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## Form and Deformity: The Trouble with Victorian Pockets

CHRISTOPHER TODD MATTHEWS

The true spirit of the times is in nothing more perceptible than in the tone given our most trifling amusements.

J. R. Planché, *British Costume: A Complete History* (1854)

**A**lthough William Powell Frith described “the acrobat and his hungry little boy” as the “main incident” of his 1858 painting *The Derby Day* (89), his famous panorama of Victorian society could be described as more fundamentally a drama of pockets and purses (fig. 1). The long horizontal canvas and the social spectrum it measures—its taxonomy of classes swindling and getting swindled, looking and being watched—is framed by the bodies of two men with their hands in their pockets. On the left, a rustic in a white frock, left hand in pocket, glances over his shoulder toward the center of the painting, turning from the protesting wife on his arm to the attractions of other men gambling (fig. 2). Meanwhile, on the right, in a nice turn on the rustic’s pose, a caddish gentleman, both hands tucked in trouser pockets, directs the viewer’s eye back to the center of the painting even as his gaze just acknowledges a flower girl on the picture’s edge (fig. 3). Frith makes the disparity in these men’s social positions clear: the hand-in-pocket pose of the rustic, of modest means and potentially gullible, signals an attraction to what could ruin him; the hands-in-pockets pose of the cad telegraphs his confidence and power,

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ABSTRACT: This essay explores the Victorian debate about the place of pockets in men’s and women’s clothing. By studying the representation of men as naturally pocketed creatures and the general denial of useful pockets to middle-class women, the essay demonstrates the tenacious cultural logic by which men’s and women’s pockets were imagined to correspond to sexual differences and to index access, or lack thereof, to public mobility and financial agency. Interconnected readings of visual art, essays, and novels show how the common sense about gendered pockets was utilized and promulgated in Victorian narratives. The question of who gets pockets is thus positioned as part of the history of gendered bodies in public space.

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**Fig. 1.** William Powell Frith, *The Derby Day*, 1856-58, oil on canvas. Photo credit: Tate, London/Art Resource.

his ownership of the carriage he leans against and the kept woman in it. One gets ruined, one ruins. Further emphasizing this spectrum, a young middle-class city-clerk type, socially and visually positioned between worker-rustic and aristocratic cad, deeply pockets both of his



**Fig. 2.** Detail from William Powell Frith, *The Derby Day*, 1856-58, oil on canvas. Photo credit: Tate, London/Art Resource.



**Fig. 3.** Detail from William Powell Frith, *The Derby Day*, 1856-58, oil on canvas. Photo credit: Tate, London/Art Resource.

hands to show how heavily he has lost in the day's betting. With these three figures, Frith creates a visual subplot, a map of male class, whose participants are differentiated by rank but united by gender. That is, while each man's pocket distinguishes him from the others in terms of class, it ties him to his compatriots in terms of masculinity: they are fellow creatures similarly equipped, their means on their hip and ready at hand. If this subplot has a vaguely democratic message, it might simply be "all men have pockets."

But not, it would seem, all women. Surrounded by these men, a young woman near the center of the painting focalizes Frith's entire tableau of risk, exchange, and temptation (fig. 4). Center stage, where the middling classes mingle among financial danger and pathos (a pickpocket stalks, a fortune-teller offers her services, a mother gathers



**Fig. 4.** Detail from William Powell Frith, *The Derby Day*, 1856-58, oil on canvas. Photo credit: Tate, London/Art Resource.

donations), fully lit and framed by the “main incident” of the canvas (acrobat father on her right, acrobat child on her left), a young middle-class woman peers into her purse. A man behind her evaluates it with his one-eyed glare; even if the purse is not opened for him, he endeavors to insinuate himself into some part of the transaction its opening anticipates. Her attitude suggests decision or indecision: perhaps a donation to the acrobat family, perhaps a loan for her beau to bet on the horses. But ultimately the reason for the open purse seems hardly to matter. The pathetic scene of the hungry acrobat boy stopping mid-routine to gaze at a sumptuous picnic *might* move her to a donation—

but she is not watching the boy. She is looking into her purse, frozen, while men dig in their pockets all around her. Some financial consternation might link her to these men, but gender and fashion figure her drama differently. She holds something pocket-like but not a pocket, separate from her body, lifted up, out in the open, available for others to gaze upon; she cannot measure her wealth by touch, cannot feel her means and study an object of charity or desire simultaneously. She cannot strike the poses struck by men. She might have a pocket sewn into her crinoline, and she might have the money a pocket metonymically signifies, but her pose and her place in the tableau fundamentally distinguish her from men with pockets.

For much of the nineteenth century, in keeping with the edicts of popular and high fashion, women were generally disallowed pockets, in the modern sense of a pouch sewn into clothing (the word "pocket" could also, in an older meaning, refer to an external pouch hung from one's clothing or a bag used for sewing work). Steven Connor argues that internal pockets demark "one of the most striking differences . . . between male and female clothing since the end of the eighteenth century. Trousers have pockets, while women's clothes continued to be conspicuously and systematically unprovided with them" (267). As has been widely noted, the Victorian period was, in the words of Helena Michie, a time of "hyperbolic gender difference," in which older models that organized sexual difference along a gradual vertical hierarchy were thoroughly replaced by an exaggerated model of oppositeness, a "historically unprecedented sense of the differences between the sexes"; the result was "a culture of separate corporeal realities where the bodies of men and women . . . were not only treated differently but were thought to have radically different needs and desires coming out of different bodily configurations" (409). Fashion was instrumental to making this new binarism legible, as it provided the technologies by which individual bodies would symbolically and quite materially fit themselves into categories of sexual oppositeness. Connor locates the power of gender differentiation in clothes themselves, noting that the mid-century was "the period in which male and female fashions seemed to have become most conspicuously polarized," a point exemplified by the fact that "it is only at this period that skirts and trousers first became fixed as the guarantee of the difference between women and men" (268-69). Even as the body was changing conceptually, a certain cultural logic maintained that clothing expressed unchanging natural attributes; the design of fashion-

able clothing facilitated the new binarism by amplifying such attributes.<sup>1</sup> In this context, as will become a central focus of the argument that follows, the internal pocket became for men a natural form, but on women it threatened to produce a kind of unnaturalness or deformity.

This essay will explore the Victorian promulgation of the idea that men's and women's pockets must be different from one another and will argue that this presumed distinction organized culture-wide discussions of sexual difference and its relation to nature, money, and mobility. The question of who gets pockets and how thereby becomes more than a footnote of fashion history: it becomes part of the broader history of bodies and their gendered meanings in public space. The place of the pocket on the female body was, I will show, a conceptual problem that brought closer to explicitness the logic by which a body could or could not incorporate the tools of public mobility. Such tools were everything a pocket might contain: money especially, but also calling cards, handkerchiefs, watches, keys, etc. Whether and how one carried such equipment was in many ways a middle-class issue, to the extent that one's public self-presentation and relation to money in "an age of acquisition and portable property" (Connor 267) were especially charged issues for middle-class women and men.<sup>2</sup> (*Derby Day*, for instance, places the middle classes at the visual center of its pocket drama.) Middle-class women, increasingly able to emulate the fashions of the strata above them and becoming a center of cultural gravity themselves, were subject to both social injunctions to dress fashionably and the economic necessities of shopping, domestic management, and childcare. One sartorial expression of this position was the pocket conundrum: how to fashion one's figure according to the template of the fashionable female but also remain somewhat mobile and functional in ways pockets would allow. If "the body of the middle-class young lady" was *the* "fetishized body of Victorian culture" (Michie 410), even something as finicky as the question of where such a woman's pocket should go, and what it might hold, could register fundamental cultural questions.

Still, the discourse of unnatural female pockets was hardly a single well-defined phenomenon: pocket troubles were not always apparent nor consistently in operation, nor was the gender dichotomy inviolate. Men could have problems with their pockets, and a woman could sometimes bear a pocket and carry in it just what she needed without inciting commentary or judgment. But the discourse this essay

explores, in which women were typically dissuaded from the use of internal pockets and perceived as troubled when equipped with them, quietly predominated. Taken together, the instances I trace reveal an ongoing and serious, if often indirect and ironic, debate about the place of pockets on bodies—and how that placement expressed, produced, or disrupted gender difference. My argument begins with the problems some commentators found with pockets in women's clothing set against celebrations of male pockets and trousers, a comparison that highlights the rhetoric of natural male and unnatural female pocketedness. I argue that pockets, as signs of being equipped for public movement, were so antithetical to the feminine ideal that they were imagined to disfigure the sign of that ideal, the well-dressed female body. I then discuss two alternatives to pockets and argue that they mostly underscore the tendency to read as disfigured women who attach to their bodies the equipment of movement and ambition. Shifting my focus to a series of literary examples of extraordinary objects appended to female bodies, I demonstrate how authors made use of the cultural common sense about women's relation to pockets. My argument concludes with a discussion of *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), where, in the image of a male animal cross-dressing as a female human, these conceptual strands come together to emphasize that, in the discourse of pockets, gender trumps even species in defining the terms of one's movement through the world.

### **Bulges, Pouches, and Cylinders: A History of Shapes**

The history of purses and pockets in the nineteenth century is, in part, the history of a debate about form and deformity. As various historians of fashion have described it, starting in 1795, after a century of rather full skirts and capacious pockets, the neo-classical women's fashions of Paris influenced the narrowing of the ideal British muslin dress, raising the waistline and revealing, with the help of clinging fabrics, the line of the body. As Claire Wilcox has described, pockets sewn into such a dress would have destroyed this newly "naturalized" female form: "Skirts, falling in columnar lines from a high waist, clung to the body. . . . The waist was now far too high for bulky pockets" (49). An external pocket called a balantine "was tried," Wilcox reports, "but proved unpopular" because "it interfered with the elegant lines of the skirts" (49). Because any pocket would disrupt the figure such dresses

were designed to produce, good fashion required what *The Times* in 1799 called “the total abjuration of the female pocket.”<sup>3</sup> But disobedience to this fashion wisdom threatened the female form throughout the next century, no matter how greatly new trends would themselves alter and reconstruct that form. In 1862, when pockets in women’s coats became briefly popular, the *Queen*, a fashion magazine, asked, “Why do ladies affect gentlemanly attire . . . why do they not leave to the sterner sex the paletots and pocketed jackets with large buttons, which are their special attributes” (qtd. in Buck 101). Steven Connor has emphasized the stark new divisions between men’s and women’s shapes in the nineteenth century: “men became pointed, alert and attentive, while women spread, inert but amorphous, their clothes blurring their outlines” (266). Ironically, pockets became easily appended to, and one of the special attributes of, what would seem to be the less accommodating form: men’s “pointed, alert” one. Women’s fluctuating, “amorphous” outlines, presumably capable of subsuming new features, could not in fact bear the disruption of a pocket. Clothes may have increasingly “blurred” women’s bodies within layers of fabric, but the new outlines clothing produced nonetheless radiated meaning, telegraphing lessons about the female body, its aesthetic and erotic functions, its poetics of reserve and sentiment. Pockets threatened those lessons.

A brief revival in 1876 saw “large patch pockets in the back breadths of the skirt” which, “when full,” were “both impractical and unflattering” (Foster 50). Even in the age of crinoline, the rounded form of broad skirts could not accommodate a pocket without seeming, at least to some commentators, disfigured. In 1882 the *Queen* again reminded its readers that “pockets in skirts are still impossible, for if they contain anything beyond the finest of handkerchiefs they bulge and make themselves ungracefully apparent” (qtd. in Foster 50). In 1892’s *The Gentlewoman of Society*, aristocratic sportswoman Violet Greville disparaged the late-Victorian pocket for similar reasons: “The average woman . . . dives into the recesses of an impossible receptacle, situated somewhere in the back breadths of her gown, for her pocket-handkerchief, her letters, her notebook, her card-case, or her money—the whole forming a disagreeably hard aggregation on which she patiently elects to sit” (qtd. in Foster 50). “The average woman” might have possessed her pocket, and made use of it, but not without opening herself to discomfort and deformity. Whether revealed through muslin

or disciplined by crinoline, the female form was in continual danger, it would seem, from the “bulges” and “hard aggregations” caused by pockets and their contents. The “female pocket,” “an impossible receptacle,” seems to have required nearly constant “abjuration” throughout the century.

Though even Greville’s “average woman” must eschew internal pockets, or keep them empty, in order to maintain a feminine bulgelessness, the pocket was considered a natural solution to men’s money-carrying needs. Trousers, coats, and waistcoats apparently gave men more forgiving locations to stash necessary items. Or perhaps bulges were more easily forgiven on the male form. An extreme example from the end of Victoria’s reign, emphasizing the pocket’s importance to manly action, is one police detective’s way of declaring himself armed in Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902): “As long as I have my trousers I have a hip-pocket, and as long as I have my hip-pocket I have something in it” (147). At the beginning of Victoria’s reign, the principles of such a declaration were laid out in *Sartor Resartus* (1838), wherein Thomas Carlyle’s satirical Editor, struggling to present the “radical” and inchoate philosophy of the fictional Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, extracts a powerful argument, “incontrovertible and final,” for the internal pocket as *the* basis for the social necessity of clothing: “Are we Opossums; have we natural Pouches, like the Kangaroo? Or how, without Clothes, could we possess the master-organ, soul’s seat, and true pineal gland of the Body Social: I mean, a PURSE?” (50). Quite simply, one needs a pocket to carry a purse (that is, a small bag for coins). For Carlyle’s Editor, the “Body Social,” tuning its very existence to the purse, relies on sartorial adaptability—on the pocket, the human body’s prosthetic pouch. Women’s clothes, and by extension women’s bodies, seem to have rarely accommodated such a taken-for-granted naturalism; the Editor’s vision of a symbiosis between pocket and purse occurs on an implicitly male body, rendering the purse an essentially male object. It is the center of economic being, muscle of marketplace selfhood, nearly invisible on the male body because *of* that body: its “master-organ” and “pineal gland.” The hyperbole of the satire may indicate an authorial distaste for this state of things, but even if Carlyle overstates the idea of money-as-soul in order to critique it, he establishes the pocket as a pivotal term in his formulation of the relationship between a man and the money he carries.<sup>4</sup>

If the male “Body Social” can absorb the purse as a supplementary organ, the lower half of the well-dressed man becomes something very unlike the bulge-plagued woman’s body (despite Carlyle’s maternal metaphors, discussed below). The man’s lower half is not the scene of unnatural shapes but the epicenter of a naturalized modern world, where civilization invisibly but palpably resides. This is not only the implication of Carlyle’s playful claim but also the earnest conclusion of others in the business of knowing and celebrating their trousers. In his 1879 *Cyclopaedia of Costume*, James Robinson Planché asserts that “the nations of the ancient world might be fairly divided into two great groups, or classes, the trowsered and the untrowsered,” and he takes such costuming as a sign of cultural triumph—of North over South, Protestantism over Catholicism, Anglo over Celt (qtd. in Connor 269). And the New York fashion guru Isaac Walker, in his 1885 *Dress: As It Has Been, Is, and Will Be*, writes at length about “cylindrical clothes,” otherwise trousers, “the costume of civilized man” (68). Although the inventor remains unknown,

His work speaks for him, . . . wearing always, under whatever imperfect shape a bungling artist may have given it, some portion of a likeness to the finished beauty of outline which floated only before the imagination of the mind that conceived it, to become a palpable reality only when the fullness of time had brought, with advancing science and more fully developed resources, the artistic intelligence and culture needed to fix the idea forever. (69–70)

There is little fear of disfigurement here—the idea of trousers is too pure, a Platonic expression of science and culture.<sup>5</sup> It is also remarkably well suited to, or nearly commensurate with, a male body that seems to epitomize civilization:

It was a great thing to have seen that man, himself a collection of pipes and cylinders enclosed in an outer cylinder, might best be attired in cylindrical garments, and one cannot but be struck by the wonderful instinct of genius in the unknown inventor of the trousers, who sprang forward mentally, so to speak, across the gap of centuries, to create . . . a form at once typical of and indispensable to the most complex and elaborate civilization. (70)

Echoing Carlyle’s celebration of the pocket as both natural and invented form, Walker finds men’s trousers both biologically self-evident and cleverly, socially inventive, the sign of the benevolent mechanics of civilization. Walker concludes with his thoughts on trou-

sers' contribution to an American "every man a king" brand of democracy: "after all, what is more suggestive of manly dignity and power, what more indispensable to an impressive and kingly bearing before the world, than legs sufficiently attired and equal to the support of the chest—the house of courage, and the head—the dome of intelligence and reflection?" (72). The shape of the well-dressed man is nothing less than the physical inscription of his citizenship, his kingly share in a democracy that will judge his fitness for self-rule by how he covers his legs. If inherent in the idea of the trouser is the pocket that carries money—as Steven Connor formulates it, "To wear trousers is to have need of somewhere to put your money" (267)—then Walker also implicitly celebrates the natural elegance of a man's pockets, the way money rides invisibly on his body.<sup>6</sup>

Among all this hyperbole, a certain elision of implications is necessary to render as common sense the notion that men's bodies naturally absorb the pocket. Carlyle's text, celebrating the easy naturalness of the male money-carrier, in fact describes a body complexly gendered: modern clothing gives men their own version of kangaroo pouches, a function of marsupial maternity. The pocketed man appropriates, that is, a distinctly female morphology. With this in mind, "female pocket" sounds rather redundant; what needs explanation is the almost oxymoronic "male pocket." Such sexual hybridity is only intensified if we consider that the purse itself—the child in the pouch—has long been promiscuously metaphorical, conjuring a range of genital morphology. Since the seventeenth century, for instance, "purse" could refer both to a "natural receptacle" on a female body, such as a vagina, and to a scrotum ("Purse"). Carlyle's nesting of such variably gendered objects (purse in a pouch on a man) could conjure something unstable, possibly unnatural—and yet, in his and Walker's telling, the trouser and its pockets are remarkably unproblematic touchstones for the modern male subject. Such celebrations set in relief the disfigurement with which a similar hybridity threatened money-carrying women—and by extension the harder time female bodies had incorporating the tools of public mobility into a naturalized shape.

Perhaps this was the case because—rather than despite the fact that—the female form was under constant redesign throughout the century, sporting a changing series of intentionally apparent bulges. Christopher Breward has argued that nineteenth-century "design innovation was a simple case of . . . subtly realigning bodily

proportions" (66). Instead of reducing the stakes, this constant revision heightened the importance of any stray alteration. Connor suggests that such changes affected gender rather than the other way around; it is fashion's characteristically "restless inconstancy of contours . . . that agitates the lineaments of gender" (264). Casey Finch has similarly traced the movement of erogenous zones: by century's end "the female body's erotic zones had shifted from the belly backward to the posterior and from the pelvis outward to the breasts and limbs. The new female *objets du désir* possessed exaggerated breasts, thighs, posteriors, and relatively diminutive waists and bellies" (341). The slim waist produced by the corset was in part meant to amplify breast and hip, to call attention to certain "bulges" while minimizing others.<sup>7</sup> Such an economy of bulges required strict management: if some carefully orchestrated ones were imbued with erogenous power, the wrong ones could throw off the whole system. By this logic, the pocket-bulge is an aberration not because it is unlike anything else on the female body but because it is one too many iterations of that body's carefully calculated features.

### The Fifth Protrusion: Châtelaines and Reticules

While men wear their hands in their pockets so grand,  
The ladies have pockets to wear in their hand.  
*Imperial Weekly Gazette* (1804)

One alternative to internal pockets in women's clothes was the handbag (a relative of the old external "pocket" or work bag), which helpfully moved a woman's accoutrements off her body. Lawrence Langer's *The Importance of Wearing Clothes* (1959) describes the motivation for such a solution in terms that provocatively evoke the Victorian debate:

[The modern woman of fashion] is already hard put to cover at least four portions of her body which tend to protrude through her clothes and proclaim the femininity from which she is often hopelessly attempting to escape. Shall she add a fifth to this in the form of a purse or wallet, when it can be carried by hand? And to this the handbag owes its popularity which is growing greater each year as woman increases her importance as a social being. (325)

Carrying "a purse or wallet" in a pocket would mean adding to four natural "portions," themselves already bordering on excess, a new

protrusion. Again, the problem in this formulation is not that the pocket adds a foreign bulge but that it generates one too many on a body defined by them. A handbag thereby serves an important function, providing an off-the-body container for those ever-increasing implements of women as “social beings.”<sup>8</sup> Langner states in suggestive terms a conundrum that had been around for a while. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, in an effort to preserve a well-designed figure, a woman might transfer a purse and other items to a reticule or a châtelaine—a thin belt, modeled on a medieval girdle, with a metal hook on which one could hang items or a small bag. The châtelaine especially gained in popularity in the 1850s when, according to Claire Wilcox, “the fashion for vast skirts stretched over a crinoline rendered any pocket but the most diminutive unsightly” (63). And they remained popular even after crinoline went out of fashion, “their versatility suiting changing styles of dress, in particular the narrow draped skirts of the 1870s” (63), which continued to make pockets troublesome. In 1882, after noting the problem of bulges and the impossibility of pockets in skirts, the *Queen* concluded: “The result is that châtelaine bags are adopted by those who may require to carry card-case and purse, besides the necessary handkerchief” (qtd. in Foster 50).<sup>9</sup> Châtelaines could preserve the female form by allowing women to carry items that might, if pocketed, bulge.

But the device did not solve the problem that easily. Even at its most domesticated (“In keeping with ideals of domesticity,” a châtelaine might carry “numerous small and decorative items such as scissors and pin cushions, keys and note pads, perfume, and often a small purse or bag” [Wilcox 63]) it could elicit ridicule. One *Punch* commentator, identified as the “Father of the Family,” complained about “those appendages of cutlery and ironmongery, jangling and dangling, and cutting one’s legs under the table—all knives and scissors and other sharp points” (qtd. in Adburgham 28). Sharper than a bulge, with jangling steel and sharp protrusions, the châtelaine became for this observer one more dangerous female “appendage,” one that threatened male bodies “under the table.” Similarly, as two of John Leech’s *Punch* cartoons make clear, the châtelaine was liable to being satirized as silly and cumbersome, as a tool belt of women’s less-than-productive work. One cartoon, entitled “How to Make a Châtelaine a Real Blessing to Mothers” (1849) (fig. 5), shows a young mother tied down, like a balloon before takeoff, by châtelaine chains attached to children and



HOW TO MAKE A CHATELAINNE A REAL BLESSING TO MOTHERS.

**Fig. 5.** “How to Make a Châtelaine a Real Blessing to Mothers” by John Leech, from *Punch* 16 (24 Feb. 1849). Reproduced with permission of Punch Ltd., <[www.punch.co.uk](http://www.punch.co.uk)>.

other maternal baggage. The other, “The Châtelaine; a Really Useful Present” (1849) (fig. 6), suggests fitting out the châtelaine for a wife’s domestic duties, with pots and pans hanging from her waist. Leech’s long history of mocking women’s foibles and transgressions makes it unlikely that these cartoons bemoan the mundane bondage of women. In fact they almost seem to celebrate women’s literal “dependence”: in Connor’s formula, “the refusal of pockets to women is . . . intended to ensure that women must carry things” (in their hands, over their shoulders, etc.) in order “to confirm the logic” of their “dependence,” their immersion in duties signaled by objects that sometimes literally hang from them, such as “bags, purses, [and] children” (268).

But these cartoons do not exactly celebrate châtelaines as devices of dependence either: rather, by offering ways to make the châtelaine more “useful,” they satirize it and its wearers as frivolous and unwieldy. What the châtelaine means to men like Leech is clari-

**THE CHATELAINE ; A REALLY USEFUL PRESENT.**



*Laura.* "OH ! LOOK, MA' DEAR ; SEE WHAT A *LOVE* OF A CHATELAINE EDWARD HAS GIVEN ME."

Fig. 6. "The Châtelaine: A Really Useful Present" by John Leech, from *Punch* 16 (13 Jan. 1849). Reproduced with permission of Punch Ltd., <[www.punch.co.uk](http://www.punch.co.uk)>.

fied by the fact that the satirist has to re-imagine it as a tool that, rather than enabling women's movement by solving their pocket troubles, ties them down and disables them. The aggressive imposition of purely domestic and maternal equipment suggests an impatience with women's efforts to carry any other kind of tools: the children, pots, and pans invoke the absence of items like memo-books, keys, card-cases, and purses. The implication is that the châteleine, regardless of its help in shunning pockets, became its own problem, threatening, for

some watchers of women in public, to unwoman women. Comically exaggerated, these gangly contraptions are unsightly, prosthetic, hybrid, extravagant. And yet, even as the cartoons exaggerate the *châtelaine* to ridicule it, they attempt to bring it back into the realm of a naturalized feminine role, making it more maternal kangaroo pouch than master organ.

Meanwhile the reticule, generally a small decorative handbag, might have been the perfect solution to the problems of both the pocket and the *châtelaine*—not because it distracted from the body or foreclosed attention to feminine shape, but because it offered such an easily standardized sexual form. That is, even before Freud, the reticule provided an obvious sexual symbolism, and in this way it could replace mutating pockets and messy bodily peculiarities with a satisfyingly generic, recognizable sign of the female body's femaleness. Consider, for instance, Rosamond Vincy's reticule in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72). While talking with Rosamond about his preference for treating the poor, Lydgate, the available new doctor, bent "his head to the table and [lifted] with his fourth finger her delicate handkerchief which lay at the mouth of her reticule, as if to enjoy its scent, while he looked at her with a smile" (290). Lydgate's simple withdrawal of the handkerchief suggests his easy access to Rosamond's bodily property; his use of "his fourth finger" both invokes the idea of a future wedding band and conveys a strange, teasing form of indirect touch. Presumably Lydgate would never perform such a ritual if the handkerchief were tucked in Rosamond's pocket, but her reticule floats free of the body even as it extends the body, creating a wider zone of acceptable intimate touching.<sup>10</sup> A kind of additional appendage in its own right, the reticule is private enough to delight and detached enough to permit contact. And its relation to the sexual is so direct that it almost does away entirely with any need for metaphor or figuration; it is so clearly a stand-in for the body that it need signify nothing besides itself. Lydgate touches Rosamond's property, removes something from a secret but accessible chamber, and it thrills.

But perhaps the cure could be worse than the disease. The reticule might solve pocket troubles by creating a purer spectacle of femininity, allowing the body to be pocketless and providing itself as a standardized, easily read sign for female sexuality. But it also seems to figure the way in which Rosamond is too permeable, her desires and ambitions too obvious. The reticule's ready symbolism, even its distance

from her body, seem to index Rosamond's too-eager sexual and social ambition. Perhaps what she really needs is a pocket: something closer to her body, less available to others, that gives her more opportunity to consider her resources and measure her desires against her means without having to look away, as the men in *Derby Day* are able to do. But, like the young lady in Frith's painting, Rosamond is made to look down: after Mrs. Bulstrode warns her against hitching her star to Lydgate's wagon ("you must not think of living in high style"), Rosamond "looked down and played with her reticule. She was not a fiery young lady and had no sharp answers, but she meant to live as she pleased" (293). As in *Derby Day*, something slightly ominous and imminent, a high-stakes choice, is suggested by the young woman's downward glance; Rosamond's defiance in this moment signals her momentum toward a mistaken marriage. And that is the end of her reticule: perhaps as a sign that marriage has ended sexual playfulness and financial ambition, it does not reappear. There is no longer anything quite so imminent to be signified once the knot has been tied. It is the younger, unmarried Rosamond who, like the young woman in *Derby Day*, must have her drama initiated by how she carries her purse. For both women, a pocket might have fundamentally changed the terms of the drama in which they find themselves.

### Daggers, Diamonds, and Sugar-Plums

Though signifying much, these representations of pocket troubles and *châtelaine* tribulations have been fairly mundane, having to do with women and men in relatively average daily commerce. But the discourse of pockets readily moved into more extraordinary terrain, and some key literary examples of more remarkable items in pockets will expand and complicate our definition of the dramas pockets were capable of figuring. Eliot, in fact, at the very beginning of her career as a fiction writer, explored the dramatic possibilities of pockets in "Mr Gilfil's Love-Story," the central section of her 1858 *Scenes of Clerical Life*, which arguably reaches its climax when a dangerous object is moved from a woman's pocket to a man's. The orphan Caterina, having been tormented to the point of madness by her beloved Captain Wybrow's lies and indifference, finally reaches her breaking point:

See how she rushes noiselessly, like a pale meteor, along the passages and up the gallery stairs! Those gleaming eyes, those bloodless lips, that swift silent tread, make her look like the incarnation of a fierce purpose, rather than a woman. The midday sun is shining on the armour in the gallery, making mimic suns on bossed sword-hilts and the angles of polished breastplates. Yes, there are sharp weapons in the gallery. There is a dagger in that cabinet; she knows it well. And as a dragon-fly wheels in its flight to alight for an instant on a leaf, she darts to the cabinet, takes out the dagger, and thrusts it into her pocket. In three minutes more she is out, in hat and cloak. . . . Her hand is in her pocket, clenching the handle of the dagger, which she holds half out of its sheath. (211-12)

Eliot's description emphasizes the medieval foreignness of the object in Caterina's pocket, its hardness and sharpness; it does not belong in a young woman's pocket, and once there it becomes a sign of a frightening intention. The dagger changes her body—or rather her transformation into something other than a woman enables her to pocket it.

When Caterina finds Wybrow, he is already dead, killed by his own weak heart. Once she informs the household of the tragedy, everyone except the good Mr. Gilfil, her friend and would-be lover, rushes out. She collapses, and when he raises her “he felt something hard and heavy in her pocket. What could it be? The weight of it would be enough to hurt her as she lay. He carried her to the sofa, put his hand in her pocket, and drew forth the dagger” (213). The hardness and heaviness indicate an object that should not be in a young woman's pocket, but Gilfil is puzzled rather than judgmental; he is interested not in policing Caterina's femininity but in increasing her comfort. Gilfil draws the blade from its sheath to make sure there is no blood: “he was ready to kiss the good steel for its innocence. He thrust the weapon into his own pocket; he would restore it as soon as possible to its well-known place” (213). Switching the dagger from her pocket to his, Gilfil shifts it from one category to another: from readily discovered to hidden, from dangerous to safe. For Eliot's humanistic vicar it is a small but remarkable act of love, forgiveness, and “restoration.”

This scene is especially rich because of Eliot's careful narrative preparation for it through a series of earlier references to pockets and purses. As with Frith's *Derby Day* (exhibited the same year *Scenes* was published), Eliot gives us a tableau of supporting characters making interrelated gestures: Caterina's friend, the simple “good gardener” Mr. Bates, watches her in a melancholy way with “his hands thrust deep in his pockets” (184); the scoundrel Wybrow, about to add

the last straw to Caterina's wretchedness by suggesting that his uncle encourage her to marry Gilfil, "saunter[s] round the room with his hands in his coat-pockets" (201); and Wybrow's fiancée Miss Assher inadvertently prods events along when she returns to the drawing-room "to fetch her reticule" (180) and discovers Wybrow and Caterina in close conversation. But two other moments more directly address Caterina's and Gilfil's pockets, as though to explain ahead of time their ability to carry the dagger. Caterina visits Mr. Bates to give him a scarf she has made, "drawing out the comforter from her deep pocket. Pockets were capacious in those days" (183). The capaciousness of Caterina's pocket—a relic of the 1780s, when the main events take place—justifies remark in the 1850s world of small (or no) pockets. But the aside is less a note on fashion history than a seed necessarily planted in a reader's mind: Caterina's pocket can hold quite a lot. Eliot presumably needs to point this out because a reader's current assumptions about a woman's pocket would not allow her to depict, without risking confusion, Caterina's eventual pocketing of the blade. (That Eliot goes to this trouble is a further indication that the placement of the knife in the pocket, and its move to a different pocket, constitute an important dramatic moment.) Earlier, when we have even less of a sense of its ultimate significance, we hear of the old vicar Mr. Gilfil and his habit of playfully asking children, "did you notice how it rained sugar-plums yesterday? . . . Why, they fell into my pocket as I rode along" (124). One boy, Tommy, looks, "for he had a well-founded belief in the advantages of diving into the Vicar's pocket. Mr Gilfil called it his wonderful pocket, because, as he delighted to tell . . . [the] little boys and girls . . . whenever he put pennies into it, they turned into sugar-plums or gingerbread, or some other nice thing" (124). Like Caterina's, Mr. Gilfil's pockets are "capacious." More than that, they are magical: they turn pennies into sugar-plums, just as they will later (when we hear the story of his younger days) hide and transform Caterina's knife.

In such scenes Eliot deploys familiar tropes of natural form and bodily disfigurement. Tommy, the boy who looks in Mr. Gilfil's pockets, has recently "quitted frocks" and taken to wearing "a tight suit of corduroys" into which he stuffs "humming-tops and marbles," thus "immoderately distending the pockets" (123–24). The pattern I have been tracing suggests "immoderately distending" would be a damning description of a woman's pocket, but a form of male naturalness is

implied here: the boy's toy-stuffed pockets place him on the same spectrum with the old Gilfil and his "wonderful" plum-filled pockets, marking him as nothing more than a comical boy on his way to becoming a good man. Caterina, on the other hand, although a sympathetic heroine, is oddly embodied throughout the story, always frail, unstable, animal-like, and slightly perverse. She has an "unhealthy glitter" in her eyes (195) and a "diseased susceptibility" (198); she is repeatedly called "little monkey" (207) and likened to a series of animals (David Lodge lists "a marmoset, a kitten, a frog, a stock-dove, a puppy, a linnet, a Blenheim spaniel, a grass-hopper and a mouse" [25], not to mention a dragon-fly when she goes for the dagger). To cure her of her illness after the shock of Wybrow's death, Gilfil sends her to be "domesticated" on his sister's farm (237), where the view of "contented speckled hens" and "patient cart-horses" can calm her (239). None of this signals the narrator's or any character's dislike of Caterina, but clearly something is off: Lodge rightly notes that "these comparisons express a range of attitudes towards the girl: that she is appealing, vulnerable, attractive in an unconventional way, somewhat wild and untamed, slightly odd and out of place, foreign, of low birth" (25-26). Petite and charming but not exactly well-formed, Caterina is prone to looking bad beside a well-designed woman like Wybrow's fiancée Miss Assher: "her little body trembling under the shock of passions too strong for it, her very lips pale, and her eyes gleaming, the door opened, and Miss Assher appeared, tall, blooming, and splendid, in her walking costume" (199). Well-fashioned and perfectly costumed, Miss Assher wears "the smile appropriate to the exits and entrances of a young lady who feels that her presence is an interesting fact" (199). To see them beside each other is to compare the deformed with the well-formed, the ideal female figure against the "little monkey" with pockets big enough for daggers.

But Eliot deploys these tropes in part to revise them. None of this mutation comes from Caterina's use of her pocket per se, but it is all part of a characterization constructed to help us understand how she comes to be a woman who pockets a knife. A similarly sympathetic note of mutation is struck in a surprising new way at the story's end. We are told that the old Mr. Gilfil does not quite resemble his young self because the events of the past have wounded him: "it is with men as with trees: if you lop off their finest branches, into which they were pouring forth their young life-juice, the wound will be healed over

with some rough boss, some odd excrescence; and what might have been a grand tree expanding into liberal shade, is but a whimsical misshapen trunk" (244). Caterina's story has not only mutated, or at least sickened, her own already odd body but also her savior Gilfil. It is most obviously the death of Caterina that has so wounded him, but Gilfil has also perhaps taken on this mutation through that long-ago act of moving the knife from Caterina's pocket to his own. While nursing Caterina back to health after the double-shock of finding Wybrow dead and realizing the "wickedness" of her desire to kill him, Mr. Gilfil soothes, "I often have very wicked feelings, and am tempted to do wrong things; but then my body is stronger than yours, and I can hide my feelings and resist them better" (235). This comparison of their bodies' relative ability to contain and conceal wickedness echoes the exchange of the knife, from her unhealthy body to his stronger one, from her misused pocket to his magical one. For Eliot, this is the great sign of the goodness of Mr. Gilfil: the old man who turns pennies into sugar-plums also once upon a time turned a young woman's disfigurement into his own.

Though her pocket is part of Eliot's characterization of Caterina's madness, it does not signify transgression of gender categories or bad independence. Indeed, soon after Gilfil removes the dagger, Eliot shows Caterina pocketing money in a not-at-all pathological way in order to run from the horrors of the house (220). Emphasizing this relative normalcy is the fact that knowledge of the money in her pocket would change the minds of characters who assume the missing girl, equipped with nothing, plans to kill herself: "She had left the house, they thought, taking nothing with her; . . . that made it too probable she had only gone to seek relief in death" (226). In other key texts of the century, though, female characters take to the road in desperate situations, while the strange things possibly in their pockets keep the suggestion of misbehavior and deformity alive in the minds of characters watching them. Lizzie Eustace, in Anthony Trollope's *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873), has a pocket, but, not too surprisingly—this being a mid-nineteenth-century and not a 1780s pocket—she is afraid to use it. So desperate is Lizzie to smuggle to Scotland the valuable diamonds not exactly bequeathed to her by her late husband, "She might even have taken them in her pocket,—had she dared" (1: 185). The narrator's tone here—his use of "even"—suggests how much of a last resort Lizzie's pocket is, and that the thought of her using it produces the

delight of an almost-witnessed transgression. Lizzie's pocket might offer an ideal security for the diamonds, keeping them close to her body, but perhaps she knows just how unreliable women's pockets have been at providing inconspicuousness. Instead, Lizzie chooses to protect the jewels in a large iron box that, *châtelaine*-like, conveniently detaches the problem from her body but nonetheless presents an extra, by-now familiar challenge: how to keep its metallic bulk hidden. When the indefatigable Mr. Camperdown appears at Lizzie's carriage door asking for the diamonds, "Lizzie felt the box beneath her feet, and, without showing that she did so, somewhat widened her drapery" (1: 186). Like a reticule, the "jewel box under a dress" invokes the most conventional of sexual innuendoes, and Trollope makes an obvious joke, linking the sexual and the financial.

Except that the image is not simple: Lizzie's box is imbued with the kind of multiple genderings familiar from the discourse of pockets, the perceived problem being, again, that a female body has appended to itself something not of it, something that complicates its categorical legibility as female. William Cohen discusses in detail the complex doubled gendering of the diamonds within the box—the diamonds signifying "reproductive male sexuality" (they are "the family jewels," an heirloom passed down through generations defined by paternity) and the box representing "female genitals" (163).<sup>11</sup> Lizzie's box, like a reticule, might equal one obvious sexual meaning, but that meaning is then doubled and complicated by the presence of an object of immense economic value. This value can be placed on Lizzie as wife, but to onlookers it becomes a kind of perversion, an absurdity, when stowed under the widowed Lizzie's dress: "In opposition . . . to the demands of her late husband's family, she had insisted on absurdly carrying about with her an enormous amount of property which did not belong to her" (2: 90). No one cares about the box per se, an obvious sign of female sexuality; everyone cares about the thing they cannot see but suspect is there, the masculine appendage of property and financial power. Lizzie quite literally threatens the diamonds with a shift in value, not just from male to female (or some combination of the two) but from stable property to liquid currency: underlining a shared fear that Lizzie will cash the diamonds in, Mrs. Eustace declares, "She is dying to handle her money" (1: 12), and whenever Mr. Camperdown is overcome by the injustice of Lizzie's behavior he exclaims the diamonds' monetary value, "Ten thousand pounds!" (1:

252). Bringing her closer to the discourse of pockets, Lizzie's carrying of the diamonds dovetails with the threat of her carrying money, bearing not so much an object of immense value but value itself, a material bulge that signifies a more immaterial mutation. In this sense, the diamonds present no special case but simply the familiar threat of the bulge, the perennial problem for the female carrier of currency. Like any woman with a pocket—or an iron box—Lizzie is not so much physically incapable of as ideologically barred from carrying so much.

Trollope's representation of Lizzie's difficulties offers a kind of retelling of the adventures of another impossibly bejeweled heroine. In Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (published in 1868, three years before Trollope's novel began to appear in the *Fortnightly Review*), Rachel, the young inheritor of the eponymous diamond, dresses in an ideal bulgeless manner at the very moment when Sergeant Cuff suspects her of carrying the jewel on her body. The House-Steward Betteredge describes her emerging from the house to extract herself from the investigation:

Miss Rachel came downstairs—very nicely dressed in some soft yellow stuff, that set off her dark complexion, and clipped her tight (in the form of a jacket) round the waist. She had a smart little straw hat on her head, with a white veil twisted round it. She had primrose-coloured gloves that fitted her hands like a second skin. Her beautiful black hair looked as smooth as satin under her hat. Her little ears were like rosy shells—they had a pearl dangling from each of them. She came swiftly out to us, as straight as a lily on its stem, and as lithe and supple in every movement she made as a young cat. (158)

It is the trim polish of Rachel's clothing, or rather the way her body and her clothing so perfectly meet, that wins remark here: the tightly "clipped" jacket, the gloves like "second skin," all together looking "lithe and supple," the very image of a woman with no surplus value on her body, no mutating money or additional tools, no unaccounted-for appendages. All the value is in the body itself, its display of fine clothing, and the strategic inclusion of those pearls dangling from each ear—a demonstration of how to wear value appropriately. Rachel rushes "into the carriage as if it was a hiding-place" (159), but she is no Lizzie, nor is she a Caterina, despite the possibility that she carries something hard and (given the jewel's curse) dangerous. The eventual revelation that the diamond was not on her confirms Collins's straightforward, conventional description of a graceful, non-pocketed woman

clearly not carrying anything inappropriate on her body. Next to Eliot's moral vision of mutation and Trollope's delight in the spectacle of a woman's awkward stowing of improper property, Collins's heroine, resembling more than anything else Caterina's rival Miss Assher, belongs to another category: properly figured, well designed, predictably feminine. For a reader who knows the discourse of the pocket, the only mystery, it turns out, is whether Collins deploys the convention in order to turn it on its head. He does not.

### Mr. Toad's Pocketless Adventure

Many Victorian women and men—Bloomerites, horsewomen, supporters of the Rational Dress and “alternative dress” movements, dandies, etc.—certainly attempted to disrupt codified fashion and gender norms. And certainly many women, and many a female character in a novel, made understated use of their pockets and similar devices. (One might think, for instance, of the bundles of keys carried by Esther Summerson in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* [1852-53] or Mrs. Fairfax in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* [1847] as symbols of domestic authority and even, at least within the confines of their houses, mobility.) But this essay has sought to spell out a subtle but tenacious cultural logic defining the differences between men's and women's pockets as an index of their contrasting relationships to nature, money, and mobility. One final example, from just after the end of Victoria's reign, serves as a capstone for my analysis of Victorian pockets by overtly combining many of the implicit strands of logic I have been explicating—in particular by revealing the way a male creature can be rendered immobile by female pocketlessness.

In *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), Kenneth Grahame's tale of instinctual domesticity, natural community, and homoerotic bonding, the irrepressible Mr. Toad relies on his pockets as a sign of classed financial power—a fact set in relief at the moment when he must put on the clothes of another gender and another class. Having stolen a motor car, Toad finds himself in prison. The jailer's daughter, an animal-loving human, takes pity on the amphibious gent and hatches a plan: Toad can escape by wearing the clothes of a washerwoman who freely comes and goes from the prison. Toad overcomes the indignity of the proposal, dons the costume, and makes his way to freedom. Although he must navigate the come-ons of various guards, it is really

only later, while trying to purchase a ticket at the train station, that he discovers the fundamental flaw of his disguise:

He gave the name of the station that he knew to be nearest to the village of which Toad Hall was the principal feature, and mechanically put his fingers, in search of the necessary money, where his waistcoat pocket should have been. But here the cotton gown, which had nobly stood by him so far, and which he had basely forgotten, intervened, and frustrated his efforts. In a sort of nightmare he struggled with the strange uncanny thing that seemed to hold his hands, turn all muscular strivings to water, and laugh at him all the time. . . . At last—somehow—he never rightly understood how—he burst the barriers, attained the goal, arrived at where all waistcoat pockets are eternally situated, and found—not only no money, but no pocket to hold it, and no waistcoat to hold the pocket! (144-45)

The lost pocket is a “nightmare”—of thwarted will, sartorial misalignment, and derailed social authority. The ticket taker is impatient, and others in line jostle Mr. Toad from behind, all when he should have exuded the easy manner of a gentleman producing money while speaking the name of his estate. Toad’s frustration stems mostly from upset expectations: mind-bogglingly not where it is “eternally situated,” the pocket precipitates the negation of the natural order—“no money, . . . no pocket, . . . no waistcoat.” Financial wherewithal, the pockets that suture it to the body, and the male social armor of gentlemanly attire are, normally, symbiotically nested within one another on the likes of Toad. Without them, his homecoming stalls.

Grahame’s manner of concluding this episode echoes Teufelsdröckh’s reverence for the pocketed animal:

To his horror he recollected that he had left both coat and waistcoat behind him in his cell, and with them his pocket-book, money, keys, watch, matches, pencil-case—all that makes life worth living, all that distinguishes the many-pocketed animal, the lord of creation, from the inferior one-pocketed or no-pocketed productions that hop or trip about permissively, unequipped for the real contest. (145)

Toad’s list of the equipment “that makes life worth living” is reminiscent of those tools of the social woman (“her pocket-handkerchief, her letters, her notebook, her card-case, or her money” in Lady Greville’s list) that become so awkward to sit upon. But Toad misses them because they are normally—naturally—invisible on his body. Toad may be a toad, but he is above all a male gentleman, and it is those “eternally situated” pockets on the body that define the natural order and sepa-

rate Toad from common, insufficiently pocketed animals. There is no reverence here for pockets as artificial kangaroo pouches (“one-pocketed productions” that “hop about” are decidedly looked down upon), but there is the same Carlylean sense that the pocket is civilization’s artificial way of naturalizing the body for the marketplace and the overall social endeavor. For Toad “the real contest” is certainly a social one, not an animalistic struggle for sustenance and territory.

If in Carlyle’s formula clothing makes humans more essentially human as social creatures, and makes men the natural masters of the marketplace, Grahame’s story emphasizes that clothing makes animals people too. In Grahame’s world of Water Rats who wear deerstalkers and Moles who display statues of Queen Victoria, (male) animals in clothes teach essentially the same lessons about the social transformations of the clothed body as do Carlyle’s humans. The importance of this interface of animals and clothing is underlined by a brief history of how Grahame’s text, originally published without pictures, has been illustrated. Paul Bransom’s illustrations, included in an American edition of 1913, represent the animals realistically, unclothed, in real-world proportions to humans. In the illustration of Toad prostrate in misery in his dungeon cell, the jailor’s daughter towers above a naked toad flopped on its back on the floor, looking more like a woman contemplating the disposal of a nasty critter than a sympathetic friend. Failing to show us a Toad accustomed to manly clothes, the illustration decidedly undermines the eventual joke of Toad’s cross-dressing. It is not until Ernest Shepard’s illustrations, first published in 1933, that we get a Toad who looks right for the part: the size of a squat man, prone to wearing fancy duds, looking lost and wide-eyed in his washerwoman’s disguise at the ticket window. Twenty-five years after the book’s initial publication, Shepard—a political cartoonist for *Punch* from the 1920s to the 1950s, best known now for his illustrations of A. A. Milne’s Winnie-the-Pooh books—visualizes these pocketed animals in a way that perfectly matches Grahame’s Victorian vision.<sup>12</sup> Grahame reportedly told Shepard he was glad the illustrator had (by rendering the animals less realistically) “made them real” (Benson).

These contending illustrations highlight the complexity of Grahame’s joke about a semi-human Toad, dressed in the clothes of another species but bothered by donning the wardrobe of another class and gender. Only Shepard gets the species hybridity right from

the start, rendering Toad as a properly dressed man, which enables him later to visualize the drama of Toad's unmaning loss of pockets. In other words, Shepard highlights the fact that the primary and plot-producing shift here is not a toad taking on human clothes but a male character dressing as a woman. While I have focused on middle-class women's pocketlessness, in Toad's case a washerwoman's clothing does the same work, drawing a dividing line between the economically privileged man for whom pockets function effortlessly and the woman differently equipped. Such a distinction, Toad's nightmare confirms, has persisted along gendered lines with remarkable consistency since the mid-nineteenth century, whether the male in question is human or amphibian, gullible rustic or powerful cad, growing boy or playful vicar. Gender is the most fundamental axis of difference in the discourse of pockets. A woman's garb might allow Toad to maneuver through a jail, but once he enters the world of tickets and trains he discovers that putting on women's clothing means losing the privileges, especially the more robust mobility, of the pocketed animal.

But it is worth finally noting that, if women were conceptually marginalized by this discourse, they were absolutely central to the dramatization of its principles and effects. The texts and images we've been examining consistently return to women as focal points and spectacles: not just the woman at the center of *Derby Day* but also women dangling châtelaines, women who may or may not be carrying enormous jewels upon them, women who stand out in the ticket line not because they are toads but because they cannot find their money. And with this intense interest comes a kind of special dispensation, or the illusion of such: the young woman as heroine, whose interiority becomes every viewer's unique concern, every reader's special case study. In fact, *Derby Day's* central young woman possesses an interiority the pocketed men around her lack. They stand, posed more than posing, actors directed in a dramatic scene. She on the other hand is less apparently controlled by the artist's eye, lost as she is in her own thoughts, turned away from us and into herself. Though this opens her to the stares of men, she seems momentarily capable of something, possessed of her own private purpose, empowered by her reserve. Except, of course, that this is exactly the vision that sells: the woman tantalizingly withdrawn opens narrative possibilities, produces opportunities for sympathy and judgment, generates fantasies of romantic passion and domestic embrace. Feminine, lovely, the very figure of the

marriage of nature and design, an icon of special emotions hidden in just the right way to display them: the woman denied the resources of the pocket can be everything her culture needs her to be.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Helene Roberts voices a broadly shared understanding of the relation between clothing and gender in the nineteenth century when she writes, "The rather minimal differences between the physical anatomy of men and women were enormously exaggerated by clothed bodies" (555). Casey Finch further argues that, by the late century, "what emerges . . . is a new sartorial iconology that collapses the age-old dialectic between the body and its clothes" (339).

<sup>2</sup>Mary Poovey identifies gender binarism as a particularly middle-class strategy in the period: "middle-class Victorians at midcentury organized difference in a binary opposition and . . . mapped this opposition onto the 'natural' difference between men and women. . . . So much depended on maintaining the oppositional, gendered organization of social relations at midcentury that challenges to it seemed to threaten the most fundamental principles of the social and natural orders" (199).

<sup>3</sup>*The Times* continues, "Every fashionable fair carries her purse in her work bag . . . [following] the new custom of carrying a bag with her handkerchief, smelling-bottle, purse etc." (qtd. in Wilcox 50). This paragraph relies on the following for its overview of women's fashion: Buck 149-61; Foster 34-60; and Wilcox 49-53.

<sup>4</sup>Though *Sartor* is a philosophical comedy of sorts, Teufelsdröckh is not simply comical in his stances. When he says, "To the eye of vulgar Logic . . . what is man? An omnivorous Biped that wears Breeches" (50), he almost directly quotes one of Carlyle's own journal entries, as Rodger Tarr's notes to *Sartor* point out (289, note to 50.25-26).

<sup>5</sup>This echoes Teufelsdröckh's celebration of man: "To the eye of Pure Reason . . . [man is] A Soul, a Spirit, and divine Apparition. Round his mysterious ME, there lies, under all those wool-rags, a Garment of Flesh . . . contextured in the Loom of Heaven" (50).

<sup>6</sup>For more on men's fashion awareness in the period, see Shannon 2, 5. While typically and symbolically male, trousers were not worn exclusively by men in the nineteenth century. According to Alison Matthews David, trousers were worn by "some working women, . . . reform dressers like the bloomerites," and, in an adapted form, Victorian horsewomen (185).

<sup>7</sup>Anne Hollander writes that "a marked fullness of breast and corresponding fullness of backside had become the chief sexual charms of women, for which a slender waist provided the appropriate foil" (113). Roberts points out that the corset, though a bulwark of the ideal feminine shape, was itself occasionally criticized for deforming women (561).

<sup>8</sup>On the handbag's resonance as "an expression of women's assertiveness within patriarchy" (24) in the 1950s and 60s, see Street, "Hitchcockian Haberdashery."

<sup>9</sup>The broad historical sketch throughout this paragraph relies on Buck 149–50; Foster 45, 48, 49–50; and Wilcox 49–63.

<sup>10</sup>As Wilcox has noted (54), the erotic difference between pocket and reticule had been established by Lydgate's time: in 1810, the *Morning Herald* wrote, "Though it is not the mode for ladies to wear pockets in public . . . no gentleman would refuse to take hold of the lady's reticule while she is dancing" (qtd. in Cunnington 381).

<sup>11</sup>The diamonds themselves, in the terms of the central legal debate of the novel, are fluidly and doubly gendered. As an heirloom, passed from male heir to male heir, they would be what Cohen describes as "quintessentially male property" (167). The lawyer Mr. Dove concludes, however, that the diamond necklace cannot belong to the dignified "system of heirlooms" (1: 258) because it is "not only alterable, but constantly altered" (1: 258) by each generation, and he suggests that it may be paraphernalia, an object of wifely adornment. Lizzie fights for the possession of an ambiguous object whose sexual meanings, initially clear, become complicated and multiplied through use and legal valuation.

<sup>12</sup>If Bransom's illustrations insisted on a naturalism illogical alongside Grahame's Wonderlandish story, it might have been due to his American idea of nature: the edition held by the Huntington Library is inscribed by Bransom to Jack London. Shepard, on the other hand, seems to have had one foot in the nineteenth century: his political cartoons, according to Tim Benson, are "full of literary allusions—with visual references to Sir John Tenniel's illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and . . . novels by Charles Dickens."

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