highly popular theory inferring Bartholdi's inspiration might have truly been a woman of the street? Speaking to that notion, Silverman asserts that

regardless of the proliferation of rumors of an anonymous prostitute filling the role as artistic inspiration for the statue appearing to lack any credence, they nonetheless have continued to circulate with authority for years (28-29). With that, the mother/prostitute opposition takes flight and becomes significant when looking at Berlin and Sherwood's post-WWII transitional work about the Statue of Liberty. By the late 1940s, and within the American culture at large, the once matronly symbol of Liberty is no longer seen as one primarily welcoming immigrants. Instead, she transitions into a younger and more sexualized entity that then develops into a national object of desire, falling into line with postwar thinking in which mutually exclusive identity patterns for either the glamour girl or the domestic woman prevailed. As a result, just as the revised persona found in Miss Liberty comes to reflect mid-twentieth-century women's place in society, she also mirrors the tumultuous nature of that position and the instability raging within many women to define their own personal identity.

Many cultural theorists see identity as a production of the collective consciousness, furthering the notion of the American psyche as a "site of an intellectual and moral competition between value systems associated respectively with the past and a future that [is] trying to come into being" (Foreman, Intro. 5). During postwar America, citizens would question both their identity and behavior, asking of themselves: "to what causes and practices would they lend their support; as voters, as actors within diverse institutions, and as consumers" (5). Joel Foreman calls upon Baktin's ideas surrounding the "'process of historical becoming'" to posit the suggestion of mid-century texts as those "within which the competing forces of tradition and cultural innovation may be exposed" (Intro. 4). Drawn from extant material conditions during the time of its fabrication, "deliberately or otherwise," Foreman points out that the producers of mid-century fictional texts were "as likely as advertisers to change minds" (13), making them equally

as culpable in maintaining, challenging, or altering consumer and social consciousness on a national level. What is more, Foreman emphasizes, there often existed "a subversive component" built into the era's cultural products, consistent with norms and acting "as an ideological virus transmitted by national media whose commitment was more to profit (read this to mean the distributed and inarticulate desires of millions of American consumers) than the dominant morals of the moment" (11). It appears the authors of Broadway fare would prove no different in their intentions. First, because American culture was structured by a clear-cut "defense of masculinity and whiteness" (Breines, Postwar 58), it would be the political, class, sexual, and racial Outsiders many authors would turn to as fuel for white middle-class imaginations. Second, it seems "literal and figurative boundaries" propelled a post war era in which "distinctions between 'them' (foreigners and deviants) and 'us' flourished" (Breines, Postwar 57-58). And third, returning veterans compared American women unfavorably to those 'womanly' ones they had met abroad" (Hartmann 212-13). With these three historical positionings in mind, the virgin-mother/prostitute dichotomy refashioned during the mid-twentieth-century cultural shift reveals itself in Berlin and Sherwood's script. The two main female characters, one abject, the other ideal, play out the nation's insecurities and need for unity. However, in order to cater to current audiences the French character of Monique as the virginal mother must first find redemption from her Otherness as foreigner. While her American foil Maisie, to the contrary, will find none as the Outsider prostitute. What is more, the structure of Miss Liberty is replete with illustrative confrontations and struggles between dichotomous forces, both personal and public, as played out and evidenced through its two principle women and their relationship to a nation.

From the outset, the authors promote their play Miss Liberty as a political satire about an ongoing feud between newspaper moguls. In the opening notes we read, "It is Republicans

versus Democrats—Fifth Avenue versus Avenue 'A'—the Union League Club versus Tammany Hall" (Sherwood 13). The former, led by multimillionaire owner of the New York Herald James Gordon Bennett opposes the latter, immigrant-born publisher Joseph Pulitzer of the New York World. The obvious rivalry immediately prepares the audience for a story of the haves versus the have-nots and a tale of one's ability to rise from rags to riches. The plot leads us toward the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty, which is used as a means to improve newspaper circulation and ultimately both personal and corporate prosperity. However, as both men vie for the best story and photographic angles, a scheme surfaces between a brash women reporter and a male photographer to find and present the woman who originally poses for the statue. Consequently, the importance given to the personal relationships established early on for this couple sets up a parallel plot leading us to focus more on the individual desires that merge home and heart (read as nation and womanhood). When the photographer goes to France in search of the model and returns with a young woman he believes to be Auguste Bartholdi's inspiration, the aspirations of the two markedly different women who vie for the affections of the photographer solidify into what I believe to be the play's true force. With this turn of focus the story becomes about much more than newspapers or the acquisition of material wealth. Rather the play develops into an opportunity to observe the more complex development and performance of mid-twentieth-century women's roles as read through a seemingly innocent and historically nostalgic moment during the late nineteenth century.

Miss Liberty's two leading ladies have much in common. From the outset they share the gender-determined label called Other. Made famous by Simone de Beauvoir in her 1949 book The Second Sex, the theorist proposes that women, because of their social position and gender differences, find themselves in relation to the ruling patriarchy as the Other. Imprisoned by her

own gendered subjectivity, woman "is not regarded as an autonomous being." Rather because "humanity is male," a man defines a woman as "not in herself but as relative to him" (Intro.). Their Otherness automatically positions the two women within an existing social, cultural, sexual, and national hierarchy. As a consequence, their secondary statuses play a significant role in determining how these women will perform their gender, class, and sexuality, as well as how they will represent their ethnicity and nation. Another commonality the women share, however, is far more sinister in nature. It appears that in order for 1949 audiences to accept Monique as their own Liberty personified, she must first enter the scene as an Outsider. In addition, and in order to solidify her eventual redemption, her American competition Maisie must undergo extreme vilification when she transitions from Outsider to Outlaw.

The Outsider parallel plays itself out through the bodies of two distinctly different types of young women. On the surface Maisie Dell is an energetic working girl who longs for marriage and Monique Dupont is a chaste French girl with very little autonomous drive. The character of Maisie seems to be everything that Monique is not. They are opposites in many ways, but more importantly, they represent the two sides of the same paradoxical national coin delineating women's oppositional stations of either virgin/mother or whore. Although situated a half-century earlier within the play Miss Liberty, I see the same scenario being played out vividly in post-WWII culture. As this study moves forward, then, I begin with an introduction to Maisie Dell's antithetical performative feminine behavior.

Outsider and the All-American Girl

The character of Maisie Dell bursts onto the stage during the first scene. As the young reporter joins newsboys from both publishing camps, boisterous greetings make it apparent that

Maisie is a familiar face on the city streets.[1] As a self-identified "working newspaperman" for the Police Gazette, she comes across as a self-assured and independent individual. Nonetheless, couching herself through the more timely and legitimate term of "newspaperman" hardly releases her from her role as a female. To the contrary, the label troubles all of her ensuing relationships from the get go. For instance, upon meeting Bennett on the street, a seemingly innocuous but rather typifying exchange ensues:

> Bennett: And who may I ask, are you?
>
> Maisie: I'm a working newspaperman myself.
>
> Bennett: On Mr. Pulitzer's World, no doubt.
>
> (She tosses him a salute and pulls up her skirt.)
>
> Maisie: The Police Gazette.
>
> Bennett: I might have known. You look it. (17)

As illustrated here and continued throughout the narrative, her gender performance is incessantly uneasy as most of her underlying actions bespeak of something illicit brought about via a demeanor which is traditionally considered thoroughly unfeminine. For example, in the display above, Maisie casually hikes her skirt, most probably to reveal either knickers or pants. As Joseph Corre and Serena Ross attest, "Victorian prudery dictated that any glimpse of flesh was too revealing," society going so far as to insist "that even the legs of tables should be covered by a ridiculously long cloth, just in case any man found them too arousing" (12). As a pants wearer in the 1880s Maisie would be considered unladylike at the very least, and at most, as a radical feminist of the worst sort. Perhaps providing a hearty chuckle for those post-WWII women in the

[1] Perhaps using his own life as model, Izzy, as Irving Berlin was originally named, worked "hawking the rowdy Evening Journal on the street. This newspaper was a typical Hearst publication of the 1890s, thriving on screaming headlines and jingoism" (Bergreen 11).

audience, this scene could also remind them of how their most recent war brought about a state of conflict for many American women, such as the ideal representations of the glamour girl as well as her necessary and grimy workhorse cousin Rosie the Riveter (Schofield 54). While post war working-class women, it seems, would experience "their war roles as almost normal," many middle-class women would realize the prospect as fleeting (Diggins 25). For although middle-class women were urged to temporarily step outside their customary sphere, civilian propaganda continued to highlight women's femininity (Hartmann 211). Within months after the war, public images of women began to change from women in coveralls to those of young suburban wives clad in billowy and feminine dresses poised happily within the kitchen (Schofield 63). Not so for someone of Maisie's ilk, however. This working class girl would stay put, eschewing the norm and continuing to tout her unfeminine behavior. When visiting Bennett's office and after refusing an offered seat, she defiantly remains standing. With an air of confidence this early Rosie places her one foot on a nearby desk chair in an attempt to equalize authority through another display of unwomanly posture. However, Maisie's physicalizations of mannishness find even more reinforcement through the author's depictions of her mental and emotional states.

On the intellectual level, Maisie is a woman with brains. As an effort to bring more "humanity" to the staged unveiling of the statue, for example, it is she who comes up with the idea that photographer Horace Miller go to France in search of the model. In fact, Maisie is the driving force behind all major actions of the play. Maisie comes up with the original scheme, pushes Horace into action, assures the payment and passage of all back to America, moves Monique to pose as Liberty, and finally, secures Monique's release from jail in order for her to marry Horace and live out her life in middle-class America. Echoing war-time memories, strength like Maisie's (for women in the audience) could also rekindle recognitions of women's

new found degree of agency. Especially as that agency, at least momentarily, included their now prominent voices "within the male-controlled working world" (Schofield 58).

What is more, Maisie's creative initiatives are equaled only by her financial shrewdness. A case in point comes when Maisie takes the story to Bennett, admittedly she says, for one reason: "You've got more money than all the rest of [the other New York publishers] put together, and you spend it more freely" (Sherwood 35). Then, noting a further observation: "You're desperate with your circulation drooping. You'll do anything to steal the inside track on this Statue away from Pulitzer" (35). Bennett makes an intriguing and I would wager gender-focused retort to her confession in saying, "I have always contended that your journalism is an interminable series of calculated risks" (35). Certainly one could read this last statement in a variety of ways, but both of the two converse readings I find lead me to believe Bennett is making short mockery of Maisie's abilities. For example, I might read this as Bennett suggesting that Maisie as a woman is brasher than most men, and more often because of it, not as successful. Or I could take the statement to mean that she is usually successful because she often takes risks. The latter risk taking, however, was being a direct result of her mannishness. Either way, she is not successful through any standardized performance of the female gender, but rather either in spite of it or because she relinquishes her femininity in favor of more male attributes. Notably, with a history in the business, Maisie's manly gifts churn out a woman and blossoming feminist who is both enterprising and inspired by the possibility of her own financial freedom.

As Berlin and Sherwood work to dispel any real feminist rumblings on the part of Maisie they also create an unwanted but familiar Outsider character for their contemporary audiences. For example, after reaching an agreement to fund the voyage of the reporter to go overseas and return with the young French girl and her grandmother, Bennett offers Maisie a job: "How would

you like to work for The Herald? I'm unalterably opposed to women in the professions—but you appear to have a certain—er—masculine forcefulness" (Sherwood 36). Although Maisie acknowledges her mannish behavior, she also confides, "that's one of the things I'm trying to lose" (Sherwood 35), thereby suggesting, at the very least, that she recognizes how her mannish characteristics may block her future aspirations. And while she puts on a positive front, her mannish Outsider behavior really only provides a temporarily means of self-protection and opportunity for self-reliance. More importantly, the authors rely on Maisie's internal conflict to work as a parallel to the more obvious external conflict they establish through the body of Monique. Moreover, because Maisie is the driving force behind the play, a woman with strength and intelligence, she could also easily become the more admired personality for post war women. However, relying upon highly familiar current post war conservative literature such as magazines with articles like "'What's Wrong with American Women?'; … 'Isn't a Woman's Place in the Home?'; 'Women Aren't Men'" (Friedan 10), et cetera, the authors can counter those positive qualities with those more negative. The degree to which Maisie presents as anti social also determines the degree with which audiences might turn to accepting the new immigrant as national mother.

Outsider and the French Connection

On the other side of the coin, a mannish persona is far from something the more feminine character of Monique would dare to embrace. Indeed, the authors provide us through Monique with the epitome of femininity and womanhood, fashioned to reflect both 1880s and the currently held 1940s idealist standards. What is more, Monique's entrance into the artist's studio serves to situate her within a world in which beauty and form smother or erase any perceived

intellectual prowess. When we first meet Monique in Act I, scene 2 at Bartholdi's studio, it comes as little surprise as to what kind of woman the authors have set us up to expect. The stage directions inform us that she is young and beautiful, "her eyes wide with innocence (Sherwood 27). In addition, the directions reveal that behind the innocence lies an "intimation of passion" (27). However, the amount of passion we actually witness from Monique during the play is minimal at best. Hardly surprising given that passion, whether read through an 1880s or 1940s lens, was considered an outlawed emotion for the proper young unmarried woman (Byars 206). While Maisie appears to have a surplus, Monique lacks passion. Consequently, Monique presents as a sweet, almost naïve, character, free of Outlaw emotions. She has come to the studio in search of work as a model. As a counter to our introduction to the more worldly, mannish, and intelligent Maisie, Monique as well as the other model hopefuls arrive as feminine full-body texts that remain conspicuously empty and childlike.

The foreignness of Bartoldi's studio in France also sets up Outsider status for Monique's nationhood as well of those individuals who inhabit it. As the curtain opens we see prominently displayed on the wall of his studio a large charcoal drawing of several nude women. It is a draft for work commissioned for the pediment of a bank and the women currently seeking employment will serve as models for the final product. Susan Bordo considers our cultural *conceptions* of the body as "forming a set of *practical* rules and regulations through which the living body" socially adapted, becomes the "'useful body'" (The Body 181). The women's usefulness is witnessed to the extreme within the confines of Bartholdi's little studio as the artist turns to the objects of his work to be and smiles, reminding them that "sometimes we work for money" (27). He follows with, "You girls understand that!" And insinuate the models, because of their poverty, have been somehow driven into a disreputable means of employment. No

respectable girl would choose to model unless they were in dire straights, especially if their modeling meant they had to be unclothed. Nude modeling had traditionally been a job often performed by either lower class women or seedy members of society.

Another means of projecting the Outsider status for the French women stems from a short but important comment about their clothing. Bordo provides a clear example of the social construction of the nineteenth-century hourglass figure. “Emphasizing breasts and hips against a wasp waist,” the hourglass becomes:

> [A]n intelligible *symbolic* form, representing a domestic, sexualized ideal of femininity. The sharp cultural contrast between the female and the male form, made possible by the use of corsets and bustles, reflected, in symbolic terms, the dualistic division of social and economic life into clearly defined male and female spheres. At the same time, to achieve the specified look, a particular feminine praxis was required—strait lacing, minimal eating, reduced mobility—rendering the female body unfit to perform activities outside its designated sphere. This, in Foucauldian terms, would be the “useful body” corresponding to the aesthetic norm. (The Body 181)

Unmistakably, however, the audience must be able to differentiate between American and French norms. Consequently, Bartholdi lines up several women to “inspect” their viability for the project, grumbling: “Ah—these modern fashions. Bustles—corsets—ribs of steel—they are inventions of the devil, fiendishly designed to conceal God’s greatest gifts” (Sherwood 27). Then turning one girl around he inspects her derriere, and when done eyeing her “pats her” fanny. None of the women, however, take offense to the gesture (a far cry from a proper American response), and when given the directive they all gleefully run off stage to remove their clothing.

Traditionally, stressing specifically feminine forms of attractiveness often meant separating "the elements of sexual interest and attraction from the total personality" (Brienes, Young 37). This moment in Miss Liberty appears as no exception. What is more, and although the script directs that Bartholdi "looks after them … with the air of a father toward his boisterous children" (Sherwood 27), stage directions and dialogue often play against this notion. Instead, the authors create an air of acceptance of Bartholdi's almost lecherous tone by feeding into the reigning ideology of femininity so vividly reflected though the majority of cultural conveyances. The perfect woman "was childlike, nonassertive, helpless without a man," Bordo reminds us (The Body 170). In providing a bevy of innocent young desperate women to typify behavior as blithely normal and playfully innocent, post war audiences might sit easy with the knowledge that current social expectations are nothing more than a continuation of those well-established behaviors and convictions.

This same sort of extreme innocence is required of Monique's performance also, but with one huge caveat. Monique must also remain virtuous, something she could not do if she were to disrobe under such circumstances. Unlike Maisie whose character centers on behavior, Monique's character focuses on the body as a visual text. "As a public action and performative act, gender is not a radical choice or project that reflects a merely individual choice," Judith Butler explains. As though enacting a script in a variety of ways, "and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives" (Performative 277). While we are witness to the specifics of Maisie's Outsider actions, Monique's behavior only hints at possible improprieties. As a consequence, the authors first have Bartholdi attempt to comfort Monique by telling her "it's no disgrace to be a model" (Sherwood 27), then the authors

create a diversion in order to alleviate any possibility of impropriety. After interjecting that his mother modeled for his latest project, Bartholdi hands Monique the famed torch and tablet, and directs her to emulate the original pose for the Statue of Liberty. He then exclaims triumphantly, "Now! You are what every man desires most. You are the most beautiful woman on earth. You are every man's mother. You are every man's love. You are Liberty, enlightening the world" (28). Within this one moment, Monique is no longer her own person, rather (with virtue intact) she shifts into her role as a representation of the ideal woman. With that, her pose forces a conflation of the real with the imagined national ideal. It is essential she not denigrate herself to the position of a traditional model. Within this one moment the youthful virgin transitions into the future virgin-mother, conflating with the iconic goddess of Liberty. To solidify this notion to the audience, Horace arrives to witness her pose. "Lost in admiration," he gushes, "I see what Bartholdi meant all right! It's wonderful! It's inspiring!" (30). Highly patriotic on the surface, this moment also becomes terribly problematic as the use of the word "It" reconstructs Monique architecturally into a grand object. She becomes an "it"—something to be desired and soon to be pursued. Before she is allowed to join the other women who are disrobing in the back room, the authors "save" her, first figuratively through her depiction of Liberty and then literally through Horace's future proposition to join him in America.

Outsider and A Body of the Nation

While to some extent frowned upon, being an artist's model would hardly make Monique a significant Outsider to post war audiences. As a result, the text turns toward both her alternate means of employment/class and nationality to establish the requisite ire and rebuke from which she might then recover. Although creating the French character of Monique as a way to touch

viewers on the simplest most outward level, the authors must also have realized her potential to disrupt some rather significant postwar memories for the audience. As a result, Berlin and Sherwood use Monique's nationality to full advantage by first reminding audiences of the terrible political precursor to France's current democratic rule, then by anachronistically exploiting recent memories of American and French relations. In addition, it is imperative that audiences not only recognize Monique's individuality but how she as a French citizen likewise represents the French nation at large. Broadly applying West and Ferstermaker's theories on the performance of race and gender to Monique and her grandmother's ethnicity and nationhood grounds their performances of Otherness. As West and Fersternmaker posit:

> To the extent that race category is omnirelevant (or even verges on this), it follows that persons involved in virtually any action may be held accountable for their performance of that action as members of their race category. As in the case of sex category, race category can be used to justify or discredit other actions; accordingly, virtually any action can be assessed in relation to its race categorical nature. The accomplishment of race (like gender) does not necessarily mean "living up" to normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate to a particular race category; rather, it means engaging inaction at the risk of race assessment. … Conceiving of race and gender as ongoing accomplishments means we must locate their emergence in social situations, rather than within the individual or some vaguely defined set of role expectations. … In sum, the accomplishment of race consists of creating differences among members of different race categories—differences that are neither natural nor biological. Once

> created, these differences are used to maintain the "essential" distinctiveness of "racial identities" and the institutional arrangements that they support. (58-60)

As a living historical record, Monique's grandmother, the Countess, serves to highlight the women's personal plight as hinging heavily upon the not-too-distant French national state of affairs stemming from Napoleonic rule. Monique's destiny from her beginning overtly merges the personal and political. There are several references to the Countess's past exploits with the French elite embedded into the script. For example, when asked for her identity card the inquiring Gendarme notices, "This bears the seal of the Empire. It's fifteen years out of date" (Sherwood 39). And when responding to her living conditions, the Countess remarks, "You understand our really valuable things are at the Chateau in the country" (Sherwood 45). Or when disembarking in America, the Countess reveals the hints of having had a tryst with none other than Napoleon himself. While perhaps only the machinations of a slightly deranged and aging mind, these declarations go far in establishing that Monique, as the newest generation, should move on to find a better life elsewhere.

The audience, however, needs first to follow Monique's undesirable life a bit further. Attending to a lower class wage-earning position of flower girl, Monique also carries the weight of having a suspect personal and familial history. Then to top it all off, this French foreigner has no home. During the first act we find Monique and her grandmother the "Countess Dupont" living under a bridge down by the river. Reminiscent of George Bernard Shaw's 1916 play Pygmalion, the two women peddle flowers. Uncharacteristically, the older woman, described as a frightening old hag, is a fallen member of the old Empire fifteen years prior. To the contrary though one can hardly miss Monique's parallel to Shaw's young chameleon, both designed to be reinvented in body and status. As it stands, the Countess and Monique, now vagrants, have lived

under many bridges, the current one for the past two years. When Horace asks for her address Monique replies, “There isn’t any.”

Horace: You mean you got no home?

Monique: (cheerfully) No home.

Horace: Why—that’s terrible …(30).

Beyond the Outsider status of foreigner, Monique’s localized place and position become key transformative components. As homeless, Monique cannot effectively reflect a particular city or be claimed by a hometown (although she lives in Paris). Instead she and her grandmother wander the land laying claim to only their personhood through ethnicity and nationality. With one less tier of cultural ties, Monique becomes an easier prospect for export and eventual immigration, allowing her to better assimilate into the American culture.

That being said, however, the authors continue to break down other barriers that might keep Monique tethered to her homeland. For example, there is no mention in the script about Monique’s parents. Where are they, what happened to them? Was she born out of wedlock? Was she abandoned by an uncaring mother? Are they in prison? Questions remain. Either way, though, having come from an obviously failed family of some sort provides less hope and security for Monique in France. And where normally her future might be bleak, she will instead find refuge in America, fulfilling dual maternal roles by establishing a family with Horace and as national mother to the young nation.

Yet another even more ominous prospect projected through the first act of Miss Liberty presents Monique as a would-be prostitute. When Monique reveals to her grandmother that she has been walking with an American, the first thing the Countess squawks is, “You get money from him?” (40). While the Countess has made no bones about her own quest for financial gain,

I still muse over why she might expect that walking with an American would result in pay. Perhaps the allusion was meant as yet another attempt to inspire the postwar audience's memories of GI talk. Love, the Countess explains to Maisie, is how the two came to live under bridges in the first place. Thus, if an investment in love creates an empty purse, then the investment best be sidestepped in order to either maintain or even reap monetary growth. She says further, "Monique, you little schemer—now I know what you've been up to when you said you were looking for work! Why didn't you tell me of your romance?" (45-46). It seems Grandmother believes Monique to be savvy enough to scheme her way into Horace's heart and life. Unfortunately, Monique also appears not to be seeking true love at all, but rather sees her relationship with Horace as a way to get money and security for her and her grandmother. Romance remains only a side effect of that search. Although the idea of prostitution might be more than was intended by the authors, the equation of romance to money still may be leading the young waif to consider all possibilities. Is Monique really the innocent the authors project to the audience? Perhaps "walk" is a euphemism for something more, like prostitution. Especially when, as in Scene 4, Monique joins various other late night Parisian workers for a song and dance about Paris after working hours. During the song "Paris Wakes Up," the various characters that join her are conspicuously all lower working-class men. There is a Seine fisherman, an Apache (a rough gangster-type dancer), a pimp, a tourist guide, an artist, and a gendarme. Although seen as innocent herself, surrounding her with questionable people, places, and events helps the authors establish good cause for her saving. What is more, there is little doubt the sexuality presumed inherent by Monique's cultural difference could be seen as a conflict to the projection of Horace's American Waspishness. Monique symbolizes the erotic and its access to innocence in the form of an innate purity ultimately to be gained through her acculturation.

Monique's questionable criminal surroundings also come from her exposure to the Countess who has her own criminal history. When threatened with jail time by a local gendarme, the Countess spits, "You don't frighten me. I was being arrested before you were born" (39). No stranger to prison, the Countess also reveals, "I had to wait six months to marry your grandfather until he got out of jail" (81). Her life since (or because of) the fall of the Empire, it seems, is far from saintly, establishing the possibility that the Countess's past criminal behavior might influence her more innocent granddaughter. Playing upon France's perceived exploitive nature and assumed looser morals also helps to secure Monique's Outsider status and propels a greater need for her redemption by America. However, Monique must remain an innocent, someone simply victimized by poverty, poor family stability, and a nation of slack principles. In only suggesting Monique's impropriety, the play's audience is allowed to view her as someone who is not too despicable, not too culturally lost, and not too unredeemable, a suitable noble subject on which to set their sights.

Unfortunately, there remains one major flaw for Monique to conquer—money. While few could fault those living in such deplorable conditions from wanting the financial means to better themselves, these particular women move that determination to an unsavory level of Outsiderness. Undeniably, the focus for both women is money. Whereas money for Maisie is a means of support gotten by hard work on her part—for Monique there is an expectation of money as a gift. In fact, Monique (like, according to the script, many French and other foreigners) has the idea that all Americans are rich. As she reveals through song during a walk she takes with Horace:

I USED TO DREAM OF A MILLIONAIRE

HANDSOME AND YOUNG FROM THE STATES

TAKING ME OUT FOR A BREATH OF AIR

SAYING “THE CARRIAGE AWAITS”

BUT SINCE YOU HAVEN’T A SOU

AND I HAVE NOTHING TO DO

LET’S TAKE AN OLD FASHIONED WALK. (31-32)

The Countess supports Monique with a blunt remark: “An American without money is the greatest waste of time I ever heard of” (40). Later when Horace comes looking for Monique under the bridge, he shows the countess the money that had been wired to him by Bennett to pay for their return travel to the States. Additionally, he makes plans for them all to stay at a hotel and shop for new clothes before heading home on the finest ocean liner. Now the Countess in an amusing about-turn welcomes him. Then Horace proposes to take them out on the town for a night of extravagant celebration. But the Countess turns about once again, countering with a scathing retort. Her song “Only for Americans” is a biting satirical dig explaining how the French only put out extravagant wares and put on airs in order to get money from visiting Americans. She sings,

THE MIDNIGHT LIFE IN GAY PAREE

THE FRENCHMAN HE WOULD NEVER SEE

IT’S ONLY FOR AMERICANS

THE PRICES IN THE SMART CAFÉ

THE FRENCHMAN HE WOULD NEVER PAY

THE PRICE THAT’S MORE

IS ONLY FOR

AMERICANS FROM THE U.S.A.

…

WE BUY YOUR WORN OUT MINK AND SABLES

AND FIX THEM UP LIKE NEW.

WE SIMPLY CHANGE THE LABELS

AND SELL THEM BACK TO YOU. (42-43)

According to the authors, antics such as these reflect the feelings of the French people. Belittling Americans as gullible, post war audiences must have cringed knowing how many American citizens invested their lives and money to rescue the French only a few years beforehand. "While the American carouses," the Countess continues, "the French avoid those houses" (44). Then further into her song, she chides,

… A MOTHER IN LATIN QUARTER

WILL WHISPER TO A MAID

COME IN THE HOUSE MY DAUGHTER

HERE COMES THE TOURIST TRADE. (44)

The Countess's skewed vision sees only Americans who want to buy fancy things and visit the whorehouses. Stanzas such as these create complex questions regarding national relationships, perhaps leaving little room to question what the French really think of their American cousins. Especially when the Countess's final lines contentiously scream,

WE SPEND THEIR YANKEE DOODLE DOUGH

TO CLEAN UP PARIS WHEN THEY GO! (45)

The full lyrics also sadly intimate that the French, far from innocent themselves, are only interested in Americans for their money, something seconded by both Monique's dialogue and action. As America's new national goddess, it is financial fulfillment that appears paramount.

For Monique there is little hope of regaining any lost status. As a result, turning to Horace and his money, Monique can see a way out and into a middle-class American home.

As it was, class differentiated women's experiences revolving around work and home during the nineteenth century (Harding 26). While nineteenth-century working-class women joined the labor pool, middle-class women were expected to stay home and bear children. "The social importance of the wife," Jennifer Harding explains, "lay in her idleness, and non-productivity was an indicator or social standing" (26). The Miss Liberty script readily supports this notion through the character of Monique. Her grandmother chides the young woman with, "You have got to get work—because the time has come, my dear, for you to stop being so damn dainty!" (Sherwood 40). Even one post war review recognizes the late-nineteenth-century expectation for middle- and upper-class women, describing Monique as a "a messy sharp-willed flower-seller of Paris with the manners of an ornate countess" (Atkinson, Mediocre). However, selling flowers seems the closest Monique might get to real work. Such is not the case for post-war women who undoubtedly still recall their own new-found work status. Subsequently, however, cultural propaganda was created in order to highlight the productivity of the home. Designed to appease women who were forced back into the home from real productive jobs, the newly fashioned propaganda helped alleviate much of the growing tensions. While Maisie's fondest dream rests in the notion of some sort of productive home life, Monique's, to the contrary, rarely refers to the idea. In fact, beyond "spend[ing] the balance of the day in bed" with Horace (65), she never even mentions either the prospect of having children or a fulfilling domestic career.

The Marrying Kind

Whether sincere or not, Monique must be successfully fashioned as a plausible body for the waiting American public. Sadly, the authors go far afield in attempting to develop her as a sympathetic character. For example, upon Horace's first meeting with Monique, and after taking a few photographs at the studio, they take a brief stroll down by the Seine. Looking her up a couple of days later, he finds her under her bridge/home where he offers to pay her for her photograph. By this time he has already made up his mind that he will marry her and take her away to America. Professing their love for one another and after knowing each other for only one day Horace announces he comes with money and a ticket to America. Although intended as a feel-good musical that moves along quickly, the rapidity with which events unfold was probably not lost on post war audiences. Men and women alike might have been left reading Monique as a gold digger at best and prostitute at worst. Compounding the reading of impropriety, Horace doesn't ask Monique to marry him but rather announces his intentions by telling her he has booked the bridal chamber on board the ocean liner. Never actually proposing marriage, then, Horace only proclaims his love, and we are left to infer from the bridal chamber booking that a wedding is imminent. Not marrying Monique in France also allows that she travels as a virgin bride to America. It is only much later in the play, after having arrived in America and gone on tour as Miss Liberty that Horace talks of taking Monique away to Prender's Falls and tying the knot.

There is little doubt Miss Liberty's primary subtext is marriage, with the two women performing the contrasting roles of potential wife/sex kitten; a "dichotomy more frequently referred to as the "virgin/whore" dichotomy" (Byars 203). That being said, the authors throw the audience a curve ball by swapping their respective positions. One might expect that the

corresponding virgin and wife roles would be played out through Monique, while the sex kitten and whore displayed by Maisie. That is not the case, however. Instead the wife and whore roles are dominant through the character of Maisie, while the sex kitten/virgin becomes Monique. With such a jumbled scenario the audience might have been hard pressed to relate to either of the women since neither reflected a reality for postwar women. But struggle as they might, the play sets up Monique as the sex kitten, as we are introduced to her most conspicuously on display at the artist's studio in Paris. Enamored by her powerful sensuality in person, and reinforced further when Horace places her within the frame of his camera, Monique is aware of the reduction of her body to that of an erotic object and skillfully manipulates the situation with girlish giggles and a feigning of impropriety. But she does not stay this way—she is sold as a virgin mother to the American public.

That being said, and in order for the audience to accept Monique's transition from the position of Outsider and near Outlaw into an accepted member of society, the authors set about constructing a counter scenario for Maisie as someone who wants marriage but cannot have it. If we are to read Maisie through any sort of feminine lens at all, we also need to recognize the different constructions of femininity based on sexual understanding and practice. While Monique is naïve and virginal, Maisie is sexually experienced. As a seemingly independent woman, there is no doubt that Maisie looks and acts how she wants. However, while her mannish behavior might have been viewed as charming in the late 1880s, that same full-bodied and robust performance in the post-WWII era potentially relegates her into a negative social territory. For example, when regarding the negotiation and embodied contradictory constructions of femininity within the single text of Miss Liberty, the two primary women's roles of Monique and Maisie become overdetermined by the distinctions "between the exchange values of chastity and the lure

of sexual desire, and between naiveté and sexual experience (Byars 203). Such distinctions, Jackie Byars argues, divided women of the post war era into the marriageable and the non marriageable (203).

The creation of an outward identity, perpetuated through various aspects of forbidden performance coupled with the *desire* for independence and control over her own destiny and visual image, constructs Maisie as an Outlaw. As Byars might emphasize, post-WWII audiences familiar with Outlaw qualities and restrictions could read Maisie's desires as synonymous with current thinking about the more radical element. As such, "outlaw emotion" plays against a society in which "women achieved romantic attachments (the grounds for that all-important state, matrimony) precisely by giving up the power of self-definition" (212).

As the play progresses it becomes quite evident neither individual freedom nor public liberty truly drive Maisie's impulses, for her independent nature appears ready to conform to existing social standards as a means to finding personal happiness. Post-WWII, "most Americans viewed marriage as the exclusive road to happiness" with very few woman considering "a successful career as a single woman to be a desirable alternative" (Hartmann 179). Conversely, the domestic pattern pushed women into roles as good companions for their husbands, subsequently removing them from the competitive arenas of the working world (Brienes, Young 37). Betty Friedan explains, "In 1949, nobody really had to tell a woman that she wanted a man, but the message certainly began bombarding us from all sides: domestic bliss had suddenly become chic, sophisticated, and whatever made you want to be a lady editor, police reporter, or political activist, could prevent or destroy that bliss—bourgeois security, no longer despised" (10). As an interesting parallel between Maisie's era and that of the women of post-WWII, John Patrick Diggins emphasizes, "Only in the [nineteenth-century] private sector, in such

nonunionized fields as publishing and journalism, did women enjoy meaningful work with the promise of advancement" (26). Intensely advocated, another similar mindset and the reigning post war consensus held for Americans was that "the good life was defined by a well-equipped house in the suburbs" (Breines, Postwar 55). Also mandatory was a good job for the husband, while children would be taken care of by a full-time wife and mother (55). As Breines notes,

> [F]rom a gender perspective, the period was a paradox. Women continued to enter the labor force, while other indicators—prosperity, expansion of higher education, democratization of the family, and increased emphasis on sexual pleasure for married women—also suggest growing autonomy and equality for women after the war. Yet the fifties was politically and culturally conservative, particularly regarding gender and family issues, making these difficult years for women. Just as conditions for their emancipation reached fruition, notions of women's place narrowed. For young, white, middle-class women, the era offered liberating possibilities masked by restrictive norms. (56)

Just as many post-WWII women might, Maisie recognizes that her participation in the public sphere in fact precludes her from future happiness. Instead, women were called upon to pay more attention to their maternal duties. Social welfare experts and psychologists alike "emphasized women's biological destiny and diagnosed feminists as neurotic or worse. And, in articles, stories, and advertising, women's magazines glorified the housewife and mother" (Hartmann 212-13). In addition, lacking a strong feminist movement in the forties would lead to the percentage of women to men in the professions declining after 1945 (Diggins 25). Mel Gussows's commemorative 1983 review of the play comments on the song "Homework": "With its idyllic picture of a woman who is eager to be a doormat to 'the guy who comes home,' the

song is a chauvinistic artifact of another era" (C3). But one might wonder to which era he refers. As Paula Baker explains, all anti-suffragists and many suffragists of the nineteenth century agreed that "woman belonged in the home. From this domain, as wife, as daughter, and especially as mother, she exercised moral influence and insured national virtue and social order. Woman was selfless and sentimental, nurturing and pious. She was the perfect counterpoint to materialistic and competitive man whose strength and rationality suited him for the rough and violent public world" (620). Either way, the chauvinism is hardly lost, and in keeping with perhaps her own author-driven nostalgic zeal, Maisie turns down a job offer from Bennett in the hopes she can snag an economically secure future provided by Horace. She then immediately breaks into song:

> … HOMEWORK—I WANNA DO HOMEWORK
>
> INSTEAD OF AN OFFICE
>
> I WANNA WORK HOME
>
> STAYING
>
> AT HOME AND CROCHETING
>
> AND MEEKLY OBEYING
>
> THE GUY WHO COMES HOME…
>
> …
>
> … HOMEWORK—I WANNA DO HOMEWORK
>
> A GENIUS WHO SITS AND PLANS
>
> WITH POTS AND PANS—AT HOME
>
> A GENIUS WHO BAKES A PIE
>
> THAT KEEPS A GUY—AT HOME. (36-37)

Admittedly many hits of the late nineteenth century era were generally designed to reassure a swiftly changing culture. “Usually sentimental ballads extolling motherhood, home, and faithful sweethearts,” Laurence Bergreen reveals, “stood in sharp contrast to the harshness of urban life; offering escape to a simpler time and place, they were inevitably nostalgic” (36). Berlin’s biographer also reveals that Berlin often turned to his trunk songs for inspiration or cannibalization, and the “more Berlin wrote, the more his songs were informed by the discarded ghosts of his earlier tunes” (47). Perhaps some of Miss Liberty’s tunes were indeed “trunk songs: songs to be saved for future” (47). Even if not resurrected in their entirety, trunk songs could often “yield useful bits and pieces for new songs” (47).

When documenting the postwar era, Betty Friedan confesses that 1949 undeniably “saw the last of the spirited, brave, adventurous heroines who had filled the magazines and movies in the thirties and forties” (10-11). Only a short time earlier heroines who “got their man” were still “usually working toward some goal or vision of their own, independent and determined and passionately involved in the world” (246). However, they were also less aggressive in their pursuits and “less kittenish than the Doris Day little housewife that followed” (246). Maisie’s character appears to shadow Friedan’s finding as the song of a dream future for Maisie continues:

> … HOMEWORK—I WANNA DO HOMEWORK
>
> INSTEAD OF AN OFFICE
>
> I WANNA WORK HOME …
>
> …
>
> … A TABLE WIPER
>
> WHO CAN CHANGE A DIAPER …

…

… I LONG TO SETTLE WITH A STEAMING KETTLE

AND A FRYING PAN AND A POT

AND BE THE KEEPER OF A CARPET SWEEPER

THAT'S THE ONE AMBITION I'VE GOT

HOMEWORK

I WANNA DO HOMEWORK .... (37-38)

As a song centering upon a woman's place in the domestic sphere, this important musical solo for the character of Maisie also discloses a host of examples of how she plans to enact her domestic role. In and of itself the song seeks to turn Maisie into an "appropriately feminine" woman, one who reflects the dominant post war ideological positioning in which, according to Byars, "nurturing is good, self-interest is bad" (208). What is more, post war held powerful cultural norms exaggerating "traditional femininity, sexual and domestic. Notions of femininity and masculinity were emphatically differentiated, women expected to be domestic and dependent on men, and men to be breadwinners" (Breines, Young 33-34). Although forcing a focus on Maisie's desire and expectation to marry a man who will support her and free her from a job in the public sphere, the longing voiced in the song appears overblown and consequently disingenuous when studied in comparison to many of Maisie's other actions, all of which work contrary to the domestic fantasy dished out here.

Unfortunately, hardly free from her on-going mannish performance, the authors appear to have chosen to present Maisie's vilification through an oddly shaped satirical characterization. Dramaturgically, however, the satirical approach only works to release Maisie's touted desire and supposed conflict arising from any semblance of reality in order to point up the character's

more important position as an obviously deviant foil for Monique. What is more, a pronounced moral anxiety permeated postwar aesthetics informing "not only prescription[s] for private behavior but preoccupations about the destiny of the nation" (Penn 361). Donna Penn suggests, "The program for moral readiness focused on a domestic ideology that sought to contain female sexuality in the home, within marriage, and attended by motherhood" as a devise to "save the nation and the American family from foreign and domestic threats" (361). Deviant sexuality, Penn continues, "achieved an unprecedented place and face in the American imagination, for it served to define not only the parameters of proscribed gender and sexual behavior but also the fate of the nation" (361). As a result, the character of Maisie Dell supplies the requisite "evil" to which postwar audiences might relate.

The Deviant Outlaw

Maisie is a conflicted psyche performatively situated as one that easily alienates her from Horace as well as the play's viewership. The character of Maisie unmistakably creates personal and social parallels between the 1880s and 1940s, conflating the two eras as though they were the same. However, her outgoing nature, personal potency, and ability to conduct herself within the public sphere with the required strength of a man shatters the progressive 1880s vision of her when her overt masculinization feeds the post war need for Outsider vilification. Mid-twentieth-century women "who failed to conform lived under a social stigma greater than that which had marked their forebearers," Hartmann points out (179-80). During the nineteenth century, she continues, "the failure to marry was thought of 'as a social disadvantage and sometimes a personal tragedy but not necessarily as a quasi-perversion'" (179-80). However, the new post-war hostility toward Outlaw behavior resulted in suspected women's relations conflating with

other forms of deviant behavior (Meyerowitz 9-10). In Maisie's case the classification of sexual deviant propels her character to a new low.

During the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries, Penn points out, "expert observers often associated lesbians and 'mannish women' with unmarried career women, social reformers, and feminists" (359). Sexually deviant women were seen as fueled by desire, seduction, adventure, and fulfillment (362). By the 1920s, all of the women previously mentioned experienced some sort of vilification for any transgressions against the gender norm (359). During the post-WWII era, however, Outlaw/deviant performances resulted in an intensification of more ominous readings underscoring a subtle but "significant shift in thinking about the lesbian [and the mannish woman] from the prewar asexual career woman to, like the prostitute generally, a postwar sexual devil" (359). The Miss Liberty script provides at least two pronounced performances of the "sexual devil" within Maisie, the result of which flip her feminine agency around to create a character even more worthy of social vilification from the 1949 society.

The playfulness with which the authors portray Maisie as a sexual devil in the first act, however, quickly becomes a comical memory in the second act. As the play opens, Maisie as the aggressor vies for Horace's love, flirting with him first by jumping in front of the camera as he adjusts it toward the dedication stage. She raises her skirt declaring her legs as the "Biggest circulation builder of them all!" (Sherwood 19). Horace pays little mind, however, precipitating Maisie's song "What Do I Have To Do To Get My Picture Took" (19). Here she forwardly announces, "I'd like to spark with you. Having the plate develop in the dark with you" (19). Further into the song she brazenly brings up notions of their starting a family and having children. While this exchange may serve as a good-humored nostalgic recitation, to the post-

WWII audience the type of girl Maisie embodies means she would never get the guy. There is no redemption for the Outsider, especially when she slides into the realm of Outlaw.

In fact, many cultural purveyors including those from Hollywood and Broadway took it upon themselves to identify Outlaw behavior in their works, subsequently narrowing "the cultural space previously available that allowed them to go unnoticed, thereby delimiting if not establishing the boundaries of deviant female sexuality" (Penn 365). Many "questionable" female characters were, as a consequence, fashioned as sexually available. Berlin and Sherwood evoke that common postwar character ploy of the day through Maisie who, as many experienced working-class women of either era, would rarely attain their dreams (Byars 207). Also in following Byars thinking, "By being available for premarital sex," Maisie has crossed "a social boundary" (208). Availability is an essential requisite in countering Monique's more reserved nature. For if Monique were to appear as though she were sexually experienced, Horace, as a rather simple old-fashioned small town guy, might not fall for her. As Byars reminds us, "Although women were increasingly expected to be passionate as wives, premarital passion was definitely outlawed" (204). An independent female sexuality must be constrained by marriage. Consequently, the authors take the notion of Maisie's feminine playfulness and rely upon contemporary innuendo to transform her performance into that of a "sexual devil" with a socially illicit personal history. For example, Maisie's song "Falling Out of Love Can Be Fun," seems to be saying that after being jilted by a man, getting back in the dating scene should be fun. However, there is little mistaking this "she-devil" for anything other than a social outcast of the crudest type, as she sings:

> CROCODILE TEARS WILL NOT BE SHED
>
> THEY'RE NOT FOR A LADY LIKE I'M

I CAN RECALL WHAT MY AUNT SAID

WHEN SHE MARRIED FOR THE TWENTIETH TIME. (78)

Within this one packed stanza, we witness Maisie's recognition of self. But, what kind of a "lady" does Maisie consider herself? And, what kind of "lady" would marry so many times? It appears she recognizes her history as being a barrier to her own future happiness as she seems destined to walk in her aunt's footsteps. Although marriage for the twentieth time may have been intended as a comical quantity, it also sadly provides further evidence of Maisie's family history of unfulfilled marriages. She, like her aunt, should be used to men coming in and going out of her life. What is implied even more dramatically in a later verse, however, is that she is good enough to sleep with but not to marry. What is more, the ridiculousness of twenty marriages then turns Outlaw-ugly as the serious nature of a final verse provides an ultimate example of the socially unacceptable:

WHEN HE LEAVES BEFORE YOU HAVE WED

AND THE STORK IS OVER YOUR HEAD

SOON YOU'RE GONNA BE WITH A SHE OR A LADDIE

SMILE AS YOU GO SHOPPING FOR A DADDY

FALLING OUT OF LOVE CAN BE FUN. (79)

Has Maisie been left with a child to bear on her own? Perhaps so, for the idea is alluded to in both the earlier song of "You Can Have Him" when Maisie sings she wants to give Horace babies; then again after the Policeman's Ball at the end of the play with her short "Homework Reprise" in which she deems herself a capable "table wiper who can change a diaper" (72). Unlike Maisie, the character of Monique is unusually silent about her position of motherhood. And although "the figure of 'mother' is a very powerful and significant player in the construction

and regulation of contemporary sex/ualities" (Harding 92), the authors have chosen to reinforce notions of virginity for Monique as they appositionally position Maisie's character. With the exception of one short song welcoming participants to the Policeman's Ball at the end of the play, all of Maisie's songs reveal her intense longing for marriage and children. Unfortunately, what normally could be considered her maternal body working to support the "regime of heterosexuality and the binary categorization of sex" (92) becomes both abject and aberrant under the constructed narrative written by Berlin and Sherwood. What is more, although in opposition to Maisie in the love triangle, Monique's values prevail not because they are so strongly presented, but because Maisie's Outlaw performance dominates, undercutting her ability to read as a viable partner for any good man. As a result, more questions surround her ability to be a proper mother. Does Maisie compromise her ethics for the man she loves? Does she sleep with him before marriage? Breines points out, "Children were more important to women than husbands" during the postwar era, with a woman's eagerness to bear children [over maintaining a marriage] often based on feelings that pleasure, love, and joy could be found more readily with having children than in marriage (Young 54). Nevertheless, the authors make certain postwar audiences cannot empathize or pity a woman who sleeps with one or many men prior to marriage, and more seriously propose at least one of those unions results in a child out of wedlock. Unfortunately, the behavior of a sexually free woman that leads to a child born out of marriage seems almost quaint when considering the other extreme and unforgivable Outlaw roles Maisie is forced to play as well—those of lesbian and prostitute.

Illicit Mergers of the Social Self

Proper female sexuality, "heterosexual in orientation and reserved for the home and within marriage" (Penn 361), has traditionally been the stuff of American national propaganda for at least a century and a half. However, I think it important to note that Frank Caprio, a leading postwar psychoanalyst with expertise in the area of female homosexuality and sexual variance "went so far as to suggest that female promiscuity" was indicative of latent homosexuality (Penn 367). Gayle Rubin explains further:

> In the 1950s, in the United States, major shifts in the organization of sexuality took place. Instead of focusing on prostitution or masturbation, the anxieties of the 1950s condensed most specifically around the image of the "homosexual menace" and the dubious specter of the "sex offender." Just before and after World War II, the "sex offender" became an object of public fear and scrutiny. …The term "sex offender" sometimes applied to rapists, sometimes to "child molesters," and eventually functioned as a code for homosexuals. …The criminal justice system incorporated these concepts when an epidemic of sexual psychopath laws swept through state legislatures. These laws gave the psychological professions increased police powers over homosexuals and other sexual "deviants." … From the late 1940s until the early 1960s, erotic communities whose activities did not fit the postwar American dream drew intense persecution. (269-70)

Consequently, post war audiences might be led to conclude Maisie's "loose" character as something even more menacing to the American public. In order to further solidify traditional women's positionality, the postwar cultural framework required that the more reputable role of

women be “surrounded by uncontained, rather public expressions of illicit sexual behaviors. These behaviors were constituted in the form of the prostitute, the lesbian, and the prostitute as lesbian” (Penn 361). Working from the point of this significant cultural shift, the mannish woman propelled by the nostalgic turn proffered by the Miss Liberty script equates and could, because of the current propaganda, very easily be read as lesbian to the 1949 audiences. But even more so, Maisie’s character shifts again merging the lesbian persona with the prostitute, the full spectrum of lost womanhood.

Nineteenth-century prostitution, Harding explains, was of immense importance as the prostitute “represented ‘the other’ for ‘respectable’ (middle-class) married women” (27). However, it is important to note that prior to WWII, “the most prevalent culturally constructed image of lesbianism was rarely linked to prostitution” (Penn 359). Penn remarks that “both lesbians and prostitutes have been assigned to the category of deviance since the late nineteenth century, [what] was new in the postwar era was the extent to which experts exposed and publicized this connection and the uses to which it was put” (362). Consequently, linking the sexual deviant (lesbian/mannish woman) and prostitute creates Maisie as a constructed symbol of lost womanhood (362). Penn explains further:

> For many psychologists and their popularizers, these two examples of sexually deviant females not only represented two sorts of maladjusted women but often were one and the same. … Whether true or not, accurate or contrived, the significance of these portrayals lies in their power to fuse the lesbian and the prostitute as individuals and social categories that represented uncontained and therefore deviant female sexuality. (371)

By the 1950s, the relationship between the lesbian and prostitute was viewed as both common and real to the average citizen (372). As a result, when influenced by the current standards, post-WWII audiences could easily fall victim to the skewed thinking of combining the two outsider positions of lesbian and prostitute into one unacceptable cultural behemoth named Maisie. Consequently, and because of the severity of the existing cultural milieu, I read Maisie's Outlaw performance as a possible deliberate construction of fallen woman as imagined by post-WWII standards. To do so places the character of Maisie into a reprehensible and abject position and helps to propel the character of Monique into a more socially satisfactory position with the audience, despite her own questionable past.

In addition, Maisie's character would continue to effortlessly fuel the rising "national hysteria" concerning a perceived epidemic of sexual psychopathology that had risen during the immediate postwar years (367). Penn clarifies,

> Despite, or perhaps because of, a rhetoric in which deviant women might disguise themselves under the cloak of asexuality, many postwar experts and their popularizes sought to give these women a face and a name that the public could recognize for the neurotic, pathological, faulty adjustment that the experts believed it to be, thereby further narrowing the terms of and space for appropriate female sexuality. Thus the lesbian, now sexualized, joined the prostitute to form the boundaries of a circular model of deviance and served as a warning of what might befall those who would dare to stray from the increasingly restricted "straight and narrow" sexual ideology of these years. (368)

The authors plant a subtle but damaging example of Maisie's deviance of prostitution within scene 3. As a scene book ended by countering scenes taking place in France concerning

Monique, this moment finds them back in America in Bennett's office. Maisie enters Bennett's office in order to negotiate a story and financing on behalf of her photographer friend. Bennett offers her a seat, to which she responds: "No, thanks. I'm better on my feet—at least in working hours" (Sherwood 34). While little might be made of this statement today, at the time and when coupled with Maisie's "Homework" song that follows, an implication of looseness during non-working hours when she is better off of her feet cannot be missed. Maisie's uncontained female sexuality links with the postwar "cultural preoccupation with the lesbian and the prostitute as the symbols of moral decay" (Penn 361), fashioning her social performances as that of a sexual devil/deviant of the worst sort. Consequently, I find it highly ironic that the authors not only relegate Maisie to performing deviance but must alternately position her to serve as society's social sentry as well. The final lines of the last two stanzas in "Homework" serve as a caveat for all women to shun deviant behavior, with the exception of creating themselves as sexual devils to serve their husbands exclusively. The stanza reads,

> A GENIUS WHO DOES HER PART
>
> SO HE DON'T START—TO ROAM
>
> A GENIUS WHO EARNS HER KEEP
>
> THAT MAKES HIM SLEEP—AT HOME.
>
> …
>
> A GENIUS WHO KNOWS THE DAY
>
> HE STARTS TO STRAY—FROM HOME
>
> A GENIUS WHO MAKES HIM STAY
>
> AND SPEND HIS PAY—AT HOME. (37-38)

The last lines of the song pronounce that a good wife must put out sexually in order to keep her husband from paying a prostitute elsewhere. Leaving little to guesswork about Miss Liberty's attempt to vilify non married women, the authors accordingly also remind their audiences of post-WWII cultural extremes determining a woman's performance, labeling her as either an endorsed virgin-mother or an unauthorized outsider-prostitute.

Keep the Other in Their Space

Finally, one of the most compelling conditions driving a reading of Maisie's role as lesbian/prostitute hinges upon the issue of her domestic locale—New York's Lower East Side. During the late nineteenth century this area originally comprised of mostly honorable Jewish, Irish (of which given her name, Maisie probably situates herself), and Italian working-class residents. However, it is likewise important to note that during the later part of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth, the Lower East Side was also considered the red-light district of Manhattan. While the people, times, and conditions might have to some extent changed post-WWII, the poverty, exploitations, and inequality remained (Crozier). What is more, "in many cities," Penn explains, "the very same territory identified as the red-light district, in which prostitutes conducted their business, also contained or was adjacent to neighborhoods that housed many of the city's sites of gay nightlife" (372). Post war popular culture was highly successful in bolstering the association between these two groups, leading to the demonizing of both lesbians and prostitutes (377). As a result, a reading of Miss Liberty through the additional lens of geographic space conflates the two eras' outlooks regarding the perceived immorality of those characters living in New York's Lower East Side.

The new postwar hostility toward Outlaw behavior resulting in suspected women's relations conflating with other forms of deviant behavior also meant many would be subject to criminal prosecution (Meyerowitz 9-10). Penn provides key insight toward understanding that society in the postwar era held "an increasingly accepted view in which the lesbian and the prostitute, whether distinct individuals or one and the same, shared a cultural space as sexually defined women, thereby placing them at the margins of respectability" (369). Taken literally, the space shared by these women places them within dubious locations. Although a primary strategy employed for exposing the deviant was, at the very least, "to link her with the prostitute as the essence of female sexual deviance and danger," many popular postwar texts often went further by linking "perverted sexuality, drug addiction, and crime" (369). As a way of reinforcing public beliefs about the growing plague of deviance, turn-of-the-century social scientists "linked the lesbian, the prostitute, and female criminal offenders generally" as they attempted "to establish the environmental and social influences contributing to the formation of the 'criminal type,'" rather than adhering to some strictly biological explanation for the deviance (363). However, Penn points out, "the full power of this linkage was reserved for the post-World War II decades" (363).

The authors' heavily romanticized treatment of the Lower East side area would have us believe it to be a rather idealistic space where thugs and criminals get along positively with the local law enforcement. Unfortunately, postwar audiences might not have had the power to resist substituting Miss Liberty's romantic view with the stark reality of events currently unfolding outside of their theatre. After the war, Rebecca Lepkoff explains, "When the men came back … they were anxious to start their lives, and they didn't want to do it on the Lower East Side. [With the better economy in the late 1940s] there was an exodus of the Lower East Side's Jewish

population to the suburbs, and new black, Asian, and Spanish-speaking immigrant populations moved in" (qtd. in Steed). The reality of post war paints a rather different picture than is supplied by Miss Liberty, as vice-control units of local police departments aimed at ridding the city of deviants meant, "the hooker, the whore, the B-girl, the call girl, the expense-account girl, and the homosexual all became victims of police raids, harassment, and arrests" (Penn 371). Inundated by the substantial rise in newspaper articles during the postwar period clearly documenting the cleanup of the red-light district on the Lower East-Side, audiences safely harbored in their theatre seats could hardly ignore the struggle or its historical parallel (372).

Perhaps this is also the world Berlin and Sherwood hoped to improve upon when they propose a highly idealistic glimpse into Maisie's Outlaw world. For example, during the late nineteenth century, Rubin explains that,

> [P]owerful social movements focused on "vices" of all sorts. There were educational and political campaigns to encourage chastity, to eliminate prostitution, and to discourage masturbation, especially among the young. Morality crusaders attacked obscene literature, nude paintings, music halls, abortion, birth control information, and public dancing. The consolidation of Victorian morality, and its apparatus of social, medical, and legal enforcement, was the outcome of a long period of struggle whose results have been bitterly contested ever since. (268)

With that, Miss Liberty's Act 2, Scene 6 takes us to the (in)famous Walhalla Hall. In reality, Walhalla Hall was a great civic and fraternal center of the 10th ward within the Lower East Side. As one biographer describes it, the hall was a place where "marriages were celebrated, dances organized, union activities discussed, and revolution plotted by tailor anarchists and peddler

socialists" (Crozier). Building upon history, the authors establish its lower-class atmosphere through descriptive lyrics about the participants' attire during a forthcoming neighborhood dance:

> … DANCING 'ROUND GETTIN' HOT 'NEATH THE COLLAR
> IF IT STARTS TO WILT FROM THE LACK OF STARCH
> THERE'LL BE SIX YOU CAN BUY FOR A DOLLAR
> …
> EACH DRESSED UP IN A SUIT MADE OF COTTON
> PATENT LEATHER SHOES THAT ARE MUCH TOO
> SMALL. (68-69)

Poverty not withstanding, however, it is the criminal element that reads most vividly. Berlin could draw upon his firsthand knowledge here. Growing up living in the heart of the Lower East Side, reveals biographer Bergreen, Berlin resided on Cherry Street, a place "so disreputable and dangerous that many took care to avoid it" (6-7). However, the authors move contrarily to construct an unrealistic safe-haven where law enforcement and the criminal element appear to have come to a truce, no matter how improbable or lasting it may be. It is the night of the Policeman's Ball[2] and Maisie sells tickets outside of the door, enticing people to enter and join the fun. Of those notorious elements, she greets Pinkie who is out on parole for assault and battery and Joe whom she reminds to check his brass knuckles in the cloakroom. Appositionally, police officers, the owners of the two leading papers—Mr. Pulitzer and Mr. Bennett, as well as

[2] Inscribed on the poster for the Policeman's Ball are the words, "Come one, come all, for fun and frolic in the worship of Terpischore." Terpischore is one of the nine muses ruling over dance and the dramatic chorus, and also known as the Mother of the Sirens. She was portrayed by WWII pinup girl Rita Hayworth in the 1947 film Down to Earth by Columbia Pictures, perhaps making her an anachronistic inspiration for the poster (http://claudia79.tripod.com/earth.html). 1949 audiences would be hard pressed to miss this reference.

Mr. Fox of The Police Gazette, all join in the festivities. Bartholdi, too, has arrived from France in order to watch the unveiling ceremony. Gaiety not withstanding, by the end of the play audiences might be hard pressed to find any redeeming value in Maisie's character. In attempting to create a character postwar audiences could accept as their own Miss Liberty, it appears a necessity to position her against an all-American girl gone bad. What is more, by positioning Maisie as a permanent resident of the Lower East side, there will be little to no hope for advancement. For Monique, however, geographical space becomes a primary mode for her transition. In order for the audience to really acknowledge her transition, though, we must witness Monique making the journey both literally and figuratively. Portrayed as a social outcast perched on the precipice of deviance in Act I, Monique's journey leaves Maisie far behind as the redeemed Outcast finds refuge through the embodied performance of Lady Liberty.

Uncomfortable Affirmations of the Ideal

By Act II a new woman emerges, one more in accordance with the nation's postwar idealistic standards and codes of womanly behavior. Although Monique begins her relationship with the audience as a possible deviant and social outcast, Berlin and Sherwood literally recoup her character before she reaches American soil. By the top of the second act of the play, Monique no longer resembles the "wretched refuse" from across the sea. Arriving first class on the most prestigious ocean liner of its day, one might almost forget her humble and questionable beginnings. A telling exchange comes as Horace and Monique take in the view of New York harbor from the bridal chamber stateroom on board the RMS "AURANIA" ocean liner:

> Horace: Look at that, Monique—look—that's the Brooklyn Bridge.
>
> Monique: What a thing to live under!

> Horace: And there's Manhattan—the Battery—Castle Garden! That's where the immigrants come in. But not us. We're First Class!" (50)

Monique's class status as an important indicator for social acceptance changes radically during the voyage. Ordering the best champagne and eating the finest epicurean delights also comes with Horace spending great amounts of money to re-costume the women in the latest and highest of fashions. The script specifically mentions that Monique is "beautifully costumed by Worth" (51), one of the finest French fashion houses still to this day. This is also a significant moment marking the character of the arriving virgin/mother, for it appears as though Monique has both set and received her purchase price as she travels via first-class accommodations toward her new home.

She is a natural at her performance of the new Miss Liberty, passing as elite and servicing the ideal well before she ever puts on the Liberty costume during the final scene at the Policemen's Ball. As the entourage exits the ship, the mayor and locals, the French ambassador and Bennett all position themselves to greet Monique and her entourage. Residents carry banners welcoming Miss Liberty to America. The dock, too, filled with banners and flags also contains several large streamers readings, "THE NEW YORK HERALD PROUDLY HAILS MISS LIBERTY IN PERSON!" (54). There is no question as to whom the crowd has come to welcome, nor any confusion about her benefactor. Bennett reaffirms with, "It remained for The New York Herald to bring you not just a statue, but the embodiment of Liberty" (54). As Monique stands on the top of the gangplank the crowd bursts into song:

> LIBERTY, MISS LIBERTY
>
> WE WELCOME YOU HERE TO OUR SHORES
>
> LIBERTY, MISS LIBERTY

THE KEY TO THE CITY IS YOURS

LIBERTY, MISS LIBERTY

WITH BANNERS AND STREAMERS UNFURLED

YOU'RE NOT JUST THE SYMBOL OF

A STATUE THAT WE LOVE

BUT THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN THE WORLD. (Sherwood 55)

For post war audiences the scene feeds the highly charged current arising from Hollywood (to which Berlin and Sherwood had significant connection) and spreading across the nation. Perpetuating and directing a national desire "to emulate those representing the American Dream," writers and artists spearheaded a renewed "myth of national solidarity and prosperity" (Corre and Ross 24). To counteract any direct threat from a strong independent woman to the visions of masculine America, many creative elements turned to promoting an "excessively feminine fantasy girl" (like the pin-up girl), forming a precise model of womanhood (24). Much like the starlets of the day, the author's stage directions read, "Monique is given a typical, gaudy, frenzied New York welcome. She is burdened with a huge gold key to the city—tablets, plaques, parchment scrolls, American beauties, vaudeville contracts, etc. She is assailed by autograph seekers, snatched at by souvenir hunters" (Sherwood 57). However lovely, though, another corresponding postwar notion consistently parodied during this time created an American Dream for everyone to believe that also included "the precept of the beautiful but dumb woman" (Corre and Ross 24). Consequently, "the conservative messages regarding women in the postwar period" blossomed as a policy of containment and "women were encouraged, even forced, to defer to men in public and at home" (Breines, Young 33). The remainder of Miss Liberty's welcoming song says as much:

1st Girl:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO DINE SOME EVENING WITH THE ASTORS?

Bennett:

SHE'D LOVE TO.

2nd Girl:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY A WEEK AT TONY PASTORS?

Bennett:

SHE'D BE DELIGHTED.

Minister:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME TO TRINITY ON SUNDAY?

Bennett:

CHARMED.

Admiral:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LAUNCH A BATTLESHIP ON MONDAY?

Bennett:

SHE'D LOVE IT. (Sherwood 55-56)

As Bennett speaks from his hegemonic position as a rich white man of power, postwar audiences could not miss how the current trends also worked so vehemently to conspire "to enforce the idea that femininity equaled stupidity" (Corre and Ross 23). As stage directions dictate, Monique is "really scared" and "looks helplessly back at Horace" (Sherwood 56-57). Given the directive, I am reminded of Butler's note on gender performance: "Surely, there are nuanced and individual ways of *doing* one's gender, but *that* one does it, and that one does it *in accord with* certain sanctions and proscriptions, is clearly not a fully individual matter" (Performative 276). As a

result, Monique is never further from controlling her own self as “the MAYOR takes her by the hand and leads her down to the platform” (Sherwood 57).

From the moment Monique disembarks she is thrust into the limelight and hustled off on a whirlwind promotional tour. A brief but harried train scene follows her barrage of fans as she makes her way to Middle America and back again. Finally, the exhausted Monique returns to her parlor suite in the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York City. She is not only tired but, at the end of it all, profoundly unhappy. She no longer wants to represent the nation nor be paraded about. When her ingratitude is questioned, she screams, “And what have I got to be grateful for? What have I done since I got here? I’ve seen nothing but monuments—parades—cornerstones. I’ve heard nothing but speeches. I’ve christened a mountain—I’ve launched a battleship. I’m sick and tired of it! I want to see Horace!” (62). Her resulting ugly mood, reminiscent of a spoiled child, shakes the audience back to reality. Monique is not a goddess, not an ideal, but rather a real woman with real feelings. Unfortunately, though, Monique’s uncontrolled emotional display might again also remind postwar audiences of their own more current social dispositions. As Wini Brienes brings to light, the existence of a propensity toward the repetition of words such as “authentic,” “genuine,” and “real” propelled postwar young women’s search for something significant at a time that for them lacked any sense of being real. For many women, being sheltered, virginal, and female “precluded the experience of meaningfulness” (Postwar 60). But that is not what we have with Miss Liberty. With Monique comes a selfish and willful nature, immature and scarcely ideal. Instead reminders that “the culture was rife with hypocrisy, with everyone keeping up appearances (by keeping up feminine appearances) in one form or another, generated a yearning for genuine feeling” (60). Unfortunately those genuine responses, otherwise known as Outlaw emotions, could not easily coexist with dominant perceptions and values (Jagger160). As Alison

Jaggar explains, “Outlaw emotions and the structures of feeling into which they are organized achieve signification far more subtly than residual, dominant, or emergent ideologies” (201). The 1950s, Breines writes, are a paradox, filled with exaggerated contradictions, giving special rise to girls that both rebelled and explored. “Camouflaged by an apparent and cheerful stability,” she continues, “they were attracted to various forms of difference and to new feminine lives” (Young Intro. 11). However, it seems Miss Liberty might work more pointedly as a warning to all those thinking of moving beyond the status quo. For Horace’s timely arrival on the scene reflects what should be her destiny as he prepares to whisk her away from it all and into marriage and middle America.

Still, before Monique and Horace are allowed to start their new life together, Miss Liberty must make one final showing at Walhalla Hall to marshal in the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty. What is more, Walhalla Hall will provide the geographic and psychic space to solidify the differences between Miss Liberty’s two leading women, assuring the audience recognizes that Maisie must remain in her lower-class status while Monique transitions on and up. As a symbol of the nation’s elitist control, though, Berlin and Sherwood make certain audiences understand that the creation and institution of idealism must be paid for in some way. And in this situation a slight loss of virtue is the price. Hardly a virtuous action in which to engage, especially for the ideal Miss Liberty, Monique agrees to continue the subterfuge so skillfully crafted by those around her. Together the newspaper moguls’ and their employees’ (including Monique) decision leads to the entire American public falling victim to this grand scheme organized to ensconce Monique as the ideal vision of woman and nation. For those involved, they tell themselves it is a necessary lie, a lie for the good of America. In spite of this, however, when Monique finds out that Bartholdi, Pulitzer, and Bennett now all know about the

ruse she becomes delirious with joy. “It’s over! I’m free! Goodbye, Miss Liberty!” (Sherwood 74), she celebrates. Ironically, it seems as though Monique is being held hostage by the nation’s most revered symbol of freedom.

On another note, for postwar audiences, the appearance of Bartholdi, Bennett, and Pulitzer all together at Walhalla Hall must have seemed out of place and conspicuously awkward with respect to its historical accuracy. Certainly many in the audience would know of the famous Pulitzer’s immigrant beginning. What is more, they might also have been quite aware of the real relationship he and his paper had with both Bennett and the famed statue. Joseph Pulitzer was a Hungarian Jewish immigrant, Babcock and Macaloon explain, “who used his newly acquired *New York World* to embarrass Americans into contributing” to the building of the pedestal and final installation of the statue (91). He then “appropriated the statue as his masthead, made her the people’s woman, and raised both the money and the circulation of his newspaper to the largest in the Western Hemisphere” (91). No doubt, in creating the oppositional within the conventional, the authors follow Pulitzer’s lead by appealing to the “common” woman and man, both to create a symbolic exchange value for the statue predicated upon and signifying class solidarity (Silverman 22). As monies poured in from rich and poor alike, “the American people made it an image of themselves and signaled their acceptance of the French gift” (Silverman 22-34). Sadly, Pulitzer also managed to paradoxically further the binarism between rich and poor as he daily published lists and statuses of those responding to the call (22-23). Perhaps because of this fact, the play creates opportunities to dredge up unwanted memories for the viewers, or just as pointedly, to remind them that little has changed since Liberty’s arrival.

Before taking her leave, however, Maisie asks Monique to “mix in with the real people. Show ’em that Miss Liberty doesn’t just belong to Bennett and the Herald but to everybody!”

(Sherwood 74). However, before they can get out of town, Bennett has Maisie, Horace, and the Countess arrested for fraud with the intention of deporting the women from Castle Garden and jailing the photographer. As the women await extradition, the area crowded with immigrants causes the Countess to recoil and object to having to wait in such a filthy place. In no way reminiscent and noticeably opposite from the women's arrival to America at the ending of the first act, an officer retorts "This is where they come in, lady, and this is where they go out—except when they are traveling first class" (80). Stripped of their first-class status might have been Berlin and Sherwood's way of reaffirming our national mythology of the people's equity. However, the historical facts of those entering through Castle Garden could also have provided postwar audiences with yet another uncomfortable historical twist. According to historian Rudolph Vecoli, "In 1882, the first broad federal immigration law excluded convicts, lunatics, idiots, and paupers" (44). As a result, had Monique and the Countess not been shepherded into the country as first-class patrons they more than likely could not have entered America at all. What is more, having been stripped of their assigned higher status at the end of play might also have resulted in their automatic deportation out again. Regardless and because of pressures from the city's hoodlums (spurred on by Horace and Maisie) who protest the women's treatment and financially cripple his newspaper, Bennett is forced to yield and agrees against deportation. Ultimately, Monique and the Countess find themselves excluded from the rules yet again and, although some elites might have preferred their exportation, it is the common people, with Pulitzer as their voice, who see to it that America's Liberty personification remains. It seems a significant note that Pulitzer once again receives credit for the release of the women and the saving of Miss Liberty.

As the walls of Castle Garden disappear, the final scenic moments give the audience a fully lit and glowing Statue of Liberty. Positioned upstage the statue serves as backdrop to Monique who sings the closing hymn "Give me Your Tired, Your Poor" (Sherwood 82-83). Visually conflating the real with the ideal, Monique's song becomes the voice of Liberty as the romantic notions of inclusion, optimism, and position translate into the seeds of a new national mythology. One final time the audience receives confirmation of Monique's transition from foreigner to national, and from Outsider to accepted citizen. Going from flawed woman to being the ideal representative, Monique performs the narratives of hope and betterment that are the American national dream.

Conclusion

As a nostalgic work produced when the country was intent on looking forward with progress, much of the play's positioning of women actually works as a reminder that little progress had been made for women's agency. Whether considering the female characters of Miss Liberty or the crude attempts to create (I would hope) worthy personal and social relationships, Berlin and Sherwood instead turn to longstanding notions of womanhood and Outsider/Outlaw identities coupled with our native postwar conflict with France, as creative fuel for their American narrative of nationalism. Perhaps this is why Berlin's biographer writes that

> Berlin was as awed as anyone else by his power to command the public's attention, and he was exceedingly cautious, even timid, about using his power. He recognized that his reputation would never last if he attempted to extend popular opinion in an unfamiliar direction; to lend his prestige to an unpopular cause

> would be to risk losing it. His mission was to express latent thoughts and feeling, not to invent them. (Bergreen 163)

What is more, even though some shifting postwar constructions of American identity construction railed against racial, ethnic, class, and gendered Others (Breines, Postwar 58), Berlin and Sherwood's rather muddy attempt at patriotism seems to mostly support the existing cultural biases. Even the life of newspaper mogul James Bennett might have provoked a bit of ire. In order to reaffirm Liberty's French ties, for example, the Mayor presents Bennett as a "great New Yorker—that great American." However, while Bennett was well known for his ties with France in the later part of the nineteenth century, by the mid-twentieth-century he had fallen in disfavor for that connection, making him much less popular with the American public. Or perhaps the viewers of the day were delighted to see Liberty enacted as a young vibrant and sexual persona; however given the tenuous nature of Monique's character, they conversely might have been loathe to see her as a French woman chosen over an American.

Christian Blanchet points out that as a product of its time, the Statue of Liberty "responded directly to major issues and concerns prevailing at the end of the nineteenth century—both political and aesthetic" (27). Uniquely transitive in its ability to speak to our country's most current generation, however, as the Statue of Liberty comes together with its embodied sister within the play, new issues and concerns emerge. Fashioned less as a critique of those social norms and traditional performances of women as national mothers and protectors, Miss Liberty still gives voice to her echoes of equity and agency for American women. And just as sex is always political, Rubin reminds us, "there are also historical periods in which sexuality is more sharply contested and more overtly politicized" (267). The women of the postwar era, much like those of the late nineteenth century, were subjected to a repetition of social and

cultural disempowerment. “When our theatres perform plays of other periods,” Brecht stipulates, “they like to annihilate distance, fill in the gaps, gloss over differences” (276). Such might have been the case for those postwar audiences attending Miss Liberty. What is more, Brecht tells us that audience spectators are akin to historians, referring “both to the spectator’s detachment, her ‘critical’ position, *and* to the fact that she is writing her own history even as she absorbs messages from the stage” (267).

Butler argues that “gender performances in non-theatrical contexts are governed by more clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions” (Performative 278). That being said, however, the theatrical stage as a place that routinely challenges current modes of thought also has the ability to both reflect the cultural performances going on outside its walls and give rise to new directions for its spectators. Although “a real woman in the place of the ideal challenges the ever-elusive character of the ideal itself, and says something unequivocal about women” (Warner 281), Miss Liberty does little to evoke anything new. For example, when during her song with Maisie, Monique believes Horace has abandoned her; she is willing to give him over to Maisie figuring “he’s not worth fighting for” (Sherwood 65). What is more, both believe any man would in the end suffice. That same notion of non specificity documented by Friedan about post war women reads, “it almost didn’t matter who the man was who became the instrument of your feminine fulfillment” (10-11).

Traditional notions of femininity, Breines tells us, “were promoted with a vengeance in the postwar period,” while “the male observers of society were largely unconcerned or insensitive to its impact” (Young 36). There is little difference in Miss Liberty when Horace literally falls in love with the image of a woman. “The nineteenth-century ‘lady’ was idealized in terms of delicacy and dreaminess, sexual passivity, and a charmingly labile and capricious

emotionality," Bordo reminds us (The Body 169). Horace, as his postwar counterparts, hardly seems to recognize the individualism of women much less never seeing the idea behind identity, the notion of liberty. Not surprisingly, while Maisie's quest to eliminate her stigma of Otherness and gain independence becomes her destiny, Monique's character concentration remains at the level of visual. Either way, though, both either lose or relinquish much of their agency and identity to a male hegemony bound toward cultivating women's images and behaviors. What is more, in order for audiences to more easily recognize and acceptingly come to terms with Berlin and Sherwood's vision of Monique as an ideal model for national consumption, they supply us with an anti heroine—a negative character—through the body of Maisie. That Maisie's character is so filled with conflicting personality traits and drives provides even greater support for my theory that mid-century influences insistently percolate throughout the text. For example, by making Maisie so brazenly mannish on one hand and yet on the other a women who practically screams for marriage and children makes me wonder whether the authors are perhaps attempting to tell us that quests for motherhood have the ability to relocate the Other/Outsider as socially acceptable. Acting in tandem and as consigned by cultural norms, spectators are able to compare and contrast features of the idyllic with those of implied imperfection.

A 1949 New York Times article heralded Miss Liberty as a hit after its premiere, holding "the audience enthralled through three hours and fifteen minutes" (Philadelphia). Ten days later Brooks Atkinson writing for the same newspaper declares the work a "Mediocre Musical: An Opportunity is Missed with 'Miss Liberty.'" Continuing it reads, "Given the Statue of Liberty on the one hand and Robert E. Sherwood, Irving Berlin and Moss Hart on the other, a cautious theatergoer is likely to expect something with spirit and flavor. … 'Miss Liberty' is a commonplace musical show … done to a worn formula without imagination or originality" (XI).

Moreover and as one reviewer comments, “Because of its subject matter, the show is resolutely patriotic, but, surprisingly, it is only peripherally concerned with questions of immigration” (Gussows). In fact, the show’s New York tenure was extended only because a soon-to-open subsequent play had to be scrapped (Zolotow 35). Closing in March of the following year, the production did go on tour for less than two months, but as a later byline reads, “Will Close in Chicago After a Financially Disappointing Two-Week Stand There” (Shanley 10). In the last fifty-plus years every so often Americans see a return of Berlin and Sherwood’s Miss Liberty. And although in one sense it fulfills our longing as a nation for narratives of patriotism, the play’s social inconsistencies and highly problematized notions of identity keep it mostly, and happily to my mind, relegated to the history books.

CHAPTER II

MISS CONGENIALITY AND THE NATIONAL SYMBOLIC: CONSTRUCTION OF THE FEMININE IDEAL

Beauty pageants are not about beauty.
They are about power.
—Kimberly Hamlin

Introduction

The film Miss Congeniality merges the fictive world of storytelling with the real world of American pageantry. The use of a real world corporation, pageant elements, live telecasting, certain legitimate contestants, and an owner as pageant commentator creates an illusion of reality that goes beyond what might normally be expected with a fully fictionalized accounting. Written by Marc Lawrence, Katie Ford, and Caryn Lucus and directed by Donald Petrie, the film tells the story of a female FBI agent who must go undercover in the Miss United States beauty pageant to prevent the bombing of the event. The Miss United States pageant as both a real and fictive narrative produces and reifies national ideologies that have become standard within the American culture. This chapter explores the performances of nationalism and gender from two singular yet overlapping perspectives, each of which, according to Richard Schechner, are "bounded events marked by context, convention, usage, and tradition" (Performance 42). The first performance frame focuses on the convention of the display of nationalism via the beauty pageant, and the second frame spotlights the more loosely defined performativity of gender as revealed through the character of Gracie Hart's (played by Sandra Bullock) and other women's journeys on and off the pageant stage. As a socially constructed "performative" mode employing mimesis and stylized discursively motivated acts or actions that achieve naturalization through the process of constant repetition (Butler, Gender 146), the performances of gender and nation

reify ideals of the annual national pageant as it both repeats, (re)posits, and (re)constructs norms that subsequently maintain the status quo.

Although espousing itself as apolitical, the Miss United States pageant (like many others) nevertheless produces and forms what could be termed a "National Symbolic" (Banet-Weiser Miss America 71). Accordingly, Sarah Banet-Weiser explains, "The pageant spectacularly performs every element of the National symbolic for a collective national subjectivity: It constitutes icons and heroes, it functions as a metaphor for the collective nation, and it offers a classic liberal narrative of individualism (i.e., overcoming obstacles, pulling oneself "up by the bootstraps," etc.) as the appropriate life trajectory" (71). The pageant as a "political space of the nation" allows for a space of representation, desire, and fantasy. Likewise the space and the pageant "produces images and narratives that articulate dominant expectations about who and what 'American' women are (and should be) at the same time as it narrates who and what the nation itself should be through promises of citizenship, fantasies of agency, and tolerant pluralism" (71). As such, the gendered construction of a national identity becomes "both a statement of the *gendered* nation and the feminine body of the *nationalist*" (71). As the pageant merges discourses of femininity and nation, the individual body of the contestant metaphorically "stands in" for the nation at large (71).

In this film the hyper narrative designed around the pageant icon of the Statue of Liberty visually merges our national symbol with the pageant women. It is this merger which transforms the pageant event from one most generally referred to as a beauty pageant into a locus for the national construction of an ideal American to serve as our national representative. What is more, the creation of a national space that dominates the final pageant performance also declares all the contestants as synonymous with our country's greatest icon. Their conflation with Liberty

eliminating partisanship and individual affiliation demands the contestant base to reflect the greater ideals of freedom and democracy.

On another level, and while the conflationary narrative remains tantamount, I also regard the film's use of parody as a rhetorical device to motivate and highlight the performances of women and nationalism, aspects central to the film's ultimate success as social critique as well as entertainment. The filmmakers address both the follies of society at large and how those follies are played out within the institution of the national pageantry system. This is especially evident when viewing the DVD Director's notes in which director Petrie speaks to this issue. He says, "[in] casting all the pageant girls, I thought it was really important we cast real girls not super models. I didn't want to spoof pageants or pageant contestants. That had been done and done many times. And really, if you take a pageant and take it as seriously as they do, it kinda spoofs itself" (Miss). This remarkable statement places the issues and people satirized in a double bind typical of satire, a parodic genre. Frequently ambiguous, obscure, or double-edged, "satire typically displays "dialogical parody" which embraces "neither orthodoxy nor heterodoxy" but produces a moment when "different voices or points of view enter into unresolved dialogue" (Griffin 33-34.). Contingent upon use of the parodic form as a vehicle for the transference of the concepts under investigation, Linda Hutcheon might remind one that postmodern art, such as this film, is inherently contradictory. Just as Miss Congeniality works to install order, it likewise works to disrupt and demystify those everyday processes that help us to structure and assign meaning to our lives (A Poetics 7). In particular, Miss Congeniality affirms and then intentionally undermines such principles as value, meaning, control, and identity as "it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (A Poetics 11).

The linking of live production with the televised, and presenting them through the medium of film, adds a richer context to the narrative and creates a complex satirical matrix. Broadly defined, Sarah Bay-Cheng explains, mediated theatre is "any theatrical performance originally created for live performance (that is, live actors in visual proximity to a live audience, although this distinction is hardly absolute) and subsequently recorded onto any visually reproducible medium, including film, videotape, or digital formats, presented as two-dimensional moving images on screens" (37). While the issue of meditated theatre will present itself more definitively during my discussion on spaces for desire and fantasy toward the end of this chapter, the overarching notion of mediatization when applied broadly to Miss Congeniality provides us an opportunity to evaluate the use of "media documents as evidence of performance" (Bay-Cheng, Notes 47). As an ontological medium constituting a mixed-reality performance, both nation and the individual blur through the colonization of liveness (Auslander 13). The resulting simulacrum, as per the Baudrillardian paradigm, yields a liminal state for the individual and demands a more complex assessment of how any individual responds, resists, and or resides within the national nexus.

Especially pertinent for the women of Miss Congeniality, current research also indicates "that media portrayals typically construct rather narrow and stereotypical portraits of women and femininity… . For female characters, the focus is on physical appearance, sexual appeal, and romantic success" (Ward and Harrison 3). What is more, "as a primary vehicle of contemporary cultural mythology," film also "transforms the ideology of patriarchy" creating images that are routinely seen as natural (Paulson 135). Lynn Paulson provides a succinct exposition from her 2005 essay in Featuring Females: Feminist Analyses of Media: "Whether film, television, or print media, popular culture does not serve the function of representing the real world so much as

it reveals, reinforces, and shapes the cultural beliefs, values, and myths held about the 'real world'" (135). Ripe with performances of gender norms, gender construction, and conflationary elements and moments, the moral and cultural ideas and ideals of Miss Congeniality provoke an inherent satirical playfulness that promotes, in stealth-like fashion, a revisiting of the national rule book instructing the chosen few how to model the ideal. What is more, the film's positioning of women nearly void of conflict with their own gendered identities creates a forum for spectators to question the deeply embedded cultural process of gender naturalization as it connects with the "National Symbolic." The women come together to emulate Lady Liberty in representing the values of the American people writ large through bodies on display, the experience of the Miss United States pageant. As a civic performance extraordinaire, the film Miss Congeniality provides a telling revelation about the extent to which citizens will go to maintain idealistic illusions of self and nation. That being said, and while it is not certain to what extent the authors intended to introduce the overt nationalism into their satiric discourse with the inclusion of the icon of Lady Liberty, the results are difficult to ignore. Irregardless of her confined space, she nonetheless looms over the pageant, both tacitly and explicitly, reaching beyond the intended spectacle of the screen proper to influence and conduct the performances of all concerned.

Moving from the individual toward a larger picture of the construction and performance of nationalism and nationhood, a reading of themes and characters in Miss Congeniality creates a comprehensive forum for the discussion of performative gender politics. Constituted metaphorically, the contestant stands in for the nation, creating visual evidence of a political subjectivity embodied in/on the feminine body (Banet-Weiser, Miss America 72). However, Shannon Jackson's words might serve as a needed warning regarding the "formal problem of

female representation" on the whole. She reminds one of the "long tradition of feminist political theory [that] tells us, public women bear the burden of standing in for the communities to whom they are speaking in a way that exceeds and skews the conventions of representation, in political and performative senses of the term" (693). Consequently, as I will argue, in Miss Congeniality the "National Symbolic" as embodied and performed by the pageant contestant constitutes nothing short of a collective national subjectivity as it forms icons and heroes, offers a classic narrative of a self-motivated individualism, and functions as a metaphor for the nation (Banet-Weiser, Miss America 71).

Metaphor for a Collective Nation—Spaces and Places

Hardly coincidentally, Miss Congeniality uses the geography of space and place with unabashed appeal to further the metaphor for a collective national consciousness. Just as the national pageant process functions as the National Symbolic, it only goes to follow that spaces in which the pageant takes place would likewise represent our nation. There is little doubt that the scenic design presented at the Majestic Theatre on the night of the pageant's airing magnifies national symbolism tenfold. But before addressing the spectacular scenic creation of that night, I think it pertinent to address how other spaces leading up to that within the walls of the Majestic Theatre help to set the tone of nationalism. Indeed, both the FBI headquarters and the Alamo work as establishing devices to ground the film's preoccupation with nationalism as both a contested and noble ideal.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation

The first reference to nationalism appears in the institution of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). What might have been a criminal act that either local or state protection agencies could investigate, the filmmakers instead create the need for a national agency. In addition to having the actions of "The Citizen" move from one state to the next, the use of a familiar terrorist device of a bomb requires an agency such as the FBI. Being an employee of a federal agency conveniently situates the female protagonist, Hart, as a player on a national stage. Her jurisdiction and those of the agency demand a national politic and consideration over and above any limited state associations. What is more, coercive tactics familiar to the agency make it less likely she will rebel against her feminine makeover. For in doing so Hart would be denying both her "good citizenship" and refusing to aid her country in a time of crisis. The stakes are higher at this level; there is no doubt.

But while FBI representatives do not overtly declare Hart's masculine nature, through censorship, ridicule, or allusion, as "conduct unbecoming," they apparently do not see her androgynous performance as a negative either. In fact, they use those attributes to their advantage. Unfortunately, as Susan Bordo might contend, we as spectators of this performance might find it difficult to discriminate between the parodies of Hart and her true possibilities of self. Especially since "explored as a possibility for the self, the 'androgynous' ideal ultimately exposes its internal contradiction and becomes a war that tears the subject in two," culminating as Bordo maintains in "a battle between male and female sides of the self" (Unbearable 174). Whether Hart actually ever wins that battle we will never know. That being said though, the undertone is clear—Hart is too masculine to ever be a national representative. What is more, she is a hotheaded, an out-of-control woman who needs taming if she is to perform believably as a

woman, a conception of the ideal female that values normative and submissive behaviors. Hart's subordination to national authority also means that she in her role as a national representative doubles: On the one hand, her allegiance to the federal agency for whom she works functions as a constant reminder of her internal psychic federation, while on the other, her performance in the pageant (generally) and as Lady Liberty (specifically), reifies national interests through her body. To make certain of her fidelity, however, she is given a camera pin and communications device. Under constant supervision by her male FBI coworkers and superior, patriarchal hegemony is literally maintained, giving both the men and the national bureaucracy authority to act as legitimized voyeurs, agents of surveillance of her thoughts and actions.

The Alamo—Memorial Space of the Nation

The city of San Antonio prides itself as the home of the historic site of the Alamo. Together the two sites work as significant spaces and places where national identity is both played out and created on a daily basis. Shannon Jackson, as well as other scholars such as Joseph Roach, Richard Schechner, and Una Chaudhuri all argue that the role of memorial space in community-making emphasizes "the spatial and performative dimensions of collective memory" (694). Both the city of San Antonio and the Alamo landmark draw upon our collective memories as they fashion performance spaces of nationalism and patriotism. There is a "linking of the Alamo siege and battle to larger American myths of heroism, freedom, and democracy" argues Leigh Clemens (23-46). Calling upon the work of humanities professor Homi K. Bhabba, she also indicates that the process of national narration stems from the authority gained by merging traditional symbols of the nation with performances that posits citizens as distinct from the Other (23-46). In this case, the spaces of San Antonio (i.e., Riverwalk, the Alamo, the

Majestic Theatre) all perpetuate the narrative of an eventual final showdown with "The Citizen"—the Other.

As an introduction, in the film the swimsuit parade sets the nationalistic tone. It is evening and the pageant experience begins at an exterior area near Riverwalk, a community gathering spot in central downtown San Antonio. The night of the swimsuit preliminary, according to the announcer, is a pageant section designed to test "the grace, athleticism, and poise" of the contestants. A wide angle shot shows a crowd of spectators seated on one side of the slim river, a lit and decorated river boat passes by below. On the other side the pink staging area lights up the event. Centrally located are three orange one-step round risers where contestants are to pause briefly and pose for the cameras and the crowd. A rock band plays as the contestants parade about the space allowing viewers from all angles to get a good look at them.

Initially, Hart is vastly unsure of herself and her ability to create a believable contestant persona. However, much of her discomfort comes from a more personal need to hide what she considers an inferior body. If she is to indeed transition into the required heroine, it is essential she realign that discomfort. Thus, as Hart parades herself on the national stage constructed at Riverwalk, the troops rally to support her. It is no accident that during this scene camera shots volley back and forth between Hart's processional and the audience where a concentration of American airmen sits. As they shout their approval, Hart's confidence grows—she is a heroine in the making—she is the ideal body of the nation—or at least will be. The audience shot made up predominately of "boys in blue" takes me to current scholarship in the study of nationalisms, in which author Banet-Weiser points out that, "an idealized concept of the 'nation' actually needs women to sustain its cultural and political currency" (The Most 8). Because men are more easily

compelled by desire than anything else when asked to fight for an abstraction such as freedom, idealized figures of femininity provide a lucrative avenue for that desire (The Most 8).

Next the women are brought individually to the small center stage round and asked a pertinent question "designed especially for them." Hart giggles and snorts, reflexively seeing herself on display. She is enjoying the attention her body is getting. The presence and significance of the airmen reverberates even further when after Hart's brief speech the large group rises to their feet, cheering with approval. Proud of her performance, Hart exits the platform giving the crowd a traditional queen's wave and blowing them a kiss. The Alamo and San Antonio serve as telling backdrop to the staging of the pageant in which Lady Liberty stands within an environment intended to represent the exterior space of the nation on the one hand, and on the other, the interior psychic spaces of its civic representatives, all for the sake of reaffirming America's gendered hegemony.

The Majestic Theatre—Locus for Exchange

Una Chaudhuri in her opening essay of Land/Scape/Theory envisions a landscape with two views, one as an environment and the other as discourse. That discourse, she contends, is politically engaged, "encompassing every conceivable form of human interaction with space"; it is a device that both encodes and transmits information (12-14). Thus, the Majestic Theatre in this film serves as the site for a national discussion on citizenship and as a space for the perpetuation of a cultural mythology that bonds the severity of reality to the ethereal nature of possibility. Here, as Michel de Certeau might contend, space is "made meaningful—'awakened'—by practices that contextualize it …'space is like the word when it is spoken' … Space is a practiced place" (Leach 283). What is more, it could be argued the space of the

Majestic exists as a locus for exchange, social mobility, and contemplation (R. West 4-5). For Hart and her co-contestants nothing could be truer.

Our first introduction to the space of the Majestic Theatre in the film comes during an early pageant rehearsal. The large stage is cluttered with hefty wooden skeletal forms which will eventually create the body of Lady Liberty. Lighting bars hang dangerously low but within reach for easy access by the theatre's stage hands and engineers. The small orange one-step rounds used during the swimsuit preliminary at Riverwalk now serve as makeshift risers for the much longer riser that will eventually take their place. Mismatched chairs, contestants' baggage and fifty contestants in fitness attire clutter the expanse of the stage. Faux walls painted pink serve as backdrop to the bevy of would-be dancers rehearsing under the glare of the white backstage lighting. It is a Brechtian scenario that temporarily shuts out the imagination in favor of the hasher realities of theatrical preparations. Here the national framework begins its construction as the contestants, in sweats, but still wearing their respective state sashes, learn choreography to the music of "Dancing Queen" by ABBA. While all of the girls struggle to learn the steps, it is obvious that Hart is substantially challenged by the routine. She is awkward and behind the others, often dropping out with confusion. All queens in the making, the Majestic will serve as their space of royal tutelage.

As the narrative progresses, viewers witness as the late night rehearsals with the pageant coach, Victor Melling (played by Michael Caine), begin for Hart. Guards and dogs sweep the auditorium for explosives, reminding us of both the impending terrorist conspiracy and our need for added security in these post 9/11 times. Although released before the national disaster in 2001, the film eerily foreshadows the arrival of widespread terrorism and, through syndication, serves as a constant reminder of the tremulous times in which we live. Seemingly oblivious, a

few technicians and workers on site go about their business, and the camera situated in the audience pans up to a wide shot of the stage under construction. Left of center (stage left) is a temporary rehearsal spiral staircase. The head of the Statue of Liberty, poised in a slight tilt, rests next to the bottom step on the stage floor. It appears ever vigilant as both a silent participant and spectator of the rehearsal. As Victor explains to Hart how to "float" gently down the steps effortlessly, he judges her walk. She wears a long blue evening gown with a high center split; from the silver bodice hang long blue chiffon "wings" attached to spaghetti straps. "Thighs touching. Touching. Not clenching," Victor coaches. Hart is awkward and stumbling until she removes several guns and law enforcement weapons and paraphernalia from beneath her dress. The weapons operate as visual reminders of the need for personal and public security. But the threatening focus also alters the space of the Majestic, prompting the viewer to reconsider how individual and national identities and interests merge during times of crisis. Besides a deft comic moment, themes of gender and power are placed on parade.

During their final rehearsal, Hart wears a long pink evening gown and her New Jersey sash. Her hair is disheveled and she appears drained and tired. Victor places a pink bar stool on a small riser. A large American flag drapes the majority of the back wall. The staircase and Liberty head are to one side but predominately displayed. To Hart's other side is a portion of the skeletal structure of the body of Liberty lying on its side. The scene is shrouded in a subtle pink hue; a small spot highlights the stool. As they rehearse the interview process three FBI agents watch and listen from an adjoining room. When the scene becomes heated, Victor chastises Hart for not having pride in herself, for not wanting more for herself. "I am an FBI agent. I am not a performing monkey in heels," she snaps. "You're also a person. And an incomplete one at that," Victor sarcastically retorts. Hart storms to the food table. The camera shot gives up a triad with

the Liberty head centrally located, its inclusion as failed arbitrator understood. Hart draws her gun upon Victor, snatches up a donut and storms out of the theatre, leaving Vic muttering to himself, “How do you feel about gun control? Favorable.” It is a humorous moment heavily weighted by a political agenda, and Victor is left to ruminate the notion with theatre ghosts, phantoms of democracy, and the memory of woman with a gun.

The scenic construction complete, the narrative moves to the final pageant night and the moment when, before a national audience, the new Miss United States will be crowned. Here the Majestic Theatre foregrounds a well-known national place and space constituting what Russell West might declare a “‘spatial signifier’ for the ‘cultural signified’” (3). More broadly speaking and according to Vincezo Guarrasi, Professor of Geography at the University of Palermo, the physical world or environment “is not seen as *external* to culture, but rather, incorporated within it through semiosis, the ‘cultural act’ *par excellence*” (226). Guarrasi further contends both material and mental objects inherent in “all manifestations of human spatiality” creates an environ where “space and culture become indistinguishable (226). Thus, the looming Statue of Liberty lights up left center stage. Taking up the majority of her half of what is most likely a forty-foot-wide stage, Lady Liberty appears in caricature, squat and wide as though ready to give birth. The white statue, bathed in pink, feminizes the space even further. To her sides large curved cutouts serve as stylized waves. Up right center is a huge projection screen that copies what the camera frame reveals as it is pointed at the stage. A full stage shot reveals a three-step riser the width of the stage, extending from the backstage curtain downstage about fifteen feet, visually transporting us to Liberty Island. Rows of lights ring every edge of the stage, risers and waves, and fashion ever-expanding halos against the back curtain radiating up and out as though on an eternal journey.

Writing on the topic of landscape, Paul Groth states that "landscape denotes the interaction of people and place: a social group and its spaces, particularly the spaces to which the group belongs and from which its members derive some part of their shared identity and meaning" (1). With that, and although Lady Liberty has a "corresponding functional place," by virtue of its framing within the space of the Majestic an apparently innocent conceptual shift is produced leaving us with "an extraordinary ontological 'mutation'" (Guarrasi 229). As a result we are able to witness the delineation of the individual citizen as monumental replica, the sculpting of national identities within the space of the Majestic Theatre, and the development of extended expectations of nationhood through the conflation of iconic and mediatized performances. At this moment the film visually displays the conceptual frame that links issues of national power for the individual as well as the individual.

Constituting Icons and Heroes

Sharon Krause in her well-known essay "Lady Liberty's Allure," furnishes one take on the statue's essence:

> Lady Liberty's femininity, which is meant mainly to engage male attachments and desires, reminds us that for a long time many of the activities of American citizenship were closed to women. Yet it also illuminates the fact that attachments and desires can support what Beauvoir called 'higher aims', the principled action that makes human lives more than mere life. Lady Liberty's allure thus calls attention to the relationship between gender and American citizenship but ultimately turns our gaze beyond gender to political agency more generally and to the fruitful pairing of partiality and higher purpose that supports it. (17)

Perhaps hers is a more comfortable concept for many; however, it is hardly a standard. When considering the conflationary performances found in Miss Congeniality, although fictive, we see what I think is a truer representational narrative. The constitution of this national icon presents pageant participants, promoters, and engineers (both live and televised) an opportunity to reconstruct themselves and their surroundings from the imaginary, to make it real. The layered environment and festive atmosphere become a medium on which affairs of state are conducted, giving rise to the substance of national display. But what is more, Liberty's constitution multiplies with the pageant women as they become miniature representations designed to return to their home states with messages of patriotism. Unfortunately those messages within the film are tainted by abuses of commodification, marginalization, and political hegemonic reification. The contestants, like Lady Liberty, speak a sad tale delivered via gendered spectacle as an uplifting national moment. From it are born goddesses and heroines, fashioning a story of national delight that continues to blind us by the very light intended to illuminate our way. But I get ahead of myself, for first we must meet our heroine.

Working as gender hybrid meant to combine a male action-oriented persona with the more traditional stance of the female heroine as a source for "visual and erotic impact" (Mirzoeff 165), Gracie Hart's character must fill some very substantial shoes. Unfortunately, however, because "'masculinity' and 'femininity,'" as Bordo writes, "have been constructed through a process of mutual exclusion. One cannot simply add the historically feminine virtues to the historically masculine ones to yield a New Woman, a New Man, a new ethics, or a new culture" (The Body 174). Most often, she explains further, the embodied heroine character results in parody (174). Such is the case for Gracie Hart, who although she generates an empathetic and heroic persona must also endure the added baggage of ridicule.

For example, in the first scene Hart and several other agents stand rigid with guns in hand, attempting to arrest members of the Russian mafia. When the criminal leader begins choking on a peanut Hart drops her gun in a comedic attempt to remove the lodged item by applying the Heimlich maneuver. That the attempt ends up as a fiasco leading to a major gun battle is second only to Hart's inability to obey orders and complete a mission without handicap. As a buffoon and screw-up, Hart's heroism is lost. On her way to work in the next scene Hart drives wildly, the red light atop her car flashing, forcing others to pull to the side. This is all to create a fast and unobstructed journey to Starbucks where she picks up the morning provisions for her office of male coworkers. Her success as heroine this time comes at the price of her personal dignity, as all her coworkers without acknowledgement collect their orders as though it were routine. And one final example comes when Hart is performing her talent on an outdoor stage in San Antonio. Forced to wear a short baby doll "Swiss Miss" costume, complete with exposed frilly panties, Hart attempts her performance while dutifully watching for suspicious characters in the crowd. As one large lone Texan approaches her stage she sees a gun on his belt. With a heroic leap she dives head first onto the unsuspecting spectator. As it turns out the gun was a cigarette lighter and she is left with egg on her face. Playing the nurturing female, the helpless little woman, the over zealous domestic and maternal force, in these scenes the character is drawn through telling ironic parody.

While the creation of three-dimensional monuments and statues might afford one the ability to recognize those whom she or he has chosen as our national heroes, they also give one the opportunity to assign the title 'hero" to those exhibiting traits allocated to a particular statue. Although Lady Liberty's gendered appearance helps to narrow the field, we still have the power to assign her heroic attributes to one or more persons. The final pageant night in the film,

through conflations of the various images of Lady Liberty, suggests the possibility that all of the contestants may possibly be heroic surrogates. However, because Hart has been introduced as a heroine in training, one must look to her character for the film's eventual fulfillment of that quest. Hart's ultimate constitution as an American heroine comes, as it probably should, during the televised and concluding portion of the pageant. Decked out in her replica of Liberty pageant attire, the opening of this scene also structures Hart's moment of accomplishment.

As Hart proceeds up the stairs with the other contestants positioning themselves for their opening number, the camera cuts to an adjacent backstage area where a black briefcase sits in ominous solitude. Hart spies the case, and leaving her position, runs to inspect it. A stage hand arrives, opens the case and takes out a microphone. From this point forward, Hart's participation as a contestant shifts. Outweighing her job as an FBI agent, Hart's focus through most of the pageant from introduction to talent, to questions and answer, through choosing the final five is virtually uninterrupted by the major plot, that of finding the would-be killer in their midst. Instead, for her the spectacle and performance of pageantry becomes the focal point. As the pageant comes to an end and the name of Miss United States is called, the action then shifts back to the criminal search narrative. Hart realizes that at the moment the new queen is crowned, the diadem will explode. Like a banshee Hart rips free from her male escort and rushes to grab the crown from the queen's head. Successfully retrieving the crown, she tosses it up and toward the back of the stage where it explodes without harming a soul. What should be an event to celebrate (and a heroic woman to honor) unfortunately does not transpire. For even after heroically saving the pageant (participants and spectators alike) from destruction, her heroism is all but forgotten as the final scene returns her to her roots of sisterly kinship. There is no final glare of success for the camera, no party for saving the day; instead her hero's pedestal comes from the recognition

of her sorority—not as a strong and brave champion but as the one most congenial. So it is we are left with a heroine shaded by the parodic. No Indiana Jones here at all, no applause for action hero exploits. Sisterhood must suffice, parody that rings false as if this particular Statue of Liberty, this female hero, is constructed as something hollow after all. As a genre busting attempt at an action film, apparently Hollywood can conceive nothing else.

Narratives of Individualism

Overcoming obstacles, rising up in a quest for self improvement, and making a mark of substantiated agency for oneself are only a few of the narratives of individualism emerging from the National Symbolic of the pageant. The way for audiences to realize the process, however, requires that Miss Congeniality provide a back-story of sufficient import, and Gracie Hart fulfills that requirement. As a comic look at gender construction and agency, Hart's individualism reveals much in the way of the confusions arising from the conflicting impulses both representing and influencing how women are seen and how they ultimately perform constructed gender codes and conditions.

For example, although gender conformity is pressed onto girls in the process of remodeling them into compliant forms of femininity (Halberstam 6), Hart's character retains little of this cultural indoctrination. The first scene of the film gives us a glimpse of the childhood of Gracie Hart, who at one moment has her nose in a book and in the next rumbles about on the playground with a boy who has been taunting her. She is a rough and tumble pigtailed tomboy, taking on the world without a second thought. Judith Halberstam stresses the fact that popular cinema's reinforcement of our society's tolerance of the tomboy image continues unchecked only so long as the image resides "within a narrative of blossoming womanhood" (6). What is more, she continues, "tomboyism represents a resistance to adulthood

itself rather than to adult femininity" (6). This is the Gracie Hart that grows up to be an agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Changing little from her youth, as an adult she still wears glasses but no makeup, her hair hangs in unkempt braids, and she dons baggy clothing devoid of color.

As further evidence of her unfeminine condition and as an important assignment wraps up at the top of the film, we witness Hart standing outside a restaurant in the rain. She is pitiful and forlorn looking. "You look like hell," says her partner Eric (played by Benjamin Bratt) as he removes his own gross derelict disguise (Miss). Hardly an unusual response given that "others, ranging from intimate partners to total strangers, [routinely] offer assessments of female bodies" (Spitzack 5). And while this is our first glimpse of Hart's interaction with her love interest, this is also our first inkling that for Hart there is no disguise to remove; this is the real Hart. If Hart's introductory scene leaves one wondering at all, the writers make certain her following scenes leave no doubt that they intend the most extreme masculine personification for Hart as possible. As necessary for the establishment of Hart as a radical Other, we must witness her relationship to three primary spaces: her home, her favorite sports bar hangout, and her gym.

Meant to reflect the adage "a place to hang one's hat," it is apparent Hart's apartment is neither home nor refuge but rather a sort of weigh station for someone constantly on the go. The space is functional, rough in the way of décor, and resembles the definitive "bachelor pad." As she enters the space we see model cars, a dart board, and steel shelving cluttered with sporting equipment and memorabilia. Her bedroom contains more steel shelving, an unmade bed, and an ironing board being used as a clothes rack. Sporting a gun and far from the traditional role as homemaker, Hart considers microwaving food a legitimate (and perhaps the only) cooking method and the keeping of a tidy house a nuisance. A pull-up rope, firing rage poster, and

hanging boxing bag center her living space and give the impression that Hart uses all for both exercise and as a way to release tension. Sadly, we see a lack of regard for herself and her surroundings, something Carole Spitzack tells us often "reflects questionable morality" (7). In addition, the cultural stereotypes evoked through Hart and her living space become aesthetic flaws that are then used to explain some innate hostility within the individual (7). If that be the case then Hart must be led to resolve some issue causing such uncivilized behavior. And her resolution will come in the form of a love interest.

From her apartment we follow Hart to her favorite hangout—a sports bar where she sits at the counter. As she uncouthly stuffs food into her mouth, washing it down with a pint of brew, her coworker Eric saunters over with his newest woman of interest. The introduction positions Hart as a sniping bitter woman who puts down the interloper in such a way that her coworker gets the joke while obviously leaving his less-than-quick-thinking date in the dark. This short mental challenge then follows up with a physical one as we next see Hart and her coworker/future love interest wrestling full force in the FBI gymnasium. It is here in the space of the gym that "muscles," according to Bordo, "express sexuality, but controlled, managed sexuality that is not about to erupt in unwanted and embarrassing display" *(*Reading 220). As the two coworkers tussle for superior position and attempt to pin one another to the mat, it is as though the two have been chums and sparring partners for some time. For not only do they wrestle, but use the time to discuss recent bureau happenings. However, Bordo also tells us "the firm, developed body has become a symbol of correct *attitude*; it means that one 'cares' about oneself and how one appears to others, suggesting willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, and ability to 'make something' of oneself" (Reading 220). Here is where Hart fails the test. Not only do her manners and slovenly house project otherwise, but when pushed into taking

the assignment as FBI qua femme, she punctuates her ire by impulsively and childishly kneeing her opponent in the groin.

Hart is patently unattractive, asexual, and highly masculatized. While comedic as an introductory façade, one must still question just how deeply Hart's masculine behavior goes. Is she presenting herself as mannish to better fit in with her male counterparts in the squad room? Perhaps so, but it is just as likely that Hart's unfeminine attire hides another self. Could Hart really be an ultra femme after all? Or does Hart really know no other way to comfortably perform her gender? The storyline really never addresses these questions and consequently leaves it up to the viewer's judgments and suspicions. Either way, Hart's female masculinity will still be read, as Halberstam explains, as "a pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment, as a longing to be and to have power that is always just out of reach" (9). Is this really what the authors want their audience to assume?

Tomboyism, Halberstam believes, "generally describes an extended childhood period of female masculinity" (5). Most often associated with a female's reach for an equitable status to that of male freedoms and mobility, the tomboy performs as a signature of independence (6). However, performing the tomboy past adolescence becomes a punishable offense (6). As a consequence, Hart is not taken seriously as an agent. In fact, from our first exposure to Hart's character she is portrayed as a "screw up." For example, during her initial adult scene, Hart, against orders by her superior, breaks ranks and saves the choking mobster. Her "caring" yet independent gesture leads to her desk duty, and her only way out is to agree to become "feminized." This sideways maneuvering punishment, while not explicitly stated as such, nonetheless implies that her recuperation become contingent upon her reconstruction as feminine. In the introduction to Undoing Gender, Butler emphasizes one's sense of gender and

individual agency develops as a result of the social norms that support and enable the definition of self (7). Norms, Butler reminds us, are usually implicit as "they operate as the normalizing principle in social practice," and are "discernible most clearly and dramatically in the effects they produce" (Undoing 41). Unfortunately for Hart, her self-defining independent nature runs headlong into the barriers of social and gender performance norms. And while her individuality might, according to Spitzack be "commodified through and against pre-existing, but no less culture-based, visions of conforming subjects" (14), it is apparent that the performance of Hart's tomboy persona is crucial to the setting up for her transformation into the ideal woman. What is more, her individualism is contingent upon standards certainly set up to further the film's narrative but also as support for the foundational national rule book for gender performance.

Women's Expected Roles

The performance of traditionally feminine actions often create a contested space for the individual, as ones personal choices find resistance within existing ideologies. This notion is especially true when considering the constructed world of pageantry as blended with the national concerns within Miss Congeniality. To reiterate Banet-Weiser's words, the National Symbolic of the pageant "produces images and narratives that articulate dominant expectations about who and what American women are," and more importantly, "who and what they should be" (Miss America 71). That being said, I believe where Banet-Weiser's theory goes astray is her attempt to include all American women as possible candidates. While her words might fit more easily with pageant policy, what American woman are is really not the issue at all. For when considering examples of operational procedure there appears to exist a more tacit doctrine determining only certain women as truly viable for inclusion into their world. As a result, in

articulating dominant expectations the refined collective market of prospective women is limited to those who are thin, light-skinned, youthful, proper, civic-minded, and come from a "respectable" background.

Additionally, women who present their bodies poorly "are expected to take corrective action, realigning bodily aesthetics and motility with cultural images of beauty" Spitzack determines (2). Furthermore, "Women's attempts to enact socially approved bodies presupposes similar normative mechanisms for seeing, analyzing, and curing deficiencies. The presentation of femininity demands evidence for an internalized apparatus of surveillance" (2). Unfortunately, it is quite obvious that Hart either does not possess or has "turned off" that particular apparatus. Often citing her job as a primary reason for not having time for an intimate relationship, we are left floundering when it comes to why she chooses to perform her gender in such an unfeminine manner. Regardless, Hart's gender performance falls closer in line with those put forth by Susan Bordo. While the capacity "for self-management is decisively coded as male," Bordo proposes, "by contrast, all those bodily spontaneities—hunger, sexuality, the emotions—seen as needful of containment and control have been culturally constructed and coded as female" (Unbearable 205-06). As a supreme truism for the beauty pageant world in Miss Congeniality, the film's satiric frame works to highlight, via Gracie's transformation in particular, each of the three elements required for her new performative gender reconstruction. To reiterate Simone de Beauvoir, as have many before me, "'one is not born, but rather, *becomes* a woman'" (Second 301).

Hunger—A Woman Consumed

Satirists like to write about eating, Dustin Griffin points out, for it is essentially a sign of festivity and an index of character (191). In this instance, food reinforces Miss Congeniality's link with festival and celebration: we see the contestants introduced at an orientation breakfast, a food table set up backstage at the Majestic Theatre, and spectators at Riverwalk, the Alamo, and the dance club all eat as they enjoy the entertainment, to name a few. As for character, that is another matter altogether. Hart's relationship with food as set up in the first scene provides us with a means to viewing Hart's character and body as abject and in need of repair. Increasingly, Bordo reminds us, "the size and shape of the body has come to operate as a marker of personal, internal order (or disorder)—as a symbol for the state of the soul" (Reading 220). In the case of Miss Congeniality, Hart's soul embraces and incorporates the soul of the nation.

While staking out a group of Russian criminals, Hart sits at a Russian restaurant coarsely munching on a large slice of rye bread. A sizable bowl once containing a generous helping of borscht sits on the table in front of her. Hart's slovenly graduate student attire accentuates her abjection. Then the girth of a large Russian woman's rear end blocks the projection from Hart's hidden camera. "This broad has two asses," snipes one of the agents working reconnaissance in a nearby van. The Russian woman's abject body echoes that of Hart, insinuating the results of excessive eating. It soon becomes apparent the scene consists of people who either typically do not have to manage their relationship with food, such as most men, or we see those who might be considered "out of control"—an obese man and woman and Gracie Hart. That the scene takes place on what could be construed as "foreign soil" establishes another layer to our national on-going thirst to depict foreigners as enemies, as Other, leading to our nation's "us" versus "them" mentality. As the agents move in to arrest the mobsters, one large Russian criminal begins

choking on a peanut he has just popped into his mouth. Breaking her commander's direct order not to help him, Hart now exemplifies one who is particularly unmanageable. A shoot-out ensues but soon ends with the FBI in control. To elude capture two of the criminals make their escape through the kitchen and out the back door where FBI agents are there to arrest and contain them. Thus the world of food begins our foray into one of the reasons for Hart's needed reconstruction.

In the very next scene we are taken to Hart's apartment where she goes directly to the kitchen to prepare something to eat. She grabs a TV dinner from the stack in her freezer, opens the box, and pops it into a microwave oven. Even the microwave is unruly, with a door that refuses to close, until Hart shoves a wooden spoon as a wedge between the door and frame to secure it. Our culture widely advertises conceptions of femininity requiring "that women learn to feed others, not the self …. Thus, women must develop a totally other-oriented emotional economy" (Bordo, The Body 171). Evident in scene 3, the out-of-control but dutiful Hart makes the required Starbucks run to get coffee and pastries for her entire FBI team. Driving like a wild woman, with flashing lights and siren blaring, once on location she pushes her way through the large crowd waiting at the counter, threatening anyone who dares question her authority. From Starbucks Hart goes directly to FBI headquarters to deliver the goods to her eager coworkers. She then takes one pastry for herself and settles down for the morning briefing. In a later scene, the team discusses the pageant while eating Chinese takeout. Shortly thereafter as the gang gathers to search for undercover agents on the computer and re-dress male superiors in women's attire, the room has become a party scene. Popcorn and chips and sodas pass amongst the members of the squad, reminiscent of a Super Bowl gathering. Hart's co-worker Eric sucks on a mini-lollipop a la Kojack. No one watches what they eat.

Amazingly, before her assignment to the pageant, Gracie Hart appeared to be quite satisfied with her food choices and intake capacity. While most women learn "to construe any desires for self-nurturance and self-feeding as greedy and excessive" (Bordo, The Body 171), Hart remains an exception. When first meeting her pageant coach Victor Melling at an upscale restaurant, Hart eats a large rare steak with shoestring pomme frits and green beans, all slathered with ketchup. Her drink of choice is a Michelob beer, which she unpretentiously guzzles straight from the bottle. Prior to that at the local sports bar, Hart munches on a large hamburger and onion rings, washing it down with an entire pint of Ben & Jerry's Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough ice cream. Food for Hart is simply not an issue. However, when taken for her reconstruction and once determined a legitimate pageant participant, food becomes a hugely dynamic issue. Without saying as much, the focus on food, or the control of it, becomes an important process of body management. For the most part, the body is the property of some elusive and unknown "disciplinarian" (Spitzack 5). For Hart, food managers appear all around her, especially in the form of her pageant coach Victor Melling.

Before reconstruction, Hart ate when and what she wanted. She ate with her mouth open, talked with her mouth full, and snorted when she laughed. Now her diet is limited to vegetables. "Men are supposed to have hearty, even voracious, appetites," Bordo tells us (Unbearable 108). Eating for them is considered natural, an experience that makes them more loveable to the females around them (108). Not so for the pageant women who must be constantly on guard. "Beauty queens, the role models for young girls, have to remain painfully thin" (159), Dawn Perlmutter reminds us. One night Gracie sneaks pizza and beer into the hotel's fitness area for a late night snack with Miss Rhode Island and a small group of friends. As the women all gather around ogling the pie and consumed with guilt, Gracie retorts, "It's lite beer and she's gonna

throw it up anyway" (Miss). The reference to bulimia as a sanctioned procedure for weight management is unnerving. Also used as a tool for persuasion, access to food comes with a price. The cocoa must be fat free, and a cookie bribe means Hart must rehearse late into the night with Victor. And while pizza and beer might help get information or secure Hart's kinship with her small group of co contestant friends, there exists a tacit agreement that it should be evacuated from their bodies immediately after consumption. Overweight women in effect engage "in an intentional, threatening, yet out of control act of rebellion which … places her at odds with society and her own femininity" (Social 294-95). We find reinforcement of her idea through American women's constant need for materials and methods for intervention (Spitzack 2). Women's "body problems" also underscore the constant need for observation, by self and others (2). This action hero carries this issue in sharp contrast to the alcohol abuse associated with other male action heroes, such as Bruce Willis in the Die Hard films.

Our preoccupation with fat, diet, and slenderness, Bordo insists, "may function as one of the most powerful 'normalizing' strategies of our century, ensuring the production of self-monitoring and self-disciplining 'docile bodies,' sensitive to any departure from social norms, and habituated to self-improvement and transformation in the service of those norms" (Reading 215). As a body readying for the pageant experience, women's normative behavior is a requirement. Women are also shown repeatedly as persons unable to manage their bodies, often losing control, succumbing to fleeting pleasures (Spitzack 2). As a result, what begins as one pizza and a six-pack ends up as a full-fledged night out on the town where the women dance wildly and consume vast amounts of alcohol and even more pizza.

In 1996, it came to the attention of pageant officials that the Miss Universe pageant winner had gained some weight during her reign (Perlmutter 159). As a result, she was given an

ultimatum to lose weight or lose her title (159). To point up this notion, Hart's character must constantly be tempted. The values perpetuated in the Miss Universe incident, Perlmutter explains, "are that if you want to continue to please men and be successful in society then you have to starve yourself" (159). Issues of weight prevail throughout the film. Even the water so skillfully displayed at Kathy Morningside's (played by Candice Bergen) conference table reaffirms the industry's relationship to health and diet, quietly reminding us of its use as a caloric moderator. Early in the narrative when Hart and Eric are wrestling in the gym, he gives her a loud hand smack on the rear, suggesting she do a few "butt-shaping exercises" in order to pull off her believability as a contestant. At this point in time Hart is not thought of as feminine, desirable, or thin.

During Hart's long night of transformation at the converted airport hanger, we see a lengthy buffet table overflowing with subs and sandwiches, cookies and pastries. While flirting with a female beauty assistant who stands next to him, Eric teases "Ever seen one this big? The sandwich, I mean. Yeah, that's a lot of meat." Hart comes to the table and picks up a large cut of a submarine sandwich and begins to bite into it. Victor appears behind her, grabs the sandwich and replaces it with a large celery stick. Although Hart and Eric teasingly but defiantly square off with one another—she by taking a large bite from the celery and he by countering with a jelly filled donut—it is obvious Hart is in for a bumpy ride. There is more to this scene, however, when considering Spitzacks words: "A transcendence of the body through a rigid monitoring of consumption, then, signifies an attempt to govern both the physical and moral components of developing feminine sexuality" (7). Hardly lost on the viewing public, Hart's lack of sexual interest punctuates the healthy libido of her coworker, Eric. What is more, however, is how the subsequent food scenarios revolve closely around Hart's body. One running gag has her making

various attempts to conceal forbidden pastries by shoving them either into her bra or between her legs.

Even after reconstruction, at the orientation breakfast when Hart reaches for a bagel the camera cuts back and forth from Hart to the other contestants, juxtaposing echoes of abjection with images of those that are toned and shapely. All the while we see and hear the male FBI agents ogling and making comments. “Not the pastry, Hart,” Eric whispers in her earpiece. “The behaviors leading to starvation,” articulates Spitzack, “are often praised initially by spectators, reinforcing an image of femininity in which women are encouraged to assert independence by suppressing desire” (6). “Good girl,” Victor says as we see Hart resist another pastry. The scenario of reaching for food and being denied is played out repeatedly throughout the film. “I’m starving. Don’t mess with me,” Hart warns Eric as she exits the hanger. As the pageant nears, Hart is tired and weak. Finally, as Victor once again makes an attempts to keep her from eating, the fed-up Hart pulls a gun on him, demanding her right to eat what she wants. The establishing shot moving through the streets of San Antonio to the Majestic Theatre says it all: Engelbert Humperdink sings his famous song “She’s a Lady.” The words echo the national premise writing so concisely upon the transformed FBI agent: “She’s all you’ll ever want, she’s the kind you want to flaunt, and take to dinner. She’s got style, she’s got grace, she always knows her place, she’s a winner. She’s a lady….” (Miss).

Sexuality—The Body Reconstructed

As Hart enters the converted airport hanger, we see an unkempt woman. She lacks makeup, her clothing hangs haphazardly and loosely on her frame, and strands of tangled hair have broken free from their already partial bonding to dance over her face. Like a teenager

arriving at her first adult happening, Hart bounces spryly behind the men, dogging them with questions about the events to come. “Generally, fashioning the body in conformity with dominant imagery is lauded as evidence of maturity; a rejection of appearance norms is regarded as symptomatic of adolescent confusion,” so says Spitzack (5). Thus it is that Victor Melling is hired as the stylist/consultant who must transform her. Obviously and stereotypically gay, he is the man who will ultimately change Gracie from a frumpy klutz who wears “masculine” shoes to a feminine beauty who glides across the floor in designer pumps. “With some intensive work,” he satirically quips, “she’ll be ready for the world’s finest trailer park” (Miss). Personal and social censures abound, but Hart enters her professional contract fully aware of the criticisms to come, fully confident in her ability to manage what is handed her, or so she thinks.

The performative theory of identity put forth first by Erving Goffman and then Judith Butler concludes that our core identities are the result of performances self inscribed on the body. However in this case, Victor is both responsible and credited for Gracie’s inscription and renovation. As she is required to release control to another, her objectification further insists she remain passive, something to be “handled, manipulated, constructed, built up and broken down” (Young 191). What is more, Hart as a neophyte femme must succumb to the ritualistic processes of feminization upon entering the modified liminal zone that is the hanger.

Victor Turner posits the rites of passage as being when one participates in a change of place, social position, state, or age. Each of these unfolding through three phases: separation, liminal, and reincorporation. “The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual … either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a ‘state’), or from both,” Turner asserts (Liminality

79). For Gracie Hart she must leave her hometown, a space of comfort and familiarity, and relinquish any self-agency acquired as an acting field agent for the FBI.

Next, she moves into what Turner describes as an "intervening 'liminal' period" (Liminality 79). Essentially, Hart will pass "through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (79). The space of the hanger serves this purpose as the scene reveals something resembling a science fiction laboratory. Dim lighting on the periphery further highlights the spots focused menacingly upon Hart. Sounds of machinery and systematic countdowns to reconstructive procedures echo throughout the bustling forbidden zone. Liminal entities may be represented as monsters, Turner emphasizes. Some "wear only a strip of clothing, or even go naked, to demonstrate that as liminal beings they have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing indicating rank or role, position in a kinship system" (80). Hart's monstrosity culminates upon her "escape" from several procedures. Walking much like a Frankensteinian creation she painfully waddles out from behind a surgical blind sporting an unflattering hospital gown, hair in a large turban, her face slathered in a green exfoliate and cucumber slices residing where eyes should be found. Passive or humble, Turner continues, the neophytes "must obey their instructors implicitly, and accept arbitrary punishment without complaint. It is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life" (80). As Turner argues, the neophyte in liminality must be a *tabula rasa*,

> a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status. The ordeals and humiliations, often of a grossly physiological character, to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of the previous state and partly a tempering of their essence in

> order to prepare them to cope with their new responsibilities and restrain them in advance from abusing their new privileges. They have to be shown that in themselves they are clay or dust, mere matter, whose form is impressed upon them by society. (85)

Women's bodies, as tools for the fashioning of gendered performances, also require a certain level of competency. However, a woman's competency in achieving the "feminine ideal" is often difficult and frustrating, mandating she bend to the dictates of established norms. As clay to be molded, Hart is worked on by Victor and his large team of beauticians who work through the night to fix her teeth, untangle, color and cut her hair, and remove unwanted hair from her legs, arms, hands, face, and pubic area. "A failure to take pleasure" in the results "points to a flaw in heterosexual identity [and] insufficient levels of self-adoration" (Spitzack 7). As they force Gracie into a tanning bed, soaking her face with a variety of cosmetic masks, we witness how this young woman's character and improved body comes at the cost of "taming its wildness," the final product evidenced through her construction of difference (7).

Finally, Hart is ready for reincorporation, her passage consummated (Turner, Liminality 79). She exits the hanger remade, renewed, and "in a relatively stable state once more" (79). She accordingly possesses all of the "rights and obligations vis-à-vis others of a clearly defined and 'structural type'" (79), and will be expected to behave in concurrence with the norms and standards required by and of her new social position. Hart, although tired, beams with a newfound confidence and struts and sways with all the feminine appeal she can muster.

"Women who love themselves," Spitzack tells us, "accept the challenge of femininity: a readiness to regulate body performances according to cultural dictates, a willingness to 'disown' the body" (7). How one succeeds at achieving beauty makes no difference as long as the end

result fits the required beauty mold (Perlmutter 160). The long grueling transformation complete, the new hyperfeminine Gracie Hart struts forth from her airplane hanger turned salon. At her unveiling, the song "Mustang Sally" screams in the background as the airplane hanger door opens, and in slow motion the entire team and Gracie come walking out a la The Right Stuff. With images that "perpetuate the myth that beauty is only skin deep," televised media and film produce fictitious conclusions that "one's worth is based on one's physical body" (Kjaergaarrd 205). "Nice work," Eric utters in congratulations to Victor. Hart is gorgeous and her slender body "codes the tantalizing ideal of a well-managed self" (Bordo, Unbearable 201). Sexually stunning and provocative, ghosts of Nevada's infamous brothel the Mustang Ranch haunt the scene, giving it an air of indecency. Yet another valuation perpetuating the ideology of "the good girl versus the bad girl" (virgin/whore) is found in "the narrow distinction between beauty queen and porno queen. It is socially acceptable to be displayed before the public as a beauty object and socially unacceptable to be displayed as a sex object," Perlmutter writes (160). Possibly in the attempt to "elide the beautiful with the sublime," the filmmakers have fallen into line with what Peg Zeglin Brand sees as a contemporary trend to recast beauty as dangerous, transgressive, and subversive (7-8).

Unfortunately, any notion of newfound empowerment gets quickly brushed aside when in the next scene the FBI team moves into action and the male agents sarcastically dub the undercover assignment "Operation Thong"—returning the focus once again to the male gaze and implicit sexual consumption. The woman's body through representation has significance, so says Laura Mulvey, who contends that the sexualized images of woman are "symptomatic of male fantasy and anxiety that are projected on to the female image" effectively making the male gaze the referent by detaching the image from any reality (xiii). Mulvey's notion works in two ways at

this point: on the one hand the men preview Hart's potential as ultra femme and on the other her transformation foreshadows associations with The Miss United States pageant, which according to one field agent is "a babe fest."

Emotions—She's Out of Her Mind

Lacking the ability to contain her emotion, Hart is seen at the beginning of the film as a young child punching neighborhood boys in the nose, one in retribution for words said. As an adult Hart fares no better, thus retiring to the punching bag hanging in her living room when she feels the need to release her frustrations. Sparring in a wrestling match at the FBI gym serves the same purpose. Erupting emotionally is a natural characteristic for Hart. Slamming her hands on a car and yelling obscenities appears to help the situation little. Given her unruly temperament then, and in order to give up the national hero we might come to expect, it comes as no surprise that the film plot balances her emotional streak by playing up her savvy intellectualism. Traditionally, ideas of beauty have also included primarily femininity and emotion. Conversely notions of intelligence often lay within the masculine purview, with strength and reason. No matter how the film flies normative tendencies, Miss Congeniality unfortunately still delivers a mostly conventional gendered viewpoint.

While Gracie Hart might have been an avid reader as a child (a significant indicator of intelligence), when taken in context with her other gender attributes, it only serves to reinforce further her masculine performance. As a "smart girl," however, all of the reading apparently pays off—to a point, such as having grown up to become a field agent for the FBI. Much more to the point, however, when the FBI agents assemble to confer on an issue, it is Hart who comes up with a good number of the best ideas. In spite of this, and in order to strengthen the male

personalities within the group, Hart remains content to let the man in charge (her coworker Eric) take the credit. Female characters, as subordinates and nurturers, are habitually portrayed with stereotypical features like emotionalism and exhibiting stereotypical conduct such as deferring (Ward and Harrison 3). Even though Hart performs and passes easily as one of the guys, she remains on the outside looking in. Standing behind her circle of male coworkers Hart is once removed and stationed out of the center of the intellectual action. Interestingly, and as exampled by many women throughout history, she has learned that by conceding to the periphery she can still provide input and make significant change.

Even as her more masculine performance allows us to witness her ability to reason, Hart must temporarily bury this ability when in hyper feminine masquerade by foregrounding her emotions in order to create a believable and acceptable pageant persona. Before doing so, however, when confronted with the possibility of going under cover amongst the beauty pageant contestants, Hart makes it a point to intellectually separate herself from the women who make up the contestant pool. “I’m an FBI agent, not a performing monkey in heels,” she complains; “I’m not going to parade around in a swimsuit like an airhead,” Hart protests later, “Like feminism never happened … It’s some sort of misogynistic Neanderthal mentality.” And soon after going through her night of transformation, she follows her previous proclamations of discontent with the capper, “My I.Q. just dropped ten points.”

Not only Gracie’s intellectual level, but the intellects of all the pageant participants are at issue here. Beauty and intelligence are rarely depicted as going hand in hand in the American pageant culture. Donelle Ruwe explains that pageants traditionally promote the notion that the women involved should be talented but not professional, and intelligent but not too challengingly so (148). Assumed feminine limitations find further reinforcement during the final pageant night

of Miss Congeniality when the announcer provides an important statistic or two about each of the final five contestants. These notes, he tells us, are how the women define themselves. Miss California is a music major who believes in the healing power of music and "like any true California girl, the Beach Boys." Miss Nebraska as a theatre major manages a drama program. Gracie Hart: Miss New Jersey's hobbies include figure skating, water ballet, and taking long luxurious bubble baths. Miss Texas, a psychology major, "eats as much Mexican food as she can get." And Miss Rhode Island, a science major, specializes in the field of nuclear fission with a minor in elementary particles.

Choosing their words carefully, the writers have, through this announcement, fashioned a diverse group of finalists to vie for the supreme title. Admittedly, all appear worthy. What stands out, however, is Miss Rhode Island's specialty. While the four other contestants provide "cute" personal quips that help us relate to them on an emotional level, Miss Rhode Island provides none. Instead, her "label" leads us to recognize her intellectual achievements by her specialization in nuclear physics. Alas, in spite of this, Miss Rhode Island performs throughout the entire film as a stereotypical dumb blonde, (a simple elementary particle herself). As a consequence, the rhetoric of her performance sadly overshadows and neatly cancels out the intellectual persona of nuclear scientist. Even her talent (baton twirling) is nothing other than an "air brain" episode according to Hart.

Another telling scenario surfaces during the question and answer session of the final five on pageant night. The stage is set up to resemble The Dating Game, with the commentators on one side of a faux divide and the five finalists seated on stools to the other side. Given the cultural familiarity of this well known television scenario, it is difficult to misconstrue the likelihood that the contestants' primary goal focuses on their prospects of securing a man as life

partner. However, during the interview session Gracie takes a moment to make a case for the contestant women in general. She tells the audience that these women are really smart and just trying to make a difference in the world. Unfortunately, echoes of her earlier gripe about beauty pageant contestants' intelligence still reverberates and undercuts this moment. "What could possibly motivate anyone to enter a beauty pageant?" she had asked; to which the pageant owner retorted, "This is not a beauty pageant, it is a scholarship program" (Miss). Here the term "scholarship" works as a device to conceal "any controversial claims" of the pageant being weighted toward beauty and not substance (Perlmutter 163). In addition, the scholarship myth both pacifies the public and creates "a smoke screen for the sexism that is perpetuated" (163). Granted, while it is Hart who eventually figures out who "The Citizen" is and the means by which the ensuing terrorist plot will take place, it is mostly lost, as mentioned earlier, when she returns to receive her award for "Miss Congeniality." No matter how productively intelligent, in the end it is Hart's emotional attachment, whether in kinship with her pageant sisters or with her new found love interest, that punctuates this story of national heroism. You can call it a scholarship program but it is still only a beauty contest after all.

Promises of Citizenship and Classism

The promise of citizenship is only one of several narratives of the National Symbolic. According to Banet-Weiser, fantasies of agency and tolerant pluralism find definition through the pageant experience as National Symbolic as well (Miss America 71). Many see the pageant contestant effectively construed as the construction of a liberal and liberated citizenship, one dedicated by democracy and self-agency (The Most 17). One way of witnessing citizenship in action is through volunteerism and work that is geared toward the social sector. The inclusion of

the “issue platform” in contemporary pageants is meant to continue the notion of voluntarism as an important part of the ideal national woman. Forming what could be viewed as “the crux of political activity” for the contestant, the platform may center around a political, social, or cultural issue or social cause that most often characterize as a “woman’s issue” (The Most 43). As evidenced in Miss Congeniality, when Stan Fields announces the names of the five finalists, he includes their all-important social connections: issues that reveal how the women define themselves within the national nexus. Miss California believes in the healing power of music, perhaps as a homeopathic ad for dealing with social and medical strife. Miss Nebraska’s drama program is geared toward underprivileged children. Miss New Jersey (Hart) hopes to become a pediatrician, a valid fantasy for her persona. However, we cannot forget that in her “real life” she works for law enforcement. Miss Texas provides assistance part time in a homeless shelter. And Miss Rhode Island as a physicist seeks to put science to use for human benefit. All these women’s selflessness reiterates their destinies as female citizens and eventual mothers of the nation. And while all of the women perform as representatives for our nation, albeit briefly, the winner of the pageant effectively becomes the supreme surrogate of Lady Liberty, taking up in the flesh what is symbolically delivered through the icon. To do so achieves what Lauren Berlant describes as “the inevitability of the status of natural law” –her birthright (20).

Unfortunately, with the positive social aspects of the pageant industry come the negative, often presented as distinct forms of marginalization. Not only are contestants expected to be visibly philanthropic, but the pageant industry thrives upon its own notions of philanthropy by giving money for advanced education to a few chosen women at the expense of the racism, sexism, and classism it perpetuates (Perlmutter 163). Class discrimination has been an intrinsic element of national pageantry from its beginning, significantly shaping the content of the event

(155). That the ideals espoused have not been easily or successfully achieved in the past is "demonstrated by the fact that the contest was canceled from 1928 until 1935 because it still retained the feel of what was referred to as a 'lower class carnival'" (156). As a result, talent competitions, question-and-answer segments, and scholarships were all added to secure and maintain the pageant's reputation as a "classy" event (156). For those who could afford a ticket to the live event, the fantasy of the event was further extended. Although national pageants today appear to be breaking down the class barriers, the fact remains that its governance still supports "upper-class patriarchal values" (156), all built upon some sort of exclusionary dictum. Even today, as a televised event, while it may be available to lower class viewers, many still do not see themselves represented on the pageant stage.

Interestingly, Candace West and Susan Fenstermaker, while they do not deny the differing material realities generated by poverty and privilege existing within the pageant system, suggest that these realities have little to do with the realities of class categorization (61). Instead they see classism sustained by normative conceptions of how one behaves. This is based primarily upon the observation that Americans operate on the assumption that they live in a classless society. And regardless of the numerous cultural examples gotten through television, newspapers, cartoons, or movies that perpetuate class distinctions, Americans cannot see the system of distribution that structures their access to resources. "Because we cannot see this," West and Fenstermaker reveal, "the accomplishment of class in everyday life rests on the presumption that everyone is endowed with equal opportunity and, therefore, that real differences in the outcomes we observe must result from individual differences in attributes like intelligence and character" (63).

Irit Rogoff, professor in the area of visual studies, maintains “that civility and bourgeois respectability need the stereotypical unruly ‘others’… to define the nonexistent codes of what constitutes ‘acceptable’ behavior” (22). Throughout the film, unruly “otherness” is particularly evident with Gracie Hart. In her earlier mode, Hart is often cross and shows little in the way of acceptable deportment or behavior. Post reconstruction, our expectations of her transformation as complete and lasting would not be far-fetched. However, in order to work as a foil for the more appropriate Miss Rhode Island, Hart cannot possibly be allowed to completely conform. She is seen as uncoordinated, tripping and falling to the stage floor when her name is called as a finalist. The threats she makes during the all-important question and answer segment reminds one that Hart’s more masculine performances lie just below her ultra femme exterior. And lastly, the extremely physical yet “unladylike” talent of the self-defense demonstration guarantees her unfeasibility to wear the crown. What is more, when confronted with saving the pageant women and with Miss Rhode Island specifically, the scene is written to dramatize and reiterate Hart’s capability for overblown physical brutality. She kicks and flips her male escort, then slugs Miss Texas in the face sending her flying into the audience with a broken nose. All the while, the other contestants, control booth personnel, announcer, and hosts attempt to remain civil while carrying on through the turmoil, creating a dichotomy to highlight proper behavior. Hart’s lower-class and uncivilized behavior creates the condition that she could never be fit material for any real consideration as our national representative. Unfortunately, the same contention surfaces for Miss New York. But before addressing the issues of marginalization that would prevent her consideration, I would like to speak to the issue of marginalization in general.

Marginalized Women

Certainly all forms of communication whether print, live, or mediatized convey messages that might potentially influence attitudes and behaviors. Mediatized expressions, however, contain the additional possibility to either further refine points of interest and/or create influential frameworks. The focus on directorial and editorial choices within Miss Congeniality often unintentionally modify seemingly innocuous and harmless portrayals into scenarios steeped with homophobia, ageism, sexism or hegemony. Close-ups or camera angles, use of music or silence, images of acceptance or marginalization revolving around age, class, race or ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation all become exceptional tools for the exploration of constructed norms and ideals (Cole and Henderson xii). When considering the marginalized women within the pageant world of Miss Congeniality, their promises of citizenship become loud voices when set beside the quieter sounds of normalization and standardization projected within the film.

For example, when Victor Melling recounts his only pageant loss, he reasons it to the fact that one of the top five women competing for the crown was deaf. Blurring the fictive and real worlds and drawing from yet another happening in real life brings both a credence to notions of preferential treatment and exposes issues of marginalization. Perlmutter recounts the real-life episode in her essay “Miss America: Whose Ideal?”:

> In 1994, there was another first in the Miss America Pageant: the crowning of Heather Whitestone, who is hearing impaired. The Miss American Organization can now advertise not only that it is culturally diverse but also that it does not discriminate on the grounds of physical impairment; it is an equal opportunity beauty pageant … In terms of visual imagery, being deaf is just not the same as being a quadriplegic. In our society hearing impairment is the most socially

> acceptable physical disability because it is invisible and hence does not cause visual discomfort to the viewer. (158)

Although a fleeting moment among many, Melling's words ring harshly. "You can't beat that," he commiserates sadly, alluding rather openly to our country's affinity to show preference to those who have overcome their "handicaps" to live lives of "normalcy." Perlmutter takes the notion of disability even further, making a scathing attack on the ideals of patriarchy and concluding that all of the contestants are in effect damaged individuals blindly unaware of their own complicity with "patriarchal notions of beauty, sex, youth, competition, and hierarchy" (164). Whether she is correct in her assumption about ignorant complicity or not is not so much at issue here as is the complicity of the film Miss Congeniality as a popular culture mechanism for the perpetuation of pageants as ideal "grooming" societies for a sector of our nation's women at the expense of an even larger sector of excluded Others.

Racism and the Phantasmatic Lie

Moving now to more specific sites of contention, issues of color and sexuality must certainly surface when considering women on the margins. As sites of "phantasmatic promise," Butler contends, whiteness and femaleness often obscure both women of color and lesbians (Gender is Burning 455). However, Banet-Weiser claims that "pageants confront national tensions about gender and race and, through performances of 'diversity' and femininity, 'resolve' these tensions" (The Most 7). On the surface one might be inclined to see such resolutions within Miss Congeniality. After all, the contestant group is made up of women who we can easily identify as members of racial and ethnic groups other than Caucasian European. At the introduction breakfast, for example, Hart is introduced to some of the eventual top ten. Both

Miss New York and Miss California read as African American, while Miss Hawaii reads as distinctly native. Other races and ethnicities are evident throughout the rehearsals and final pageant. However, in the film's racial inclusion dwells uneasy residual sparks emanating from efforts that insist a nonmarginalizational stance. For example, to have the outgoing queen portrayed by an African American projects a favorable inclusion, while pointing up that she was the best queen ever creates a moment of questioned sarcasm, especially when delivered by hopefuls for her crown. And while Miss New York as a predominant African American candidate commands our attention, she does so with a stereotypical coarseness often projected within the media. Whether in fact or not, she reads as a tough middle/lower-class woman of New York's rougher side we certainly do not read her as privileged.

Both bell hooks and Judith Butler concede to the centrality of a white, unmarked gaze "that passes its own perspective off as the omniscient, one that presumes upon and enacts its own perspective as if it were no perspective at all" (Butler, Gender is Burning 459). For the first fifty years the Miss America Pageant rule book included rule number seven stating, "Contestants must be of good health and of the white race" (qtd. in Perlmutter 157). Perlmutter, while wandering through the book Miss America: The Dream Lives On—A 75 Year Celebration (1995), noticed a significant detail: "All the black women are light skinned with Caucasian features and the style of their hair is characteristically that of white women. The African-American women who were allowed into the pageant could pass for white" (158). It is hardly surprising to hear that just as a "woman with a hearing impairment pass[es] for one who is physically intact," so do African American women pass for white (158). "When the judges are deciding who is the fairest in the land, this can be taken literally," Perlmutter writes, citing statistics from Rita Freedman who makes it known that nearly one of three contestants has been a blond Caucasian (157). Furthering

the notion, it comes as little shock that the title winner in Miss Congeniality would be Miss Rhode Island—a wholesome, youthful, innocent blonde.

Sexism and the Phantasmatic Exchange

Shannon Jackson also makes the point that publicly our culture often "position[s] racially marked and unmarked women differently, make the possibility of conceiving alternatives an ambivalent and volatile process" (694). Such is the case for Miss New York, who must bear the additional burden of a second marginalization—lesbianism. As the remaining finalists are led off the stage, Miss New York breaks from the group in a shout out to lesbianism: "I just want to let all the lesbians out there know if I can make it to the top ten so can you" (Miss). Although not alluded to in the least during the scenes prior to the final pageant night, when finally confronted with Miss New York's admitted lesbian identity, the audience is naturally apt to replay her previous performances, this time actively seeking evidence of her "true" self. Whether one finds evidence or not, a significant reading might still be had about Miss New York's conduct after being dismissed from the stage. "Like gender," Gayle Rubin explains, "sexuality is political. It is organized into systems of power, which reward and encourage some individuals and activities, while punishing and suppressing others" (309). While her racial identity as a black woman foregrounds our relationship with her as a success story of individualism and racial integration without prejudice, the establishment of her sexual orientation exposes another of this country's remaining and most divisive tensions. Because Miss New York's sexual orientation comes as a surprise to all concerned, film viewers included, we are left to wonder about both the reasoning for and the timing of her announcement.

What is more, the solitary and radical nature of Miss New York's militant interruption creates the appearance that lesbians have infiltrated the event. Instead of establishing her legitimacy as a contestant and proper/realistic candidate to represent our nation, her actions code her as unacceptable on several levels, the least of which is impropriety. Butler points out that "discrete genders are part of what 'humanizes'" us, and "those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished" (Performative 273). As punishment Miss New York is dragged quickly the from the stage. Because Western societies structure sexuality "within an extremely punitive social framework," both informal and formal (Rubin 277), Miss New York's removal cannot be seen strictly as an attempt to reestablish order in the theatre. Rubin explains that the ideological formation of sex negativity plays an important role within our culture. "Western cultures," she continues, "generally consider sex to be a dangerous, destructive, negative force" (278). Consequently, Miss New York's surprise pronouncement and self-outing sets in motion a predictable chain reaction that both reaffirms her status as Other (both black and lesbian) and confirms her collective's habitual and antinormative conduct as hostile to national interests.

Homophobic remarks "often follow upon the discovery that one is a lesbian," says Butler (Gender is Burning 452). "Can we say lesbians?" the concerned engineer queries. Although not itself a homophobic remark per se, that the male control booth engineer has to ask about its appropriateness as a possible forbidden word in the industry maintains its homophobic energy. The stern retort from his female coworker, "Got a problem with that?" reveals further evidence of the infiltration process as her gendered performance is such to make the viewer conclude that she is not necessarily concerned for Miss New York's rights as an individual but rather as a "sister" coming to the defense of one of her own. Verbal admonitions often act as a "first line of social control" reminding persons to act in accordance with the expected attitudes, appearances,

and affiliations assigned by the institution (Garfinkel 125). Hart's constant reprimands and insults from Victor are good examples. For Miss New York there are none presented to the viewers and thus we must infer tacitly that some sort of compliant maneuvering exists behind the scenes. In society, Harold Garfinkle reveals, kinship arrangements often create then hold persons in compliance with established parameters "regardless of the desires, *i.e*., 'whether they like it or not'" (125). Perhaps this has been the case for both women. The result being for Hart that she must maintain her performance of hyperfemme, and for Miss New York, she must continue her masquerade as heterosexual. Having achieved her status as a legitimate female, Miss New York must secure herself through her appearance and performance. As a testament to her success she must mobilize herself "under the gaze or in the presence of normal male and female other" (134).

Even Hart's sexuality is at issue, if only for a select few. Although not available to television viewers, those who buy the video release are given some additional scenes with which to construct fuller character performances. For example, there is a wedding scene that was deleted from the final version of the film. In the scene, Gracie attends her father's marriage to a new wife. While waiting for the bride to complete her walk to the altar Gracie and her father exchange a few words about her settling down. Although she cites her heavy workload as a reason for not being married, her father turns to her to with concern asking if she is a lesbian. She snorts and says, "Dad, I wish." Is it fair to bring this scene into the conversation at this time? I think yes, but not necessarily as a means to further enrich our understanding of Hart's character. Rather this scene serves as an indicator of the directorial choices and editing that went into removing any doubt as to Hart's sexual orientation, just as it exposes the tacit implication that lesbianism exists with prejudice. What is more, with the implication that Hart may be a lesbian based upon some deficient experience with men, or because she has not yet found the

right man, presumes, as Butler might contend, that her "lesbianism is acquired by virtue of some failure in the heterosexual machinery, thereby continuing to install heterosexuality as the 'cause' of lesbian desire; lesbian desire is figured as the fatal effect of a derailed heterosexual causality. In this framework, heterosexual desire is always true, and lesbian desire is always and only a mask for forever false" (Gender is Burning 452-53). Consequently, both Hart and Miss New York present themselves in masquerade. In that "our society prohibits willful or random movements from one sex status to the other," such transfers must be accompanied, according to Garfinkle, "by the well-known controls that accompany masquerading" (125). As a timed, hegemonically constructed event, further limited by occasion, there is an expectation that any masquerade will end with the event (125). However, both Hart and Miss New York end their masquerades prior to the ending of the event, which forces a reconstitution of all the people and situations that have taken place. The spectators and the viewers must reshuffle reality and fiction in an attempt to situate themselves and those they choose as their representatives somewhere within the new narrative of the National Symbolic.

The Phantasmatic Ageist

The continuation of the contestant's requirement to be connected to something greater than themselves and of civic value stems from the Progressive activists of the nineteenth century. Further extending "the ideal of the 'citizen mother' through their involvement in civic associations" designed to serve democracy, women served as defenders of moral values, as well as universal ideas of freedom and equality (Krause 15-16). Youthful examples of the role of "citizen mother" are played out through the "issue platforms" of the contestants. However, as a means of comparison and as a way to provide an example that works against the younger contestants more ideal personas, Miss Congeniality gives us the opportunity to witness the

effects egocentrism might have on the “citizen mother” who is past her prime. While aging women are rarely “represented in prominent roles or featured as strong leading characters” (Kjaergaarrd 204), the matured Kathy Morningside is the exception.

However, the character of Morningside performing as the evil antagonist comes at no great cost to cultural traditions. As a method for aging women’s continued reification as negative members of society, Miss Congeniality furthers an already distorted media standard in which “older people—especially women—are presented in a negative light or in a stereotypical fashion” (Kjaeraarrd 204). Morningside, as the pageant director, is not portrayed as a victim so much as victimizer, nor dependent so much as independent. On the other side, however, she is stereotypically negative and ill-tempered (204). So much so that it only furthers our disgust with her ruthlessness as the action progresses. Speaking more specifically toward aging women on television who are more often portrayed as both sexless and evil (204), Kim Kjaergaard’s words easily include what is happening within Miss Congeniality, not only as a film but as a film in constant replay via televised syndication. What is more, aging also often leads to a loss of value and import within our culture (204). Consequently, identity management for aging women involves the deployment of masquerade (Biggs 46). Her masquerade, much like those of her marginalized sisters, is often reserved for a specific audience, “even if that audience exists in the inner world of the self” (46). Through the aging process many women often no longer buy into simplistic notions of idealism. Thus comes one of the values of youth and the need to replace the aging with younger more innocent individuals. And although Morningside’s attempts to collude with the cult of youth provide her an extended phase of inclusion (49), she is nonetheless eventually slated for termination as pageant director in favor of someone who can provide a newer, hipper look and feel to the event.

On a more sinister level, Morningside (as the aging Other) compounds her role of public enemy. Working to undermine the pageant as the National Symbolic, she becomes more precisely an enemy of the nation, made so with the inclusion of Lady Liberty as watch-keep over the event. In The Second Sex (1949), Simone De Beauvoir agues that the mythologizing of women often "plays out and substantiates a fear of women," resulting in the villainization of the female gender. She also points out that the man-made-woman is the projection of men's fears, especially their mortality (12). By their very nature, then, women are seen as irrational and a threat and challenge to the patriarchal order (Bordo, Unbearable 206). In Miss Congeniality, the irrational appears as Kathy Morningside. When we first meet Morningside in her conference room, she is beautiful and authoritative. At one point she stands up and the crown worn by a past pageant queen in the photo behind her now hovers mystically over Morningside's head, looking as though she is wearing it. She is in fact, a past beauty queen, and the source material of her past is now being reshaped "to build a serviceable identity in the present" (Biggs 50). However, Morningside's age also shields a double absence, "that of being 'not male' and of being 'not young.' From being only too visible, one becomes invisible" (49). In addition and according to this film, a beauty queen beyond her years (read usefulness/desire) results in someone duplicitous and antiquated, devious and dangerous.

Images of women engaged in violence sells, Lynn Paulson concludes, feeding a desire of female spectators to experience a "secret thrill" (135-36). Although many women would rarely give in to such extremes, even though they might wish it, the use of the "thrill" as a vicarious tactic works to ensure that women watching might remain docile and the nation safe from hegemonic disruption. Violence committed by women, it is argued, comes from their victimization (133). Consequently, aggression becomes lashing out at an injustice with warrant.

A childhood trauma, abusive partner, or hormonal imbalance all explain and lessen women's culpability (133). Women's justified violence reconfirms the status quo Paulson reveals, "no such explanations for the phenomenon of male violence are needed, because it does not disrupt one's sense of the social order to the same degree" (133). "The feminine nature of patriarchal cultural ideology is rigidly reductionist," Paulson reminds us (133), remanding women into roles determining them as the gentler, nurturing sex, who should stay committed to home and motherhood (133). Those who do not subscribe to these norms "fall outside the boundaries of prescribed femininity. In addition, within the sexist ideology of patriarchal culture, women who are elderly and ugly are Other (133). Miss Congeniality relies heavily upon this implied standard. Early in the film, for example, the viewer is introduced to "The Citizen"—a terrorist bent on destroying the pageant. Viewers witness a practice demolition as a female dummy's head, rigged with dynamite, explodes with a push of a button. The gender of the "The Citizen" is kept a mystery and Gracie Hart must both expose and stop whoever this evil person might be. Popular culture preserves "cultural expectations for and beliefs about the violent behavior" (135), and the film's ageism readily accepts those premises. Although Morningside's son carries out the actions, it is obvious that she is the architect behind the violence. And when her son fails to do the job, Morningside is the person who picks up the detonator in an attempt to complete her mission of destruction. Eventually Hart discovers it is Morningside who engineers the plan, and that during the pageant the crown rigged to explode will supposedly kill the new Miss United States.

The low number of violent crimes executed by women perpetuates the belief that although "aggression by nature is male," violent women are truly monstrous (134). Although the dominant caretakers of their children, women are responsible for much of the child abuse in our

country, ranging from emotional abuse and neglect to murder (138). As the reigning "citizen mother," Morningside reproduces a powerful cultural mythology that "only women who are evil or insane harm their children" (138), and her symbolic children are the youthful pageant contestants.

In addition to her forthcoming firing, Morningside's crusade against "feminists, intellectuals, and ugly women" is compounded by a further revelation of insane reasoning behind the destructive plot to silence "twenty-five years of bitching beauty queens." But while she did not succeed in that task, she does, if only momentarily, succeed with the bombing in symbolically silencing the pageant's link with the nation. What is more, choosing to rig the crown to explode also symbolically plays into the notion that intelligence in women creates a dangerous enemy. Historically, the head has been considered the most dangerous element of the female body. In fact, during the building of the Statue of Liberty, the comments of a couple of male onlookers were recorded. As they viewed the headless body of the statue, one man turned to the other saying, "They could leave off the head. All a man really needs anyway are the arms and legs" (The Statue). As Morningside's body comes to represent our culture's method of dealing with the aging, the ferocity of her protest should give us all reason to pause and reflect about the destructive avenue we are on as a nation. Morningside's masquerade had become "an arbitrator between the inner and outer logics," facilitating her survival within a patriarchal environment and serving as a way for her to continue to participate in a world defined by others (Biggs 52). And just as spokesperson for the pageant, Morningside's usefulness has come to an end as mouthpiece for the nation: Lady Liberty's damaged head creates a momentary silence throughout the theatre. However, the film gives little time to reflect upon the marginalization of

those women who are no longer in competition for the seat of reigning queen. Instead, the action quickly draws the viewer back to the desires and fantasies the spectacle of the event evokes.

A Space for Desire and Fantasy—The Majestic Theatre

As a National Symbolic "political space of the nation," the Majestic Theatre as sponsor to the Miss United States pageant acts quintessentially as a "space of representation, desire and fantasy" (Banet-Weiser, Miss America 71). An analysis of the socio-political nature of the pageant space must also take into consideration both the radical socially embedded nature of artistic production as well as the inherent psychic and material examples of the representations found within it (S. Jackson 693). The film's back-story all leads up to the final pageant night, working as something akin to what theater audiences often find in their programs today—director's and dramaturgical notes. In like effect, we as the film viewers are provided with both the personal history of its protagonist and multiple visible supports for the nationalistic message the film intends to reify.

Unmistakably, Lady Liberty serves as both a memorial space and a site for the performance of nationhood. In the film, a giant Statue of Liberty fills the back area of the stage. Kaja Silverman offers a laconic reading of Lady Liberty:

> Bartholdi's statue, on the contrary, completely buries the female form beneath her classic drapery. … Any thought that a body might nevertheless lurk beneath those folds is abruptly put to flight by the possibility of entering the statue and climbing up inside it. From this interior vantage point, as from all exterior views, all that can be seen between arms and feet are the green metal sheets of her neoclassical garments. Eiffel's support structure only works to deny corporeality even further,

> since it puts a wrought-iron pylon and secondary system of truss work at the center of the statue. (21)

However, in the magical world of theatre and fantasy, realities might easily shift. As the music blares, Lady Liberty's tunic rises to expose a large spiral staircase down which descend the fifty pageant contestants. Additionally, each also wears a large Liberty crown. In their right hands, the contestants carry the familiar Liberty torch and in the left, instead of a tablet, each clutches a cutout representation of their state. The trophy, a gold Lady Liberty statue, glistens in the foreground as the lyrics from the Miss United States song are sung:

> From sea to shining sea
> Like Lady Liberty
> She reigns over all she sees
> She's beauty and she's grace
> She's Miss United States.

The configuration seen here is highly reminiscent of the statue in New York Harbor where visitors can enter through the base of the statue/woman, move through her lower pedestal spaces (now a museum), and walk the many stairs that lead up through the body, the head, and into the crown. (Today, however, the head area remains closed for security reasons).

In the words of Marvin Trachtenberg, and apparently without irony, "for a fee" Liberty "is open to all for entry and exploration from below" (Babcock 401). Silverman recounts a similar event in 1918 in which a outline representation of Liberty was filled "with the photographic cutouts of the 18,000 officers and men stationed at an Iowa military base" (24). Philippe Roger, a witness to the happening gives the following description: "'The totemic giantess (there) becomes a fabulous conglomerate of flesh and blood, her body a mosaic of

human bodies. And that extraordinary tableau vivant is a mythic realization of the desired fusion of the foreign colossus and the social corpus'" (qtd. in Silverman 24). Strikingly, the collage "compensates for the statue's own missing body by substituting a myriad of smaller bodies," Silverman concludes, resulting in a form of gender hybridization (24). While similar, the fact that all of the small bodies at the Miss United States pageant perform as miniatures of the national mother means the hybridization remains contained to the dual natures of womanhood in both its human and iconic forms. What is more, according to Silverman, "What Bartholdi's statue held out to his compatriots was the promise of a liberty uncontaminated by passion, a republic without republicanism, and a political arena from which the female body would be discreetly barred" (22). Significantly, Miss Congeniality recovers these aberrant notions through its evocations of passion, civil engagement, and the gendering of its space.

The gendering of space, explored by theorists such as Grosz and McDowell, might "help us understand how spaces can orient or organize family, sexual, and social relations" (Bryant and Livholts 31). Riverwalk is one prime example of the gendering of space. Originally intended as communal space for shoppers and sightseers, the space becomes a sight of/for primarily feminine consumption during the swimsuit preliminary. Just as "the bodily praxis of using rooms promotes an understanding of the body," so might a space be "activated through the gaze … depending on who is looking and what they value" (Bryant and Livholts 31). The airplane hanger also moves from a being masculine space to one femininely gendered. With the exception remaining that during both times, pre- and postreconstruction, the space remains a source for masculine utility. In the end, however, it is the space of the Majestic Theatre that will transform into the most provocative gendered space of nationhood.

Performative Elements and Elements of Performance

The desire for agency and self-empowerment often runs in tandem with fantasies of self as supreme authority. From the outset, and hardly naïve or uninformed, pageant contestants deliberately deliver a "self-aware gender performance" (Ruwe 148). But what is delivered when coupled with our national icon of Lady Liberty is a self-aware performance of nationhood embodied by and within symbols of the majestic. At the opening of the pageant's final night at The Majestic Theatre (so aptly named), all of the women are dressed in identical long, flowing, aqua-blue gowns reflective of that worn by The State of Liberty. Reminiscent of American idyllic iconography, they portray images of "peace and wholeness," the approximation of young, virginal mothers (Young 196). As timeless woman clothed in blue, the prospective queens evoke "a primary image of power, female power" (196).

The choosing of the pageant's queen, preceded by her making, reifies both the collective self identity as well as points of cultural identity (King-O'Riain 75). As opportunities to understanding the links between bodies and textual memories, the pageant gives us "embodied symbols *and* symbolic bodies" (75). Predictable and unchanging, the format of the judging criteria, pageant events, and emcee performances remains stable. Even bodily practices like holding hands and tearful acceptances are "highly homogenous" (76). As contrived performances, pageants serve as national narratives and initiates to inspire the consumption of embodied national ideals (78). Notwithstanding, Miss Congeniality must work to overcome the performative elements and the elements of performance standardized within the pageant that so often ring of an insincerity that aligns as an illustration of kitsch. In fact, Ruwe's work admittedly links "the beauty pageant—its displays of music, dance, and theatre, the tawdry display of beauty, and commodified presentation of the female body—to kitsch" (145). Familiar

kitschy iconography, she points out, most often includes the pageant sash, the overkill rhinestone crown, the runway walk and wave, and the large elegant bouquet of roses (145). But how is pageant kitsch reconfigured when the iconography includes our national icon as well as a surrounding space and place reminiscent of actual locations so dear to the national psyche? Does kitsch take on a new meaning? Or is kitsch eliminated altogether? While pageant items and surround reflect one level of kitsch, the actual performances of the contestants are another (145). "The two-minute melodramatic renditions of classical music, jazz ballads, or dance are the very image of high art being rendered in a popular context," Ruwe explains, and are presented "with no redeeming sense of irony" (145-46). This is especially evident with most of the contestants within Miss Congeniality. However, in order to avoid the loss of the political narrative so deeply invested in up to this point, the authors must adjust the performances of Miss New Jersey (Hart) and Miss Rhode Island so that they supersede, as much as possible, any inherent kitschiness. Contemporary queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defines kitsch as "a structure of human response and relation, typically one involving author or audience relations of spectacle … Kitsch is not a quality that inheres in objects, it is something grafted onto the object through the audience's response" (155).

For example, Miss Rhode Island, whose talent relies upon twirling batons, overrides expectations of kitsch by conquering her fear of failure. As the camera in the audience zooms in on Miss Rhode Island beginning her routine, we also interestingly hear that her previous marching band music has been replaced with loud rock—"Everybody put your hands up. Everybody have a good time." With torches lit the audience roars with approval. The camera cuts to an angle that looks straight down on Miss Rhode Island as she tosses the flaming batons high into the air, and the final stage shot gives up Miss Rhode Island finishing her routine and

striking a pose for the cheering auditorium crowd. The flaming batons presented to her by Hart and so skillfully deployed to the awe and approval of the audience hardly delivers a spectacle of either heroic or royal proportions. But it is in overcoming her insecurity and choosing to risk failure that demonstrates how Miss Rhode Island's individualism finds empowerment within the national purview. But because only the film viewers are privy to Miss Rhode Island's history of insecurity, they are also in a position to impose their revised viewpoint upon its sister audience sitting in the Majestic Theatre.

In Hart's case, most would probably consider that one dressed as a Tyrolean maiden and playing musical water glasses as kitsch. However, when Hart must resort to an alternate talent, the self-protection demonstration, the element of kitsch is replaced by yet another more affirming display of self-empowerment. As a highly comedic moment, engineers in the booth (caught unawares) react to her announcement and scurry to decide whether or not to cut to commercial. Deciding to stay with her, the full stage shot with Hart standing center also gives Hart's close-up on the screen behind her on one side and on the other, Lady Liberty. In unison, the visual makes a solemn commitment to her value as both individual and citizen. No longer a "useless" talent, Hart's demonstration is lauded for its practicality and effectiveness, and just as Miss Rhode Island's talent, receives approval from the audience both within and without the cinematic frame. Unfortunately, the brutality of its execution eventually reflects poorly when considering the more docile and sanctioned talents of the other pageant contestants. In the end, though, it is the opening and closing moments of the final pageant that create the bookend spectacles that eventually disrupt kitsch in order to reaffirm Miss Congeniality's primary message of nationalism. What is more, the film's focus on theatricality as it merges with forms of media

sponsors an even more significant, provocative, and perhaps more successful forum for the nation narrative.

Mediated theatre, Bay-Cheng stresses, is "a new methodology for understanding the media exchange between the live performance event and its record in moving images" (40). What is more, she continues, "media share certain characteristics of image construction, conventions of time and space, and mutual reliance on screens that we may usefully juxtapose against embodied performance in the theater" (37). Although finalized in film, Miss Congeniality still utilizes elements of live theatre such as constructing within a real theatrical space and filming with live audience members present in the auditorium house. Similarly, many archival tapings of live play productions not only use multiple cameras and reconfigure original stage lighting to that more suitable for the camera, but some even eliminate their live audiences all together, replacing them with a camera to serve as the play's spectator. So why should we think any differently of the filming of the Miss United States pageant than we would of the filming of a production of Hamlet by The Royal Shakespeare Company? "Both present and absent, the recorded performance," Bay-Cheng stresses, "cannot be simply a transparent window to the performance it records, nor can it be dismissed as irrelevant to the theatrical performance" (39). As a result, Bay-Cheng's notion is given tangibility when considering the layers of mediated performances within Miss Congeniality. "In mediated theatre," she continues, "both the live performance (if only implied) and the recorded versions are visible, but the view of the performance is radically revised by the apparatus" (41). On the one hand the embedded media erases the theatricality of the event through the negotiation of the camera lens around the backstage scenes. While on the other, film viewers are pointedly instructed in the processes of

theatricality through the inclusion of both off-stage and control booth shots. As a result, I would argue, the mediated layers fashion a kaleidoscopic view of the National Symbolic.

It is the final pageant night and viewers are a given a wide shot of the exterior of the Majestic Theatre. Walking up the long red carpet the audience enters the space, and an interior shot of the balcony reveals two roving spotlights actively highlighting the event to come. The auditorium is packed, and the space resounds with a cacophony of pre-show noises. Next viewers see a tight shot of the contestants climbing the backstage spiral staircase that is Lady Liberty. Cut to an establishing shot of the control booth, where several engineers are readying to broadcast the pageant live. Coinciding with the countdown, they watch a large central screen (establishing what the home viewer will see) several smaller monitor screens for various cameras surround it. The real life owner of the Miss United Stated pageant performs as the fictional pageant's announcer. She stands at the back of the auditorium, and as she introduces the "States on Parade" she turns away from the camera, sweeping her hand to reveal a long shot of the entire pageant stage. The looming statue of Lady Liberty lights up left center stage, up right center is a huge projection screen that copies what a centrally located camera in the audience reveals as it is pointed at the stage. The Liberty diadem erupts with lights and sparklers as the Miss United States theme rings loudly throughout the auditorium. Fireworks gush and flood from the stage floor the entire width of the stage to create a wall of light as the fabric concealing the staircase that is Liberty's body lifts. The contestants, in single file, descend the staircase and on out to the stage floor. They parade down a center forestage runway, breaking off to left and right runways that circle them around and back to the main floor. The song "One In a Million" plays as they make their way back upstage eventually reforming in one large group. In unison they pose seductively, then undulate their bodies forward and back several times like waves on the ocean.

The group breaks and each of the contestants go to new positions on the stage. Rearranged, the women join together covering the full stage floor for smaller group dance sections. Until now the music has been fairly slow and refined. The women twirl slowly one last time and in keeping with a loud crashing crescendo all strike overtly provocative poses. With their legs spread wide apart they perform a Vegas-like routine to loud and fast pulsating music. Flirting and seductive, accentuated hips and pelvic actions accompany a flurry of rapid spins and turns. The camera cuts briefly for viewers to witness a group of men off-stage watching the action, then returns to the dancers who increase the tempo. A mist rolls out on to the stage and the women parade one final time to their last position. In a full stage shot viewers see them completing their dance on the upstage riser of Liberty Island. They are spread out over its width and end with a final pose with right arms raised as Lady Liberty. The large screen behind them shows a close-up of one contestant's diademed head. A new camera shot from behind the contestants looks out over their heads at the cheering audience, and the women slowly bring their arms straight down in unison as if to say "scene."

"All recorded versions of live performance distort the performing space," and it is up to the viewer to "imaginatively reassemble" the live performance by discriminating between those changes produced by the physical altering of the theatre production (Bay-Cheng 41). While most films provide only a partial view of an any scene because of the limitations of the frame, Miss Congeniality gives us an extended view of the "larger reality" by its inclusion of backstage camera shots and cuts to the control booth (42). "No single camera position can adequately contain the stage space" (43) thus, after dividing up the stage space into smaller areas, the camera can further break up the materials within those spaces. The framing creates meaning for

viewer through its narrowed focus (43). The continual shifting of the framing, which includes off-stage happenings, fashions an added dynamism to the live performance (44).

Just as the theatricality of the pageant projects out toward the audience, the cinematic structure pulls the viewer towards the frame. Mediated theatre, then, reverses the gaze creating a performance that retreats from us (43). However, Bay-Cheng concludes:

> The best-recorded versions, then, are those that account for and address the structure of the space and direction of the viewer's gaze, by penetrating the stage space so as to make it a dynamic environment by moving the camera into the stage space much like the camera moves through cinematic space. Watching the recorded version, the archival viewer must watch for the compensations of the screened performance, particularly the placement of the camera as an active viewer, penetrating the space of the performance in order to guide the screen viewer's eye into the screen space. The camera often violates the fourth wall from the outside so that the viewer can move into the performance. (43)

The camera as performer-observer fundamentally alters the act of looking by focusing in on those "things we do not and cannot see by ourselves" (44). Zooms, dolly shots and cuts all vary the way the camera enters the space of the stage. Also point-of-view and close-up shots become temporary stand-ins for the characters (44). By bringing the viewer closer to the action they are invited to identify more closely with the character (44).

The cinematic techniques used during the concluding pageant sequence are very much intended to reiterate the theatricality of the event and its inherent liveness. The primary elements are synopsized as follows: As Miss New Jersey's name is called as a top-ten finalist her first reaction is to flutter her hands in the attempt to stall a faux cry, a move well rehearsed on her

flight to Texas. As she walks down the riser and on to the stage floor she trips and falls. Cut to an announcer's uncontrolled response of "Oh Shit"; cut to see some of the audience rise with concern; cut to another control room reaction ("That was graceful," the women says); cut to Hart rising—a dress wing of chiffon is caught ridiculously on one side of her diadem and her long hair hung up on the other. She half gets herself in order and takes her place with the others. Cut to the audience and judges all relieved and clapping. As the contestants parade in swim suits, the camera positioned at mid-body allowing us to see the women from their knees to partial head, within the frame is both stage screen and Lady Liberty. Morningside stands at a monitor in the wings watching the televised version of the women parading in their swimsuits. When announcing the final five, the ten finalists stand center on the island riser in front of the onstage screen where a close-up solo of the sparkling crown rotates. Cut to the final five dressed in evening gowns and seated on pink stools center stage. Miss Rhode Island holding a microphone answers a question. "America is like a big ship," she says. The Dating Game setup has co-emcees Fields and Morningside sitting stage right. Partitioned by a center wall the five women sit stage left. A sheer blue curtain backdrop, about five feet high, curves around behind them all in the shape of a heart. Behind it viewers can still see the screen and Lady Liberty in the background.

For the crowning moment the authors create a space that is at one time made negative through the creation of spatial threats, and at another positive through the use of awareness and strategies that can lead to agency and empowerment (Bryant and Livholts 37). Thus the final pageant scene, although conflicting and energized, is able to also reaffirm the women's proper uses and displays of and for their femininity. However fleeting the illusion of agency, the patriotic surround still cements the women's relationship to their nation. The crowning moment

begins in the backstage dressing room where Miss California, Miss Texas, and Miss Nebraska all vie for a position at the mirror to freshen up. Victor is helping Hart adjust her dress and as she exits we hear him bellow, “Wear the crown, be the crown, you are the crown.” Jump shots volley between Hart trying to signal Eric in the wings to the announcers, then to the contestants and to the audience. Miss California is called for fourth runner-up; Miss Nebraska will be third runner-up. Eric sees someone up by the head of the statute and goes to investigate. Cut back to Miss Texas who is called for second runner-up. As Miss Rhode Island realizes she will be the new reigning queen, Hart hugs her, whispering, “Don’t take the crown.” The following wide shot of the outgoing queen also reveals a male escort pulling Hart from center while another replaces Miss Rhode Island’s sash. As the Miss United States anthem is sung, Hart continues to struggle. Confetti falls from the loft and the crowd cheers. Hart breaks free attempting to snatch the rigged crown from the unsuspecting new queen’s head. As the queen attempts to retain her crown, Miss Texas intervenes. Hart and Miss Rhode Island dressed in white, Texas in blue, and the flurry of red rose petals released from the anxious queen’s bouquet fashion a moving tapestry of patriotism. As Eric struggles with Morningside’s son up behind the head of the statue, Hart knocks Texas into the audience, grabs the crown and throws it up-stage just a Morningside pushes the button on the detonator. “Hold your crown up high,” Stan sings obliviously. The crown explodes over the shoulder of Liberty, blowing a hole in her head. We see the flaming head of Liberty as a ray of her diadem falls to the stage floor. Miss Rhode Island faints and Hart lowers her carefully onto floor. There is pandemonium in the audience. The camera cuts to a close-up of Stan, who continues to sing, “She’s Miss United States.” In the background we see Lady Liberty’s torso and head engulfed in flames, at which point the action cuts to the a stunned control room—“Good show everybody.”

Both the pageant ritual and its annual telecasting operate in concert to reinforce existing patriarchal structures, two thus far not mentioned—bureaucracy and the controlled use of time (Deegan 151). That being, however, when considering the gendering of space at the Majestic Theatre, the bureaucratic controlled use of time shifts markedly. Disruptions of space and time, according the Bryant, blur notions that there is a separation between public and private, consequently shifting what remains within a masculine spatial milieu into something more feminine. Within Miss Congeniality those disruptions come when both the production participants and spectators and we as viewers of the film/televised film also become viewers of the internal televised process. As the announcer of the televised "live" broadcast of the pageant production takes over, all spectators enter yet another space. The geographical space of the Majestic Theatre intersects with the illusionary space of Liberty Island, and both of these spaces again intersect through the medium of television with the imagined space of the nation, which includes both those audiences that are seated at home watching the televised broadcast and myself as viewer of film. The powerful spatial metaphor rekindles images of the nation, and the quest for its ideal representative merge desires of fantasy with fantasies of desire as the nation as a feminine geographic site becomes reified.

Conclusion

The final frames of the telecast pageant night of the Miss United States pageant are taken from the perspective of the Statue of Liberty. It is as though Liberty herself were looking down with approval, reminding viewers that the actual pageant system instructs its participants to acknowledge the ideal as imaginary (Ruwe 148). What is more, "the woman who wins the crown in the nationally televised event does not exist in nature; her looks are not real but manufactured.

The ideal is produced and crafted through labor, and the winner understands how to play the system (148-49). But is the contestant's complicity so easily explained away? Especially when so many young women are bent on achieving the body and social status afforded by participation with this institution? Young women viewing the pageant experience, many of whom are teenagers, "convey a strong sense of identification with characters" (Sorsoli, et al. 26). Sexual scripting theory, Lynn Sorsoli, et al. explain, is one aid to unraveling the role of gender ideology (36). Combining social learning theory and the study of media effects, scripting theory suggests "television may act more immediately by providing adolescent viewers with certain informative 'scripts' that dictate a variety of behaviors (in this case, sexual behaviors). The theory suggests that the scripts become so internalized and automatic that adolescents may become quite nonreflective about behaviors" (36). Given their findings Sorsoli, et al. determine that "even when television does offer girls choices about how to be in the world (i.e., whether they would like to be more like Buffy or more like Rachel), it tends to restrict them to a single script in terms of romantic relationships" (36).

A prime example comes when attempting to strike a balance. In the final scene we see the new Gracie Hart with her hair done, wearing earrings and makeup. She still wears her standard issue FBI suit, except now she buttons her blouse one button lower, seductively revealing a smidgeon of cleavage. Once again her compatriots are seated at the "Alpha" table. Today, however, we might read the sign not in reference to its gender connotation but rather as a symbol of a new beginning for Hart. No longer a social outcast or unloved, she has both kinship and romantic affection. Today "if a man marries a beauty queen, he literally takes home the trophy, tiara and all," says Perlmutter (157). That same idea could also include Hart for although she was not chosen as the queen, her performance as the crowned Lady Liberty lends weight to her

reconstruction as a prospective candidate. Consequently, as queen-contender and first runner-up (assuming she has been allowed to retain that position), Gracie's pageant status allows Eric to find himself where most heterosexual American men strive to be—sitting next to a beauty queen.

What is more, while receiving her award in the final scene, Hart admits the process has been "one of the most rewarding and liberating experiences" of her life (Miss). However, hers is a liberation heralded through her transformation into the supreme feminine. What is more, the writers give a final punctuation of irony to their viewers (whether film or televised). Earlier, on the plane traveling to San Antonio, as Hart studies a video of past pageant winners accepting their awards, she witnesses one particularly flustered contestant flapping her hands in front of her face in an attempt to keep from crying. At the time Gracie could only snipe and speak for the woman with ridicule: "Oh, if I only had a brain." Remarkably, this is the same hand-flapping action that Gracie uses as she tries to refrain from crying when receiving *her* award of Miss Congeniality. Ruwe explains a fascinating duality that persists within the pageant framework. On the one hand we witness a display of women behaving in an acceptable and congenial manner toward one another; while on the other they compete against one another for the pleasure of patriarchy. This disunity among women, Ruwe points out, feeds society's "deep investment in watching women simultaneously compete and display friendship" (145). Miss Congeniality easily verifies the competitiveness and kinship within the pageant world, for what Hart once ridiculed she now embraces.

Satiric endings, Griffin also reminds us, "are often obtrusively open … because the form and purpose of satire seems to resist conclusiveness" (98). Distinctly referential, satire only suggests a link between what is being satirized and the external world (120-21). However the film Miss Congeniality, on the other hand, develops an overtly comedic view of womanly

performance and women's agency. Consequently, I am compelled to ask how and if this satiric form furthers feminist goals. For it appears as though the kitschy nature of the pageant allows for a kind of naughty voyeurism for the intellectual, the feminist, or the cultural critic (Ruwe 146). Additionally, is it possible for the female viewer to move past the satire to recognize positionality and performance within American society? How might this shape our view of women and the construction of their gender identity? Why do women perform parodies of themselves or of an ideal? And if so, could we consider the result as a process of reification of hegemony or a deconstruction of the positionality of both icon and women, or both? Paradoxically, "the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of its own production" (Butler, Performative 273). Thus as witnessed here, I would argue that when conflated with the general conceptions of the performance of women compelled to reify national norms, both the pageant and gender performatives in the shadow of Lady Liberty, in the end, serve no American woman a good turn.

"Women's bodies," Ward and Harrison explain, "are habitually presented as objects for other's viewing pleasure, objects used to beautify and adorn" (3). Judgments of feminine attractiveness are often based partly on "finesse in giving pleasure to those who are placed in the position of observer" (Spitzack 2). The result generates a divided identity that demands a women embody "the positions of spectator and spectacle simultaneously" (2). "The spectacle of individuality and freedom" bestowed through the women's conflation with Liberty, "is both made possible and compromised through a commodification of personal identity" (14). In spite of this, their conflation with Lady Liberty drives a more complex impulse that refashions the women into adornments for a national concern. And although the winners of national pageants

most often continue on to represent the nation in global pageants such as Miss Universe or Miss World; they rarely bring with them such a tangible national reference. The question remains, then, as to whether consecutive images of the pageant winner will continue to evoke memories of the conflation found within Miss Congeniality. Or might that conflation subside into the mists of cultural memory. At first I was reticent to believe retention was possible save for the fact that the syndication of the film Miss Congeniality might conversely be responsible for not only the memory but the added potential for its intensification.

In addition, contestants reaffirm the notion of "natural" because the system utilizes an ideal starting point from which to begin its magic. Natural beauties are passed off as natural but improved constructions. Through affirmations of national identities such as the pageant, the pageants themselves become naturalized (Mattsson and Pettersson 8). With their marked female gender foreground, Gracie Hart, the other contestants, and Lady Liberty as conflated entities become versatile performers productive of multiple and often conflicting meanings for the viewer. The interplay between the feminine body and bodies of ideas creates an interchange where meaning transforms into matter (5). These meanings often serve either to continue the promulgation of female gender stereotyping or attempt a renegotiation of those stereotypes. Functioning then with the capacity to ideally disrupt myth or perpetuate it, the Miss United States pageant may either elicit social change for today's woman, or not. Unfortunately, as I explore the images of Miss Congeniality, I realize that the latter is most often the case.

Finally, I ask, does the conflation of the contestants with Lady Liberty in the end reflect our culture or challenge it? "Cultural performances," Turner emphasizes, "are not simple reflectors or expressions of culture or even of changing culture but may themselves be active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on

which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting 'designs for living'" (Anthropology 13). What do films like Miss Congeniality tell us about how certain American women who represent our country continue to perform in their roles as women and national representatives? Women and mothers have consistently reflected the nation and national beauty contests as sites for the reification of the National Symbolic to produce a tangible moment for young women to represent the mythic. According to Mirzoeff, "visual culture does not depend on pictures themselves but the modern tendency to picture or visualize existence" (5). Consequently, through the film's myriad embodied performances of Lady Liberty, I see Miss Congeniality working to strengthen our relationship with our most revered national icon, formalizing further our collective gender-driven national mythologies, and ultimately memorializing limiting conditions of feminine performance, agency, and ideals of American womanhood.

CHAPTER III

LIBERTY NOW: INTERTEXUAL ARTICULATIONS OF A NATION

—DISRUPTIONS OF THE IDEAL

So are we as foolish as monkeys if we assume that moving from theory to theatre or theatre to theory is an easy or straightforward process?
—Mark Fortier

Introduction

Moving from two-dimensional representational examples like those of the former two chapters to the world of three-dimensional presentation allows the artist-scholar the opportunity to flesh out more fully the theories and conjectures that propel any given thesis. In the case of the conceptualization and the presentation of my performance entitled Liberty Now, that process takes on added dimension as I seek to put into play some of the ways in which the two dimensional might provoke and reflectively resonate within the three dimensional—the inanimate inciting the animate. The artworks included in/as my performance (both two and three dimensional) continue to address, at the very least, issues surrounding the advancement and restrictions placed upon women's personal and public agency. What is more, this work seeks to expose Lady Liberty's physical and psychic state as it is recontextualized to reflect various visions of womanhood.

Certainly, the ideas having been informed by the research and analysis put forth in previous chapters allow me a unique perspective from which to begin my performance/exploration. For instance, in the fall of 1927, Mae West's new play The Wicked Age, about a rambunctious flapper who wins a beauty pageant, bombed in New York. Undeterred West would continue to take on the commercialism and exploitation of women by

the pageant industry and a few years later posed for a rather radical pageant style photo as Lady Liberty (Savage 66). Her point was not only conveyed but pointedly received, even if not in a positive light. So, too, it is my expectation that all members of the audience will be capable of "catching" many, if not all, of the distinctly gendered reinforcements and antagonisms embedded through the interplay of dimensions within Liberty Now. However, while the visuals/slides within this work may be read on one level as representational and reinforcing of the various hegemonic positioning of women within this society, I also believe those same visual images work conversely as a caustic disrupt of those cultural conventions. The merger of visuals from a variety of source fields from art history, news media, mass media, spectatorship, and the performance arena "unframes" them from the "specific histories of their making" and provides for the possibility of rewriting them within "and for our many and different concerns" (Rogoff 17).

Together with the audience, the collective semiotic space allows for the possibilities of play that might release sets of fixed meanings in order to "serve as the site for the continuous (re)production of meanings" (17). Drawing upon Laura Mulvey's work, Irit Rogoff considers curiosity as essential to viewership. What is more, he tell us, "Curiosity implies a certain unsettling; a notion of things outside the realm of the known, of things not yet quite understood or articulated; the pleasures of the forbidden or the hidden or the unthought; the optimism of finding out something one had not known or been able to conceive of before" (18). It is with this same sort of "curious eye" that I engage my production. I would also expect a certain amount of dis-ease from all members of the audience, but more pointedly from the male spectators since the hegemonic practices espoused/opposed are distinctly and predominately patriarchal. It is by way of this disrupt that I propose to challenge and evoke change. Some theoreticians have suggested

that “audience experience is basically sensory rather than cognitive in today’s theatre, a postulate with which Schechner agrees, although he suggests that the ‘seams’ between all these terms are currently being erased by the contemporary avant-garde” (Martin and Sauter 21). Before I discuss the intricacies of the production, however, I would like to share a short example of the conflation between icon and woman as it was made flesh in a very real way in the late 1970s.

Timothy Murray, professor of English at Cornell University, provides an apt case in point, one that took place in 1978 during his friend’s visit to the Musée du Louvre in Paris. As it was, a celebrity punker named Jordon, known for her Lady Liberty hairdo that spiked skyward in an ongoing mode of cultural transgression and protest over the sorry state of individual liberties, was asked to participate in a performance art showing/action at the museum. However, because she did not “perform” the icon correctly or according to convention, the simple presence of her abject personhood caused so much fervor amongst the shocked attendees of the museum event that she had to be whisked from the premises (The Contrast, 278-79). Fascinatingly, the only tangible visual connection to Lady Liberty was through Jordon’s gendered performance and her artistically fashioned hair as a simulation of Lady Liberty’s crown. She held no torch, no book, nor did she don Lady Liberty’s traditional costume. Remembering that the French originally created and presented the goddess icon to America reveals much of why the museum’s curators were so nonplussed and resistant to either any change (proffered by the progression of time leading to contemporary display) or individuation.

Given the history, therefore, simply walking into a/the public space reinforced both Jordon’s transgressive imagery of self and her performance of the conflated woman/icon. This was an insistence reinforcing the necessity to continue performing the historicized figure as the historical figure, and a perpetuation of gendered performance of the hegemonic image as it

continues to resonate with the culture at large. She—as Lady Liberty—was expected to continue to look/be as traditionally represented. While she may not have been standing on American soil, there is no dismissing the fact that a three-dimensional embodiment of the icon (whether punk version or otherwise) raises questions of agency as it applies to women's/Lady Liberty's iconic representation. While this example speaks to the demand for the continuation of traditional concepts of women's representation and agency, it also exposes one performative means by which those traditional binds might find liberation—solo performance.

What is more, Jordan's performance serves to reinforce my conjecture that while most women (of European/Caucasian descent) often indirectly maintain the hegemonic status quo, they also might possess a certain power that comes from their long-established connection to the icon. This empowerment, I contend, finds double force through the intertextual confluence of the genres of performance, art, and performance art. Performance art, Murray emphasizes, has the ability to "re-present" through a reversal of the customs that often underlie "traditional forms of aesthetic documentation" (Drama 2). In my case, the performance challenges the two-dimensional images and intertextually reconfigures hegemonic impressions into sites for resistance. Continuing, Murray explains that "re-presentation" is a mode of release rather than repression for "the subliminal energies of the body, a drive not merely to make present and visible but more essentially to activate through representational absences and Otherness the sights and scenes that performances always face, but never face, through psychic voyeurism" (The Contrast 282). Additionally, Jeanie Forte provides a lengthy but I think very pertinent explanation that women's performance art in particular serves as a deconstructive strategy operating to unmask traditional representations of women. She explains:

> This deconstruction hinges on the awareness that "Woman," as object, as a culturally constructed category, is actually the basis of the Western system of representation. Woman constitutes the position of object, a position of other in relation to a socially-dominant male subject; it is that "otherness" which makes representation possible (the personification of male desire). Precisely because of the operation of representation, actual women are rendered an absence within the dominant culture, and in order to speak, must either take on a mask (masculinity, falsity, simulation, seduction), or take on the unmasking of the very opposition in which they are the opposed, the Other. Michele Montrelay identifies women as the potential "ruin of representation" precisely because of their position within the accepted system. This is an identification informed particularly by semiotics theory and the understanding that "Woman as sign" is the basis of representation without which discourse could not exist. (252)

What is more, as women's performance art poses an "actual woman as a speaking subject," the potency of the disruptive act "clashes with the patriarchal text" (254), opening up fissures in the constructedness of the system and exposing the opportunity for a reflexitivity that might alter those paradigms in favor of a heightened female agency. So it is that my performance of Liberty Now moves toward this end.

Although the performance space varies from production to production, the rudimentary elements of the Liberty Now performances remain fixed. As the audience enters the space they first meet up with a small table on which sits a basket of one-use cameras. The sign next to it reads, "Please take a camera and use it freely and when directed during the performance. It is yours to keep." Audience members then take their cameras and saunter in to find a seat. While

doing so, they see a rather modest stage area on which rests a small bench to the left of center, nearby a bulky carpetbag sits on the floor. A large white projection screen serves as a backdrop. Several rows of chairs for audience seating face the stage. While the audience takes their seats, a single female actor moves about the space busily preparing the stage, her costume, and various prop elements. She chats casually with people while she works. As the lights dim the music begins and a video projection lights up room. The female actor, now in full persona, has transitioned into the character of Woman who stands silently to the side of the video screen watching the audience and the introductory slides. Eventually Woman begins to move into positions, first highly animated, then as static *tableaux vivant*. As the slides change, her actions and demeanor follow suit. Throughout the performance audience members are encouraged to respond vocally and through the taking of photographs. While the slide presentation includes nearly 60 representative slides of Lady Liberty in her various guises, most reflect her more traditional look—some are humorous, some not. Dispersed throughout the production, however, are a few slides reflecting the use of the Liberty image in more out of the ordinary ways. During these particular slides, audience participation and interplay with the character of Woman increases. While the character of Woman has many standardized positions and scripted actions, much is also improvisational in nature and dependant upon the particulars of each audience. Nearing the final frames of the production Woman's near-complete break from performance allows her to segue out of the character and back into the actor mode. As the last slide fades into black, I as actor and now audience member witness the final moments from my seat in the house. The house lights come up and I return to the stage for discussion.

My Performance Aesthetic

Forging a perspective that takes into consideration both the ontological and epistemological, my works rests somewhere between an aesthetic and a method. Primarily, however, I readily concede that my work is unabashedly informed by a feminist aesthetic that is concerned with the doing, and is being driven by the responsibility of witnessing and charging others toward radical performances of their own. My agency as a performer resultantly colludes and collides with my agency as a woman. Likewise, sight or vision becomes the apparatus that institutes and serves as a primary vehicle of exchange between myself/persona and the audience. Consequently, as a solo performance artist my work finds its aesthetic rooted in the visual and auditory. The auditory is not a spoken live text, however, with the exception of periodic audible sighs. The majority of the spoken word text presents through a voice-over track that is integrated into the slide presentation. The number of voice-overs is distinctly few, with only nine over course of the entire production. The infrequency of these particular modified voice-overs texts is intended to avoid stressing a mode of communication that has become all too often nothing more than a din to spectators. Furthermore, the limited use hopefully creates moments of increased focus on the theories underpinning the production. For example, Voice-over Number 2 speaks:

> Richard Schechner: “Restored behavior” something that is repeated, rehearsed, recreated; the repetitive nature of the behavior as something that cannot be performed the same way, giving rise to “‘repetition with a difference,’”—variations of a theme. The theme of Lady Liberty performed as a social memory that results in bodily knowledge, habit, and custom. (Roach 46-47)

The feminist aesthetic I utilize, one that "deploys the technique of re/reading in order to open up spaces of subversion using textual resources that are always, inevitably impure" (Constable 244), relies upon Butler's notion of affirmative resignification. The offered reading is fundamentally nonteleological, and as Catherine Constable might require, enables "the articulation of a series of moments that have subversive potential, rather than being bound to a traditional holistic model of the text" (244). Voice-over Number 5:

> The body, Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson argue, "is known and experienced only through its representational performances—whether presented 'live,' in photographs, videos, films, on the computer screen, or through the interpretive text itself."
> (Performing 8)

The interplay that is theatrical performance consists of the text (in all of its forms), the dramatic space, the actor, and the audience (Martin and Sauter 50). While Liberty Now breaks the audio/visual code by nearly eliminating the illusionistic style, my performance as Woman breaks the stage/audience code as well as the usual actor/audience zone. The performance space is at once a museum, lecture-hall, theatre, diorama, and academy; all which are discursive spaces by practice. I momentarily recreate myself as a cultural artifact—ready for exploration and exploitation. Voice-Over Number 6:

> W. B. Worthen: "texts and performances are materially unstable registers of signification, producing 'meaning' intertextually in ways that deconstruct notions of intention, fidelity, authority, [and] present meaning." (20)

My work is significant because it invests in the performative of static representations and through performance parody brings the static to life in a revelatory exchange that preferences neither state (static or active) but merges the two into a dialectical exchange that encourages and at times forces a cooperative participation with all those present in the room. On another level the relationship garnered through the transference of solo performance to the body as art (i.e., the monument of Liberty or inspirational tableau) creates another dialectic. My identity shifts or modulates from the position of self/actor to that of image/character which is Liberty as woman in all of her various forms (i.e., sexual, white, or educator). My work conflates and points up the performative by way of performance allowing spectators to view what is often mostly a subliminal transformation to/into the conscious act that is performance or the performative act that is life. As one final example, a voice-over draws upon a quote by Simone de Beauvoir:

> "One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman." (Second 301)
>
> On n'est pas né, mais plutôt devient une femme?

The audio/visual fragmentation reflects lived experience and thrives upon the arousal of connotative responses from the spectator (Martin and Sauter 41). In addition to voice-overs, a second sound track, also integrated, contains music and songs as additional texts to reinforce the overall thesis. The songs of Bette Midler and Jacqueline Jones, for example, playfully but seriously interact with the tangos by Armando Pontier. The blending of extra- and intra-theatrical expressions intends to create a performance/performative conglomeration, a theatricality that teeters between often harshly oppositional states (Martin and Sauter 99-100). The polysemy created when reading through a variety of textual devices delimits the structure of the text as well as its preferred readings (Fiske 226). The mobilization of a text's polysemy "involves activating one set of meanings rather than any of the others, or responding to some contradictions rather

than others" (226). Through vertical intertextuality focusing on the primary text's relations to other secondary texts engaged within the performance space, I seek to summon criticism and "promote the circulation of selected meanings of the primary text" (227). Tertiary texts also expose the available polysemic readings, while the critical use of the subsequent criticisms "act as textual shifters" that breath new life and meaning into the images involved (228).

As my performance opens we see Woman engaged as/in a "fleshed" continuation of the icon, seated on a bench in front of a video projection screen. A crown, lighter, and banana are placed at one end of the bench. A large carpet bag rests on the floor to one side. She wears a black lace bustier, black shorts, black stockings, and black lace-up boots. Over that, she dons a Japanese kimono. Excessively feminine, Woman paradoxically parodies what is considered appropriate feminine dress. Woman's liminal role as social provocateur and critic subversively reveals and troubles authority while prescriptively illuminating and eschewing the processes and products surrounding her creation. Foregrounding woman's traditional role as spectacle and object of and for the desiring male, Woman's clothing is simultaneously a literal and figurative (re)fashioning of culture and counter-culture.

Her face and upper torso are deliberately within the projection's lighting source, with the rest of her body illuminated less so by the spillage of parameter lighting. A feisty tango plays softly, underscoring the images projected on the video screen, which works as both a physical and psychological (re)presentation of the issue at hand—that being the (re)formation of fleshed women's display and agency as expressed through two-dimensional visual displays of Lady Liberty. The many slides of the production are separated into four primary "types" of women that cycle randomly throughout the performance. The four represent woman/Lady Liberty as "Goddess," "New Woman," "Mother," and "Slut." In appearing as "myself" as I simultaneously

perform the "Woman" I, and to paraphrase Richard Schechner, am not myself and not not myself (Harris 44). This doubling paradox intimately intertwines the lived experience with the visual. In addition, the created technological space "thoroughly reworks the trajectory of the gaze in performance … using multiple representations of bodies and audience interaction to make subjects *and* objects out of both the performers and audience" (Kozel 300). Also serving as a sort of "hacker" working to infringe upon "areas of political authority and territories of symbolic practice" (301), Liberty Now's use of multimedia crafts a space where multiple hypothetical positions for decoding might be constructed: the dominant-hegemonic position; the negotiated position, which acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic while "at a more restricted, situational (situated) level," makes its own ground rules and operates with exception to the rule (Hall 131); and the oppositional position, requiring "detotaliz[ing] the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference" (132).

Every few seconds to a minute a new slide appears and periodically Woman moves into a position that either reinforces or aggravates the visual rhetoric on display behind her. Reliant upon the intertextual readings provided by the concurrence of visual images projected on a back screen with a variety of performed *tableaux vivants* (chosen for its historical significance in feminist and American culture), Woman creates freezes generally lasting about two minutes. Through the exploration of the myth and the use of archetypal imaging, I work as an actor/image, creating stills within an active and shifting narrative. The constant juxtaposition of the live persona/character with the image reflected beyond it doubles the paradox fashioned by the intimate intertwining of the lived experience with the conceptual.

The engagement of a persona viewed from multiple perspectives means I/Woman "becomes the intersection point of a variety of sanctioned fantasies of femininity" (Constable

238). What is more, all of the various roles feed off normative ideals of woman as desirable object (238). Functioning as both a tool of reinforcement and antagonism, simultaneously conflating and reifying hegemonic ideals, and blatantly reaffirming the representations and expectations embodied by/through the conflated state of Liberty/Woman, the process of the embodied reception of visual artworks performatively engage the audience as complicit performers. For example, during slide 2 we see a photo of the Statue of Liberty overlay upon the written document of the American Constitution. The text reading "Goddess" appears in the upper left and lower right corners of the screen. The audience directive also appears, reading, "Photo Op. Take a photo … Take me … Make me." Simultaneously a gong sounds and Woman sits up and places the crown upon her head. She smiles broadly towards the audience and poses for photographs. While the audience is expected to actively engage in the construction of the fantasy, the written directive intends to insure a point of clarity.

For while they may not, from an epistemological view, be able to determine the direct meaning of the gong's auditory cue, they may understand that it is meant to mean something. Unable to disclose itself unaided is what precipitates a/this more direct approach (Martin and Sauter 83). As most, the moment should be a precariously tense one, for in as much as the "goofiness" of the persona of Woman is poised to illicit laughter, that same nonchalant demeanor creates a tension for the spectator; forcing her or him to choose to become complicit with laughter or to remain stoic in these uncomfortably reflexive moments. The distinct turn toward camp acts against the possible shoring up of any "binary structures of signification" as it works as a type of "*performative* technology of subjectivity and meaning," denaturalizing the processes "through which *any* determinate meanings [are] produced" (Butt 114). The (preter)natural pose also endorses the serious/high cultural norms of painting/illustration while at the same time

"performatively undermining its naturalized significance and legitimacy" (115). Drawing upon the notion that "the viewing or embodied reception of visual artworks is a *process* that can be engaged as performative" (Jones and Stephenson 2), my push toward using the audience as complicit "performers," engaging with my "own embodied specificity," and "habits of seeing and desiring," should aid in the determination of meaning and social value of the product (2).

An alternative example that performs transgressively/oppositionally might be slide 15. Here the audience sees a large close-up of the stony face of Lady Liberty that takes up most of the screen. A smaller edited photo of the upper half of Lady Liberty overlays the first and rests in the lower right corner. Her torch has been modified to the obscene gesture of "flicking off." The text "Goddess" appears in the upper right corner horizontally and again below that vertically. The audience is directed once again to take a photo. The gong sounds and Woman stands up and raises her "flicked" finger in parallel to the screen. She poses for photographs. The comedic reverberations that vacillate between the tensions created by the dialogic of realism and irony are intended as a base for my social critique. What is more, a la Brecht, Woman transgressively "wants to expel something from the national character" (States, Actor's 31). As such, I work to align the spectator empathetically with my "critical self," not the self I am portraying. This substantively ironic strategy then performs as a denunciation of my sin (that of reconfirming and reification) in the act of performing it (31).

As a final example, during my production I interject two diametrically opposed visuals designed as explicit pointers to the process of American women's conflation with the Statue of Liberty. Drawing upon the work of the celebrated Belgian surrealist artist René Magritte, I have chosen to parody one of his most famous paintings The Treachery of Images (La trahison des images, 1928-29). Intended to reflect a common shopkeeper's poster, his painting depicts a large

single pipe under which he has written the words, “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” (This is not a pipe), the latter (internal caption) used as a framing device to deny the realism of the item presented (Nilsen and Nilsen 397). In Liberty Now both the images, Woman and Liberty make “fun of the original through enlarging its characteristics, while at the same time paying tribute to the original” (395). In parody, an introduction slide shows an edited picture of the Statue of Liberty standing in front of an over-sized American flag backdrop. At the bottom of the slide one reads the words, “Ceci n’est pas simplement une statue” (This is not simply a statue). Further into the performance I reintroduce the parody of Magritte’s painting but from an oppositional view. While the slide shows an edited photograph of a real Miss USA winner dressed in the costume of Liberty (with crown and raised torch), the words beneath her image read, “Ceci n’est pas simplement une femme” (This is not simply a woman). Playing between the boundaries of representation and the real also “plays with the duality of the viewer’s reading position as it switches between involvement and detachment” (Fiske 229). Because this is a performance that intentionally blurs the distinctions between performer and spectator (spect-actor), I encourage the audience, through mimed action, to read the words and speak their interpretation of those words out loud.

Audience Participation

Drawing upon established cultural and gendered codes and subcodes of behavior and propriety, the audience is exposed to many levels of artist-inspired and spectator-engendered expectation. Fulfillment of those expectations will depend heavily upon the spectators’ willingness to “play along” within the performative process. However, mine is a collaborative process in which there is a direct interaction and communication with the audience. The

production draws upon the work of Augusto Boal who is widely known for his unique, powerful, and yet often-controversial theatrical methods that in effect unite the actor and the nonactor within/on a unified performance/performative field. From this highly contested position, theatre becomes a democratic arena for the confrontation of problematic social issues such as racism, economic inequities, gender exploitation, or oppression. Distinctive to his process is the transmutation of spectatorship into one of participation; the newly formed personated hybrid is delineated as the "spect-actor." To be more specific, the "'spect-actor' is a Boal coinage to describe a member of the audience who takes part in the action in any way; the spect-actor is an active spectator, as opposed to the passivity normally associated with the role of audience member" (Boal xxiv). With an activity between stage and audience in mind, this performance seeks to address and question the use/exploitation of the individually gendered voices (both physical and psychic) that are created by one's distinct positionality within a/the/our culture. As is designed, however, these spect-actor voices will be heard (or not) at the very least through the employment (or not) of individual cameras provided upon entrance to the performance. Bert O. States in his essay, "The Actor's Presence: Three Phenomenal Modes," discusses the uniqueness of the collaborative mode. He explains that in order to challenge the more passive role of the spectator, the performance must also include an invitation from the performer.

Although the invitation might vary dramatically, he says, "from the implicit to the explicit, and from the token to the literal, the guiding characteristic is that the stage uses some form of the 'you' address in its relation to the audience" (29). Liberty Now accomplishes this in (at least) two ways. Initially, the audience meets with a placard and basket of cameras instructing the spectator's participation directly upon entrance. The placard reads, "Please take a camera and use it freely and when directed during the performance. It is yours to keep." However, it is

through the designed reading of the written text “Photo-Op. Take a photo … Take me … Make me” during the performance, that truly challenges this participation. Notably, the directive is intended as a command, but the safety of the semi darkened performance space renegotiates the term as suggestive; and it is up to each individual spectator to choose whether or not s/he wishes actively to participate. Woman’s timed posing/tableaux for the photographs in which she sets herself up for the “shot” and waits for spect-actor response second this inferred directive. As the spectators choose to take the photograph/exercise their “voice”/”make me” they may also recognize that in so doing they have become complicit in the reification/reaffirmation process of the ritualization of women’s subjugation.

What is more, as the entrance placard infers, they may photograph others before, during, and after the performance—blending their audience selves even further into the performance proper just as they expand the nature of the performance out beyond its traditional frame. Their participation through the act/performance of taking the picture coupled with the auditory barrage of clicking cameras disrupts any perceived sacredness of the performance space as well as the negotiation of further rights to artistic ownership. In addition, the ritual patterning maintained when they “automatically” follow directions through repetition creates a zone of comfort as it reifies the content. “In performance analysis,” Martin and Sauter explain,

> we have to contend with the ritualistic patterns and customs which reflect the aesthetic norms existing in society—our own and others. They are not, however, contrived by the theatre makers—director, actor, designer etc.—without an awareness of the effect they should have upon the audience or “target culture” which in turn decodes according to its cultural codes, but are purposefully

> intended, i.e., encoded by the "presentational" side of the theatrical event, or what Pavis has termed the "source culture." (35)

In Liberty Now, for example, the source culture of the tourist and/or voyeur, gives in to the opportunity to photograph Woman. Then the spect-actor is encouraged to take the camera home after the performance. As such, these ethnographic tourist-voyeurs become archivists, who in choosing to walk away with their camera/performance document have indeed "taken me."

The photo-shoot additionally causes a slippage between my "art" and my "life," propelling the audience to rethink traditional divisions between life and work. As Gavin Butt of the University of London suggests, "Rather than seeing 'the life' as ontologically prior to the performance of 'the work', to position it as origin or truth of the work, a performative hermeneutic might seek to view 'the life' as *enacted* through the reiteration of certain social and discursive norms, and within and through the work of art" (121). Consequently, I/they have created a new visual representation of the conflation of woman and icon. The question is, then, will their latest reading fashioned from the newly devised (and second) hermeneutical device of the camera evoke/inspire them to see alternative perspectives/options and form new actions that will deliberately revision and effect the level of women's agency. My hope is that the interplay of texts in all the varying forms—physical and psychic, auditory and written, visual and tactile—as they unite with the dramatic space, real and imagined, will parlay a dialogical experience for the spectator that will reverberate long after leaving the performance space.

Disrupting the Ideal

Through the modes of extending, subverting, and resisting, the constructed concepts of the ideal become suspect as the performative/performance attempts to disrupt the status of ideal. Not necessarily reconfiguring the ideal, Liberty Now rather fashions critical moments for/of reflection, reflexion, and review. As an auto-referential reading of my research as practice and practice as research (praxis), my script/performance is intended as an analysis of both current women's embodied lives and as a tool for social and cultural change. Through the self-referential lens I look at how my own privilege and power identities are "done" and "undone." Although my work might speak most pointedly to those others in positions of power, its reitification also intends to produce a lens through which those marginalized Others might see their positionality as both unreified and/or unquestioned. The praxis relies on the constant identity shifts between the fictive and the real, insisting upon a perceptional multi-instability and announcing the liminality produced by the clash of texts and modes of delivery. With each slide, or series of slides, I present a series of intertextual "stories" or moments in order "to explore the relation between subjectivities, materialities, and bodily competencies" (Valentine 15). As I move to and through different subject positions, who I am appears to merge with a consequence determined to disrupt standardized notions of ideal presentations and deportments of the self. Likewise, the work questions how reframing might equal the beginnings of a redefinition and/or redesign of the hegemonically defined intersectional gender constructs. My project approaches performance from both that of the position of the practitioner as well as that of the theorist. I move between the experiential approach garnered through firsthand experience and the critical reflection of that concrete endeavor. This chapter is a product of my/an admittedly decentered eccentric reading. While to some extent problematic, I still believe the results obtained before, during, and after the

staged performance are productive. Reflecting upon my practice through a sort of synoptic apprehension I work from the state of Otherness, distancing myself from myself and the product as a way to create a space for clarity and analysis.

It is imperative to this document that I also reveal that there exists several generations of this production. The premiere was a part of a graduate course called “Gender & Sexuality in Performance” under the direction of Dr. Lesa Lockford at Bowling Green State University during the spring of 2004. Subsequent performances were given at a Women’s Studies Conference at Marquette University, Milwaukee; a Popular Culture Studies conference at BGSU; at a Central States Communication (CSCA) conference in Indianapolis; a Women’s Studies Research Forum at BGSU; and finally at a Performance Symposium at the University of Minnesota. After each performance I would take note of audience reactions, participation, and feedback and then return to alter the production in some way reflective of those notes, either by eliminating something, altering, or adding. As an example, one performance tactic/moment initially began with my eating a small container of chocolate pudding. The pudding was revised to eating a chocolate-covered marshmallow bar, which was revised to eating a banana, which was revised to my sharing bananas with spect-actors. Another example comes as the wearing of a crown began as my exclusive photo-op tactic. Next the process moved to my choosing an “ideal” spect-actor who would wear the crown and I photographed her, which then moved to being a mutual photo-op moment with me and an audience member both wearing crowns. And as a final example, a camera was initially handed out before the performance to be used during the performance. The camera inclusion then morphed into my using an additional camera to photograph the audience while audience members photographed me. Distributing the cameras subsequently ended as a process in which I handed out cameras well before the performance,

during the performance, and well after the performance as a way to further extend the tourist/voyeur metaphor while foreshadowing the event to come, defining the event as it was happening, and reinforcing its participation and memory long after its conclusion.

The greatest point of contention for this work is the issue of visibility, especially of the woman within the monument. Therefore one of my goals was first and foremost to excavate and hopefully reveal what has become a naturalized identity marker through the body of Lady Liberty. My findings rest upon hundreds of fleshed illustrations of Lady Liberty where the majority tend to perpetuate the ideal, while a very small percentage (a handful) attempt to disrupt that solidified ideal via a variety of means (mostly parody). Unfortunately the latter I deem as largely unsuccessful in their parody. The Liberty Now parody, then, is an attempt to recoup the issue so it does not become lost through misreading and faulty decoding. The gap between performer and persona initiates an interstice where parody might occur. Through tableaux and performance I endeavor to recode and reconstitute the messages (or what I believe are the intended messages) originally encoded by certain authors-artists. The following five examples provide the final snapshot in the Lady Liberty tour book that is this dissertation.

Extending the Ideal: Mommy Liberty

The vision of Liberty as the mother and protector of the nation was never more evident than after September 11, 2001 when terrorists wreaked havoc with our country's belief in itself as secure from the personal and political forces that oppose the American people, government, and dominant ideology. Consequently, newspapers, magazines, and Web sites were flooded with images of Lady Liberty as witness to the event. Some displayed her as a mother weeping over the loss of her children while others attempted to refashion the statue's likeness into instruments

of female authority. Two such visuals would draw upon dichotomous revisionings of Liberty in order to instill in her a renewed sense of empowerment. The first of such remodelings would appear at the hands of Eliza Gauger with her illustration entitled "Mommy Liberty."

> Slide, slide, slide. Woman sits on the bench staring out at the audience. A heavy sigh. The sound of a tango. She places a queen's crown upon her head. The slide of "Mommy Liberty" appears on the screen behind her. The word "Mother" appears briefly to the left of the figure. A gong sounds, and an audience directive appears. It reads, "Photo-Op. Take a photo … Take me … Make me ..."

Woman's sigh vocally claims the space as redundant and the context of her narrative as outmoded. Unfortunately, even works by female illustrators can succumb, albeit probably innocently, to our deeply embedded cultural constructions of women. Artwork often "hides its true nature under a twofold veil, the outer one a mask of naturalness and familiarity, the inner one an explicit fantasy, full of grotesque and perverted imagery" (Mitchell 188-89). Such is the case of "Mommy Liberty," for in order to invoke any real power, Lady Liberty might be depicted, as in Gauger's

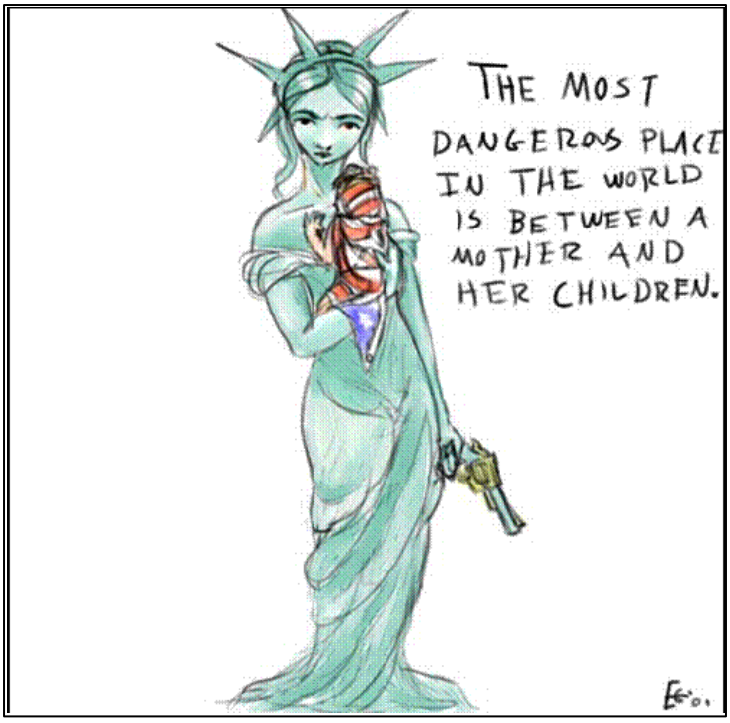

Fig. 1. Eliza Gauger, *Mommy Liberty*. 12 Sept. 2002 Angelfire.com

version, as a sexual agent (see Figure 1).

In her attempt to return sexuality to the normally *matronesque* statue, "Mommy Liberty" appears as a bluish/green youthful woman holding a child in one arm, swaddled in the American flag. In the other hand by her side, she holds a gun. This image not only creates a conflicting site for gendered identity but an opportunity for a conflicted performative reading as well. On the one hand, the visual feeds into familiar religious iconography, while on the other, creates an image of unrestrained violence. Performing first as a mother as legitimate savior the insistence of a Christian likeness dominates. As a Christian "image of peace and wholeness," the young, virginal mother and a timeless woman clothed in blue evokes a primary image of female power (Young 196). Her strength is reiterated by the historicity of patriarchal mythology regarding the nature of women which often painted women as gentler than men. The one exception, however, being images falling within the arena of motherhood and reproduction (Paulson 136). But if Gauger is attempting to take her image to a higher position of empowerment, it appears as though something goes terribly awry. For both the gun and Liberty's youth tend to play against her agency, helping to create additional but negative readings of womanhood.

> Woman retrieves an American flag from her bag and wraps her arm with it, stands, swaddling then cradling the bundle in mimic of the slide … with one exception … she opens her mouth wide and menacingly looks as through she were about to devour her own hand/child and—tableau. The sound of a tango. Cameras click.

Contemporary Western women have been relegated by patriarchy into oppositional categories that determine there be clear-cut borders separating woman as asexual mother and woman as sexual being (Young 196-97). For much of the Western world, "the repression of sexuality,

especially female sexuality, has been enforced by organized religion since its inception" (Corre and Ross 22). Nudity, sex, and the sexualized female body have become contested sites for individual repression and the redefinition of morality (22). In this performative representation of the sexualized Lady Liberty, it seems the artist works to complicate the overt likeness of the youthful and beautiful Virgin Mother by introducing sexual power. The dichotomies of goodness and purity (equated with the "defleshed, spiritual" maternal image) and the badness and impure (equated with the "fleshy eroticism" of a sexual being) work to trouble the viewers' interpretations of the representation (Young 197-98). Unfortunately, in her possible attempt toward agency Gauger has recast the youthful beauty as dangerous, transgressive, and subversive (Brand 7-8). Far from passivity, this Liberty version no longer functions/performs idealistically but rather introduces as a revision of the masculine sublime that is often ranked over and above the feminine version of the beautiful (10).

Regrettably, Gauger's image also serves to further the debate over whether beauty victimizes women or provides "an avenue of self-realization by which women become empowered agents" (Brand 3). In this case, while Gauger attempts to empower Liberty by giving her a gun, the youthfulness of her likeness tends to read against that empowerment as nearly pornographic. Specifically, its pertinence resonates when considering author Eleanor Heartney's suggestion that beauty, like pornography, "'can be a double-edged sword'" capable of both "'destabilizing rigid conventions and restrictive behavioral models'" just as much as reinforcing them (xv). For in an age of child pornography, today's viewer can hardly refute this artist's portrayal of childlike innocence. Marina Warner points out that the Greek root for Mommy is *mamm-e*, which "gives both the word for the breast, the word for a child's cry for the breast, and the name of mother, as it still does" (276). That being said, however, and seemingly barely old

enough to bare children herself, this youthful postpubescent child/woman forces the viewer to try to rectify Lady Liberty's youth and sexuality with national moral standards and judgments about motherhood. Moreover, as an indexical sign established by patriarchy, the existence of the sexual woman is predicated on the premise that the "feeding function of the breasts must be suppressed" and ultimately desexualized (Young 199). Yet in this image, the size of the baby infers a breast-feeding mother, which then can only conflict with her highly sexualized, even pornographic, body. One can hardly dismiss the lowered shoulders of the dress that drapes suggestively over her erotically poised youthful form. Historically, Warner writes, semi-nakedness even within the Christian tradition finds justification through the functioning of women's roles (278). "Motherhood, childbirth, and nursing gave legitimacy to a body that was otherwise a source of peril" she points out (278). As a contested entity, one projecting motherhood and the other sexualized youth, this Liberty does not solve any conflict for women viewers but conversely, reiterates their unsettled state.

The abandonment of inanimate idols for an animate imagery of female embodiment would lead to "the interpenetration of actual and symbolic planes," a convergence Warner writes, that "can present tremendous possibilities for emancipation (281-82). Liberty Now deconstructs notions of the ideal and examines the discourses and power relations making "ideal" a normative category. What is more, performativity allows me the opportunity to locate fissures and spaces for agency and subject reconstruction (A. Jackson 675). As a result, and through the process of extension, the body of Woman has the capacity to disrupt the contested reading one might be propelled to construct. While the tableau of Woman/Mother presumably extends the idealism of motherhood through gender, it likewise disrupts that idealism through its readings of ageism and violence. "Old age," to reiterate Simon Biggs's explanation regarding its double absence ("that

of being ‘not male’ and of being ‘not young’”), fashions a channel whereby women move “from being only too visible” to invisible (49). Used progressively, and working in collusion with the cult of youth, Woman’s age (while not old but considerably older) might serve to point up the preferred youthfulness of/in a Liberty representation, the one mostly presented through contemporary media (49). “What naturalized codes demonstrate,” Stuart Hall explains, “is the degree of habituation produced when there is a fundamental alignment and reciprocity—an achieved equivalence—between the encoding and decoding sides of an exchange of meanings” (127). The reading of the text performatively resituates its meaning while Woman’s body fuzzes the exchange even further.

As a generational image, closer to the matriarch of the monument, Woman also has the authority to disavow the pornographic and release the visual back to the preferred youth and innocence of a national mother. What is more and on another front, Woman extends Mommy Liberty’s age, acting as a future self and referential image for those who currently perform as national mothers. Unfortunately, because of women’s oppositional categorization within Western patriarchal logic, Iris Young reminds us, “an exclusive border between motherhood and sexuality” remains well defined. “The virgin or the whore, the pure or the impure, the nurturer or the seducer,” she explains further, remands women into positions as either asexual mother or sexualized beauty, with one precluding the other (196-97). Coupling with Young’s dichotomies there is an expectation women will instinctively “defend their offspring at the cost of their own lives,” which is violence traditionally sanctioned (Paulson 136).

But what happens when the child’s own mother is set upon its destruction, especially when we have an aging mother who fulfills common subliminal tendencies to see older women as dangerous? Aging has become the ultimate “other” (Biggs 52), and what was previously

masked and protected from external attack gives way through the socially constructed narrative of older women as stereotypically sexless and evil (Kjaergaarrd 204). Consequently, the new framework re-instills a sense of visibility for Woman, albeit negatively constituted, and her returning voice parenthetically gives voice to her young shadow on the screen behind her. As a further extension, the hybrid text, hand painted as though a personal warning from the young Liberty, conversely shadows Woman/Liberty's penchant for violence. Her words literalize the inscription of patriarchal ideals as unattainable as written. Socially sanctioned by her maternity and youth, however, Mommy Liberty puts on notice any and all prospective villains from future attempts at confrontation. Ultimately, Woman's parodic performance confuses the audience as to who might be the more threatening while forcing them to choose one over the over (youth over age). Thus, as none of these readings finds equivalence in/by the body of Woman, the audience must attempt to imaginatively construct their own vision of possibilities for an "ideal" fleshed representation. What is more, as the spect-actors in guise as tourist/voyeurs capture the moment with their cameras, they give up their invisibility, forcing their own recognition as duplicitous to the making, watching, and evaluation of women (Spitzack 18).

Extending the Ideal: Nude Liberty

A second extension advances through an exaggerated parody of the sexual body as an objectified commodity ever ready for consumption through various generations of the gaze. Commercialism has a long tandem history with the exploitation of women. One of the earliest and most famed beauty pageants begun in the early 1850s by Phineas T. Barnum was the selection and exhibit of "the Handsomest Ladies" in America (Savage 11-13). Although he saw little success the idea was picked up and modified by entrepreneur and Barnum's rival Adam

Forpaugh who cleared nearly half-a-million dollars from the posing of beauty winners in an erotic epic (15). Quickly noting the success, newspaper moguls began sponsoring their own pageants in order to increase circulation. Of course the pretty girls pictured in their newspapers boosted sales tremendously (15). By 1907, the photographic use of the female image merged

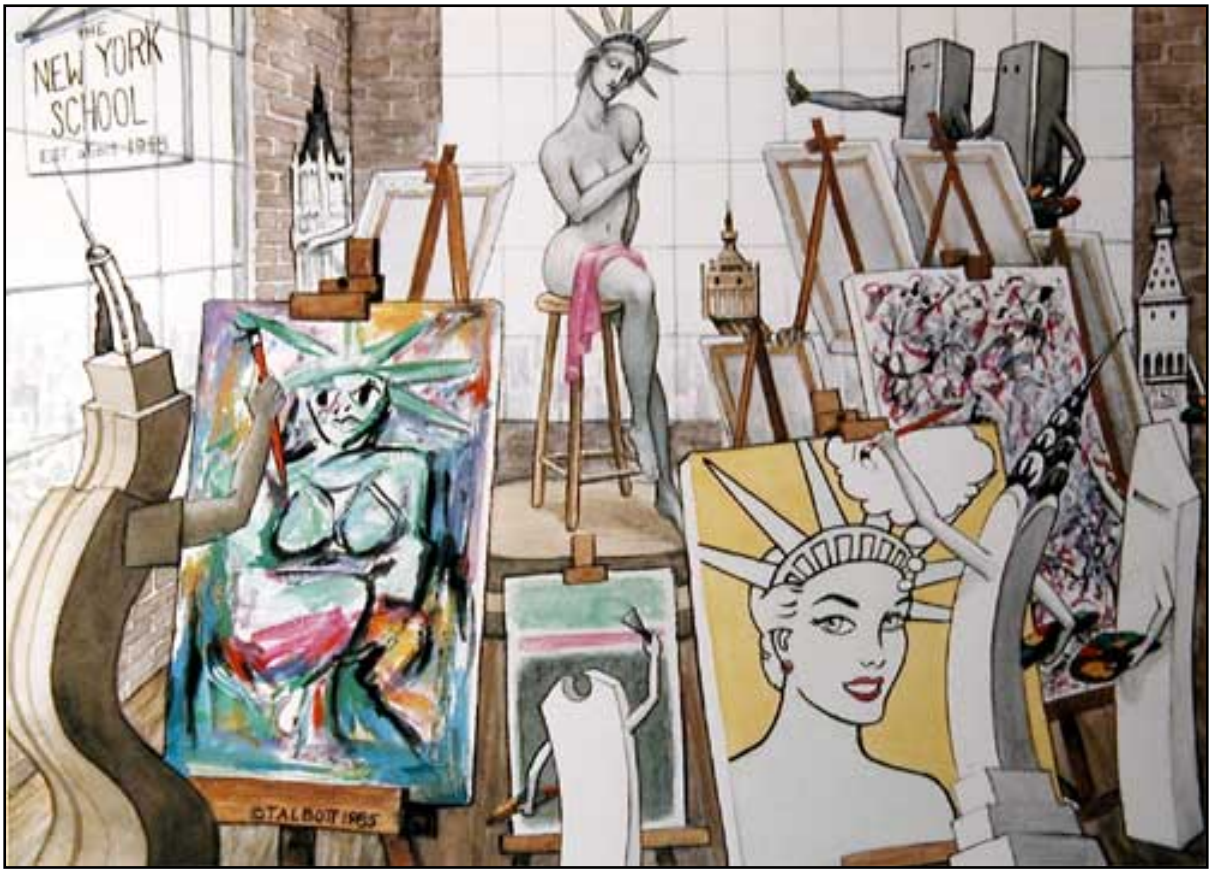

Fig. 2. Hudson Talbott, Untitled. No Date Available. Hudsontalbott.com.

with a renewed vision and preference in the art world for the female form, as women "were presumed to exist on a higher plane than the crass, utilitarian culture surrounding them" (17). By the mid-1920s the American culture was learning "to frame its meanings through the camera lens, [and] bathing beauties created a provocative image of womanhood that carried more weight than thousands of pages of text. When their bodies talked, the eyes of the world turned" (60). What is more, the beauty no longer belonged exclusively to herself. As soon as she stepped into

her public role, “she became a blank screen on which anyone and everyone felt free to project his or her own message” (60).

While women’s oppression has historically most often come with the objectification of her nude body, twentieth-century social transformations have led to changed views about nudity. Although today most Western women are freer to choose how they want to display their bodies, this was rarely the case prior to the sexual revolution of the early 1970s. Freelance illustrator Hudson Talbott provides an intriguing example of the continued conflicted American social perspectives regarding contemporary female display (see Figure 2). In his untitled painting of Lady Liberty, she sits as a fully fleshed woman, posing nude (except for a long pink fabric draped over her one thigh) for a room full of artists in the New York School of Art. However, unlike Lady Liberty, the artists are not fleshed people but appear as somewhat personified buildings representing other iconic images of the New York skyline such as the Empire State Building and Chrysler Building. While this work may simply be Talbott’s critique of New Yorkers’ self-importance reflected through its most well-known iconic representations, when viewed through the lens of gendered conflations this work reads altogether differently.

> Slide, slide, slide. Woman has been lying on her back on the bench. The song “Black Drawers” begins to play. Woman taps her foot in rhythm. The slide of “Nude Liberty” appears on the screen behind her. The word “Slut” scrolls across the top of the slide. A gong sounds, and an audience directive appears. It reads, “Photo-Op. Take a photo … Take me … Make me ....” Woman sits up, smiles broadly, and raises her hand to playfully tip her crown to

> the side. She stands and begins to gyrate with the music. Slowly she begins a seductive striptease, finally opening her kimono to expose her full breasts. Woman leans forward, gives them a hearty shake, smiles and—tableau. Cameras click.

By making the artist personas objects, Talbott appears to be attempting to point up the remaining other object in the room—Lady Liberty. Furthermore, their form as objects/buildings also works to confirm Liberty's nudity, transforming her nakedness through objectification and display. For as art historian, John Berger explains, "a nude is not the starting point of a painting, but a way of seeing which the painting achieves" (39).

One cannot mistake the fact that each artist represents a tall slender phallic building that independently and en masse unquestionably dominates the New York City skyline, this studio interior, and ultimately the woman on display. On the four canvases facing the viewer we clearly see parodies of the works of four prominent mid-twentieth artists: Jackson Pollack, Mark Rothko, Roy Lichtenstein, and Willem de Kooning; all of whom had some affiliation with the New York School prior to 1970. Although these paintings and artists might serve to remind us of women's disenfranchisement from representational agency during the earlier half of the twentieth century, the inclusion of the Twin Towers of The World Trade Center, which were built after 1970 and served as icons of this country's economic and political growth during the latter twentieth century, leads me to believe that Talbott's work and the embedded paintings could easily be read with a distinctly current notion of feminism in mind.

The Rothko painting down center with its large fields of color reflect this artist's use of the shallow pictorial space. In a traditional manner, the canvas is divided into three fields. The top one-third is light blue, the bottom two-thirds is grey, and they are separated by a pink stripe.

Rothko believed that the abstract image could directly represent the fundamental nature of the "human drama." He likened shapes to "performers" who are on "an unknown adventure in an unknown space" (Rothko). Many of his works are either untitled or simply numbered. Knowing this, a reading of the parody of his work comes to mean that New York is the shallow space in which the abstracted ideal of Lady Liberty must remain foregrounded in order to be effective. Notably, however, while Rothko normally worked on large oversized canvases, in this parody his canvas is the smallest. Perhaps Talbott is leading us to believe that that is as much space as should be given to Lady Liberty's representation. After all, she is only an idealization of woman as a mere icon.

Sharing the down center space in Talbott's illustration, Roy Lichtensteins' comic book cartoon portrait of Lady Liberty's head also includes his trademark empty monologue box, which floats above her crown encircled by overly enlarged spiked rays. Perhaps this is an allusion to her inability to speak for herself. Or perhaps it reflects that she, like most women, is perceived as having nothing important to say in the first place. On the right, abstract expressionist Jackson Pollack's work, which often posited the notion of the body as logos, is said to be "expressively made manifest through gesture" (Katz 178). With that, Pollack is well known for embedding his own handprints (many of them visible) into his work. In this case one might connotatively read his painting to mean that his hands are both literally and figuratively all over Lady Liberty, and she is only "authenticated by the autographic imprint of his hand" (178). Finally, on the left, the most prominently displayed parody is of Willem de Kooning's Woman I. Feminist art history has often simultaneously identified de Kooning's work as equating women with violence and destruction (Barber 127). As such, the cartoon parody perhaps reflects not only our nation's

current violence and rejection of living women, but also reinforces the dismissal of any prospect of movement toward her physical and psychic liberty as well.

Overall, Talbott's work suggests that neither art nor its prime sources of objectification has changed. However, a contemporary reading goes much further with regards to women's agency, as his painting notably and successfully still works to condemn the existing objectification and commodification of women, both personally and publicly. It also strongly denounces the centralizing of women's beauty to her being. There is little doubt today that concepts of beauty are value laden in that they influence our culture socially and politically. In removing Lady Liberty from her stone plinth, Talbott reveals a woman with all the sexual verve a goddess might employ. Reminiscent of the young peasant woman with partially exposed breasts seen in Delacroix's painting Liberty Leading the People, this Lady Liberty, too, sits as an artist's model modestly covering her breasts with one arm. Both are representations alluding to the ideal of freedom being represented by nakedness, and as such, they should not "invite one to fondle but to worship" (Corre and Ross 21). However, breasts are fetishized in this culture, and the "capitalist, patriarchal American media-dominated culture objectifies breasts before a distancing gaze that freezes and masters" (Young 191). Moreover, just as performance artist Carolee Schneeman "posed nude in early performance pieces to critique the way women had been visually depicted by male artists" (Brand 13), Lady Liberty in Talbott's painting appears to be doing the same thing. Unfortunately, though, for all of its good intentions, it perhaps relies heavily upon an informed art-history viewership. For those ignorant of the aesthetics of the represented New York School artists, Talbott's work will most often be read with simplicity and so continue to perpetuate those myths it seeks to unhinge. As a result, the viewer may see only

that New York as represented by the buildings has many ways to express and convey the image of Lady Liberty, never realizing the inherent misogyny and power the painting possesses.

From the outset, Don and Alleen Nilsen tell us, “Art is in itself ironic in that moving objects are changed to permanent and non-moving objects, while three-dimensional images must be painted onto two-dimensional canvases” (397). Within the performance of Liberty Now, however, Woman’s extension of the symbolism and metaphors projected through Talbott’s painting recast the character of Liberty from object to personification while the unity of the tableau and visual/slide second the revision by hyperbolically disrupting and disallowing her containment. For example, there have been countless cartoons, jokes, and parodies in which Liberty has tossed away her torch, tablet, and robe and is shown sitting naked in the grass or cavorting in the water (Babcock 406). Woman extends those images through an exaggeration of ironic display that is dependant upon the knowledge that the “sophisticated” spect-actors making up the audience are familiar with irony as “a form of ‘lying’ that gives itself away through elements of playfulness” (Nilsen and Nilsen 394). Well aware of the exaggeration and distortion, Woman/I realize that “with irony, the distortion is sometimes, but not always, resolved” (394).

Undeterred, however, Woman delivers her ironic statements (visually) in a deadpan style devised to provoke a comedic response to a shocking display. However, “not all irony will make people laugh, or even smile,” the Nilsens explain (394). It is precisely because of the tremulous nature of ironic resolution that a disrupt might occur. Furthermore, instead of attempting to achieve irony through creating characters that are the opposite of one another, the tableau seeks to “achieve irony through creating characters who are doppelgangers to each other” (407). Operating with an ultimate disruption in mind, and as per Butler, with the theory that the audience’s “psychic excess,” or the denied transgressions made real through the denial of the

"ideal," my work makes use of subversive repetition to create moments of instability within all iterable modes (A. Jackson 681-82). Ours is a society "that fetishizes breasts more than any other part of a woman's body" (Young 202). What is more, Young explains, "a woman's breasts are bound up in some ways with her sense of herself" (202). The performance of such a realization is echoed within both the two-dimensional and three-dimensional spaces. For both Talbott's Liberty and Woman/I are both well-endowed and their confidence is meant to remind onlookers that this bodily accomplishment will give satisfaction to all.

At the same time, however, the exaggeration of Woman's caricature ridicules and mocks the seriousness of the moment and the forms of "High Art" (both in painting and monument) to the point of burlesque (Keyishian 529). Peg Zeglin Brand indicates in her book Beauty Matters that while art history chronicles men's longstanding tradition of appreciating female beauty, recent critiques have found that the privileged "male gaze" serves to objectify, demean, and ultimately silence those women on display (3). Woman's silence is one of the prime reasonings behind the use of tableau. For while Talbott's Liberty sits modestly silent her doppelganger sister demands to be heard—screaming for/towards a recognizable gaze. The familiar visually pleasing spectacle of disrobed Woman serves to invite the gazes of observers, but more importantly, is meant to reassure them of the damage wrought by turning oneself into a spectacle (Spitzack 18). The ironic codings are both semiotic and psychological, and in the process of decoding reveal a variety of conflicts that pose performances of self and expectations of feminine and national ideals at distinct odds with one another. Optimistically successful, the tableau's ironical twist will hopefully leave the spectator unsure of "what the author's attitude is or what their own attitude is supposed to be" (Nilsen and Nilsen 394).

Subverting the Ideal: Butch Liberty

The performance of subversion is intended to weaken what might be a misconception and destabilize the opportunity for further confusions. However if, according to Catherine Belsey,

> meanings are not fixed and guaranteed, but as Derrida has consistently argued, indeterminate, differed and deferred, invaded by the trace of otherness which defines and constitutes the self-same, texts necessarily exceed their own unitary projects, whether these are subversion or containment, in a movement of instability which releases new possibilities in the very process of attempting to close them off." (559)

Fig. 3. Corky Trinidad, *Untitled*. 12 Sept. 2002. Daryl Cagle's Pro Cartoonists Index Home Page.

Hence, I have chosen to link this particular upcoming performative image with a kindred performance of Woman that first imitates then reveals itself as counterfeit to the cause. The attempted disrupt comes during the presentation of a non-traditional-looking "fleshed" representation of Liberty.

Sadly, too, it is another female artist's unsuccessful attempt to empower Lady Liberty, this time through a rather atypical (fe)male vision. In the illustration by Corky Trinidad, we see Lady Liberty reconfigured in a manly way. Taking on a very threatening demeanor, and hardly ruffled, Liberty now stands decked out for war as the caption below her reads threateningly, "One Tower They Missed" (see Figure 3). In place of her crown, she dons the helmet of a military soldier, and her face and arm have morphed into a very masculine musculature. With scowling face and thickened biceps, the virile Lady Liberty's guiding torch is no longer visible. Instead, the cartoon centers upon the tablet in her/his arm, serving to remind us of the past battle for independence now renewed in this "war against terrorism."

> Slide, slide, slide. Woman sits on the bench putting on a pair of large black army boots. She looks up while doing so, makes a screwy face, then continues lacing her boots. The song "Nothing but a Man" begins to play and Trinidad's Liberty slide appears on the screen. The words "New Woman?" appears briefly at the top of the slide then disappears.

Traditionally, author Nicholas Mirzoeff explains, the female heroine is "coded for strong visual and erotic impact so they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness.*" Conversely, the male hero's iconographical coding reads as one who "initiates action" (165). Without doubt, Trinidad's work certainly reflects the notion that "masculinity is back in vogue" since 9/11, and

once again, “the male hero has become a prevailing cultural icon” (Dowler 159).

Traditionally war also has been an agent for the gendering of political identities. And as such we most often tend to “perceive men as soldiers, warriors, and heroes of war, while women are understood as victims or icons of that war” (161). That sentiment has been exemplified repeatedly throughout generations of editorial cartoons. What is more, our culture remains quite uneasy with the idea of women performing as soldiers, and consequently “stigmatize[s] them as non-feminine or hyper-feminize[s] their identities” (161). While Trinidad certainly removes Lady Liberty from her female place of ambiguity, she does so altogether at the expense of her gender. What is more, the lack of familiar fetishized viewing as a critical part of the everyday visual consumption of women now works to trouble the spectator’s moral perceptions.

> Woman, with her boots now laced stands and turns upstage to face the screen. She sways with the music. Slowly she raises the back of her kimono revealing the black men’s boxer shorts that she wears. On one cheek is a large imprint of red lips as though left by the giantess herself. A gong sounds, and an audience directive appears. It reads, “Photo-Op. Take a photo … Take me … Make me ...” Women turns her head and torso toward the audience, thrusts her rear out, licks a finger and applies it to her backside with an audible sizzle. She smiles and—tableau. Cameras click.

Identity, as Halberstam indicates, is “a representational strategy [that] produces both power and danger (177). In this case, Trinidad may believe that that identification with the male gender, an already empowered position, strengthens the message of Lady Liberty.

But does it? Actually, by continuing the traditional Lady Liberty stance and leaving Lady Liberty's clothing in-tact, this artist has not created a stronger indexical image, but rather one representative of a group even more marginalized than women—the transgendered. While we presume her outward appearance to be strictly male, we cannot escape our historical memory of her as female. As such, the feminine subconsciously bleeds through palimsestically to create this new Lady Liberty. Additionally, and as Halberstam notes, when "women appear cross-dressed as men … they are coded as flawed women rather than perfect men (206). Moreover, in not quite completing the female to male transfer (she remains in Lady Liberty's dress), this R*amboesque* version of Lady Liberty appears stuck in a supremely contested site that nullifies any gender empowerment altogether. To my mind, s/he becomes a parody of empowerment that insures the message, one that may have been genuinely intended as one of serious reprisal. Unfortunately, it now becomes lost in this visual quagmire. Sadly, it appears that for Trinidad the only way to empower Lady Liberty is to make her masculine, which is exactly how patriarchy might attempt to refashion her. As such, Trinidad seems unwittingly to be, as Susan Bordo might contend, "enmeshed in [a] collusion with forces that sustain her own oppression" (Unbearable 167).

As a result, Woman is left to untangle this gender mess. Hardly doable however, Woman attempts to redraft the body of Liberty in service of a more familiar but alternative gender construction as she performatively queers the "feminine" to potentially effect a shift within the spectator consciousness regarding self and Other. As a precursive note, however, there is no obvious reason for the convention that dictates that the embodiment of the notion of liberty be a woman, for historically women have not necessarily been associated with liberty in particular. Nor do they "value their freedom more than men do, nor do they have more" (Wiseman 245). And although a more masculine Liberty has been seen a few times in American history such as

in a World War I poster promoting the purchase of USA Bonds, typically the visuals have given us women with unmistakably effeminate natures. Seeking social approval of her re-inscribed gender position, Woman becomes the satirical creation of an unnatural woman who cannot be contained by rules of deportment.

> Woman unfreezes, grabs a second pair of black drawers from her bag, twirls them wildly above her head, and throws them to a woman in the audience with a wink.

Making a spectacle of lesbian desire disavows traditional notions of heterosexism as exclusive to male desire. However, the reshaping of a cross-dresser back into a woman under these circumstances only results in her modification to a butch lesbian. Lesbianism, in the case of butchness according to a general but misguided belief, Butler indicates, results from "the appropriation of the masculine position that one originally loved" (Gender is Burning 453). Articulating the desire of one woman for another refutes the oppression and repression of Woman's body and desires.

Consequently, the audience is (presumably, of course) forced to parley the embodiment into a softer lesbian encounter, one more in keeping with traditional sensibilities. In addition, the audience can hardly resist reading the encounter as a "fake," a performance for the sake of making a point. The conflicting subjectivities presented through the multidimensional conflation of real and fictive enlarges the space of and for conjecture and possibility. The result of which either brings into question or eliminates the believability of the encounter, relegating it as mere fiction and forcing a recognition of the mythology behind the construction as that of their own doing. What is more, "the mythologizing of women," to call once more upon de Beauvoir's contention, "subsequently plays out and substantiates a fear of women, creating villains of/from

the female gender" (12). Her insight when applied to Lady Liberty facilitates and reveals the alternate scope of warrior/villain as it clashes with those of victim, mother, and protector. Even more so, however, the warrior/villain in this particular case moves from bring a militarized cross-dresser to butch lesbian, both furthering the distance one must travel to find a more familiar representation. Woman has her work cut out for her and once the spect-actors recognize their ability to rewrite they will hopefully appreciate that their own capacity for origination also lies within their scope.

Using ironic parody to undermine and subvert the existing gender norms and forms in motion (both physically and psychically) Woman becomes the unusual, developing into the unexpected. As her performance breaks expectations through a surprise of reflexive satisfaction reminiscent of the naughty school girl or even more risqué, strip tease artist, the normalized pattern of her action/freeze helps the spectator to "appreciate the irony" (Nilsen and Nilsen 395). So too, instead of throwing the black drawers to a male audience member, Woman makes certain that the shorts are received by a female, with the edginess of the display aimed at giving the spectators something to think about (395).

Subverting the Ideal: Coke Liberty

Sabotaging the status quo also means subverting the ideal through more than just a passive viewing of a disruptive tableau or limited engagement with alternative performance. Bringing the audience into complicity in a very obvious way is essential to the disruptive messaging tactics employed throughout Liberty Now. One example of direct connivance takes place during the viewing of another non-traditional slide (nontraditional within the context of my performance, that is). In the appropriation of Lady Liberty to use in an attempt to critique

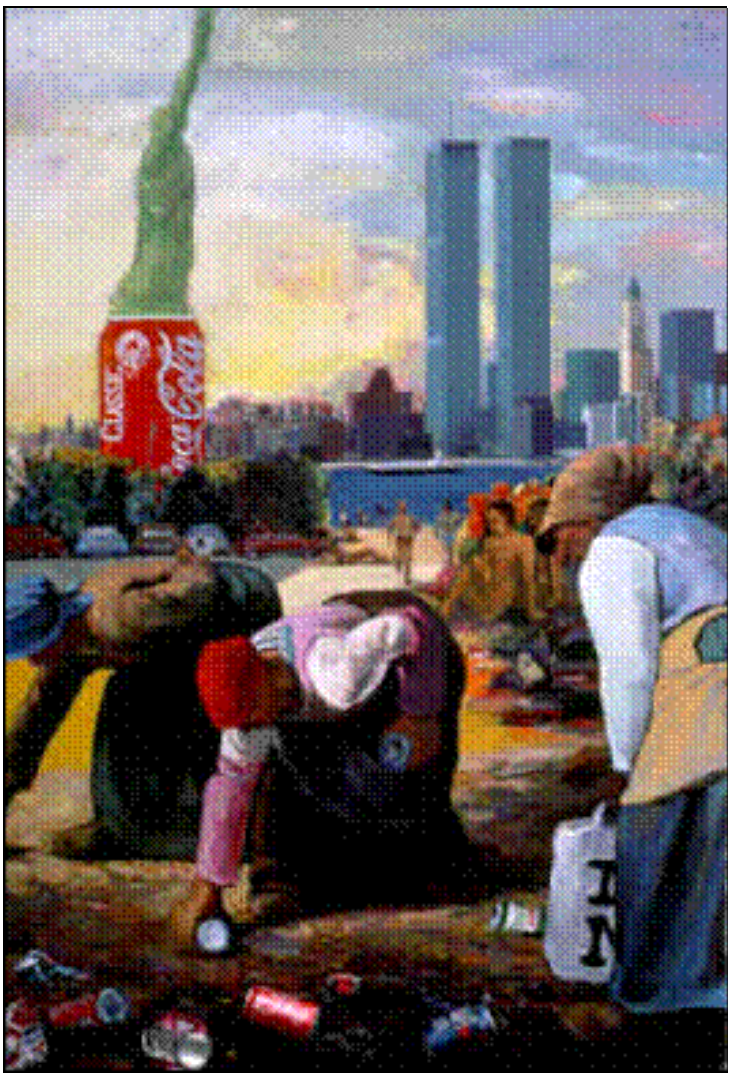

Fig. 4. T. F. Chen, *City Gleaners*. 1985. T.F. Chen Cultural Center Website.

corporate greed, artist T. F. Chen manufactures a vigorous construction of Americana with his 1985 parody entitled City Gleaners. As such, Chen's creative turn takes to task the overt commodification of the statue, and boldly places it in scathing juxtaposition with the reality of the state of affairs within this country (see figure 4). This image is meant to radically enlighten the viewer with his challenge of current socio-economic discriminations. At the same time, a reading through the feminist lens yields an even more disturbing statement regarding gender inequities.

Chen's substantially modified image of the Statue of Liberty as a commodity that sells everything from sewing thread to laundry soap to medicines reaches out to an even larger audience by his alteration of the stone base of the statue into that of a can of Coke. Just as recognizable around the world as Lady Liberty, the image of Coke has engulfed the global commodity scene. However, Chen skillfully takes the idea of cultural imperialism depicted

through the exportation of this cultural product and brings it back to American soil. Media expert Carolyn Kitch explains: “Mass media exists not only to make money but also to make meaning” (191). As such, we have undoubtedly become accustomed to the ongoing disseminations of “a particular group of visual stereotypes of womanhood and manhood (though mainly womanhood) that stand for not just gender ideas but also issues of what it means to be typically American and what it takes to have status in American culture” (191). Here Lady Liberty becomes the back-drop for and against what is most obviously to be read as emigrant women along a New York beach, double-bent in the task of collecting empty Coke cans (presumably for money). This vision, however, creates a double source of commodification through both the object of Coke and the objectification of women. In affirming that women are objects of property, he also affirms that they are to be had and owned. Accordingly, they only attain their full weight, “as commodities, objects for exchange on the market [through] a circulation of power….” (Young 191).

> Slide, slide. Slide. The slide of “City Gleaners” appears on the screen. The word “Goddess” appears briefly in the upper right corner then disappears. A gong sounds, and an audience directive appears. It reads, “Photo-Op. Take a photo … Take me … Make me ...” Woman takes a small Bic lighter from her bag, raises her arm in the fashion of Liberty, and lights it. Within a moment the heat becomes too intense and she is forced to let the light go out. Woman blows on then licks her hot finger, smiles at the audience, and relights the lighter. Her eyes express her wish to be photographed—quickly. She smiles—and tableau—a very brief

> one. Woman must relight and repose several times in order for her audience to take their photos. Her expression becomes more tortured throughout the process. Cameras click.

Coke/Liberty, Chen's newly condensed symbol representative of the almighty conglomerate, stands arms raised and facing to the Twin Towers that loom in all of their superiority over the Manhattan skyline. While this nearly gender-free image of Coke/Liberty is itself monumental, temporally and metaphorically, she still appears/performs within a syntagmatic relationship wherein she could turn and give what could be read as a post-modern "sieg heil" to an even larger capitalist giant, the United States of America. With that, however, we must also ask from whence her empowerment comes.

Of course, that conclusion must lead us to recognize that it is the Coca-Cola Corporation that wields the true power. Moreover, like most, its existing power structure is both repressive and constitutive, "bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them…" (Bordo, The Body 167). Thus the conflicting ideas of enterprise, that of the corporate global giant represented by Coke/Liberty, and the ordered lower-class worker, as seen in the female beach collectors, resonates even louder when issues of gender are raised. Although the Statue of Liberty has from its beginning been used as a commodity, Linda Zerilli feels that instead of "thinking about the Statue of Liberty as a national monument whose origins get corrupted by being commodified," we might be better "to think of it as a commodity at origin—one that mediates the citizen-subject's relation to the nation and its moment of political founding" (175). In countering existing hegemonic forces, Chen has taken this opportunity to equate the traditional gleaner's job of removing the leftover specks of grain that remain after the male harvesters have completed their task with these new-world gleaners.

The emigrant women, twice marked by both gender and social status, even in the new land, are somehow relegated to the same position held in their homeland. Prospects for change and opportunity become even further removed from reality for emigrant women. In relation to the activity of the gleaners as workers, Coke/Liberty stands as an even more visibly fetishized commodity. Sadly, and almost snubbing them, the elitist statue of a woman, built, received, and now modified by a patriarchal system, turns away from those of her own gender, ignoring their plight. A more flagrant reading might supersede this as the viewer reflexively examines his or her own position in relation to the artwork. As such, the material statue positioned with her back turned to all three populations—gleaners, beach-goers, and viewers—leaves us to speculate just where in reality *any* individual is positioned against this metaphorical monolith of capitalism.

America always has been for the most part a nation that, at least overtly, professes to accept those wishing to procure an opportunity of betterment for themselves and/or their families. However, just as we know that, we also know what often becomes of many who reach our shores. Diasporic newcomers often find themselves reeling with delight initially, until reality sets in. Jobs are hard to find when you do not speak the language and decent housing comes only if you have the money at hand. Chen's image speaks cleverly to this issue as he prominently places in the foreground the three women gleaners. With that, the viewer is forced to look beyond the women, hunched over in their task of collecting, to the throngs of scantily clad beachgoers in the distance, who either lounge about, basking in the warmth of the mid-day summer sun, or happily jog along the coast. This carefully crafted visual opposition might be read two ways, however. Body image equates with success, and for those women whose bodies do not conform to the hegemonic ideal there awaits further scrutiny. Accordingly, these diasporic

women are censured, both personally and socially, by a white-dominated culture that has created a form of “racialized beauty” (Brand 110).

On the space of his canvas, Chen’s painting maintains the long held position of power that beauty holds, although those images of standardized beauty occupy the visual distance. The throngs of scantily clad beachgoers, even as a subtle inclusion, only serve to highlight even more emphatically the lack of power that comes with age, class, and ethnicities that do not correspond to the current national standards that youth, wealth, and whiteness enjoy. On the one hand, the beach-goers may be very oblivious to the manual labor that is taking place only a short distance away, or, on the other, they are in reality very aware of the disparate conditions and stations that both groups possess. Either way, though, the reading remains critical of America and its apathy toward existing cultural dualities—rich versus poor, citizen versus emigrant, white versus minority, and beauty versus unattractiveness. Nonetheless, and despite their cultural “invisible” yet marked position in Chen’s image, their foregrounding still valorizes the performances of the foreign can-pickers.

> Woman crosses to her bag, bends over in imitation of the visual
> behind her, plucks a can of Coca Cola from its center and hands it
> to an audience member. Her slow motion mimicry continues
> several times until she freezes in one last bend. She turns her head,
> sighs audibly, and—tableau. Cameras click.

Destabilizing the status quo, Woman as a reflection of the migrant worker subverts the standardized expectations of that group of women. Her parody disrupts the ideal through her embodiment in the flesh, as though Liberty has climbed down from her corporate pedestal and taken a place among the Other woman who are her citizens. Last seen, Woman/Liberty was at

the mercy of the product. Standing with her Bic lighter she was invested in providing spect-actors with an expected vision—one that maintained the status quo just as it increasingly diminished her authority and agency. Caught up in the spectacle of her collusion at all costs become a painful existence. As a consequence, the "idealness" of Woman disappears back and under the cloak of commodification. In this second tableau, however, her idealization as white elite becomes reconfigured when placing her as part of a larger national community. Woman uses performance and performative interruptions as a way to weave together real and fictive narratives, existing and possible. The selective showing and doing "exists as a noninnocent presentation" of particular women (A. Jackson 676). Elizabeth Ammons, professor of English and American Studies at Tufts University, writes a cautionary note in her essay "The New Woman as Cultural Symbol and Social Reality" that may be useful here. She points out that our nation's current "enshrinement" of that same white middle-class ideal of the New Woman, most popularized during the Progressive Era, "should give us pause" (95). For notably excluded from our contemporary vision is the rural wife, the working class woman, the emigrant, and American ethnic minorities. Despite changing attitudes, women of color continue to be the most marginalized group with their "relative invisibility" reflecting "the low status they are accorded in the wider society with respect to their economic, political, and social clout" (Sanchez-Hucles, Higgins, and Gamble 185-86).

What is more, paintings such as Chen's already recognized as cultural artifacts and aesthetic objects, are more importantly "instruments in the formation of beliefs" with considerable power to shape ideas and attitudes (Wiseman 241). Media dissemination of visual stereotypes of womanhood "stand for not just gender ideas but also issues of what it means to be typically American and what it takes to have status in American culture" (Kitch 191), and have

made meaning for our citizenry for over a century. Harding, pulling from the work of Petchesky, reminds us context, reception, communication, and application are crucial considerations leading us toward the formulation of meanings—meanings which are far from objective in nature (32). "Construction of the meanings of the image/visual text is an interactive process," Harding continues, "which draws on experience and various prominent discourses" (32). Woman's frame bent in submission explores notions of dominance and submission for women as Others as well as their potential within cultures of exploitation and consumption. Mary Wiseman also provides a significant point:

> The effects of a painting are indirect when the viewer uncritically accepts received readings and reacts to works as they are interpreted by the culture at large. They are direct when the viewer engages in the activity of interpreting, balancing well-known interpretive conventions, her cognitive stock, the general tenor or her experiences to date, and the mental states caused in her by what she finds in the work (244).

The reactions of the spect-actor are considered as an integral part of moment to moment theatrical communication. The "spectacle text" (often used to describe the theatrical event) generates a "multi-coded, multidimensional and pluralistic new textual system … [which] allows the audience room for freedom of choice in what it wishes to focus attention upon" (Martin and Sauter 23). For example, we might ask about Chen's work how the perpetuation of the privileging of this image connects with current moral perceptions to contribute to the existing divisions among American women today, and how the commodification of only certain women continues to fuel our patriotism. Or when adding Woman intertextually we might ask how the perpetuation of ideal imagery through the body of Woman/women disrupts our notions of

commodification and use value. Art has the potential to "trouble" our normalized assumptions about looking and being looked at. Given how we are presumably "entitled" to stare at the women in Chen's painting, it seems only fair that Woman should reciprocate for her sisters. While Woman's use of repetition may initially establish an illusion of a "coherent identity category," the vulnerability that repetition instigates also opens the category to resignification and change (A. Jackson 681). Unfortunately, the parody is only mostly useful as a means to pointing out the obvious inequity between the women in both texts. One (or perhaps both) wishing some sort of reconciliation might be forthcoming. That being said, it is also important to note that the use of this slide comes well into performance with the intention that those in the audience will be well acquainted with the performance aesthetic by this time and subsequently will be able to create more complex readings propelled by the intertexual juxtapositions.

Resisting the Ideal: Super Bowl Liberty

Resisting the ideal can mean mutually to stand firm or to oppose. For this last example both connotations find company with an emergent necessity to survive in the face of a seemingly unending barrage of psychic and bodily abjection and a persistent refusal to both recognize and engage those most needful in our society. David Gauntlett cautions us about attempting to make meaningful analysis of representations of gender stemming from new media sources primarily "because there is no 'mainstream' that a majority of people are looking at" (65). On the other hand, he confesses "there's no reason to think that gender representations within new media will be any different to the gender representations elsewhere," say in magazines (65). However, unlike mainstream magazines and newspapers the Web provides opportunities for alternative images, playing against existing dominant ideas about women (65). Taking his words into

serious consideration I am also prepared to foreground my analysis with Auslander's notion about postmodernist art's nature of resistance. As Carlson explains it, the resistance is not to any specific political practices, but rather a resistance to representation in general (Performance 155). The result situates the final visual within a performative arena bent upon challenging the process of its creation. What is more, the radicalization of the visual when in collusion with the character and performance of Woman further tests the authority of ethical (re)presentation in the destabilization of normative behaviors and standardized cultural constructs.

"If no 'meaning' is taken, there can be no 'consumption'"; these words underline a premise made by a leading sociologist, Hall revealing that meaning leads to articulated practice (123). In the last discussion of City Gleaners, the articulation for changing the socio-economic disparities for the emigrant women rests as future possibility. In this final example, however, the potential for consumption becomes weighted with such visual discrepancies that make it difficult to know whether any articulated practice might be possible. The most notable vexation and challenge comes from the nature of the medium—photography, as presented through the lens of new media via the internet. As a precursor, however, I make use of Michael Moriarty's paraphrase of Roland Barthes: "Photography offers the possibility of certain knowledge of the past … It has also helped to redraw the boundaries of public and private." And finally, "it reveals the privacy of public figures as even the wart-and-all portrait does. It is thus the visual equivalent to gossip, murderously transforming subjects into pure images" (206). But what happens when modifications are made through digital imaging? How does alteration reshape the gossip? And how does this change our concepts of photographic truth? For as Daniel Chandler notes, "digital imaging techniques are increasingly eroding the idexicality of photographic images" (42).

However, Hall makes the point that "it is at the connotative *level* of the sign that situational ideologies alter and transform signification" (128). With that, and without further adieu, I will begin my last discussion about one of the most intriguing, shifting, and contested Statue of Liberty personifications. Making statements on women's liberty and spectacle as a site of hegemony, this final work also introduces readings on the power of presidential display. And just as theorist Marshall Blonsky refers to Playboy magazine as a "key code for understanding America, the pleasure land …" (xxxv), so does this photo remind us that another such key code is the Super Bowl.

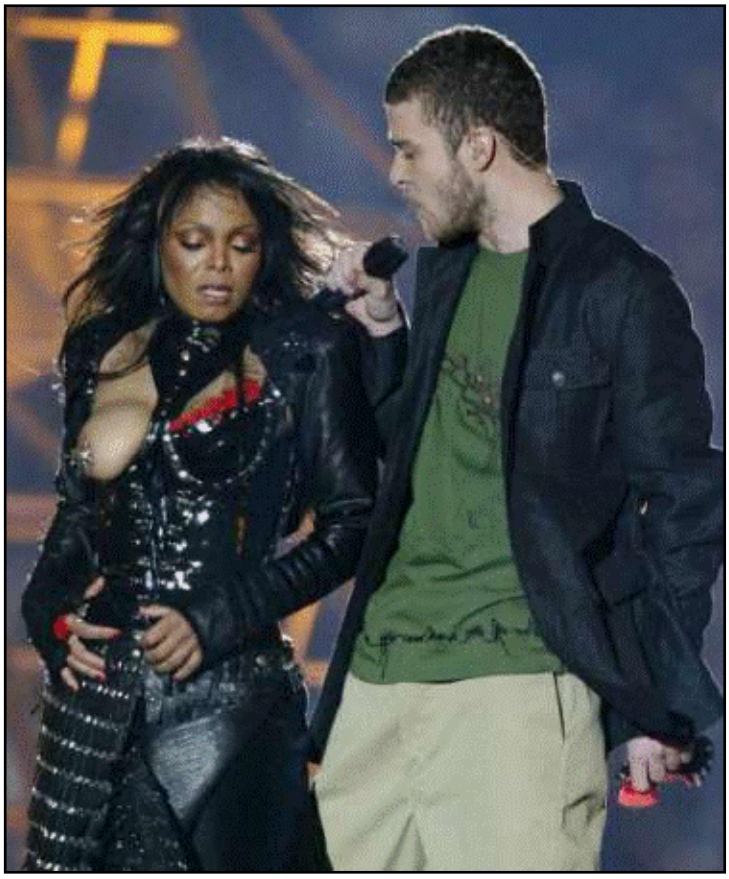

Fig. 5. *Justin Timberlake Exposing Janet Jackson's Breast During the Super Bowl Half-Time Show*. 2004. Sunfyre.com.

In February of 2004, Americans were treated to a national sensation when Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake's Super Bowl halftime extravaganza went seriously awry (see Figure 5). Whether intentionally done or not, the fact that during their song Timberlake reached over and ripped apart Jackson's bustier, exposing one breast to the national viewing audience, meant the notion of televised "liveness" would soon be substantially changed. The subsequent fervor over issues of decency and deception would

eventually mean that national broadcast would for the foreseeable future now be adding a 5-7 second delay to all live telecasts in order to protect the sensibilities of future viewers in the event of any comparable mishap. Our phallocentric culture "tends not to think of a woman's breasts as hers," but rather in keeping with notions that "woman is a natural territory," her breasts would naturally belong to others (Young 192). What is more, Young indicates, "Nipples are indecent … are no-nos, for they show the breasts to be active and independent zones of sensitivity and eroticism" (195-96). Neither telecast nor print media could resist the exposure (pun intended) that Jackson and Timberlake could give them in ratings. So for nearly two weeks, the nation witnessed replay after replay of the event, all the while viewing scores of still photographs taken from about as many angles as might be humanly possible.

Also, within hours of the telecast official photographs from the media and unofficial photographs garnered from personal VCRs and computer TV capture software were posted on hundreds (if not thousands) of Web sites. One very familiar photo and editorial is a wide angle shot, from the about the knees up, showing Timberlake and Jackson standing next to each other as they sing their halftime song. Jackson, decked out in S &M style black leather, stands rather statuesque, with her hair caught in mid-swing from whipping her head in one direction; her hands appear to be resting lightly upon her belly. Timberlake's stand is more casual, and in his raised right hand, he holds the microphone into which he sings. In his other, he holds a piece of Jackson's costume—part leather, part red lace. While creative captions underlined some of the photo postings, for others, playful citizens took to their computer imaging packages to alter and reposition the possible readings of the original photograph.

One of the most textually layered and engaging manipulations that works to disrupt any possible dominant-hegemonic readings is by Mike Pasternack, posted on the Bongo News

parody website. In his negotiated version, Pasternack substitutes the existing signifiers of Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson with two quite unexpected replacements. First, he changes Caucasian Justin Timberlake's head to the head of President George W. Bush, replete with full grin; then he not only replaces singer Janet Jackson's head with that of the Statue of Liberty, but also re-colorizes the singer's flesh from her original African-American brown tone to white/grey, presumably to match the color of the statue's head (see Figure 6).

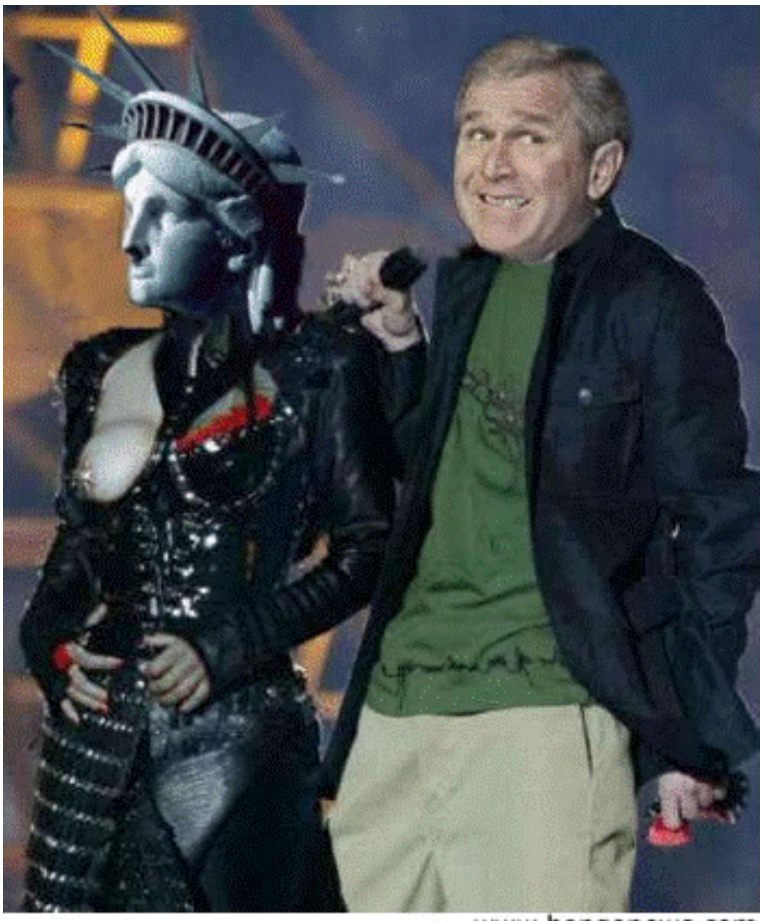

Fig. 6. Mike Pasternack, "*President Bush 'Accidentally' Strips Lady Liberty*." 10 March 2004. BongoNews.com

Jackson's body, iconic of a rock star, now becomes conflated with the inherent symbolism reflected by the head of Lady Liberty. While her reconfiguration is hardly surprising given our country's history of conflation, the switch from Timberlake to Bush is not quite as seamless in its believability. Additionally, it is the male transference that most shatters some of prominent codes surrounding sex, politics, and the Super Bowl.

> Slide, slide, slide. The slide of President Bush and Liberty appears on the screen. The words "Mother" appear top left, "New Woman"

> appears bottom left, “Mother” appears right, and “Slut” appears just below the shirt line on Bush’s pants. Woman retrieves a large bag, thrusts her hand into it, and pulls out a large banana which she hands to an audience member. She happily returns to her hand to the bag, which is stuffed with many like fruit, and begins distributing them to other patrons. The upbeat song “I Am Beautiful” sung by Bette Midler echoes throughout the space. Woman passes out her last banana reserving one for herself which she, with great design and care, peels and begins to eat. A gong sounds, and an audience directive appears. It reads, “Photo-Op. Take a photo … Take me … Make me ...” Lifting the banana to her lips she opens her mouth wide, turns to the audience---and tableau. Cameras click. Some don’t—those belong to other banana eaters.

Before I continue, however, I think it only fair to include the script providing this artist’s original intent for the photo. For Pasternack radically works as iconoclasts, who, as Jean Baudrillard maintains, “are often accused of despising and denying images [but] were in fact the ones who accorded them their actual worth” (9). Accompanied by a short statement, the photo was intended to make a critical comment about Bush’s proposed ban on gay marriage. Set up as a news article, Pasternack’s mock story reads:

> WASHINGTON, DC — President Bush went on nationwide TV this week to apologize for “accidentally” stripping Lady Liberty last week at a performance before Congress. “I was just trying to introduce legislation on the sanctity of

> marriage between a man and a woman and brought Miss Liberty along with me to help me. As I was speaking I grabbed her costume to show how strong our liberties are and the next thing I knew I had stripped her," said the President. "Believe me, I didn't mean to do it intentionally but, now that the damage is done, I just hope the people of America can forget it and move on," he continued. After months of pressure from social conservatives, Bush said that a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage was needed to prevent a weakening of "the good influence of society." "I hope that this incident doesn't affect the fact that an amendment is needed to keep gays from ruining the time-honored principle that anything other than a man-woman marriage is the only true marriage. Any other combination is too weird." Bush also added, "I know there are a lot of kids that might have been watching that expect Lady Liberty to be the way she always was, but hopefully they will get used to the idea of how she is going to be looked at from now on.

Certainly, while original creative intent is important, I think that this artist's innocently modified hypotextual photo has unwittingly given this viewer (and hopefully others) the opportunity for drastic oppositional readings. Ignoring Pasternack's more literal and primarily heteroglossic goal of commenting on existing monoglossic values and practices, my applied oppositional code shifts the reading yet again in order to comment on several other embedded issues within this bricolage. Predicated upon a good amount of intertextual knowledge about the verities exposed by this photo, I also turn to Saussure's confirmation that, "No sign makes sense on its own but only in relation to other signs" (Chandler 22). Consequently and in this instance, there is a distinct visual transference as certain qualities of one sign move to the other. For example,

President Bush becomes a sexualized rock star (a little imagination please), and the once stone form of Liberty transforms into a full-bodied and energetic body. The latter, however, nullifying the persona of Jackson and subsequently further objectifying her. As Judith Mayne, Professor of Women's Studies at Ohio State University points out, "the polarity of sexual difference, of the active male and the passive female, has been read … as totally synonymous with the subject/object relationship" (130).

The linking of the commodification of women to sex, sports, and personal and public liberty provides the potential for yet another example of semiotic potency. For example, most photos of superstar women as well as many of Janet Jackson's promote the "ideological formation of the camera as phallic voyeur and shaper of the female 'look' serving male desire" (Murray, Drama 149). However, because she as an African American women stands "exposed" (albeit palimpsestically) next to a Caucasian male, bodily elements of her become exacerbated as her fetishism reminds us of "the term's inevitability to connote notions of race and colonialism" (Mirzoeff 174). As such, there is a sort of male complicity created that merges the controlling male gaze with deeper structures of black oppression. In this case the image serves as "both a structure of representation and a device or apparatus (tool and episteme) lending itself naturally to colonial struggles for unlimited power and authority" (Murray, Drama 146).

As a reminder, the original Statue of Liberty was bronze, but within a short time oxidation led to its turning a pale green. However, the green either does not read in this photograph or has consciously been re-tinted as grayish-white, a color most often associated with statues. I tend to believe the latter because of the artist's obvious re-coloring of Jackson/Liberty's other flesh areas as well. Not only does this visibility of whiteness then suppress and deny Jackson's blackness, but it also works to reify the preferred existing normative that insists only

white females are allowed to physically reflect or embody Lady Liberty. Reflective of the depth and habituation of racial codes, this photo, as a way of diffusing any threat of difference for the public at large, also defuses any opportunity to misconstrue that President Bush might have interracial desires.

Another reading inspired by Professor Jennifer DeVere Brody's essay, "Shading Meaning," would posit that Jackson/Liberty is actually gaining her freedom from any colonization through her white female impersonation (99). However, I do not concur, for even with a possible gain based upon new racial markers, Jackson remains "colonized" and subjugated as a woman; and the self as subject is a position historically denied of women. Rosi Braidotti notes, "in order to announce the death of the subject, one must first have gained the right to speak as one" (237). On the one hand, the image deconstructs the viewers' interpellation while its strongly held codes issue an alternate reconstruction. When Liberty's head is superimposed, we are also reminded that all women's bodies have traditionally been coded as objects or cultural artifacts.

But when considering the result of the subsequent layering, the Jackson/Liberty coding becomes tripled in effect. First, when reading through a black feminist lens, Jackson is recoded as the colonized Other. Then, when read aesthetically as an idealized woman captured in a work of art (signified by the statue's head), Jackson/Liberty becomes coded as the *possessed* object of male desire. Finally, when re-colored, she becomes coded as an object depicting the white hegemonic general desire to control our nation's commodification of personal and public liberty. Moreover, even as the projection of a white veneer attempts to override that of the dark interior, we also must realize that in the end they both "share a similarly debased social status" (Brody 103).

> For several moments Woman is caught in the gaze and reflexively repositions herself slightly for a renewed barrage of photographs. Woman takes a bite but chokes on the banana. She recovers, throws the banana on the floor, and leaves the stage.

The removal of Woman's female body from the stage deconstructs the desired woman as unrepresentable, a negated subject. On the one hand, as an interrogation of the ontological, Woman's absence serves as a critique of patriarchal hegemonic cultural constructs, refusing her essentialism. While on the other, her absence remands the spect-actor back to focusing on the performative display of Jackson and Bush. Unable to ignore the implied narrative the spect-actor becomes an exceptionally uneasy voyeur.

What is tragic is that Janet Jackson as the "exposed" female was the one to receive the most damning public and corporate criticisms, while Justin Timberlake's action of the aggressive male was nearly dismissed altogether. Additionally, as one critical Web site points out, "neither the [Wall Street] Journal nor the Christian fundamentalists criticized the halftime performance by the talentless rapper Kid Rock, an avowed supporter of George W. Bush and the Iraq war, who 'wrapped himself in an American flag, flanked by a pair of shapely women gyrating in halter-tops while waving the stars-and-stripes,' in a 'crass pandering to patriotism'" (Walsh). As a conflated site consisting of sexuality and sports, it would also be beneficial to remember football's conflation with war. Significantly, sport and gaming analogies have "become the salient metaphors in both official government statements and media representations of the war, with expressions drawn from football achieving special prominence" (Jansen 189). For example, during the Persian Gulf War, General Norman Schwarzkopf characterized "the strategic plan of the ground war 'the Hail Mary play in football'" (188). Using football's favorite terms like blitz,

bombs, offense, or defense, a sort of "gridiron imagery was used to deflect the public's attention away from the real horrors of war by rallying support for the 'home team'" (193).

As a propaganda device, sports and war found a way to support one another, especially in terms of the Super Bowl. Sexual Super Bowl displays, however, are hardly new, for they have been taking place for years. Moreover, sex sells, for as most advertisers believe, "it is merely a commodity shouting for recognition" (London). With that, in the attempt on the part of producers "to recapture the spirit of Roman gladiatorial contest[s]" (Walsh), women not only sell sports, but like the animals and Christians and criminals selected for sacrifice during Coliseum intermissions, become expendable objects of brutish desire and control. It is during these ritualized times of violence that women, as objects of the male gaze, become even more fetishized through their sexuality.

David Walsh, writing for the World Socialist Web site brings up an interesting point. Most people are well aware of the inherent violence in the sport of football. But Walsh reveals that "the violence continues off the field" as "Pros and Cons: The Criminals Who Play in the NFL" (1998) alleges that one in five NFL players during the 1996-97 season had been charged with a serious crime at one time or another" (Walsh). From there I might raise the question about how many of those were sexual in nature. Conversely, though, and so as to not project a one-sidedness, "before Super Bowl XXVI in the Metrodome, Evelina Giobbe, a former prostitute who ran an advocacy group for women who work in the sex industry, told the Minneapolis Star Tribune, 'Pimps see the Super Bowl as a moneymaking opportunity delivered by God'" (Merron). Another advocacy "specialist" admits that while she has not "'done a scientific poll … a Super Bowl and football crowd is more likely to pay for sex than a baseball crowd. During the football season, there are a lot of halftime calls'" (Merron). These are prime examples wherein

hegemonic-dominant encodings (a healthy sport) contradict subsequent negotiated-corporate decodings (sex as commodity). For as Hall reminds us, the negotiated code, "accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to 'local conditions', to its own more *corporate* positions" (Hall 131).

Moving beyond any connotation of how this plays into the notion of machismo as a defining element for the cowboy (read G. W. Bush), we still have through the transference of asexual politics to entertainment what appears to be a president using women to sell L/liberty to men. Additionally, as Bush's "hegemonic masculinity reflects, supports, and actively cultivates gender inequity, his elite status allows him to extend his influence and control over lesser status males" in the stadium (Jansen 193). This inter-male dominance hierarchy reinforces cultural myths about leaders as all-powerful. More importantly, though, it is the idea of a president enjoying the fruits of that commodification that then ultimately links Bush with this perverse sexual display. What is more, he has been caught in the act of enjoying it—providing a reading that plays against what we know about both his personal and political agendas (conservative, Christian, and republican). Herbert London, president of the Hudson Institute and Professor of Humanities of the New York University, writes in his on-line column for townhall.com that, "most television programs … are tasteless with sex being the overarching theme. It's as if television producers feel a compulsion to compensate for the Puritanical views that once characterized the nation."

While that may be true, I would nonetheless question whether those Puritanical views have truly met their demise in America. Significantly, President Bush is known for both his strong Christian religiosity and his Puritanical standings, and many pundits today have expressed their concern over him and his constituents' heavy-handedness in continually attempting to

dictate the morals of our nation. For some time now, “traditional” moralists have been calling for a return to “family” values and foregrounding the notion that video and cable TV (to name a few) are potential sites for public corruption. What is more, “the rhetorical device of ‘the family’ was deployed to articulate a range of New Right positions on gender, and to pronounce threats to masculinity that were then mirrored in concerns about the erosion of traditional forms of femininity” (Gough-Yates 231). This reminds women then to return to those ideals projected by Lady Liberty as the matron of the nation. Moreover, the very fact that Jackson’s “wardrobe malfunction” could create such fervor is evidence enough to presume that this nation is still highly Puritanical.

That reality aside, the artist’s placing of the particularly significant grinning head of President Bush into the photo signifies a reading that provokes a conflict between his public and private self as his Cheshire grin exposes his possible true desire to both engage in the sexual display and possess the woman next to him. We should also remember that when pairing public-private, private is the marked term. Moreover, “how strongly a term is marked also depends on contextual frameworks such as genres and sociolects, and in some contexts a pairing may be very deliberately and explicitly reversed when an interest group seeks to challenge the ideological properties which the markedness may be taken to reflect” (Chandler 113). Such is the case here. As though “caught in the act,” the Commander and Chief has himself been exposed and now reads as the male majority who hegemonically controls the female population. With that, the reading also shifts demonstratively, creating additional levels of complexity when further considering some of his other personal/public agendas, specifically his take on the marriage act or abortion rights.

Another legitimate decoding forming an extended and fascinating connection for "those in know," comes from the fact that "before the game, the NFL commissioner posed on the sidelines for photographs with former president George Bush" (Walsh). Knowing that Bush senior was in the audience makes the reading of his son's relationship to sex, sports, and politics even stronger through familial affiliation. Not only that, but, "coincidently" the son of the then current Secretary of State Colin Powell, Michael Powell, was a Bush appointee and FCC (Federal Communications Commission) chairman, and had promised to "investigate" the episode (Walsh). Thus, there appears to exist some far from moribund puritanical power politics happening on several levels. Sadly and overall, the "indecency" of the act of exposing Jackson's breast not only led to the further censoring of the television airwaves but also now reads as a direct censorship of women's liberty in general. Michael Ventre, writer and contributor to MSNBC had this to say in his playful (?) commentary about the Super Bowl fiasco: "Those of us in the breast cognoscenti have come to a fascinating realization lately, a profound truth worthy of the great existentialists, which can be expressed succinctly: If you expose one boob, you expose many" (Ventre).

> Slide, slide, slide. The slide of Mae West as Liberty appears on the screen. Woman returns to the stage with a digital camera in her right hand and a copy of the Liberty Now performance script on a clipboard in her left hand. She crosses to center stage, lifts her clipboard in imitation of the Liberty tablet, then lifts her camera hand high into the air duplicating Liberty's torch and—tableau. Cameras click.

As a rule, celebratory moments such as the Super Bowl, when interacting with designs that limit women's agency unsurprisingly create "powerful emotional ties to ways of being that are relatively impervious to social critique and change" (Deegan 166).

However, and levity aside, with Pasternack's performative re-imaging of Lady Liberty, just as with Chen's social critique, one may be able to witness how the commodification of Liberty for even specific personal agendas like theirs can easily find reframing through the broader lens of politics and gender identity. "We can never be *outside* power relations and discourses that constitute us (italics her)," Jackson explains, but "can disrupt what discourses produce and refashion alternative ways of being that revise accepted, common-sense truths" (A. Jackson 685). Through an unauthorized redeployment of constructed frames and ways of conduct, this work through deconstruction calls into question notions of authority, agency, and power. In addition, the unfamiliar intertextual space that merges the Super Bowl stadium with performance space cum Liberty Island provides an environment "where imagination, memory, and stories construct and reconstruct both space and self" (Bryant and Livholts 36).

As a (re)visioned landscape/environment takes shape, pushed by visual, sensual, and emotional memories, so too does the body of Woman (re)configure (35). In fact, Woman's status as individual subsequently lapses. The resulting disrupt, and given the spect-actor's inability to now consume either the icon or Woman as customary, provokes an ensuing erasure. In view of the women's intertextual inability to exist and with no facility to express themselves as individuals within the newly formed paradoxical environment, neither enters the stage of consumption (Spitzack 15). Additionally, and with definitive contact satirically reached between spect-actor and the conflated Woman/I/Liberty, the tripartite persona critically merges the stories of individual women with national narratives (Keyishian 528). An ironically critical

contradiction created by the juxtaposition of the ideologies of consumerism and individualism forces spect-actors to consider hierarchical divisions and their own place in the settlement of those constructs.

The humor of Woman's satiric pose expects to receive both censure and ridicule from spect-actors (Keyishian 528). "Images are made and read in relation to other images and the real is read as an image," John Fiske concludes (226). By forcing an intertextual performance/performative tableau designed to (re)install Lady Liberty's iconic status (albeit unsuccessfully) via provocatively dichotomous modes, the Liberty Now's results fashion a composite image that effectively resist all notions of constructed conflation—whether they be between woman and icon, ideal and Other, or individual and nation. Art not only reflects our liberties (and of course the restrictions that come along with it), but it in and of itself assumes liberty. As such, we are challenged to "discover, invent, and reveal it," for it is a complex interaction between real and imaginary factors. Eventually, one realizes that there probably only exists relations and nothing else" (Escobar 49). Art then, just as the Statue of Liberty, becomes pivotal in our human quest to rescue and, hopefully, redeem life.

> After a moment or two Woman breaks from her tableau, retrieves another crown from her bag, and gives it to a young white woman in the audience. Woman takes her photo, then retrieves the crown and brings it to another young white woman, who dons the crown. Woman snaps her photo. The slide of Mae West as Liberty fades and is replaced with one that reads, "Lady Liberty … Just Like Every Other Girl." Woman purposefully approaches then rejects all men and minorities, moving throughout the space taking photos

> of only those women who represent the ideal. Audience members are taking photographs of Woman/Liberty taking photographs. After a succession of photos are taken Woman returns to center stage and beckons a minority woman to join her. When she does, Woman removes her crown, sets it upon the spect-actor's head, and together they pose for photographs and—tableau. Cameras click until everyone, including Woman, thinks the performance should end. Woman merges into the crowd and sits.

"Imaging produces real material effects," Barbara Bolt reminds us (142). The transformative potential of performative practice that she argues for suggests "that transfiguration occurs through matter … it is in the chiasmus between country, cultural knowledges and materially constituted bodies (both human and non-human), that *poiēisis* makes anew" (146).

What is even more deliberately instrumental for Liberty Now is that "performance produces signification and signification in turn has real effects. Sign production is a *methektic* production involving the interplay of culture, bodies and languages. It is a becoming sign through matter" (146). Deconstructionists realize "that in the theatre the spectator is rarely offered a single message, but is called upon to play with a variety of interpretive possibilities in a complex system of codes" (Martin and Sauter 21). This also creates an arena where spectators are consciously (re)making meaning through their active perception, interpretation, and inclusive roles as spect-actors.

The final performances/performatives and tableaux are designed to first perform the narrative currently in play and then to pull spect-actors into a complicit forum to deconstruct our national narrative. What is more, because subversive repetition remains contingent upon

established categories (in my case the category of the "ideal woman"), and that disruption is only possible from within, those that do not fit or nearly fit the requirements established for that category are exempt as subversive agents (A. Jackson 682). For example, an African American or lesbian could not be as successful in subverting the ideal espoused by/through Lady Liberty since they are traditionally deemed outsider to the category. "To rework categories," Alecia Jackson emphasizes, "is to challenge the historicity of them, to expose the falsehood or their origins" (682).

Decidedly deeply subjective, the Woman/I-as-Liberty satire reflects my personal indignation and contempt for the existing national norms and narratives. Building upon the indignity, Woman/Liberty also ironically serves to perform the prejudice and immorality inherent in her creation, a conflation of self-parody and parody (Keyishian 531). Along with the social reproduction of the gendered individual comes the production of societal structures that systematically maintain dominance and subordination (Lorber 3). The use of satire in Liberty Now comes from my observation and analysis of the social phenomena that is the conflation of Liberty with women in general as well as with specific women. The desire for equity expressed through this particular artistic form/formulation founded upon the parodic, ironic, and satiric hopefully will play into the natural capacity of us all to be both angered by injustice and to find amusement in the performances we give in order to perpetuate bias (Keyishian 541). With a vision in mind, the satirical play of resistance within Liberty Now anticipates a utopian-like place or point of imaginative speculation for the spect-actors (Nilsen and Nilsen 394). Standing beside herself Woman didactically hopes to resist any dystopic scenario and ironically to draw attention to the paradoxes of her separation without attempting to pass judgments (394-95). Designing their actions in relation to how they might be seen and described by one another, the

spect-actors are challenged to acknowledge and hold themselves responsible for their complicity in the forming of our national narrative (West and Fenstermaker 60). The process of rendering their actions accountable equates to being an “interactional accomplishment,” which Candace West and Susan Fenstermaker explain is also institutional in character (56). As a feature of social relationships, its idiom “derives from the institutional arena in which those relationships come to life” (56). Thus the confluence of individual and space: Woman/Liberty within dual locations possesses the possibility of developing innovative and tangible, but most profoundly, equitable future narratives.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The notions of individual choice and free will are critical to mechanisms of female self-production and erasure.
—Spitzack

As a sign the icon of Lady Liberty possesses recognizable properties, such as womanhood, and symbolically stands for the ideas proscribed to its being, such as beauty or truth (Mann 38). As images or sacred objects, icons "consistently reinforce meaning by the repetitious visual bombardment of the observer with ideas encapsulated in consistent form" (Orr 16). What is more, ironically Liberty "has far more mimetic qualities and represents what it denotes more directly (Mann 39). However, "icons in the case of architecture," Dennis Mann cautions us, "are objects which are *about other objects*. They are fixed mental images and can be quite literally interpreted. Although their forms might have been established for one reason, they have come to be identifiable for a totally different reason" (39). What is more, icons have the ability to objectify a "deep mythological structure of reality, revealing basic needs which go from age to age, media to media, generation to generation" (Fishwick 3). As cultural ciphers, they help us to unlock "the mystery of our attitudes and assumptions" (3). Icons can accumulate and alter meanings, or they can lose them (4). In either case, though, icons such as Lady Liberty "must reflect the change" (5). Thus icons function as "sensitive indicators," with the ability to show us "who we are, where we come from, [and] where we intend to go" (8).

The male symbol of Uncle Sam, Marina Warner explains, relates to Americans differently, creating a distinct differential relationship between Sam, Liberty, and the American public (266). "The female form," she continues, "tends to be perceived as generic and universal,

with symbolic overtones," while the male is perceived as an individual, "even when it is being used to express a generalized idea" (266). Men generally appear to be "in command of their own characters and their own identity, to live inside their own skins, and they do not include women in their symbolic embrace" (266-67). Women, on the other hand, have forms that do not either refer to their individuality or their unity as a gendered group (266-67). The result of her contention goes to the crux of my argument, as I see the fleshed Liberty, through its various representational forms, taking on and embodying the fleshed woman. While Warner insists that male and female citizens alike are able to inhabit Liberty when identifying with her more abstract qualities, when challenging men and ethnic/racial minorities with Liberty's gender identification, a pronounced disrupt prevails. For while in the abstract "Liberty is not representing her own freedom," as a fleshed woman no longer trapped between "the ideal and the general," however, there exists the possibility for personal agency (267).

It is my profound hope that the examples provided in this document will serve to highlight some of the avenues for reflection. For example, during the 1940s a precedence had been set for the cultural production of representational forms "used in virtually every vehicle of communications and entertainment that promoted the war aims of the United States" and provided viewers with icons they should emulate (Schofield 54). The play Miss Liberty, with its patriotic and socializing narrative would certainly find its place within our national propaganda machine. Although touted as a "feel good" and innocent national retrospective of sorts, the play Miss Liberty in reality appears to expose itself more as a critique of post-World War II slipping social norms. The attempt to fortify the traditional performances of women as national mothers and protectors exposes a carelessly constructed base for the deliverance of a national ideal at the expense of a valuable contingent of American citizenry. Susan Hartmann tells us in her book,

The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s that an antifeminist backlash of sorts began even before the war ended (212). As a result, businessmen, labor leaders, and government officials implemented a major venture of social control, beginning with a directive requiring women to relinquish their jobs and return to the home (213). As a result, for me Miss Liberty's parody of assimilation only further points up how far our nation has progressed in some areas, such as cultural transitioning, and how seemingly unfathomably far we have yet to go with regards to agency for American women. What is more, although this play was originally produced fifty-eight years ago, the reality that it continues to find audiences within regional and amateur theatres to this day makes me shudder with apprehension.[3] It appears as though just the idea of Lady Liberty has the power to perpetuate its usage, with producers giving little to no thought of how outdated it is. While today the author's names of Irving Berlin and Robert E. Sherwood (given added cultural currency by the work of Moss Hart) and the statue's mythological status bring it out moth balls and all, I do wonder what audiences really think about it.

In the case of Miss Congeniality and the pageant process espoused by the film's making and syndication, we have a cultural artifact that blatantly confirms the national pageant institution as a gendered symbol of the nation. The result of which joins constructions of race with regional identities, sexuality, and class, together forming "an arena where nationality is linked to femininity, Whiteness, middle and upper class values and heteronormativity in various ways" (Mattsson and Pettersson 2). "The hegemonic constructions of femininity marginalize and classify large proportions of women—'ugly', large, old, working-class, brown skinned, brown

[3] A recent example is a production at 42nd Street Moon in San Francisco November 2005. Kelly, Tom W. "Staged Musical of Miss Liberty" San Francisco Bay Times. 3 November 2005. 5 August 2007 <http://www.sfbaytimes.com/index.php?sec=article&article_id=4258>.

haired and/or homosexual—as inadequate and non-feminine," Katarina Mattsson and Katarina Pettersson bring to light (6). Furthermore, they enlighten us, constructed "hegemonic body norms demarcate and exclude several peripheral 'others' through the powerful definition of the norm" (6). Since the advent of widespread use of TV and movies, "We are no longer given verbal descriptions or exemplars of what a lady is or of what femininity consists. Rather, we learn the rules directly through bodily discourse: through images that tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements, and behavior are required" (Bordo, The Body 170). The pageant process only brings to a central location and consciousness a heterodoxy consistent with many, if not most, of the currently constructed visions of American women. Laura Mulvey's work with images of women in cinema certainly reconfirms the displays of feminine psychic non-authenticity and bodily deportment, revealing the use of women's images as both spectacle and fetish. Together the two sadly link the various sites in which femininity are produced (xii). What is more, the continuation of both the filmic retelling and embodied performances of feminized pageantry heartbreakingly provide a queasy foundation for the young women of America's tomorrow. Children's pageants are recklessly "grooming" a next-generation of beauty queens (Perlmutter 165). The process of propaganda and instruction starts on stages in small towns all over America, "infants, toddlers, girls, and young women are being indoctrinated into values that exploit, commodify, and objectify—values that imply that it is permissible to display little girls in women's attire while they prance around on stage dancing and being photographed in sexually provocative poses" (165-66). That being said, Judith Butler's words might provide great solace to those grieving for agency. As she tutors her readers toward a unity of personhood and harmony of cause, her words ring with heartfelt conviction:

> Significantly, it is in the elaboration of kinship forged through a resignification of the very terms which effect our exclusion and abjection that such a resignification creates the discursive and social space for community, that we see an appropriation of the terms of domination that turns them toward a more enabling future. (Gender is Burning 460)

As a result, what does Miss Congeniality truly reveal about women's agency in today's world? Has it really changed in the past century? Or are the ongoing conflated performatives, such as depicted in the film, reflecting our culture or challenging it. "Cultural performances," as ethnographer Victor Turner emphasizes in his The Anthropology of Performance, "are not simple reflectors or expressions of culture or even of changing culture but may themselves be active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting 'designs for living'…" (13). As such, what do films like Miss Congeniality tell us about how certain American women who represent our country continue to perform in their roles as women and national representatives? What might it mean that since its movie theater closing, this film has been running nearly non-stop over the past seven plus years on both commercial and cable television? Visual culture develops the "ideas of culture" in a political fashion, creating a place for individuals to define and express individual and group identities (Mirzoeff 24). What definitions is the viewing public instituting? In what groups do they seek reinvestment? Within the visual, meanings are created and contested; in other words, "seeing is not believing but interpreting," Nicholas Mirzoeff reminds us (13). How will you interpret the performances of gender and nation, and to what end does the film offer parody as hope.

And finally with the performance of Liberty Now, I seek to reconfigure the unmarked woman through the unmarked icon of the Statue of Liberty. While women in both instances are traditionally regarded as unmarked Others (Liberty less so), when read through the conflationary lens, they, in tandem, recoup their lack and perpetuate a (re)new(ed) identity frame; or should I say frame for identity. Barbara Babcock and John Macaloon challenge us to both recognize and do something about female objectification. We might begin, they suggest, by "examining the politics and psychodynamics of a patriarchal symbolic order and reviewing political allegory and its female embodiment in the context of a structural history of the Western political imagination" (94). The beginning years of the Statue of Liberty's union with America might provide us with clues to possible courses of action.

Mostly unwelcome by the general public, Lady Liberty's American supporters were largely New York-based enthusiasts. What is more, Linda Zerilli reveals, "The clergy claimed that the French gift was a pagan goddess and a Masonic plot; the poor suspected that the statue was an excuse for the rich to throw expensive dinner parties; many of the rich feared that the celebration of liberty might be an invitation to anarchy; [and] New Yorkers were accused of trying to get the country to pay for their monumental fantasy" (172). That being said, however, the lack of any definitive national identity would eventually be the very thing around which the diverse citizenry might rally (172). Bringing together "otherwise diverse and, in many cases, mutually hostile groups of immigrants and workers, the Statue of Liberty became the cause of the people, a democratic people bound not by some transcendent principle but by mutual promises" (173). Liberty's transformation indicates that the people were not so much focused upon any sort of "stable content that inheres in the monument and gets communicated to the spectator" (174). Rather Lady Liberty's meanings, Zerilli explains are "fully contingent on the

spectator's subjectivity and the particular conjuncture of political forces." Zerilli continues with more detail:

> Indeed the question of referential meaning, the "what" of signification, cannot account for broadest historical shifts in the statue's meaning: from a symbol of translational republicanism to a symbol of immigration; from a symbol of immigration to a symbol of the American nation-state threatened by the wrong kind of immigrant; and from a symbol of America's national heritage to a universal symbol of democracy in a post-cold war political context. The Statue of Liberty was in no way destined to become the symbol it became (whatever that may be at any given historical juncture), nor is its history a story of the unfolding of any inherent meaning—as almost every popular narrative of the statue would have us believe. (174)

Liberty's Now's use of intertexuality demands, as per the term's definition, that spect-actors read each text in relationship with/to the other's within that purview, subsequently bringing their own ranges of textual knowledges to bear upon the resulting conflations (Fiske 219). The findings for novelty and change rest in the spaces between the texts (219), and the lens of intertextuality provides the clarity of/for discovery. What is more, and according to Jacqueline Martin and Willmar Sauter (who draws upon the work of Gadamer), "the intentionality of the artist goes beyond his control and the performance becomes open to interpretation" (60). From the openness of Liberty Now hopefully will come engaged and motivated spect-actors. Regarding the work of theatre focusing upon change through the contestation of convention (which is Liberty Now), Butler writes that acts constituted within this particular frame looking to "demarcate the imaginary from the real" actually "constitutes a reality that is in some sense new, a modality of

gender that cannot readily be assimilated into the pre-existing categories that regulate gender reality" (Performative 278).

Through the tactic of masquerade, primarily determined by costume and stylized deportment, Woman maintains my own identity, while keeping my options open whether or not I wish to participate fully as me, as a hybrid, or as a character. Through the devise of masquerade I am able to look out and negotiate my experience as Woman, and those experiences I instigate with the spect-actors. The tactic also refuses to define me, allowing me to retain some control of the distance (psychically and physically) between myself and others in the space of play. "The conceptual frame of masquerade therefore more ably encounters issues of resistance and the expression of authenticity," Simon Biggs explains, and works as a mechanism to deal with suppressions or assaults rising from an often sexist environment (54). With consequence the spect-actor is ultimately left to unravel what they see, hear, and experience as fact or fiction (53).

Showing mannish women as unruly, older women as unloving mothers, or younger women as sexual beings is not inherently problematic, it becomes so, if women are almost always shown in this light because it tends to normalize their objectification while presenting limited perspectives on women's humanity (Ward and Harrison 3). Given our propensity to label, I turn once again to Judith Butler for consolation who emphasizes that, "The body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning, if nothing else, and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic. By dramatic I mean only that the body is not merely matter by a continual and incessant materializing of possibilities" (Performative 272). So it is that Liberty Now first draws upon the dramatic performativity of gender and display, then reissues all within the context of a radical performance space. Additionally and as Butler so vehemently argues, "it is primarily political interests which create the social

phenomena of gender itself" (Performative 280). For example, and with the political in mind, we must search for ways to realign our thinking about gender on a wider scale. The work of imagery as a propellant for personal, political, and social change must also be a part of the equation. And while, as Luarua Mulvey gloomily points out, "women exchanged in image and women transforming themselves into image through commodity consumption" is common in today's society (xii), readers must recognize that it is within our capacity to reconfigure the illusions and fantasies perpetuated through consumerism.

While the artist's interpretations of Lady Liberty explored in this study may lead one to a more informed perspective about the performances of American women in general, they hardly begin to answer some of the more pressing questions about how and why our nation continues to reify specific bodies as national representatives and perpetuate grossly negative hegemonic practices. Of the literally hundreds of other similar two-dimensional and the few three-dimensional and performance-based artworks I discovered, most (regardless of the misfires) readily serve to expose the injustices toward women and provide fuel for further questioning. That being said, one must be ever cognizant of the fact that the nature of and inspiration for the construction of women comes from centuries of repetitive cultural action. Nonetheless, given our current state of enlightenment, perhaps we should be attempting to create gender and identity performances that play against these representations in order to create an American landscape where these outmoded performances no longer represent reality. To reiterate, one last time, Simone de Beauvoir's insistent message, "'one is not born, but rather, *becomes* a woman'" (Second 301). However, ensuing change must undeniably rest upon the shoulders of America's women to perform a new vision of gender. In exposing the ethical implications that belie these works's most often playful simplicity, one might ask more specifically, will the moral

perceptions revealed automatically precipitate moral action. If considering the actions to be constituted by patriarchal hegemony, I suppose that remains to be seen. However, if looking to women, then I would hope so. As women we have the ability to appropriate and reinterpret the existing doctrine of our constitution (Butler, Performative 270). And in so doing call for the new representation of Lady Liberty to be one that refuses to reflect an outdated reality and choose to replace it with a vision of what shall/can/will equalize the gendered structure of our culture. Indeed, women must be the ones to reconstruct their identity and to alter the repetitions, for it is that "performative accomplishment" which social audiences "come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (271). Hopefully this project will not only ignite a much-needed discussion surrounding women's performatives and performances of gender and nationhood but somehow, however modestly, empower women toward change.

Realizing the degree of idealism proposed, I nonetheless must consider the magnitude of incorporation or rejection or reconfiguration such a "vision" might require. As a result I am resigned to further questioning. For example, I might ask how the repetitive acts etched within/on ethnically and racially marked women in our contemporary society react when confronted with the reality of their "absence" from the myth surrounding Lady Liberty? How do they find inclusion given Lady Liberty's Anglo-European roots? How can she (Liberty) truly continue as a representative of our national ideology? For that matter, one needs also consider the predominant exclusions of lower and working class woman as well. Moreover, we must ask how the perpetuation of the privileging of the iconic image as it connects with current moral perceptions continues to contribute to the existing divisions among and between American women today, and how the commodification of only certain "beautiful" women continues to fuel our patriotism. This is especially relevant in light of the recent Iraqi war debacle making the

young single white woman Jessica Lynch a highly recognized war hero, while nearly forgetting her African American counterpart Shoshana Johnson. Is it really possible to re-mythologize Lady Liberty? For example, if all women have traditionally been fashioned to stand as surrogates to Lady Liberty's naturalized position (one of tradition and subjugation), who are we when we move against that naturalization? Would being a member of the National Organization for Women (NOW) create or constitute an "ill-fit" for women and nation? As a result, would that make our progressive and/or antihegemonic actions be seen as national character flaws? Or conversely, if the bond between woman and icon looms so large, where do we start to revision women? Do we tear down the Statue of Liberty hoping that her demise might also be the demise of the myths attached to her? I would hope not. Rather it is with great optimism that this document, structured to illuminate the wide variety of performance and performative sources surrounding and encompassing the uses and portrayals of Lady Liberty, coupled with those that have come before it, will eventually cause first a metaphorical disrupt, then a literal antithetical movement which might begin a transition toward the release of all American women as they are read within the scope of national interests.

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