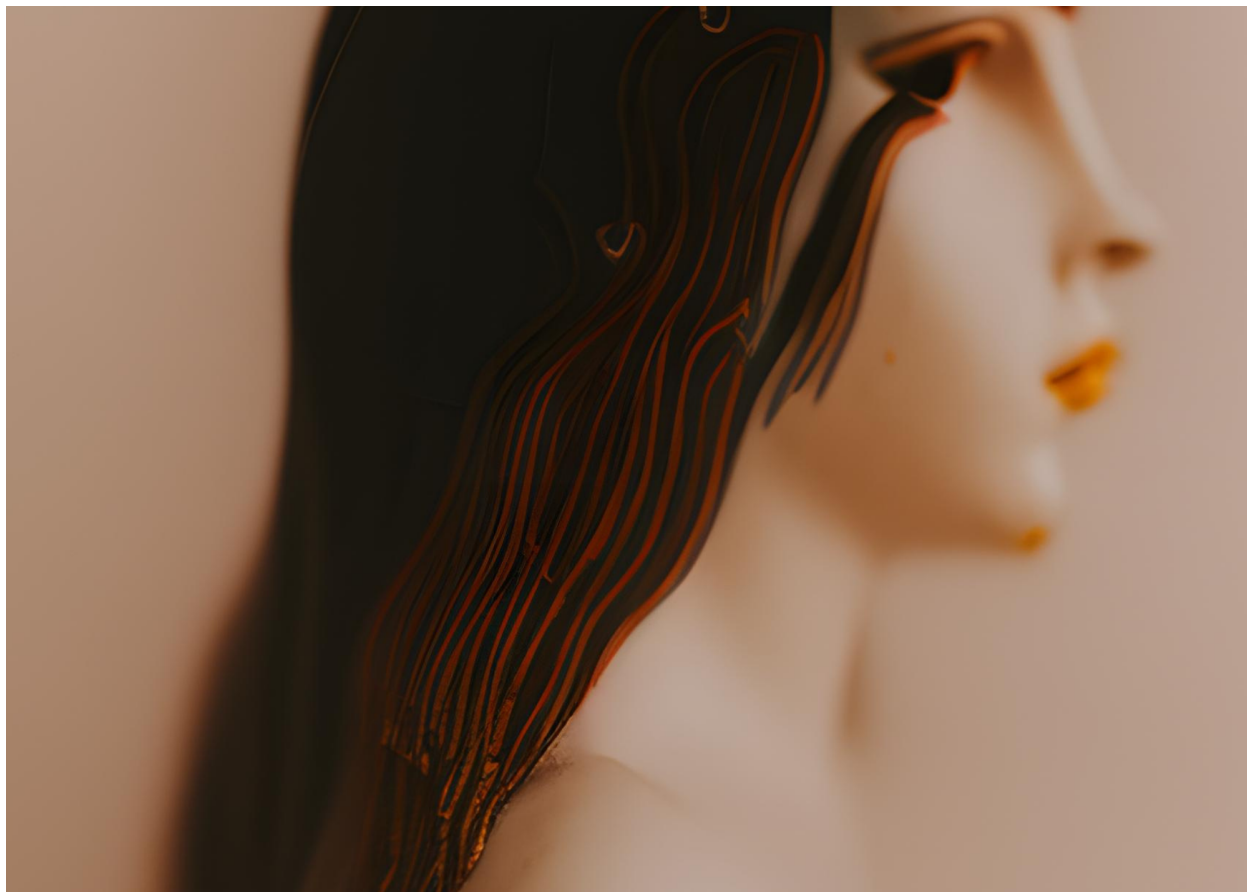


## The Performance of a Lifetime: Identity and Performativity in 20th-Century British Literature

by Kiran Campone



In 1988, Judith Butler reconceptualized gender and even identity as a whole with their essay “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” claiming that gender is not innate but learned and performed. Although not the first text to question the notion of fixed identity, Butler’s essay highlights the possibilities of fluid, unstable, and even paradoxical identities that involve performances that create “compelling illusion[s].” Instead of focusing solely on the psychological perception and conceptualization of an inherent self, they emphasize the role of physical embodiment in determining who a person is, saying, “The body is understood to be an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities, a complicated process of appropriation” (Butler 521). This emphasis on physicality suggests that, through the changing and reshaping of a person’s body and face through costume and makeup, a person alters their performance and therefore their identity. Dr. Aoife Monks claims in her book *The Actor in Costume* that costume is “not simply reflective of the inner states of characters, or a decoration of the actor’s appearance, but is rather constitutive of the actor’s inner and outer body” (33).

Although Monks is discussing on-stage actors, her claim applies to people off-stage as well; although performativity does not involve a person trying to disguise their “true” self to enact a character, it does involve the assertion of a persona through specific acts and physical embodiments. The only difference between on-stage and off-stage performance is that one involves playing a character and the other involves playing oneself.

Twentieth-century British literature, especially novels published around the time of Butler’s essay, often reflects and epitomizes the performance, performativity, and physical reshaping that Butler and Monks discuss. Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia*, a bildungsroman exploring the development of Karim—a half-Indian, half-British teenager—highlights the complexities of being biracial and simultaneously existing within and outside two ethnic categories. In his adolescent development, costume, makeup, accents, and aesthetics help Karim reshape and take control of his identity and discover who he wants to be. Similarly, Angela Carter’s *Nights at the Circus*—published just two years before Butler’s essay—features a heroine, Fevvers, who does not even fit into a category of *species*, as she is half-human, half-bird. Yet, this hybridity and the mystery surrounding her existence propel her to fame as a circus act and grant her the freedom to perform whatever identity she chooses. Like Fevvers, who embraces not just her biological hybridity but also a dually masculine and feminine gender identity, Gerty from the “Nausicaa” episode of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* uses makeup and costume to embrace a Catholic, girlish femininity but also one of seductress. Like Fevvers, Gerty uses her physical embodiment to overcome the challenges of a patriarchal society, seizing sexual control over the protagonist of *Ulysses* and reversing the concept of the male gaze. In colonial, patriarchal societies that cast Karim, Fevvers, and Gerty as outsiders, performativity allows them to deliberately create and perform their identities and claim social freedom and power.

### Hybrid Identities

In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *Nights at the Circus*, and “Nausicaa,” the protagonists rely on their paradoxical, multiple identities to flourish professionally, romantically, and personally. Not being tied to singular, fixed labels grants these characters the freedom to seamlessly weave between different personas, such as when Karim performs Britishness at school and Indianness at home and in the theater. Embracing hybrid identities also allows these characters to reverse dominating colonial or patriarchal narratives. For example, Karim exploits his British culture just as much as he does his Indian one, and in *Nights at the Circus* and “Nausicaa,” Fevvers and Gerty exploit the male gaze, performing different types of femininity and gender to seize control over male onlookers. Although having a multiplicity of personas means that these characters lack a stable identity, this fluidity empowers and frees them from the constraints of their social environments.

In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim embraces and even *needs* multiple identities to exist; without the freedom to embrace his hybrid, biracial identity, Karim feels caged-in and restless, constantly longing to flee to London, where his hybrid identity can flourish in an urban culture

that lacks the conformity of the South London suburbs. When Karim introduces himself at the beginning of the novel, he says, “I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories[...]Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored” (Kureishi 1). Although Karim calls himself an “Englishman,” his inability to fit cleanly into an ethnic category makes him “restless,” and he can only cure this “bored[ome]” by discovering a sense of self revolving around a hybrid, fluid rather than singular, fixed identity. Karim is neither “here” nor “there,” and neither is his identity; it simultaneously exists within and outside the ethnic categories of Indian and British. Perhaps this is why, as scholar Radek Glabazna notes, “to sort out his chaotic life and create a more stable sense of self, Karim must embark on an acting career that is engaged with a multiplicity of fluid, imaginary selves” (Glabazna 70). Indeed, Karim finds professional success and personal fulfillment through embracing his biracial identity, such as when he plays Mowgli in a theater production of *The Jungle Book*. Although Karim finds this role demeaning, he recognizes that his “Indianness”—however inauthentic—places him in the center of attention and thus grants him power as the most essential actor in the play. He says, “although I hated inequality, it didn’t mean I wanted to be treated like everyone else[...]So despite the yellow scarf strangling my balls, the brown make-up, and even the accent, I relished being the pivot of the production” (Kureishi 149-50). Karim recognizes that conformity strips actors—and even non-actors—of their professional and social power, and Karim embraces his “Indianness” to boost his acting career. Although Karim initially refuses to wear the “yellow scarf” and “brown make-up,” he eventually embraces these objects of minstrelsy and uses them to be “the pivot of the production.” Karim’s performance of minstrelsy and wearing brown makeup to appropriate his own ethnicity suggests that race is not inherent but performed—at times with the help of costume and make-up. Being biracial and performing race means that Karim has the freedom to seamlessly transition between being an “Englishman” and an Indian person, and rather than his Indian culture being a source of shame in a country of colonialism, it becomes a marketable advantage. For Karim, empowerment comes from not denying his biracial ethnicity but embracing it, even when doing so means appropriating his cultures.

Like Karim, Fevvers’ identity—both in real life and on-stage—revolves around and is empowered by multiplicity; but while Karim’s hybridity stems from his biracial identity, Fevvers’ revolves around her biologically being a half-bird, half-human person and blurring the boundaries of femininity and masculinity. Although *Nights at the Circus* establishes Fevvers as a woman, she embodies stereotypes of both men and women; she is loud, large, and unapologetic, yet she bats her eyelashes at Walser and wears feminine costumes and makeup. While androgyny might involve a person not fitting cleanly into the categories of feminine or masculine, Fevvers simultaneously fits into both. This paradox appears when the narrator says, “[Fevvers] let a ripping fart ring round the room. She peered across her shoulder, again, to see how he took *that*. Under the screen of her bonhomerie – bonnefemmerie? – he noted she was wary” (Carter 11). Here, Fevvers’ unapologetic flatulence defies conventions of feminine propriety, yet, her

wariness when she “peer[s]” at Walser from beneath her “screen” suggests a hint of self-reproach for her display of “unfeminine” or uncouth behavior. At the same time, the question of whether her screen is a “bonhomerie” or “bonnefemmerie”—two words that are gendered and lack proper definitions—also emphasizes not just Fevvers’ gender ambiguity but also her unstable, undefined, and curated identity. This deliberate ambiguity and curation shows how, although Fevvers is the one being interviewed and interrogated by Walser, who is trying to decide if she is truly a bird-woman, she appears in control of the situation, showing how performance helps to reverse traditional patriarchal narratives of male domination. Although Fevvers is a performer, much of her off-stage personality appears performed, and, as Monk notes in *The Actor in Costume*, the intersections of performance and performativity reveal “the ability of performance not just to imitate, but also to invent and perpetuate further ways of doing the body” (Monk 97). The way Fevvers interacts with her body and performs femininity on-stage but appears unfeminine off-stage shows how she is actively inventing “ways of doing the body.” The paradoxical performance of Fevvers’ corporeality helps launch her to fame, as her ambiguous identity—the question of whether she is bird or human, woman or non-woman, fact or fiction—allows others to project meaning onto her. For example, she takes on the stage names of “the Cockney Venus,” “Helen of the High Wire,” “l’Ange Anglaise,” “Angel of Death,” “Winged Victory,” and “Cupid.” Although these names all show how audiences project specific images or metaphors onto Fevvers, they also reflect how unstable and undefined Fevvers’ identity is, and the mystery of Fevvers’ multiplicity of identity empowers her and catapults her success as an *aerialiste*.

In the “Nausicaa” episode of *Ulysses*, Gerty empowers herself and seizes control over others by taking on multiple identities; the narrator compares her to the Biblical Mary and describes her as pure and perfect, yet she uses clothing and makeup to deliberately curate her appearance to satisfy both the male gaze and her own. For example, the name “Nausicaa”—which refers to a Greek princess from Homer’s *The Odyssey*—paints Gerty as pure and regal, and the image of her posing on the seaside rocks resembles Da Vinci’s *Madonna on the Rocks*. The narrator also says, “The waxen pallor of [Gerty’s] face was almost spiritual in its ivorylike purity” and calls her “Greekly perfect” (Joyce). Gerty appears as a natural beauty who embodies classical, perhaps even Catholic, feminine aesthetic ideals. However, towards the end of the story, the narrator describes Gerty so that she takes on not just a Catholic sense of femininity but also one of seductress. When Gerty and Bloom watch the fireworks—an event described with sexual language—the narrator says, “her face was suffused with a divine, an entrancing blush from straining back and he could see her other things too, nainsook knickers, the fabric that caresses the skin, better than those other pettiwidth, the green, four and eleven, on account of being white and she let him” (Joyce). Here, the narrator juxtaposes the sexual image of Gerty “straining back” and revealing her “knickers” with the description of her as “divine.” The concern with Gerty’s clothing emphasizes how Gerty deliberately crafts a hybrid identity through garments; she reveals her “knickers,” a private, provocative garment, but they are white—a color of purity. Also, the narrator’s emphasis on the color of Gerty’s underwear shows how even the minutest details of external appearance can alter the performance and reception of a person’s

identity, as the white underwear are “better than those other pettiwidth.” The garmented body acts as “an agent and a space of performance and self-transformation,” and Gerty’s choice of clothing allows her to perform a hybrid identity of Catholic purity and voyeuristic seduction and transform herself into whomever she wants (Kollnitz 80). Clothing—and the multiplicity of identities they can express—empower Gerty and allow her to take sexual control of Bloom; stripped of power in a patriarchal society that objectifies women and dictates their behavior, Gerty seizes control over herself and those around her by deliberately fashioning herself into whomever she wants to be.

### **Authentic and Curated Identities**

Just as embracing multiple personas allows Karim, Fevvers, and Gerty to embrace different sides of their personalities and freely navigate otherwise confining racist and patriarchal social structures, the act of curating the body through visual aesthetics means that these characters can become anyone they want—regardless of their innate biological traits. Karim can perform different versions of himself to suit different audiences, Fevvers can perform different personas to mystify audiences and propel herself to fame, and Gerty can transform into an entirely different person, one without the strife that her socioeconomic standing and physical disability—her “lame” leg—inflict on her.

*The Buddha of Suburbia* suggests that people do not inherit their identities—nor even their race—but rather fabricate themselves with the help of clothing, makeup, and visual aesthetics tied to the body. At the beginning of the novel, Karim takes “several months to get ready” to attend Eva’s social gathering, and when he arrives, she says to him, “Karim Amir, you are so exotic, so original! It’s such a contribution! It’s so you!” (Kureishi 9). The observation “It’s so you!” suggests that Karim might at times *not* be himself; in this moment, Karim is performing himself more and is more Indian or exotic than at other times. Karim’s visual aesthetics—and Eva’s response to them—question what defines authentic race and physicality. The tone of Eva’s dialogue makes her sound like she is describing an outfit rather than an individual; the words “exotic,” “original,” and “It’s such a contribution!” make Karim appear to be as much of an accessory or tool of identity fabrication as his clothing. As with Gerty and her use of undergarments to perform for Bloom, Karim uses clothing to perform himself and the exotic Indianness that Eva praises. The ability of the body to take on a multiplicity of authentic or inauthentic identities—especially through clothing—also appears when Charlie, one of Karim’s classmates and love interests, performs punk to catapult his music career, despite coming from the same suburban background as Karim. For example, Karim says, “Charlie was magnificent in his venom, his manufactured rage, his anger, his defiance[...]It was a wonderful trick and disguise. The one flaw[...]was his milky and healthy white teeth, which, to me, betrayed everything else” (Kureishi 154). Here, Charlie is not faking his emotions but rather “manufactur[ing]” them; that is, he feels his emotions authentically, even if he consciously or unconsciously prompts himself to feel this rage for the sake of his punk persona. Charlie’s “rage” and “defiance” are thus curated yet authentic. Just as Charlie costumes himself with punk

clothing—even a shirt with a swastika—he costumes himself through emotion. Yet, his physical body also hints at the part of his identity that he tries to disguise; although his embodiment reflects a curated punk image, his white teeth reveal his suburban beginnings. The juxtaposition of Charlie’s impeccable teeth with the ruggedness of his new persona represent Charlie’s internal struggle as he, like Karim, tries to leave the suburbs and his past self behind.

Just as *The Buddha of Suburbia* questions the importance of and undermines the authenticity of race, emotions, and aesthetics, Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* inhabits the space between real and unreal, natural and curated. While Charlie roots his stage persona and fabricated real-life personality in punk, Fevvers has no specific locus of identity; she exists as a paradox, as both “fact” and “fiction.” This instability of identity propels her to fame, with the narrator saying, “Her name was on the lips of all, from duchess to costermonger[...]‘Do you think she’s *real*?’” (Carter 8). The question here does not ask if Fevvers’ wings are real or question the authenticity of any specific aspect of Fevvers’ existence, instead asking if she as an entire being is authentic. From the bloneness of her hair to the grandeur of her actions, every aspect of Fevvers requires audiences to suspend their disbelief, as she destabilizes the notions of real and unreal. Even the speakers of the questions, people ranging from “duchess” and “costermonger,” suggest that Fevvers does not belong to one class of people but to all; she exists beyond stratification. Fevvers’ corporeality also reflects such questions of authenticity and categorization, especially when the narrator says, “she batted her eyelashes at Walser in the mirror. From the pale length of those eyelashes, a good three inches, he might have thought she had not taken her false ones off” (Carter 22). Here, Fevvers performs femininity for Walser by batting her eyelashes at him, but this action also emphasizes the ambiguity of her biological form, as Walser can barely distinguish her real lashes from her false ones. The extremity of Fevvers’ body—including the drastic length of her eyelashes—further shows how, like Karim with his ethnicity, Fevvers’ identification as a woman or even a human is dually authentic and inauthentic. As Dr. Aoife Monks notes in *The Actor in Costume*, “make-up[...]convinces us of its permanent state, even if we know that it can be removed” and hints at “the illusion of the performance and the assertion of the authentic body of the performer beneath the make-up” (81). As Monks asserts, makeup only reinforces the ambiguity of Fevvers’ body; like her wings, which may or may not be part of her “authentic body,” Fevvers’ false eyelashes blur the line between performance and realness. In doing so, Fevvers achieves extraordinary fame and seizes control over the minds of others; unlike stereotypically flat feminine characters who merely act as the subject of the male gaze and male projection, Fevvers remains a mystery to Walser and the world. No one can ever truly know her, and no one can turn away from her. She captures the world’s attention and does not let it go.

Like Fevvers, in “Nausicaa,” Gerty’s use of makeup blurs the line between her authentic and fabricated body and allows her to occupy a space in between the categories of real and fake; while the narrator describes her as epitomizing natural, classical beauty, Gerty’s beauty is also the product of consumer culture and self-fashioning. For example, the narrator describes Gerty by saying the following:

“Gerty's [eyes] were of the bluest Irish blue, set off by lustrous lashes and dark expressive brows[...]It was Madame Vera Verity, directress of the Woman Beautiful page of the Princess novelette, who had first advised her to try eyebrowleine which gave that haunting expression to the eyes[...]Then there was blushing scientifically cured” (Joyce). Here, Gerty epitomizes Irish beauty, yet this natural beauty is emphasized by her “expressive brows” that she manipulates with “eyebrowleine”—a tool that she hears of from a magazine, an object of consumerism. Manipulation of Gerty’s appearance allows her to evoke specific emotions in others, as she crafts a “haunting expression” that, indeed, captivates Bloom. Beauty aesthetics and even consumer culture allow women like Gerty—who is disadvantaged because of her gender, socioeconomic status, and physical disability—to seize control over others, especially men. Where Gerty lacks a mother figure, “Madame Vera Verity” passes on the knowledge of beauty and self-fashioning that mothers often teach to their daughters, and the application of makeup does not just act as a superficial pastime for young women but rather a form of knowledge, materialism, artistry, and even science, as blushing is “scientifically cured.” As Monk claims, makeup fits in seamlessly with the real body and, although Gerty does not apply makeup directly to her eyes, the “eyebrowleine” she wears alters the intensity and emotional effect of her “Irish blue” eyes. Gerty embraces consumer culture to define and perform identity, and her “girlish treasure trove” epitomizes her natural-artificial hybrid femininity, as it contains her “tortoiseshell combs, her child of Mary badge, [and her] whiterose scent,” along with a poem she “copied out of the newspaper[...]*Art thou real, my ideal?*” (Joyce). Here, the “child of Mary badge” represents Gerty’s girlish purity while her “tortoiseshell combs” and “whiterose scent” represent a more artificial form femininity. Even the poem she keeps with these items comes from a newspaper—a form of writing filled with the language of advertisements and consumer culture. Like Fevvers’ slogan “is she fact or is she fiction?” and Karim’s cultural appropriation, this poem asks what is authentic and inauthentic, but, as Gerty’s successful seduction of Bloom indicates, the distinction between fact and fiction does not matter. Regardless of Gerty’s natural physical features, she can self-fashion herself to appear elegant and even wealthy and seize sexual control of Bloom, who would otherwise ignore her because of her impoverished background.

### **Selling Identity**

Karim, Fevvers, and Gerty empower themselves by taking situations in which they are disadvantaged because of their race, gender, or biological oddities and turning these qualities into social—and even professional and romantic—selling points. When Karim must demean his Indian culture to achieve success, he simultaneously pokes fun at British culture and reverses the colonial gaze. Similarly, Fevvers takes her abnormal biological form—what most would consider freakish—and markets it as a mystery that makes her worthy of fame and attention. Gerty sells her femininity and seduces Bloom, but she does so for her own pleasure rather than Bloom’s. She uses her physical beauty to manipulate Bloom and make him take part in her naive romantic fantasies, and, in doing so, Gerty overcomes the passivity typical of the romantic and visual

objects of the male gaze. Thus, these characters take qualities that would otherwise disadvantage them in their societies—such as their race, biological abnormalities, or gender—and use these traits to their advantage.

In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim and Charlie sell their manufactured identities to attain success as performers, revealing how the curation of identity and even cultural appropriation can empower, especially for immigrants or those seeking to re-categorize themselves socially. While Karim and Charlie grew up in the South London suburbs, both of them try to escape the confines of this social classification; Karim wishes to be an actor who can take on a fluid, hybrid identity, and Charlie hopes to become a celebrity rather than live as a subject of suburban conformity. Karim sells his biracial ethnicity in his performance of Mowlgi in *The Jungle Book*, saying, “I sent up the [Indian] accent and made the audience laugh by suddenly relapsing into cockney at odd times...I liked being recognized in the pub afterwards” (Kureishi 164). For Karim, culture replaces experience as a marketable acting skill, and he appropriates elements of both Indian and British culture. Even here, a dual sense of authenticity and inauthenticity define’s Karim’s performance; although he is both English and Indian, he is still appropriating these cultures, and his appropriation is “partly a construct and product of colonialist discourse, and partly performance.” To succeed as an actor, Karim must “sell essentialist stereotypes of cultural and ethnic identity” without clarifying whether these stereotypes are reflective of a colonial reality or merely performance (Glabazna 70). Similarly, Charlie appropriates his English culture to attain success in the U.S., with Karim saying, “here in America Charlie had acquired this cockney accent when[...]he’d cried after being mocked by the stinking gypsy kids for talking so posh[...]He was selling Englishness, and getting a lot of money for it” (Kureishi 247). Although the artificiality of Karim’s and Charlie’s on-stage and off-stage performances shows them taking advantage of, rather than correcting, racial stereotypes, doing so empowers them and suggests that they are fully in control; they are profiting off the very qualities that they were ridiculed for in the suburbs.

Just as Karim and Charlie sell themselves through performance and appropriation, Fevvers sells herself by taking the qualities that mark her as peculiar—especially her biological and gender hybridity—and marketing them. On the very first page of *Nights at the Circus*, the narrator introduces the reader to Fevvers by saying, “Fevvers, the most famous *aerialiste* of the day; her slogan, ‘Is she fact or is she fiction?’ And she didn’t let you forget it for a minute” (Carter 1). The ambiguity of Fevvers’ identity is a selling point that enables her to achieve professional success, despite the disadvantages of her gender in a patriarchal world, the freakishness of her biological form, and her humble socioeconomic beginnings as a ward in a brothel. Fevvers’ hybrid identity makes her the most valuable act in Colonel Kearny’s circus, and he even extends the portrayal of her hybridity to that of a bionic woman, telling newspapers that Fevvers is “not a woman at all but a cunningly constructed automaton” and “beam[ing] with pleasure at the consternation this ploy will provoke” (Carter 86). Fevvers and Kearney profit from even a fictitious multiplicity of identity, perpetuating Fevvers’ already paradoxical



existence. Fevvers thus empowers herself by taking sources of potential shame and ridicule and turning them into marketable mysteries.

Like Fevvers, Gerty empowers herself by selling her partly-curated, partly-natural physical embodiment and hybrid femininity, allowing her to not just achieve the romantic success she desires but also seize control when she would otherwise be a passive object for visual consumption. For example, the narrator says the following:

“His dark eyes fixed themselves on her again drinking in her every contour, literally worshipping at her shrine. If ever there was undisguised admiration in a man's passionate gaze it was there plain to be seen on that man's face. It is for you, Gertrude MacDowell, and you know it” (Joyce).

This passage again evokes the comparison of Gerty and the Biblical Mary, as she sits on the rocks with Bloom “literally worshipping at her shrine.” Although the narration of “Nausicaa” leaves the reader wondering if such descriptions reflect Bloom’s actual thoughts or are merely the interpretation of a third-person onlooker, the text suggests that Bloom’s actual feelings towards Gerty do not matter; the authenticity of his emotion does not affect Gerty, only the *appearance* of his “undisguised admiration” bears significance. Although this passage mentions the male gaze, Bloom is also an object for Gerty to gaze at, functioning as a mirror through which she can admire her own physical embodiment. The passage does not mention Bloom’s actual inward emotion but rather the appearance of his emotions that are “plain to be seen on that man’s face.” Although Gerty initially appears to be the objectified subject of Bloom’s voyeurism, she is the one in control and also objectifies him; he lacks a clear identity and is just “that man.” He functions as a vehicle through which she can gaze upon herself, as emphasized by the narrator’s direct address to Gerty: “It is for you, Gertrude MacDowell, and you know it.” Gerty sells herself to Bloom, but doing so grants her power over him. Later, when Gerty walks away and exposes her physical disability, Bloom tries to defend himself after “buying” the illusion of physical perfection that Gerty so convincingly sold to him. The narrator says, “See her as she is spoils all. Must have the stage setting, the rouge, costume, position, music. The name too. amours of actresses” (Joyce). Bloom feels taken advantage of and conned, and he tries to defend himself by refuting Gerty’s authenticity, claiming that she is an actress who must rely on makeup and costume to sell a specific image of herself to garner the attention of men. But Bloom’s defensive accusations fall flat, because authenticity and inauthenticity do not matter for Gerty. As with Karim and Fevvers, the performance of identity is not confined to stages—or in this case, rocks on a seashore—but pervades every aspect and area of life. Where performance is associated with staged actions and selling theatrical personas, performativity is its real-life equivalent, with “the fashioned body [being] an entity existing in between performance and performativity” (Kollnitz 80). Gerty’s ability to perform multiple types of femininity allows her to seize control where she would otherwise have none and to simultaneously reverse and take advantage of the male gaze.

Karim, Fevvers, and Gerty not only emphasize Butler’s point that identity is performed but also show how the freedom of performance, multiplicity, and self-curation allows people to

overcome the boundaries of marginalization. Through switching between performances of Indianness and Britishness, Karim navigates and finds professional success in a world divided by racial categories and filled with anti-Indian racism. Similarly, Fevvers embraces the ambiguity of her biological form and gender, finding fame and enrapturing audiences despite her humble beginnings in a brothel and the extremities of her abnormal physicality. Like Fevvers, Gerty uses self-curation to mask her poverty and uses her hybrid femininity to control Bloom, reversing the roles of male voyeur and female object. Despite these characters being disadvantaged or marginalized—either for their race, gender, or socioeconomic status—they empower themselves by embracing the freedom of a fluid, performative sense of self. They show how performance does not end when they step off the stage; in fact, it is just the beginning.

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