observation—“The Young People may have heard it said that a savage is a grown-up child, but it seems to me even more true that a child is a savage” (6)—resurfaces, fully staged, occasioned by the visit of some “genuine Indians.” Not “a whit more dignified than the children,” they were “old and young alike, savages, and the boys who looked on and envied them were savages in their ideal of a world where people . . . never grew up into the toils and cares that can alone make men of boys.” In short, the boys fail to recognize that “the great difference between a savage and a civilized man is work” (151). The work ethic grounds Howells’s racism, the work/play binary generates the civilized/uncivilized and adult/child binaries, and civilization must remain remote from the very “remoteness from the sphere of man” that had been so appealing in Aldrich.

The intensity of that vituperation suggests how pervasively and casually the generational and the racial other were equated. In Being a Boy (1878), for instance, Charles Dudley Warner explains that “scientists who want to study the primitive man . . . couldn’t do better than to devote their attention to the common country-boy” (199). And the science of play maintained that “the shortest and easiest way to the study of primitive man lies through the study of child’s play” (Atkins 10). The generational/racial equation—which Chamberlain’s The Child laboriously traces from Lucretius to Percy Shelley, Cesare Lombroso, and G. Stanley Hall—was no less entrenched in an anthropology still influenced by Jean Baptiste Lamarck (Stocking 246–49) and sociological, psychological, and educational theory overwhelmingly influenced by Herbert Spencer (Cleverley and Phillips 42–53; Boyer 246–49). Chamberlain’s chapter on “The Child as a Reaier of the Past” details a host of atavisms (“Psychic,” “Alimentary,” “Mimetic”) that reveal less mankind’s past than mankind’s present state among “primitive” peoples—Eskimos, Polynesians, Malaysians. The succeeding chapter, “The Child and the Savage,” makes it clear that it is less the past of the past than a fantasy of the past residing in the present that peculiarly constitutes the allotemporality of childhood and distant cultures.

Despite marks of resistance to the hegemony of this paradigm (such as the appearance of Injun Joe in Tom Sawyer; distinguishing savage from child) the paradigm persisted. When Crane characterizes a deominia mob scene in “The Lover and the Tell Tale,” he does not just call the children “barbarians” who are “excited only by the actual appearance of human woe” but also, when such barbarism comes to a close, persists with the characterization: the children obey the school bell “even as older nations obey the formal law which is printed in calf-skin” (7: 147–48). The story reads like an illustration of Johnson’s “The Savagery of Boyhood” (1887), where boys’ “actual pleasure” at “the sight of pain” recalls “the complacency of the Dyak who recounts his success in the head hunt” (797). Of course, recapitulation logic justifies the fact that “the humane impulse is as soundly dormant” in “most healthy boys” as it is in “the bosom of a Feugian or a Gaucho” (798).

In Crane’s Bowery, however, the savagery of the child at play is shared by the parent; a boy who repeatedly beats a dog eventually becomes enamored of the animal, but his father’s “savage temper” expresses itself in the same “amusement” to the point where, “in a mood for having fun,” he throws the dog out the window to its death (8: 52–58). The Bowery sketch describes a striking limitation of the savage-child equation: the metaphorization of urban masses (and above all strikers) as “savages”—whose “barbarous” activity threatened “property itself” as it foolishly struggled “against the unconquerable instinct of the race” (Harper’s Weekly, qtd. in Slotkin 480–81)—should contaminate the metaphorization of the child. And it is tempting to argue that just such contamination, or the arrested evolution it implies, provoked Howells’s anxiety. But for Howells, of course, the problem was not the savageness of savagery but rather the play ethos as embodied by the savage, an ethos that was increasingly advocated by childhood studies as the means by which “nature develops all the faculties both of body and mind, in a safe and healthful manner” (Crafts 311). By the time the valorization of play had become a commonplace, proponents of progressive pedagogy, while arguing that the “aim of education is to bring out the good and strength there is in the child,” often resisted, like Howells, any liberal attitude toward play: “The people who are of most account in this world are the people who work . . . . We want [our children] to learn to work as hard as possible” (Martin 42). Chamberlain himself makes the logical problem posed by “play” most apparent when he contends that had man “no play he were perpetually a savage” (27). For while “play” characterizes precivilization and while “the regularity of work among civilized nations” marks the triumph of evolution, play also appears as the mark of civilization itself, with “language, poetry, art, science, all beginning in child-play” (20–27). How is it, if play is the condition of savagery, the means of passing through savagery, and the mark of civilization, that recapitulatory evolution can work?

For Howells, among others, the answer to the problem lay in ignoring the problem and returning to the lesson of work. But a more complex answer—though hardly formulated as such—
appears in the account of an economic instinct that inheres in the civilized child, an instinct generating the recapitulation of mankind’s economic development from communism to bourgeois capitalism and hence an instinct that always already differentiates child from savage. If the play of the playground was meant to Americanize the immigrant, the play described by child psychologists was meant to Americanize the American—in accordance not so much with the regnant somatic economy that understood play as the expression of a surplus (for example, Riis 132) but with a market economy restaged in the realm of recreation. The child acculturates himself to the American economic way of life, which appears wholly natural because it is the outcome of spontaneous play. If, as one commentator put it, the “money sense of the young child, as of primitive man, is feeble and nascent,” requiring for the savage “the subsequent period of barbarism” (Monroe 152), it only required play for the civilized child. In Johnson’s purview, “with no qualms of conscience,” boys “develop to the utmost their new powers of ownership” (Rudimentary Society 24).

The child’s “instinct to have” (Kline and France 248) is part of the “instinctive nature of the tendency from common to individual property” (Johnson, Rudimentary Society 55); that is, the instinct of ownership differentiates childhood from “primitive communism” that, with its “evidence of mental dulness, physical laziness, and primitive lethargy,” is “a system of monotony revolting to an independent, virile manhood” (Kline and France 248). Put most extremely, this instinct of having appears mutually constitutive with subjective being: “[W]e find that the concept mine and self-consciousness are mutually dependent” (Kline and France 248). It is as though we are asked to accept not a mirror stage, but a proprietary stage—asked to understand the object in a psychopolitical economy, with particular attention drawn to “the role played by property as a mind-developing agent” (Kline and France 241). It is the “notion of acquiring” that prompts the individual to attain the status Howells might approve: “He broke away from his laziness, threw off his lethargy. His mind stirred into activity” (Kline and France 251).

We might thus understand Cora’s obsessive attachment to the stove—“Little Cora burst into a wild declaration that she could not retire for the night unless the stove was carried upstairs and placed at her bedside”—as a property relation that figures the girl’s sense of self at the moment when it is “difficult to distinguish between the self and not-self” (G. H. Ellis 290). If we can reenergize this psychology to think outside the Oedipus and to imagine not a child’s latent sexuality but her latent eco-

nomicity, then Cora’s hypercathectic (whatever neurotic relation to the maternal it may seem to express) looks foremost like a means of attaching the self to the productive life that her artist father and corseted mother have veiled in their “awesome apartments” in New York (7: 129). While Howells grumbles against the boys’ resistance to work, Crane depicts a girl’s desire for work that makes her inseparable from the stove. However much, for the American boy, liberty appeared to lie in the freedom of play, liberty for the American woman was being proclaimed—by figures such as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Louisa May Alcott, and Gilman—to lie in the freedom to work (see Rodgers 182–209). Cora performs the latter freedom within the former so that, playing, she exemplifies a will to productivity.

It was not an economy of production, though, but one of exchange that particularly fascinated the observers of boyhood, whose convictions about the child’s (meaning the boy’s) “desire to trade and to do business” inspired enthusiasms that reflect the robber baron mentality (Kline and France 268). Though the novelistic account of such a developing desire does not appear until Theodore Dreiser’s The Financier (1912), both Johnson and Hall fully exhibit it within the recreational. The “boy economy” that emerges in Johnson’s study includes the money form and the banking system (Rudimentary Society 41–51). Hall’s “The Story of a Sand Pile” (1888) describes how one neighborhood’s boys, left to “the tuition of the mysterious play instinct” (142–43), develop “money, trade and laws” (143), as well as “industrial processes, institutions, and methods of administration and organization” (155). Recreation thus re-creates “the progress of mankind” (147) from an agricultural commune to bureaucratic capitalism. As an “illustration of the education according to nature we so often speak of,” the story naturalizes the very nineteenth-century American culture that, elsewhere, Hall, like Aldrich, seeks to exclude. In other words, the psychologist does capital’s work of creating a world after its own image; or, rather, the Robinsonade effects an economic imaginary in which society can sight itself, as though on a fantasy screen.

Of course, what remains unprojected in that imaginary is the figure of the girl, whom Willa Cather, for one, introduces in her own contribution to the boy’s book, “The Way of the World” (1895). An epigraph—“Oh! the world was full of summertime / And the year was always June”—establishes the temporality I’ve described, and the story all but depicts a version of Hall’s “Sand Pile.” In “Speckleville,” which has emerged from the backyard of Speckle Burhnam’s house, one boy keeps a grocery store, one a hardware store, one a pool room, one a dime museum, and
Speckle himself plays the role of mayor, postmaster, and banker. The town enjoys a state of “peace and concord” until a neighborhood girl, Mary Eliza Jenkins, objects: “the instincts of her sex were strong in her, and that six male beings should dwell together in ease and happiness seemed to her an unnatural and a monstrous thing.” The monstrosity of the homeeconomic is normalized when Speckle, despite the protests of the other boys, “grant[s] Mary Eliza naturalization papers and full rights of citizenship” (396–97). She soon deposes Speckle, and the boys accept her rule as the “sole imperatrix of Speckleville” until she becomes the circuit through which a boy from Chicago enters the town, offering cash instead of pins. To “offer money to a citizen of Speckleville was an insult, like offering a bribe,” not least because it had long been Speckle’s “imagination [that] was the coin current of the realm” (401, 397). No matter how mimetic of American culture Speckleville may seem, in the children’s minds it has been the child’s mind rather than the money form that effects the logic of substitution. The realist contamination of that logic—where money is itself money—turns Speckleville into a “doomed city”; its economy collapses, the city disappears, and the girl and the Chicago boy go off to fashion their own city. What Cather narrates is the end of the closed community, the end of the “sovereign community.” Once the girl has been granted citizenship, the (city) state of boyhood crumbles.

Crane’s own version of this story is “The Angel-Child” (1899), where Cora appears not as a consummate producer but as consummate consumer. With a money sense her father does not share, she demands and receives five dollars for her birthday: “It was that he did not at all understand the nature of a five-dollar bill. He was deaf to it. He had it; he gave it; that was all” (7: 130). For the girl and her compatriots, this real money provokes an “orgy” of consumption as they visit a candy shop, like “drunken reveling soldiers within the walls of a stormy city” (7: 131). Receiving $2.27 in change, the children “gaze . . . at the coins,” knowing “then it was not their capacities which were endless: it was the five dollars” (7: 131). The story materializes the “reserve capital” with which Chamberlain figures the “superfluity of energy” giving rise to play (14). To spend the remainder of the money, Cora buys haircuts for everyone, including the Margate twins, whose “long golden curls” recall “the bright curly hair” of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s Little Lord Fauntleroy of 1886 (9). A special object of Crane’s scorn—“no kid except a sick little girl,” he wrote in one letter, “would like Lord Fauntleroy” (Correspondence 688)—the image suffers at the hands of the healthy girl who defaces her literary predecessor. Not quite at her hands, of course; rather, at the hands of her money. While Cather introduces a girl as the circuit through which real money violates the economy of boyhood, Crane’s girl, herself in possession of real money, situates the neighborhood children in an economy of consumption. The economy of play and the consumer economy do not mirror one another—they simply merge. Where childhood does not represent an economy but resides within the existing economy, the child produced by psychology and the boy’s book disappears.

4. Recreational Realism

Anita Schorsch has addressed the contradiction between the belief in the “pure play” of the child and the child’s world as depicted in Victorian art, “a world of commercial, mass-produced, isolating toys” in which “loneliness [is] assuaged only by the new materialism of childhood” (101). It is precisely such materialism that the boy’s book suppresses: “storm” the “town of Boyville” with “golf-sticks, and skates and base-balls” and still “the walls remain” (White xvii–xviii). In the Whilomville Stories, however, toys assume unprecedented importance—in “Showin’ Off” the velocipede mediates male rivalry; “Jimmie Tresscott’s new velocipede had the largest front wheel of any velocipede in Whilomville” (7: 150). Books, however, also mediate boyhood fantasy—“a certain half-dime blood-and-thunder pamphlet had a great vogue in the tribe at this particular time” (7: 229)—enabling critics to equate Jimmie Tresscott’s world with Tom Sawyer’s, so that postbellum childhood seems to participate in a production of the child that denies the production of the toy and the colonization of childhood by the American toy industry’s unprecedented success. Crane criticism—declaring Whilomville “the ideal American small town of memory and imagination”—has done its best to buttress the wall of boyville (Levenson xiii).

Schorsch’s comments on the contradiction between the theory and the reality of play should not lead us to believe, however, that the toy was ignored by the new pedagogy. Indeed, Hall’s most frequently quoted essay (written with A. Caswell Ellis) is “A Study of Dolls,” and a more widespread fascination is illustrated by articles like Katherine de Forest’s “Playthings of Kings,” which appeared beside “The Stove” in Harper’s and, indeed, by a flurry of essays and stories on toy manufacturing (Harrison, “Where Toys are Made”). But such accounts insistently focus on Germany, where the simplicity of artisanal manu-
facture preserves the plaything against mass production, and not on the American industry that “drove their German rivals out of this particular field” (Clark 2: 137). And Hall strives to preserve the material simplicity of the doll by discussing how doll-substitutes (such as pillows) exemplify “the strength of the doll instinct and the vigor of the animistic fancy”: this process of “dollifying” objects shows how the “rudest doll has the greatest advantage of stimulating the imagination” over and against “dolls with too many mechanical devices” (Ellis and Hall 162–63). While Holmes had objected to the mimetic failure of Autoperipateticos in the 1860s, Hall objects to mimetic success because it problematizes the way the “doll instinct” recapitulates fetishism and idolatry. The modernity of the inventive toy, in other words, threatens to modernize the child prematurely, to contaminate the invention of the child.

The modern toy that gives the title to “The Stove” appeared once the toy industry discovered that cast iron was the best medium for creating realistic playthings (West 113; Hertz 16). The mass-produced toys replicated functional and stylistic differences to the point where the toy catalog of the 1890s all but mimicked the stove catalog, completing the reality-effect by summoning consumer desire’s fantasy of discrimination (see Figs. 3 and 4). This “recreational realism,” as we might call it, was identified as early as 1868 as a traumatic event for the American child (“Concerning Toys” 5). By the 1890s theorists of children’s play typically argued that “the more imagination and cleverness the inventor has put into the toy, the less room there is for the child’s imagination and cleverness and genius” (Wiggin, “Training” 327). The problem seemed to intensify as the century closed, with the naturalist John Burroughs declaring the “chaos of toys” to be “a sin against our children” because “it corrupts their simplicity” and “blunts their curiosity” (1424). By 1907 The Nation was bored by “alarmists of the toy shop” who insisted that “modern toys may be destroying the child’s imagination” (“The Ethics of Toys” 225). The alarm over the realistic sounds like an objection to the commercialization of childhood, and yet it also defends the very commutation of values, the fungibility, enacted by the commodity form—beside which the mimetic toy might be said to insist on an autonomous solidity of the thing. Moreover, while the practicable toy provokes the problem in “The Stove,” this is only because it inspires Cora (moving from the miniature to the gigantic) to transform the basement furnaces into other realistic toys. The problem posed by realism, here, is certainly not a matter of leaving fancy nothing to do. It is a matter of licensing fancy’s full transformation of reality into a realist game.

Nonetheless, just as we find Howells describing the “romancer” as a writer producing “intellectual toys” (“Negative” 81), so too we find the “alarmists of the toy shop” believing that recreational realism, “supplant[ing] the ideal by a commonplace reality,” threatens the “romance of childhood [that] becomes the foundation of the romance of later life” (“Concerning Toys” 5: Atkins 356). Indeed, complaints about the realist toy sound like the defense of the romance, ushering in a “reaction from realism” and signaling that “the world is once more coming to its own in the ideal realm of imagination” (Field 377; “The Revival of
architect, "form became feeling" (13–14). Tradition has it (beginning with Wright) that the forms and figures, which delighted the seven-year-old, inspired his future furniture and houses (Spencer). Milton Bradley’s so-called Froebel "gifts" (a denomination insisting on noneconomic exchange, or the economy of the gift) provided not merely an alternative to the automatic toy and the mimetic toy but a (commodified) antirealist, antimodern, primitive alternative that inspired the most recognizable version of American modernism.

Wright’s primal scene of recreation restages a scene from John Ruskin’s childhood, where the child, denied commercial toys, develops his aesthetic sensibility by staring at forms and colors in the carpet (Praeterita 11–12). The scene prefigures the persistent cry against recreational realism that assumes the rhetorical form of a Neoplatonic and modernist reaction against modernity, one that seeks, in play, to preserve childhood against the time and space of the present. Thus, Barthes charges that, by "literally prefiguring the world of the adult functions," French toys "obviously cannot but prepare the child to accept them all," denying her or him the role of imaginative "creator." Familiarly, he advocates instead the "merest set of blocks" with which the child might create "life" rather than "property," blocks of wood because wood, making "essential objects, objects for all time," is a "poetic substance, which does not sever the child from close contact with the tree, the table, the floor" (53–55). Extending Barthes’s argument to the American nineteenth century, we could say that, by literally figuring the adult world, the "practicable" iron stove helped reproduce, because it naturalized, the gendered relations of production. But "The Stove," of course, demonstrates how the child’s "fancy" can triumphantly transform the most literal of toys, how the "uses" of consumption become another "production," an "art" that resists any rationalized cultural colonization (de Certeau 31).

The four parts of "The Stove" describe Cora’s attachment to the toy, the typical Whilomville tea party, the children’s production of turnips as puddings in the cellar, and the olfactory entanglement of these two events. The spatial difference between childhood and adulthood has been rendered vertical, a fantasy world of production thriving beneath the homosocial world of consumption. The story appears to dichotomize woman’s world along the lines suggested by, for instance, the ads circulating in Youth’s Companion, where ads for baking powder and stoves accommodate woman’s role as household cook while ads for cosmetic powder and corsets accommodate the image of the leisured woman as, in Veblen’s sense, permanently and obviously unfit
for work (Theory of the Leisure Class 171). While Cora redefines cooking as a “social function” rather than a “family function” (Gilman 240-41), the women of Whilomville occupy only the economy of the sign, scrutinizing one another’s dresses and cups. Cora’s enthusiastic productivity only highlights the frustrating hyperactivity of the typical hostess, who, “woman-like,” flings “herself head-long at the accomplishment of a pleasure which she could not even define and at the end [of which] she felt only weariness” (7: 199). Mrs. Trescoth, for one, finds herself “in a circle of tea-fighters largely through a sort of artificial necessity—a necessity in short which she had herself created in a spirit of femininity” (7: 200).

Such feminine “necessity” would seem to relegate Cora’s “work” in the cellar to a prior moment in bourgeois women’s history, as though in accord with one tenet of recapitulation, such that as civilization advances what was once the work of adults becomes the play of children (see Chamberlain 273). Yet Cora not only imaginatively expands the vestigial productive role beyond the home to the hotel, she also, in that role, lays waste to the family’s winter store of vegetables. The consumption of the toy, inspiring a dream of production, actually incites a frenzy of destruction. Her game of work (thriving beneath Mrs. Trescoth’s labors of amusement) most obviously destabilizes any absolute distinction between labor and play; it confuses any logic of recapitulation; and it circumscribes any dichotomized encoding of the American woman as producer or consumer, as laboring or leisureed. The sale of toy stoves certainly participates in a system of commodified gendering, and a girl’s game of cooking exemplifies the gendering effect of material practices. But Cora makes it clear that if, following Marx, we insist that the production of objects produces desiring subjects, we can also imagine a “new materialism of childhood” that, rather than naturalizing social relations, provokes a desire that seeks to satisfy itself outside the ideological dominant. While the realist toy may sever the child from “all time,” it connects her to the time in which she must live. Rather than “doing things by the book,” the girl, playing with mass-produced things, escapes the interiority of boyhood by recovering (as she textually marks) that temporality within which change can once again take place.

Children, Theodor Adorno reports in Minima Moralia, remain aware “of the contradiction between phenomenon and fungibility,” and their “purposeless activity” exists as a “defense” against the commodity system. It is not the metamorphosizing power of the child’s mind but rather the child’s own realism that thwarts the logic of exchange: “The little trucks travel nowhere,” but they resist “the process of abstraction” and “abide as allegories of what they are specifically for” (227). For Adorno, unlike those who would preserve the primitive object for the “primitive” child, only the modernization of childhood—the mass-marketing of toys that represent (as the truck represents) the mass market—will enable the child to perform a subsersive repetition of modern life. The child’s mimetic faculty prompts disobedient mimicry. “The unreality of games gives notice that reality is not yet real. Unconsciously they rehearse the right life” (227-28). In “The Stove,” the child herself may seem to be teaching Adorno’s lesson. But Adorno’s portrait of the child’s political unconscious obviously succumbs to the homogenizing abstraction that the (homogenized) child is said to resist; childhood remains mythic, spatialized as a permanent locus not of bourgeois capitalism but of its permanent critique. The myth foregrounds the way Crane’s toys—situated in heterogeneous contexts—function differently, as sign-values for the ominous baby, as (allegorical) use-value in “The Stove,” but a use-value that insists on deterritorializing the site of female productivity.

Having rewritten Crane’s fragment on the toy shop as a fairy tale in which the materiality of labor surfaces on the objects of play, I want to conclude by understanding “The Stove” as a story where the text’s material unconscious finally expresses what a genre had successfully repressed—the conflict between a nationalized childhood and a nation’s consumer culture. The story remembers what the genre forgets. At a moment when the savagery of children (boys) had become acceptable, but the enfranchising modernity of children (girls) had not been thought, The Nation’s antagonism to the Whilomville Stories—no “children in the world are good enough to read these tales without losing the bloom of their youth” (“Ethics” 283)—may well be a symptom of how threatening the new materialism of childhood began to look as a mode through which to fantasize, individually and collectively, alternative (and alternatively gendered) economies. The fact that boyhood appears as a site for projecting and preserving nationality, typicality, and the bourgeois economy, and that girlhood becomes a site of idiosyncrasy, materiality, and an alternative economy, means that “woman” continues to serve as the marker for consumer culture and for a threatening modernity, as she does from Autoperipatetikos, to the bicycle craze, to Fritz Lang’s Metropolis (1926). But another way to put this would be to quote Hall’s ambiguating belief that “woman is far nearer childhood than man, and therefore in mind and body more prophetic of the future as well as reminiscent of the past” (Adolescence 2: 566) and then to suggest that, in the “ephebic literature”
he admired, only a child playing the role of woman could mark the perpetual presence of an alternative futurity. If a less nostal-
gic Benjamin was right to argue that “toys are not evidence of
[the child’s] autonomous existence but rather of a mute dialogue
of signs between the child and the nation” (“Kulturgeschichte,”
117), then we might say that such a dialogue is what “The Stove
allows us to overhear.”

Notes

1. That wave prompted not just “the rise of the average man,” in Daniel Boor-
stin’s terms, but also the rise of the average child (167–73). Indeed, children are
the subject of the text that Boorstin designates as “epoch-making” (189), Dan-
iel Edward Ryan’s Human Proportions in Growth: Being the Complete Mea-
surement of the Human Body for Every Age and Size during the Years of Juvenile
Growth (1880), which became a guide for the ready-made clothing industry,
producing the notion of standard sizes, hence proliferating “the standard” itself
within the everyday.

2. This brief summary derives from circulars published by the Illinois Society
for Child-Study, the Iowa Child Study Society, and the Division of Child Study
in the Department of Public Instruction in the State of New York, and from
courses in the Educational Review and in two journals that Hall founded, the
Child Study Monthly and the Pedagogical Seminary.

3. Hall’s piece was published the year his wife and daughter died and four
years after his parents died, making the autobiographical return to his youth
appear as a response to personal crisis that he himself figures as a response to
social decay. As a result, he must translate his own idealized youth into the

4. In Hertz’s first illustration of clockwork toys, for instance, eight out of the
twelve figures are black, mostly performers (27). For a crucial account of the
production of children’s consumer desire at the outset of the twentieth century,
see Leach, esp. 85–90.

5. Determining when play becomes not just an accepted but an encouraged
activity for the American child requires some oversimplification. See, e.g., the
competing claims of Calvert, Mergen, O’riard, and Wisby.

6. In contrast to his extreme differentiation of girls and boys (see Adolescence
2: 561–647), in discussing dolls Hall is “convinced that, on the whole, more play
with girl dolls by boys would tend to make them more sympathetic with girls as
children, if not more tender with their wives and with women later” (190).

7. While I disagree with her claim that “free-standing metal” toy stoves “did
not come into existence until the era after the First World War” (94), nonethe-
less Susan Willis’s comments about children’s interaction with their toys have
been extremely helpful. I would argue that her periodization is a symptom of

how effectively the nineteenth-century emergence of the toy industry has been
historiographically effaced.

8. A better known, explicitly theorized deconstruction of the work/play bi-
nary appears in the whitewashing episode of Tom Sawyer. The self-proclaimed
“wise philosopher” who narrates the story goes on to define work as whatever
is obligatory, play as whatever is nonobligatory. This insight rather belittles
Tom’s more naïve and insightful discovery—namely that the translation of
work into play is an economic matter. After Tom commodifies the activity of
whitewashing, he can sell the act of labor as play. The point is that commodifi-
cation itself produces “leisure,” “play,” and “freedom”—or, in Baudrillard’s
formulation, that the liberation of play is rarely more than “its” assignment to
the system of exchange value” (For a Critique 191).

9. So gibt denn auch ihr Spielzeug nicht von einem autonomen Sonderleben
Zeugnis, sondern ist stummer Zeichendialog zwischen ihm und dem Volk. Trans-
lation by Ross Lewin.

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The Poetics of Cultural Decline: Degeneracy, Assimilation, and the Jew in James's The Golden Bowl

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The cultural process Patricia Williams has brilliantly named "the alchemy of race and rights"—that subtle, magical interplay between collective identities organized by the category of "race" and individuated subjectivities produced within that epistemic regime—was frequently anatomized by Anglo-American fin de siècle intellectuals through the vehicle of the Jew. Indeed, the stereotypical Jew provided for many writers, critics, and theorists of this period precisely a figure of racial alchemy—one possessing ambiguous powers to transmute or transform all that he came in touch with. Or, to switch metaphors, the Jew served the fin de siècle as a catalyst—one whose very introduction into the representational field caused the racial identity of surrounding figures to emerge into definite shape and full clarity. As a result, it was often through this relatively ambiguous racial character type rather than the numerous available alternatives—Asians, say, or Africans—that the nature, properties, and problematics of race itself were defined, understood, and perhaps finedness by the Anglo-American elite.

Among the varied texts of the fin de siècle that comprise his knotty, heterogeneous, internally rifted discursive struggle centering on the Jew, none perhaps makes this dynamic clearer, nor its rifts more evident, than Henry James's notoriously un-clear novel The Golden Bowl. The racial drama of that book—a drama that few if any critics of the text have hitherto noted—centers on the racially ambiguous figure of Amerigo, a figure represented as an emblem of racial and cultural degeneracy, whose task is understood to be nothing less than a successful assimilation of the norms and even the identity of the dominant Anglo-American order. The benchmark of his success is the progress of those other figures who embody cultural degeneration, encode racial difference, and attempt to assimilate—but who, by comparison to Amerigo, rather conspicuously fail in that latter task: