Comic Form and Conservative Reaction: Hubert Henry Davies's *The Mollusc*

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Raymond Williams defined the "structure of feeling" that necessitated the emergence of modern drama in the form of realism or what he called "serious naturalism" as the tension between what individual subjects "feel themselves capable of becoming, and a thwarting, directly present environment."[1] Indeed, he suggested that "Ibsen had to make rooms on the stage in order to show men trapped in them,"[2] though other critics have noted that it was more often women than men who were shown to be trapped in the rooms of modern drama. William Worthen, for example, has observed that "[p]laywrights frequently associated the political and social limitations of middle-class life with male characters and used female characters to pose subversive questions about that social order."[3] Thus, female characters at odds with entrapping social environments served as the means by which a quintessentially modern playwright such as Ibsen could articulate an inherently critical structure of feeling in such plays as *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*.

Hubert Henry Davies's 1907 comedy *The Mollusc* bears some resemblance to the modern realist drama that was developed in the late nineteenth century by writers like Ibsen. Reviewers of the original production at the fashionable Criterion Theatre in London's West End commented, for example, on *The Mollusc*'s apparently central female title character,[4] its small cast,[5] its "wholly colloquial and natural" dialogue,[6] its "use of the biological term mollusc,"[7] and the "*vraisemblance*" of Mary Moore's performance in the title role,[8] while the play itself makes passing pseudo-scientific references to infection[9] and to "conscious and subconscious thoughts."[10] As Raymond Williams observed, however, the innovative dramaturgical and theatrical techniques that were originally associated with the emergence of modern drama subsequently became conventional, "without precise relation to the consciousness they had been designed to express"[11]; and as the title character of *The Mollusc* demonstrates, what Katherine Kelly has called the "figure of a woman in crisis"[12] that was initially so characteristic of modern drama could be detached from the structure of feeling she originally embodied as readily as could such

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related realist conventions as small casts of middle-class characters, life-like prose dialogue, realistic settings (especially sitting rooms), and thematic concerns and principles of character construction reflective of the scientific insights of the age of Darwin and Freud. Thus, Williams stated, "It is not in the separated conventions that naturalism defines itself: it is in the structure of feeling to which, as serious conventions, they relate."[13]

Distinguishing between "society drama" for the entertainment of fashionable London audiences—or, as one reviewer of the Criterion production of *The Mollusc* wrote, "smart people in these late-dining days"[14]—and "social drama" concerned with pressing social issues and popular with audiences commonly perceived as political and sexual radicals,[15] George Rowell has suggested that, although "Davies's work looks forward as well as back,"[16] it belongs more to the category of "society drama" than to the category of the "social drama" inspired by Ibsen. Indeed, Linda Hutcheon has defined parody as "repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity,"[17] and it might be argued that the realist conventions and modes of discourse that Davies put to comic use in *The Mollusc* were more than what Williams called "naturalist habit,"[18] dissociated from the critical structure of feeling out of which they grew. Instead, Davies's comic deployment of such conventions in effect constituted a parodic attempt to negate or at least defuse the threat of the modern figure of the rebellious woman at odds with her environment—both on the stage and off—by co-opting her into "society drama" to reinforce the status quo. Thus, although Allardyce Nicoll remarked that "[n]o doubt for many of the *avant garde* this comedy must have seemed sadly lacking in theoretical social comment,"[19] *The Mollusc* did in fact offer "theoretical social comment," but this comment was conservative, reactionary, and fundamentally opposed to the critical structure of feeling that gave rise to modern drama.

The Mollusc concerns a married woman, Dulcie Baxter, whose passive-aggressive behaviour disrupts the lives of her husband Dick Baxter, her brother Tom Kemp, and her children's governess, Miss Roberts. Tom describes his sister as a "mollusc," by which he means not simply that she is lazy but, rather, that she uses "all [her] energy and ingenuity in sticking instead of moving," in "[doing] nothing, when it would be so much easier to do something."[20] Tom also remarks, however, that what he calls "molluscry" "can ruin a life so, not only the life of the mollusc, but the lives in the house where it dwells."[21] At the start of the play, Miss Roberts wants to give notice because she feels she is insufficiently qualified to continue teaching the children, but Dulcie will hear none of it, preferring the easier route of letting things remain as they are. Complications ensue when Tom arrives from America and falls in love with Miss Roberts, which in turn causes Dick to feel that he also is in love with the governess, who has, of late, taken his "molluscing" wife's place as his constant companion. When Dulcie catches Dick and Miss Roberts

in what appears to be a compromising situation, she takes to her bed, choosing to control the situation by having both her husband and Miss Roberts dance attendance on her. When Tom makes her realize that she might lose her husband's affection and fidelity through her selfish unwillingness to release Miss Roberts, Dulcie finally comes to her senses and resumes her wifely duties, and Tom and Miss Roberts are free to marry.

In his introduction to Davies's collected plays, Hugh Walpole situated Davies within a long line of great comic dramatists including Wycherley, Congreve, Sheridan, and Wilde,[22] and in the sense that *The Mollusc* draws on long-established comic traditions, Walpole was correct: Dulcie is a comic type not unlike Moliere's imaginary invalid Argan, and like Argan, she is an example of what Northrop Frye called an "obstructing" or "blocking" character.[23] It is worth noting, however, that, according to Frye, while such blocking characters are often the title characters and the characters of greatest comic interest, they are not, technically speaking, the protagonists of the plays in which they figure. Rather, in comedy, the technical protagonist is typically the young male hero whose desire for the young female heroine is obstructed by the blocking character, even though, as in many of Moliere's comedies, "[t]he technical hero and heroine are not often very interesting people" compared to the blocking characters.[24] According to Frye's analysis, the basic comic plot structure from Greek New Comedy onwards is as follows: "a young man wants a young woman," but his desire meets with opposition in the form of a blocking character who is often parental or is in some other way in "closer relation to established society."[25] "The obstacles to the hero's desire, then, form the action of the comedy, and the overcoming of them the comic resolution."[26] "[N]ear the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will," and the play ends with "some kind of party or festive ritual," most often a wedding or at least the promise of one.[27]

Frye's analysis of comic structure is supported by the original production circumstances of *The Mollusc*, in which the role of the male hero Tom, whose desire for the young heroine Miss Roberts is obstructed by the blocking figure of his molluscing sister, was played by the actor-manager Sir Charles Wyndham. The fact that Wyndham was, by that time, seventy years old undoubtedly accounts for Davies's otherwise inexplicable decision to assign the lover Tom the age of forty-five and to make his life experience as a mature man a large part of his appeal for the innocent and unprotected young governess/ingenue, Miss Roberts. Wyndham's portrayal of the romantic male lead despite his advanced age caused one reviewer of the original production to remark on "this Wyndham rejuvenescence,"[28] but such self-showcasing on the part of the actor-manager regardless of the needs or quality of the play was a defining aspect of the actor-manager system, so that another reviewer commented that "[a]ltogether, Sir Charles may be congratulated upon having hit upon so suitable a piece for the display of his own talent."[29] Indeed,

despite Wyndham's seventy years, this same reviewer wrote that he played the part of Tom "with the necessary infusion of manliness and energy" and that "his active, emphatic method kept the piece from flagging for a moment."[30] Northrop Frye's argument that the romantic male lead is at least the technical protagonist in most comedy is further supported by the text of *The Mollusc* itself, in which Tom says of his sister Dulcie, whom he intends to reform, "A woman isn't difficult to deal with if you take her the right way."[31] Tom is indeed the active agent that drives the plot of the play.

As a comic obstacle to be overcome, Dulcie is something of a mystery. Her husband haltingly attempts to explain her condition: "She's so—well, not exactly ill. . . . I can't remember when she had anything really the matter with her, but she always seems so tired—keeps wanting to lie down—she's not an invalid, she's a—," at which point Tom interjects with his diagnosis of molluscry.[32] This diagnosis does not quite ring true, however. For one thing, although Tom maintains that both men and women can be molluscs, the condition is feminized in various ways in the play, most obviously through the emphasis on Dulcie's mother as her prime precursor in molluscry.[33] As well, though Tom maintains that he circumvents his own propensity towards molluscry through a deliberately active and energetic life of adventure in the American West, such a lifestyle is not an option for his sister as Dick's wife. Moreover, when Dick and Tom do become "molluscy," it is an effect of Dulcie's infecting influence rather than something inherent in their own personalities, as is clear when Tom says, "I do believe I'm turning into a mollusc again. It's in the air. The house is permeated with molluscular microbes."[34] One reviewer of the Criterion production elaborated the play's feminization of the purportedly non-gender-specific condition of molluscry by explaining that "[o]ur grandmothers used to call the disease the migraine, or the vapours. Our sisters and wives describe themselves as martyrs to nerves. We, if we happen to be afflicted with tonelessness, prefer to style ourselves Conservatives—as Tom Kemp very sagely remarks."[35] Not insignificantly, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the most current definition of now chiefly jocular term "the vapours" is "(an attack of) nervousness, indignant rage, etc.; hysterics." Despite the inherent chauvinism of such dismissive diagnoses as "the vapours" and "hysterics," it is worth noting that the actual psychosomatic illness known as hysteria, which I will discuss later in some detail, was so closely associated with women in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that in her book *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, Elaine Showalter called it "the daughter's disease."[36]

The "cure"[37] for Dulcie's feminized ailment that falls somewhere between a sickness and a "vice"[38] ultimately entails assuming the socially prescribed role of wifely helpmeet to her husband Dick: as Tom advises, "*You* be his companion, *you* play chess with him, *you* go walks with him, sit up with him in the evenings, get up

early in the morning. Be gay and cheerful at the breakfast table. When he goes away, see him off; when he comes home, run to meet him."[39] This prescribed cure, then, indicates that Dulcie's "molluscing" is essentially nonconformity to normative gender roles as modelled in the play by the exemplary Miss Roberts, who is described in the opening stage directions as "honest-looking"[40] in tacit contradistinction to the willful "humbug"[41] Dulcie and who, in her youthful beauty and innocence, presents herself as a kind of blank slate to be inscribed by her much older and more experienced husband-to-be.[42] Notably, while Tom may be correct in speculating that Dulcie is not fully conscious of her own motives as a mollusc but is instead driven by "the subconscious caverns of [her] mollusc nature,"[43] it is clear that what Dulcie gains through her manipulative behaviour is a certain power in the household. Indeed, a clever comic scene in which Dulcie successfully resists Tom's efforts to get her to arrange some flowers reads as a power struggle in which power is exercised simply for the sake of exercising power.[44]

But the text itself may also be driven by an unconscious subtext that is inadvertently hinted at through the purportedly comic yet also somehow repellent and disturbing metaphor of the mollusc that locks onto something and uses all its power to retain its suction-hold. Not surprisingly, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud observed that in mythology and folklore, as well as in dreams, snails are "genital symbols,"[45] while *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols* specifies that "[l]ike all molluscs, the snail displays sexual symbolism in the analogy between its substance, motion and excretions with those of the vulva."[46] This unconscious sexual subtext may account for such textual details in *The Mollusc* as that Dick has been "at [the] mercy" of his mollusc-wife since he first fell in love with her and feels he should have taken her in hand from "the very first morning of [their] honeymoon" and that Tom, presumably aloof from his sister's sexual sway, believes that "[a] brother is the best person in the world to undertake the education of a mollusc."[47] Both Dick *and* Tom are emasculated by Dulcie, though—Dick in the sense of being hen-pecked, Tom in the sense of being rendered unable to get the girl. Dulcie's "paraly[zing]" molluscry has, thus, indeed "infect[ed]" the household and must be overcome.[48] In this unconscious monstrous aspect, Dulcie corresponds with such ancient female monsters as Medusa and the Sphinx, both of whom have been characterized by Teresa de Lauretis in her essay "Desire in Narrative" as "obstacles man encounters on the path of life, on his way to manhood, wisdom, and power; they must be slain or defeated so that he can go forward to fulfill his destiny—and his story."[49]

What makes Dulcie a comic figure in spite of the apparent dread of women that underlies Davies's text is the inevitability that Tom, as hero, will ultimately prevail. In her book *Women and Comedy: Rewriting the British Theatrical Tradition*, Susan Carlson explains that "in . . . comic plays populated by women, two features proscribe what comedy's women can be: a basic inversion and a generally happy

ending."[50] Of the inversion feature, Carlson writes that "[i]n most comedies, the status quo is disrupted, and in the upheaval of role reversals the women characters acquire an uncharacteristic dominance. Women in power, or a group of women in power, are funny because they are so out of the ordinary."[51] Carlson further explains that "the basic movement of a comic drama [is] a journey from established order through an inverted, upside-down world and back to the status quo," and that "[a]s powerful as inversion is in the shaping of women characters in comedy, comedy's ending has still greater impact."[52] "[W]hen comedy ends," Carlson writes,

> the role reversals are *reversed*, the misrule is curtailed, and any social rebellion is tempered by the good feelings presumably attached to the reestablishment of order. For comedy's free-wheeling women, the ending usually marks their retreat to more conventional activities. In an overwhelming percentage of cases, the comic ending, for women, is marriage. And while marriage has been represented as a happy ending, even the highest reward, the comic heroine usually finds love and happiness only at the price of freedom and power.[53]

Moreover, Carlson argues,

> the influence of the comic ending reaches both beyond and before its emphatic final position. For comedy's women, such omnipresence means that their comic power—however potent and extended it appears—can [be] and usually is read as a disorder that will not persist. An audience knows, all along, that women's final role will be . . . second-class. Thus, to experience the vigorous moments of female comic power is to know, simultaneously, their temporary nature.[54]

In other words, firmly entrenched comic plot conventions, as outlined by Northrop Frye, let us know from the start of the play that Tom will in the end overcome the obstacle that his mollusc of a sister represents and win Miss Roberts as his wife.

In a commentary on Freud's case history of the hysteric Dora, whom he treated unsuccessfully for a brief period around the turn of the twentieth century, Hélène Cixous compares the adulterous machinations of the adults surrounding the teen-aged Dora to "the little calculations of classic bourgeois comedy" and says of her own experience of reading Freud's case history, "I could not keep from laughing from one end to the other, because, despite her powerlessness and with (thanks to) that powerlessness, here is a kid [Dora] who successfully jams all the little adulterous wheels that are turning around her and, one after the other, they break down."[55]

While Cixous's reading of Dora as a kind of comic heroine is perhaps overly optimistic, Dulcie in *The Mollusc* is in certain respects similar to the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century figure of the hysteric, who, together with the novel figure of the feminist, was a worrying cultural icon of "the woman question" in a time of momentous change both on and off the stage.

Hysteria was a psychological disorder that manifested itself through a range of physical symptoms, including partial paralysis, breathing difficulties, chronic coughing, eating disorders, and a variety of speech disorders, including mutism,[56] and as Elaine Showalter and others have noted, it became increasingly common among women in the late nineteenth century. Although Freud eventually attributed hysteria to repressed sexual desires, he and his colleague Josef Breuer initially saw its causes as "the repetitious domestic routines, including needlework, knitting, playing scales, and sickbed nursing, to which bright women were frequently confined."[57] Recent feminist critics such as Showalter and Gail Finney have concurred with this earlier view, suggesting that hysteria and feminism were in fact opposite extremes of a continuum of reaction against an oppressive patriarchal social order, hysteria being repressed, internalized, and self-destructive, and feminism being conscious, outward-directed, and constructive.[58] This connection between feminism and hysteria is at the heart of Cixous's postmodern revision of Freud's case history of Dora in her 1976 play *Portrait of Dora*, in which the hysteric is figured as proto-feminist, a quintessentially modern woman walking out on Freud on January 1, 1900, signalling the dawn of a new age for women.[59] In actuality, however, Dora never recovered, suffering from psychosomatic symptoms for all of her life.[60]

Although Tom in *The Mollusc* expresses concern that his sister will actually make herself ill through her behaviour,[61] the difference between Dulcie and the turn-of-the-century hysterics, with their seemingly inexplicable physical symptoms, is that Dulcie is faking it; and whereas Freud failed to "bring [Dora] to reason" as her father requested,[62] Dulcie eventually comes to her senses, at least as common sense is assumed within the world of the play. Susanne Langer has suggested, with reference to the origins of comedy in fertility rituals,[63] that whereas the fundamental rhythm of tragedy is "self-consummation," the rhythm of comedy is "self-preservation."[64] Comic action, she argues, is generally based on "the upset and recovery of the protagonist's equilibrium, his contest with the world and his triumph by wit, luck, personal power, or even . . . acceptance of mischance,"[65] and this fundamental rhythm of "upset and recovery" reflects the fact that "[l]ife is teleological" and, more specifically, that "to maintain the pattern of vitality in a non-living universe is the most elementary instinctual purpose."[66] While Langer means this argument primarily in relation to the comic hero's overcoming of obstacles to his desire rather than to the obstacles themselves—the blocking characters—her argument about the association between comedy and "self-

preservation" might also be applied to Dulcie in *The Mollusc*, where Tom exclaims, "I thought the fundamental instinct in any woman was self-preservation, and that she would make every effort to keep her husband by her."[67] In keeping with comic tradition, Dulcie indeed chooses "self-preservation," and in this choice she differs radically not only from the real-life hysteric Dora, but also from one of the paradigmatic examples of the dissatisfied wife in modern drama, Ibsen's Hedda Gabler, who instead chooses suicide and who, not incidentally, has been described in terms of hysteria by feminist critics such as Elin Diamond and Gail Finney,[68] as well as by Ibsen himself in his notes on the play.[69] As Northrop Frye explains,

> The tendency of comedy is to include as many people as possible in its final society: the blocking characters are more often reconciled or converted than simply repudiated. Comedy often includes a scapegoat ritual of expulsion which gets rid of some irreconcilable character[s], but exposure and disgrace make for pathos, or even tragedy."[70]

Thus, *The Mollusc* closes not simply with the engagement of Tom and Miss Roberts, but with Dulcie kneeling beside Dick, saying "And now that I'm so much better, I shall be able to do more for my husband, play chess with him—go walks with him—Tom shall never have another chance to call me a mollusc."[71]

One reviewer of the 1907 production wrote that "[a]rtificial light comedy as skilful as 'The Mollusc' is very amusing, if somewhat unsatisfactory, like a dinner of hors d'oeuvres and sweets, such as many ladies enjoy."[72] *The Mollusc*, then, was a good example of what Bertolt Brecht would later call "culinary" theatre,[73] a tasty morsel to be consumed as entertainment by those "late-dining" Criterion audiences. As Brecht's theoretical ally Walter Benjamin observed, however, "[t]he bourgeois writer of entertainment literature does not acknowledge . . . that, without admitting it, he is working in the service of certain class interests."[74] The dramatic conventions associated with realism—particularly "the figure of a woman in crisis"[75]—exemplified in Ibsen's modernist articulations of an emerging structure of feeling defined by Raymond Williams as a "bourgeois revolt against the forms of bourgeois life"[76] are not simply "naturalist habit" in *The Mollusc*, but are in fact comically re-deployed to re-assert hegemonic gender ideology in the face of social change. Northrop Frye states that "the normal response of the audience to a happy ending is 'this should be,'"[77] and this seems to have been the response of *The Mollusc*'s original audiences. These audiences were not the political and sexual radicals who favored social drama in the Ibsen tradition, though, and it is worth noting that *The Mollusc* does not actually end with the union of Tom and Miss Roberts and the reconciliation of Dulcie and Dick. Instead, following this seeming comic closure, it raises a question, as Tom wonders to Miss Roberts about the

durability of Dulcie's transformation: "Were those miracles permanent cures? [*Shakes his head.*] We're never told! We're never told!"[78] We do know, however, that within the world of the play, the social conditions that gave rise to Dulcie's anti-social behavior have not changed, and so her comic reformation reads as a kind of unconscious wishful thinking, as fanciful, perhaps, within the historical context of first-wave feminism as the notion of women in power was for the ancient Greek audiences of Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*.

Notes

1. Raymond Williams, "Conclusion from *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*," *Modern Drama: Plays/ Criticism/Theory*, ed. W. B. Worthen (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1995) 1174, 1172. Williams's use of the term "naturalism" encompasses what is more conventionally described as "realism" and serves to underscore the critical concern with the relationship between human beings and their "natural" environments that Williams saw as having given rise to modern drama. In this paper, I will use the more conventional term "realist" except when citing or paraphrasing Williams.

2. Williams, "Conclusion" 1172.

3. W. B. Worthen, "The Emergence of Modern Drama: 1850-1950," *Modern Drama: Plays/ Criticism/Theory* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1995) 20.

4. Max Beerbohm, "*The Mollusc,*" *The Saturday Review* 2 Nov. 1907: 538.

5. Beerbohm 538; review of *The Mollusc*, *The Stage* 17 Oct. 1907: 18; "'The Mollusc.' Sir Charles Wyndham and Miss Mary Moore. Criterion Theatre," Theatre Museum, London; "'The Mollusc' at the Criterion," *Illustrated London News* 19 Oct. 1907, Theatre Museum, London.

6. "'The Mollusc' at the Criterion."

7. *The Stage* 18; see also "'The Mollusc.' Sir Charles Wyndham and Miss Mary Moore. Criterion Theatre," which defines molluscs in scientific taxonomic terms.

8. *The Stage* 18; see also "The Mollusc," *The Era* 19 Oct. 1907, where the reviewer describes Moore's performance as "deliciously real and natural" (17).

9. Hubert Henry Davies, *The Mollusc*, *Late Victorian Plays, 1890-1914*, ed. George Rowell (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1968) 174; see also 201.

10. 175; see also 206.

11. Williams, "Conclusion" 1172.

12. Katherine E. Kelly, "Introduction: The Making of Modern Drama," *Modern Drama by Women 1880s-1930s: An International Anthology*, ed. Kelly (London: Routledge, 1996) 3.

13. Williams, "Conclusion" 1172.

14. "The Mollusc," *The Era* 17.

15. A review of the 1889 London production of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, for example, made reference to a "scant audience of unnatural-looking women [and] longhaired men," as well as "atheists, socialists, and positivists" (Scrutator, "Ibsen's 'Dolls' in Archer's 'Doll's House,'" *Truth* 13 June 1889: 1127, qtd. in Tracy C. Davis, "Ibsen's Victorian Audience," *Essays in Theatre* 4 [Nov. 1985]: 24). A reviewer of an 1889 production of *The Pillars of Society* similarly described the audience as consisting of "masculine

women and effeminate men" (*Playgoer* [August 1889]: 1, qtd. in Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997] 71).

16. George Rowell, introduction, *Late Victorian Plays, 1890-1914* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1968) ix.

17. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 26.

18. Williams, "Conclusion" 1172.

19. Allardyce Nicoll, *English Drama 1900-1930: The Beginnings of the Modern Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1973) 370.

20. Davies, *The Mollusc* 174, 175.

21. 175.

22. Hugh Walpole, introduction, *The Plays of Hubert Henry Davies*, vol. 1 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1921) xvi.

23. Northrop Frye, "The Mythos of Spring: Comedy," *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*, ed. Bernard F. Dukore (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974) 902, 904.

24. 904.

25. 902, 903.

26. 903.

27. 902.

28. *The Stage* 18.

29. "The Mollusc," *The Era* 17.

30. 17.

31. Davies, *The Mollusc* 176.

32. 174.

33. 174.

34. 201.

35. "'The Mollusc.' Sir Charles Wyndham and Miss Mary Moore. Criterion Theatre."

36. Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1930* (New York: Penguin, 1985) 145. As Showalter points out, while some healthy but rebellious women were diagnosed as hysterical by the patriarchal medical establishment as a means of social control, other women—Josef Breuer's patient Anna O. and Freud's patient Dora, for example—expressed their resistance to their subordinate positions within male-dominated society through actual debilitating psychosomatic symptoms. Although hysteria was primarily associated with women, it was not an exclusively female illness. Indeed, Showalter's book includes a chapter entitled "Male Hysteria," which focuses on shell-shocked soldiers of World War I.

37. Davies, *The Mollusc* 203, 212.

38. 174, 175.

39. 198.

40. 159.

41. 175.

42. 209-210. Miss Roberts's eagerness to travel to the American West might seem to suggest that she is a version of the modern figure of the "New Woman," but this suggestion is countered in a number

of ways in Davies's text, in keeping with its reactionary project. For example, Miss Roberts identifies "her chief value as a person" not as her intellect or spirit of independence but as "her looks and her youth" (209), and she regards earning her own living not as an exciting privilege but as a burden resulting from the fact that she is an orphan (160) and as a necessary stopgap until she marries (209). More importantly, whereas the "New Woman" was, like the hysteric, a kind of proto-feminist figure, Miss Roberts is represented not as a parallel to the rebellious wife in *The Mollusc* but as her victim, Dulcie's failure to fulfil her marital duties compromising the governess's virtue by making her vulnerable to Mr. Baxter's attentions and impeding her progress toward her proper comic destiny of marriage to the male protagonist Tom.

43. Davies, *The Mollusc* 206.

44. 177-81.

45. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (Second Part)*, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, vol. 5 (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953) 357.

46. Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. John Buchanan-Brown (London: Penguin, 1994) 890.

47. Davies, *The Mollusc* 176, 182, 176.

48. 200, 174; see also 201.

49. Teresa de Lauretis, "Desire in Narrative," *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984) 110.

50. Susan Carlson, *Women and Comedy: Rewriting the British Theatrical Tradition* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1991) 17.

51. 17.

52. 20, 21.

53. 21.

54. 22.

55. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing, *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 24 (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1975) 149, 150.

56. Showalter, *Female Malady* 145-164; Gail Finney, *Women in Modern Drama: Freud, Feminism, and European Theater at the Turn of the Century* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989) 8.

57. Showalter, *Female Malady* 158.

58. Showalter 161; Finney, *Women in Modern Drama* 4, 8.

59. Hélène Cixous, *Portrait of Dora*, trans. Anita Barrows, *Benmussa Directs* (London: John Calder, 1979) 27-67.

60. Showalter, *Female Malady* 161.

61. Davies, *The Mollusc* 200.

62. Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')," *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989) 183.

63. Susanne K. Langer, "The Comic Rhythm," *Types of Drama*, ed. Sylvan Barnet, et al. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985) 522.

64. Susanne K. Langer, "The Great Dramatic Forms: The Tragic Rhythm," *Tragedy*, ed. John Drakakis and Naomi Conn Liebler (London: Longman, 1998) 323.

65. Langer, "The Comic Rhythm" 522.

66. 521.

67. Davies, *The Mollusc* 205.

68. Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London: Routledge, 1997) 3-39; Finney, *Women in Modern Drama* 149-65.

69. Henrik Ibsen, notes on *Hedda Gabler*, *Playwrights on Playwriting*, ed. Toby Cole (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1960) 166.

70. Frye, "Mythos" 903.

71. Davies, *The Mollusc* 212.

72. *The Sketch* 23 Oct. 1907, Theatre Museum, London.

73. See, for example, Bertolt Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," *Brecht on Theatre*, trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964) 35, 39-42.

74. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984) 297.

75. Kelly, "Introduction: The Making of Modern Drama" 3.

76. Williams, "Conclusion" 1173.

77. Frye, "Mythos" 905.

78. Davies, *The Mollusc* 212.

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