Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Signature:

_____ _____
Alex Weil   Date

Passages and Screens:
Media Technologies in Texts by Henry James, Clara Smith, Theodora Bosanquet,
Mina Loy, and Kenneth Fearing

By

Alex Weil
Doctor of Philosophy

Comparative Literature

_____
John Johnston, Ph.D.
Advisor

_____
Elizabeth Goodstein, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Walter Kalaidjian, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Accepted:

_____
Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

_____
Date

Passages and Screens:
Media Technologies in Texts by Henry James, Clara Smith, Theodora Bosanquet,
Mina Loy, and Kenneth Fearing

By

Alex Weil
B.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001

Advisor: John Johnston, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature
2014

Abstract

Passages and Screens:
Media Technologies in Texts by Henry James, Clara Smith, Theodora Bosanquet,
Mina Loy, and Kenneth Fearing
By Alex Weil

Passages and Screens looks at the ways in which English-language stories, novels, and poems published between 1880 and 1945 reflect changing media technologies' influence on literary writing, on society, and on the self. During this period, I argue, a growing consciousness of the diversity of the material means of communication and perception undermines a sense of a consistent relationship between the self and a stable world. This consciousness, in turn, causes novelists and poets to reformulate ways of living and writing in relation to a reality that is not only constructed through the mediation of communication technologies but also rendered discontinuous or incomplete by their diversity. Through the mimicry of other media forms and their transposition into novels and poetry, the literary texts addressed in this dissertation attempt to describe the divergent effects of different media and to evaluate the evolving relationship between humans and technology. Chapter One describes Henry James's use of epistolary narration to depict two different but interrelated media of global communication, money and postal systems. Chapter Two discusses the cultural effects of the increasing speed associated with innovations in communication technologies by contrasting the themes and narrative techniques in James's novella *In the Cage* with Clara Smith and Theodora Bosanquet's novel *Spectators*. Chapter Three looks at how Mina Loy draws on the philosophy of Henri Bergson and on technology's restructuring of the faculty of vision to reformulate the relationship between image and self in her early poetry. Chapter Four examines the role that electric and electronic communication plays in generating simultaneity and its concomitant effects on the formation or dissolution of communities in Kenneth Fearing's novels *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*.

Passages and Screens:
Media Technologies in Texts by Henry James, Clara Smith, Theodora Bosanquet,
Mina Loy, and Kenneth Fearing

By

Alex Weil
B.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001

Advisor: John Johnston, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature
2014

Acknowledgements

I owe a great debt to my advisor, John Johnston, and to the members of my dissertation committee, Elizabeth Goodstein and Walter Kalaidjian. Their support, advice, and encouragement during my time at Emory and throughout the writing process made this project possible.

Martin Johnson, Gregory Flaxman, Eliza Richards, Beverly Taylor, Cathy Caruth, Elissa Marder, Dalia Judovitz, Ben Reiss, Alian Teach, Kathy Ly-Nguyen, Rob Vork, Sarah Stein, Jean Paul Cauvin, Lauren Caryer, Asher Haig, and Jenny Heil all offered inspiration, aid, suggestions, and friendship that helped me on my graduate path. Deborah White, Walter Reed, Xu Linxiang, and Tang Yongming provided teaching opportunities and invaluable support while finishing. I'm also grateful to my students at Emory and YZU for our conversations on literature and composition.

I could not have seen this project through to the end without the love that my parents, Nornman and Betty Weil, have given me over the years.

Finally, words cannot express how much I owe to Xiaoxun. Thank you.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Discussing a recently-published work by Joseph Conrad, Nicolas Romer, one of

the narrators and correspondents in Theodora Bosanquet and Clara Smith's epistolary

novel *Spectators*, quotes a friend's complaint that in Conrad's fiction "'one can neither

see nor feel the chief actors in his drama, they're too impenetrably screened by other

people!'" (Aug. 31 532).[1] Nicolas concurs with his friend's description, but concludes

that this opacity is precisely the value of Conrad's technique. More problematic, he

argues, is the contrary tendency to write novels from an omniscient point of view that

fails to acknowledge how, for finite human beings, seeing and feeling are indirect and

mediated processes:

> We don't most of us have much chance of admiring the kingdoms of the earth
>
> from aeroplanes, but it seems to me that it's a dangerously attractive point of view
>
> for novelists, and they're making much too free a use of it. They want to show us
>
> such huge tracts of human experience that the whole picture has to be flattened
>
> into something rather map-like. There are no mountains and valleys in the
>
> countries of their imagination, nothing but watersheds and river systems. Perhaps
>
> it's my natural reaction against this that makes me appreciate Conrad's passion
>
> for atmosphere and perspective, even though in his case it's so overmastering that
>
> he really can't bear to let his readers have a clear view. It's as if he undertook to
>
> conduct you through the heart of his country, but cunningly arranged the track so
>
> that there should always be some great looming mountain or tangled growth of
>
> jungle obscuring the distance. You arrive at the further frontier having seen very

little with your own eyes, and dependent for knowledge of the interior on the

reports of the spies he has provided for your guidance and amusement. (532-33)

Mediators and mediation loom large in Nicolas's assessment of contemporary literature. "Aeroplanes", "maps", "pictures", and "the reports of spies" all open passageways or points of view on otherwise invisible or unreachable people, events, or things, but they also ensure that those people, events, or things are "impenetrably screened" from readers, who see little with their "own eyes". Nicolas's own report of his friend's critique of Conrad, of course, also comes to the reader as a second hand account, positioning Nicolas as just such a mediator. Likewise, rather than making his report in person, he includes it in one of the letters that comprise the text of *Spectators* and that open passages for Nicolas and his sister Nanda (as well as for voyeuristic readers) into one another's thoughts and lives while also screening their immediacy behind words, paper, and postal systems. This ostentatiously epistolary form, which had been out of vogue for over century at the time *Spectators* was written, has an untimely feel when contrasted both with the near omniscient narration of the contemporary realist novels Nicolas critiques and with early modernist works that, like those of Conrad, experiment with restricting narrative points of view. Yet Smith and Bosanquet's use of the epistolary mode is in keeping with the latter, while also differing from it by shifting the emphasis of the restricted point of view away from the interiorized consciousness and perception of an observer or storyteller and towards the partiality of the material medium of communication.

That lives in 1914, as in 2014, would be unthinkable bracketed from their deep entanglements with media technologies is clear. Yet thinking about media and the nature of these entanglements also presents challenges. On one hand, to serve as a medium means withdrawing or vanishing in order to establish otherwise impossible relations between entities. On the other hand, this disappearance is itself illusory, as a medium is itself an entity, a palpable network of properties and effects from which the relationships it structures cannot be readily separated. That this concreteness or positive presence is as constitutive to cultural or social endeavors as any purely human volition to say, do, or perceive is the premise that provides the foundations of media theory as a field of study, as when Harold Innis describes the "bias of media" as critical to the structure and development of socio-political units (5), when Marshall McLuhan proclaims that "the medium is the message", rather than its ostensible content, in the practices it enables (7), or, most strongly, when Friedrich Kittler states that "media determine our situation", establishing a culture's parameters for communication, perception, or thought (*Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* xxxix). Exceeding their status as natural substances or technological apparatuses, media are a diverse and divergent set of distinct and concrete means of knowing and of doing that nevertheless exist exterior to human minds and, in part, beyond their comprehension, neither faithfully representing a coherent world that exists "out there", beyond the human, nor constructing a seamless reality "within".

This difficulty is the media subtext that emerges from the epistolary form of Smith and Bosanquet's novel. By making its narrator's voices, and thus the possibility of narrative, perception, and thought, dependent on letters and the post, even as the characters themselves are apparently trapped in a geopolitical catastrophe that is spiraling

out of control, *Spectators* points towards the simultaneous significance of mediating systems and apparatuses for late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Western culture and a concomitant sense of attenuated agency on the part of the individual human being. It is this significance and this sense of attenuation that I seek to analyze in my dissertation, which presents readings of a series of English-language literary texts published between 1880 and 1945 that reflect sharply on ways human selves and media technologies enter into reciprocally determining relationships.[2] These texts include Smith and Bosanquet's *Spectators*, fictions by Henry James and Kenneth Fearing, and poems by Mina Loy. I have selected these writings because they foreground the capacity of modern literature to reflect on communication itself, mimicking or becoming inflected with the forms of other media and the ways in which those forms construct communication and structure perception around, through, and for human selves. Regardless of genre, these texts put into question any notion of a purely literary sensibility that might be opposed to other forms of communication. They are thus attuned to the growing significance for their era of a varied, shifting set of divergent media. At the same time, they retain the kernel of novelistic or poetic identity that makes them acts of mimicry, not copies. In doing so, they create a certain space from which human selves can explore the simultaneous interconnections and differences between the realities constructed by mediating apparatuses and systems and the possibilities for freedom and action that they open.

Literature in the modern era, which is itself to some degree a long, slowly unfolding effect of the invention of the printing press, can be seen as a reflexive expression of the consciousness of an increasing diversity of not only topics, but also of modes and vehicles for communication, a diversity that only tends to increase with

technological innovation. What has enabled modern literary writing to meditate with such power on relationships between selves and societies is its capacity to mimic other material forms of communication, including other literary genres, and in so doing, re-contextualize them within a world that is meaningful for characters, narrators, and for the readers that observe or identify with them. This capacity for establishing order among heterogeneous means of communication runs on an axis from the Romantic to the Modernist period and corresponds to a growing valorization of the novel as a fluid, encompassing form and of a certain humanist individualism that provides a natural consistency or grounding for fictional worlds. In his 1799 "Dialogue on Poetry" – itself a heterogeneous text with dramatic personae, theatrical dialogue, lectures, and a letter – Friedrich Schlegel has one of his characters describe capaciousness as the chief characteristic of the modern novel: "I can scarcely imagine the novel but as a mixture of storytelling, song and other forms" and that "a theory of the novel would have to be itself a novel which would reflect imaginatively every eternal tone of the imagination and would again confound the chaos of the world" (102-03). Over a century later, in "Epic and Novel", Mikhail Bakhtin likewise describes the novel as a genre that is "plasticity itself" in its capability to absorb or mimic other genres, written and oral, literary and extra-literary (39). From Bakhtin's point of view, the novel can be theorized as a tension between the heterogeneity of forms and styles that comprise its materials, mimicking not a univocal "reality", but rather the multitudinous forms of culture that mediate that reality, and the desire to give some meaning to that heterogeneity. Bakhtin notes that the mimetic plasticity of the novel provides a way for thinking about the "extraordinary complexity" of "our era" (40). The imaginative capacity of literature thus comes to be

described as a way of reflecting on the points of view constructed by an immense variety of modes and genres of communication, literary or otherwise, while also ameliorating their blind spots. These descriptions of the novel as a kind of all-encompassing super-genre depend to a large degree on a parallel notion of imaginative writing as a kind of super-medium. Yet they also point towards the inherent parasitism upon which any such governing genre or medium depends. The novel that makes use of the epistle and the ballad, the sermon and the folk tale, the philosophical tract and the family genealogy, the newspaper report and the police dossier as incomplete modes of knowing or describing reality, rather than attaining an organic state that transcends these modes, instead retains something of its patchwork origins in other forms and genres, becoming a gesture towards its own openness or incompletion. Despite their dependence on textual heterogeneity, these classic theories of the novel posit a consistency for worlds made from words that becomes increasingly fragile as technological media increase in number and variety and gradually gain their own consistencies as divergent, quasi-autonomous systems. John Johnston describes media-inflected novels written in the 1980s by authors such as Thomas Pynchon and William Gibson as texts in which "writing functions less as a general medium, as it does for the nineteenth-century novel, than as a special kind of writing machine or means by which differences between media can be registered" (192). The decline of a general or dominant medium and corresponding genre that can claim to resolve the whole array of communicative modes into cohesive images points to a growing autonomy of technological means of perception and communication, as well as to a concomitant insecurity about the place of the human being and its capacity to define values that might effectively guide these means.

The sense of technological systems and apparatuses' growing complexity and autonomy, and the pressure this sense puts on the supposed capacities of human selves to construct meaningful worlds, has its strongest roots in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the period in which industrial capitalism attains a clear trajectory towards dominance and in which the related, but not identical, efflorescence of new media technologies reaches a critical mass.[3] The texts that I present share a number of concerns that illuminate the way imaginative writers responded to changes in media technology in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries. First, as I stated, on the most basic level these texts all carry traces of other media apparatuses and systems. Along with Smith and Bosanquet's *Spectators*, James's "A Bundle of Letters", "The Point of View", "The Jolly Corner", and "In the Cage" are all texts that attempt to construct fictions that can comprehend the effects of postal systems or of financial instruments, either through the adoption of epistolary narration or its suppression. Loy incorporates technologically enhanced or altered vision into her poems' imagery, altering the ground of what and who constitutes images within lyric. Fearing takes communications systems based on simultaneous electric or electronic transmission, particularly the radio, as key elements in the textures and plots of *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*, while also mimicking, in the fragmentation of their narratives, the distances and divisions between humans that these media both facilitate and, in their own way, overcome. This mimicry of media forms within the frameworks of literary convention points to an effort on the part of these writers to maintain literature's function as order-giving medium, while also pushing its very identity as a medium to its limits.

Second, even as these authors consciously inflect their writing with forms or modes derived from other media, they also render those other media as strange, unfamiliar, or as partial abstractions, and thus depict these technologies as working somewhat differently or as having the capacity to work somewhat differently than the way that they are normally perceived as working. Letters in James's "The Point of View", "A Bundle of Letters", and "The Jolly Corner" do not only appear as convenient vehicles for first-person narration, but also become markers of global monetary flows and of the dispersive movements of human selves that follow or are borne by those flows. The telegrams in James's *In the Cage* and the letters in Smith and Bosanquet's *Spectators* serve not only as narrative or plotting devices, but also as tokens for human control, or its lack, over technologized temporality. In Loy's early poetry, media technology is abstracted from particular instruments or apparatuses to become an indicator of the open-ended, denaturalized status of the embodied senses themselves. In Fearing's *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*, the electric and electronic systems of simultaneous communication that form the basis for modern communities appear in several forms, including electric lighting, the telephone, and the radio, and these in turn appear as unstable in their identities, capable of producing widely differing effects. This defamiliarization is, in part, an imperative for a modernist aesthetic that seeks to recast the objects of attention for human consciousness and perception, and it seems particularly necessary for ostensibly secondary objects such as media technologies, the everyday tendency of which, as I claimed earlier, is to withdraw their qualities and disappear. However, the defamiliarization of media at work in these texts also points towards a fundamental instability in the objects themselves, the sense that their very identity

harbors multiple tendencies and lines of development. At the same time, this strangeness or resistance to familiarity is used to indicate these technologies' quasi-autonomy from human comprehension.

Third, all of these texts depict a dispersion, fragmentation, or loss of control affecting both communities and the self that is tied to the quasi-autonomous operations of media technologies. James's "The Point of View", "A Bundle of Letters", and "The Jolly Corner" all depict characters who, out of desire or necessity, attempt to lead mobile, partitioned lives in dispersed locations that are drawn together by postal systems, transportation networks, and monetary flows. James's *In the Cage* and Smith and Bosanquet's *Spectators* both center on characters whose capacities for mobility and perception are tightly restricted by their identifications with socio-technological or geopolitico-technological mechanisms, producing uncertainty and a lack of direct contact with others. Fearing's *The Hospital* likewise depicts a community fragmented through the functional division of labor and knowledge facilitated by electric communication systems, while *Clark Gifford's Body* depicts a community dispersed in both space and time by the militarizing, mobilizing effects of the radio. In Loy's early poems, the open ended development of embodied vision via technological change has the effect of unfixing the self, establishing its entanglements with the surroundings that it perceives and describes, and setting it onto paths of becoming. In all of these texts, selves have their roots in a "natural" territory replaced by dispersive and fragmenting technological media and are confronted with the challenge of reestablishing a consistency and an autonomy within the terms of this technologically-mediated reality. For James, while endless flight from local constraints as a prelude to self-construction via the post seems to

offer one possibility, establishing this consistency ultimately means attenuating subjective points of view with a third-person perspective that has the authority to keep a stable world in place. For Smith and Bosanquet, a compensatory consistency can be found in the emphasis they place on response and exchange in the epistolary narrative. Fearing, seeing the technologization of society as rendering inadmissible a strong third-person narrative point of view, nevertheless uses *The Hospital* to explore whether a potential alliance between the persona of the novelist and the persona of the engineer might form an order-giving consciousness that can address modern social problems. He then returns more critically to this persona in *Clark Gifford's Body*, a novel that plunges into a nihilism of pure technological action with unforeseeable consequences. In contrast, Loy's take on the dispersive effects of media technology is largely positive, as these effects disrupt what she sees as the excessive homogeneity of the self in the lyric tradition; having abandoned one version of a stable self, consistency remerges in the self's reflexive attention to ways in which it is affected by its immersion in a changing environment.

Fourth, these texts make the effects of dispersion and the attempts to resynthesize a certain livable consistency in its stead problems of literary voice, evincing in particular a skepticism towards authorial voices that can stand outside of the text's characters, images, and events. James's "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View" are distinct from the rest of his oeuvre in their combination of epistolary narration with multiple first-person narrators. Smith and Bosanquet's *Spectators* is likewise formed around the transmission and response pattern of its two first-person epistolary narrators. Loy's early poetry, written in relation to the lyric tradition, likewise remains close to the notion of

vision attached to a particular self or selves at the core of a piece of writing, and her poems become descriptions of the ways in which that self, in its fluctuations and alterations, is deeply and multifariously engaged with the scenes that it sees and describes. Fearing's novels, like James's epistolary fictions, though carried to an even greater extreme, allow their stories to emerge from the voices of a number of first person narrators without the support or judgment of a guiding authorial voice. For all of these texts, the insistent return of speech in the first person is a critical component in their attempts to approach media technologies as reality-structuring apparatuses. Media technologies themselves take over the role of the observers that lend ultimate authority or consistency to the narratives or images that create literary worlds – a fundamentally dislocating shift away from an anthropomorphized authorial consciousness. As we have seen, Smith and Bosanquet compare the point of view of the omniscient, invisible author to the point of view taken from an airplane, an equivalency that not only serves to disenchant the dominant authorial voice and the world it constructs, but that, coming as it does in a novel that is haunted by the unrepresentable mechanized slaughter of the First World War occurring just beyond its margins, connects literary form to an anxiety about technology's indifference to human values or ends.

These novels, stories, and poems suggest ways that media apparatuses can shape the crises and encounters in which characters and speakers find themselves entangled, and influence the forms by which these events and perceptions are given expression in text. At the same time, by translating these forms or modes of mediation into printed literary texts, the works I analyze here all make use of a certain difference – not the distinction between fiction and reality, or the distinction between representation and

referent, but the distinction between modes of mediation that indicates that no single medium can be so totalizing in its construction so as to be taken for reality in itself. The lack of a naturally given coherence or consistency revealed by the diversity and fluctuation of modes of mediation thus forces a rethinking of the tension between an anthropocentric technological instrumentalism assumed by both individualist and collectivist projects and a technological determinism that sees both individual selves and social relations as epiphenomenal effects of technological apparatuses and systems. Rather than an opposition that would allow for a positive affirmation of technologies solely as instruments of human beings or of human beings as being determined by technologies, there are instead two entangled terms, the technological and the human, neither of which are stable or fixed in their essences or in their relationship to one another.

Literary texts have a special significance in the problem of how human beings relate to technology because the space of literature is one location where the fraught question of self and instrumentality is readily and reflexively given concrete form. Literary authorship implies, with few exceptions, the self-conscious construction of voices, personae, characters, and possible worlds, an endeavor that makes an implicit claim to exert control over the shape of a formed thing and of the texture and consistency of an imagined reality. Yet, at the same time, the act of producing literature depends on mediating systems over which authors can claim nothing but the loosest authority – grammatical structures and word meanings, the protocols governing genres and forms, the receptivity and attentiveness of an unknown and unknowable mind of a reader. In short, any given relationship between an author and a text, between a self and the

technologically-mediated alterity upon which it depends, is itself a reflection of a possible approach to the technological condition. The distinct formal strategies deployed by James, Loy, Fearing, and Smith and Bosanquet in the writings I present here are attempts to portray and work through this otherness in both literary production and in technologically mediated life in general. The conscious attempt to establish relationships between formal experimentation, the self, and newly emerging ways of life connect all of these texts to a broader modernism.

My description differs in this way from the most detailed and convincing delineation of a media-constructivist and determinist theory of literature, that of Friedrich Kittler. Kittler's account assumes that systems of communication form discrete structural epochs that, when taken from the point of view of human individuals, generally produce an experience of everyday life that is stable. Media technologies, in Kittler's view, form the a priori conditions for thought, communication, and perception, but that this is the case is naturalized and rendered essentially invisible or unconscious. In contrast, the texts that I analyze here show that in the literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century this smooth assimilation of technologies – including communications technologies – to human experience is not taken for granted, and that there is a lived, temporal dimension missing from his account by which humans are perfectly conscious of the disconnects that result from lives lived in the midst of ever changing media; thus we find the defamiliarization of media apparatuses and systems and the destabilization of the authority of voice. In the "1900" epoch Kittler delineates in both *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* and *Discourse Networks 1800 / 1900*, the incapacity to reconcile the various modes of communication and perception introduced by media technologies into a

hierarchy puts into question the notion of a unified, natural subject that serves as the agent or ground for the synthesis of a coherent world. Yet, the same process suggests the lack of a singularly coherent world or symbolic order which would form a determining ground or origin from which subjects emerge. Modern technology itself tends to introduce a rapid tempo of change in life, and to live entangled in technological modernity is to very often become acutely aware of the gaps and instabilities this change introduces. What defines the modern technological condition from an anthropocentric point of view, as much as the experience, delusional or not, of smoothly operating instrumentality, are ongoing and repeated crises in the sense of breaks or separations, of technologies as events that tear individuals or groups out of or allow them to escape from already set programs. Technological changes that re-orient human lives in the midst of their being lived, altering modes of earning a livelihood, frameworks and objects of perception and sensation, schematizations of time and space, and possibilities for and limitations on movement and expression, have become a part of the common experience of succeeding generations since the first industrial revolution. Though apparently mutually opposed, neither instrumentalist nor determinist views of technology are wrong; rather, their mutual insufficiency points towards an essential unpredictability that resides in modern technology, an incapacity to calculate outcomes or to clearly delineate chains of cause and effect. The trouble that technologies present for any straightforward notion of a self-possessed, instrumentalizing human agency is real, but it lies as much in the complexity and polymorphism of modern technologies as in their internal logics. As complex, material objects possessed of their own reality, technologies are carriers for tendencies that shape the imaginations, perceptions, and projected ends of the humans

who enter into relationships with them. At the same time, as products and bearers of social systems, they are themselves always "media" that become charged with the swarming, often incongruent, desires and intentions of an entire population of designers, marketers, and users; how a person engages with a technology is never free of what someone or something else has done, or is doing, or wants to do with it.

This instability and complexity points towards the problematic nature of the distinction between "old" and "new" media, and the importance of keeping in view what is new or emergent within the former. My first chapter thus begins by looking at Henry James's use of epistolary narration and of his depiction of the twinned, intertwined operations of both the post and of money – two old media that, like printed literature, continue to evolve and take on strange new forms. In James's era, the written letter is still a primary mode of telecommunication, though postal communication takes on the aspect of a global technology that is particularly pertinent to the mobile, literate, trans-Atlantic milieu in which James's stories are embedded. For much of the eighteenth century, the epistle or letter provides a model for framing the novel's direct narration of the self within a spatially complex society. By the nineteenth century, however, epistolary fiction largely disappears, supplanted by modes of indirect narration simulating a more neutral authorial point of view, while dispensing with the postal framing that simulated the materiality of the means of communication. While James is one of the practitioners of the novel who pushed this mode of writing towards a form of subjective self-consciousness in modernism at that century's end, he also produced two linked epistolary fictions, "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View", that make visible the postal relations tying together – and separating – the shifting global spaces of James's time and the strategies

of communication that are built around these relationships, creating fictional portraits of selves that are not oriented towards natural or immediate cognition or perception, but towards interactions with media technology. What also emerges from James's engagement with the postal medium is its entanglement with money as a globalizing medium, and I attempt to make clear this relationship through a reading of another, later tale, "The Jolly Corner", which shares many of the themes of "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View" while transposing them into a different narrative mode. Reading these stories points towards James's awareness of the ways in which media systems shape lives within this historical period and his awareness of the difficulties other media creates for novelistic convention and form.

Chapter Two continues to look at telecommunications, this time with the emphasis on temporality rather than space, in another of James's works, *In the Cage*, and in *Spectators*, a novel composed jointly by Clara Smith and Theodora Bosanquet. These two texts put technologies of the post at the center of crises of knowledge and put into question the capacity of the human being to grasp their operations. In my reading of *In the Cage*, I discuss the way the bias of the telegraph towards temporal compression is taken up in James's story as the undermining of human agency over communication by the otherness of technology, a loss that James attempts to consolidate in his own position as a novelist. Bosanquet, who had worked as James's amanuensis in the later portion of his life, would subsequently collaborate with Smith to establish a writing partnership based on dialog rather than dictation. In their novel *Spectators*, Smith and Bosanquet develop narrative personae for both sides of an exchange of letters. This novel's form thus deploys a specific aspect of the written letter that differentiates it from the novel and

novelistic authorship, namely that letters include within their horizon the possibility of a reply. Setting their novel in the weeks surrounding the beginning of the Frist World War, Smith and Bosanquet use the text's epistolary form to reflect the speed of events and the limitations imposed on movement and communication by the war in their characters' – and their narrative's – reliance on postal communications. In contrast to *In the Cage*, which stages the encounter between human and media as a struggle between non-human technology and a single authorial subjectivity that is expressed in the blending between James's own voice and that of his nameless telegraphist, the multi-authored epistolary form of *Spectators* portrays media technology as shaping and sustaining relationships between multiple personae, the paired narrators and paired authors, who depend upon the response of the other for the narrative to continue to unfold. In this way, the figures of writers working in concert within both the constrictions and possibilities of the postal medium become a model for working within the constructions and collapses that develop out of the otherness of both technology and humans.

In Chapter Three, I describe how Mina Loy deploys both visual technology and the philosophy of Henri Bergson in her early poetry. While Loy has been seen at times as working in a realm of linguistic abstraction, I argue that her poetry in fact contains a strong visual element and that the approaches to seeing and to the production of images in poetic language that she develops are important to her project to establish her own voice as a poet. In texts such as "The Dead" and "Three Moments in Paris", Loy presents vision as a fluid faculty that is nevertheless bound up with the reality of time, a position that in part draws on the fluctuations in perspective and scale presented by the new media of her era, as well as Bergson's critique of vision and his valorization of becoming as a

category necessary for an understanding of reality. Bergson emphasizes the difficulty, and importance, of the self's capacity to apprehend the flow of qualitative change that inheres in living beings, and he uses everyday vision as an example of a key faculty that blocks this apprehension; troubling the distinction between life and matter, however, media apparatuses point to the diversity and specificity of the available modes of apprehending reality through vision, while also indicating that these modes are contingent and changeable. For Loy, this capacity for vision to flow out of its own forms and identities while remaining supported by the durational self becomes important to her construction of the lyric speaker as a figure who contends with the ways in which perception emerges out of concrete, embodied operations that are themselves seen and affected by the vision and embodiment of others. By establishing at the core of the lyric poem a version of selfhood constituted in part through vision as a fluid, evolving faculty that both shapes and is shaped by its surroundings, Loy is able to differentiate her own poetic practice from that of a modernism centered on an invisible, controlling subject of vision founded in masculine experience.

Chapter Four looks at how media systems form and transform communities in two novels by Kenneth Fearing, *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*. In these novels, Fearing uses a series of shifting first-person narrators, a technique of narrative fragmentation and flattening that I argue points away from the individual psychologies of the characters and towards the structures of the electric and electronic media systems that constitute the relationships between them. In both of these novels, Fearing asks how these structures, apparently existing beyond the agency of any individual, can be effectively altered or changed in accordance with a plan, program, or goal. This question itself has a

bearing on the position of poets and novelists, who, according to Fearing's essay "Reading, Writing, and the Rackets", are being eclipsed by the modes of communication instantiated by technological media such as film, radio, and television that themselves decenter the possibility of individual agency. The idea of the literary writer as a figure who uses printed texts to actively intervene in the system of language, and, by altering it, reconstruct the reality that it mediates, Fearing suggests, is exposed as untenable when writing is viewed as only a subset of media. *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*, then, ask the question of what kind of figure, if any, might intervene in electric or electronic systems of mass communication that seem to produce stable social spaces, but which also bring everyone within those spaces into close, potentially volatile, contact. In both of these novels, events, or deviations from stable states are created by characters with opaque psychologies and potentially irrational intentions who are nevertheless able to gain access to the media systems in question, resulting the potential unmaking of the social space that communication generates.

Chapter One

"Even as a letter through the post-office":

Epistolary Narrative and the Post in Henry James

Epistolary fiction, though a dominant literary form in the previous century, at the end of the nineteenth century appears as an archaism. What, then, does it signify that Henry James wrote two lengthy epistolary stories during the 1880s? These two texts, "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View", are worth looking at precisely because their narrative mode is at once out of place in their period and, at the same time, calls attention to James's concerns with the place of the human in the space of globalizing modernity generated through media technologies. "Telegraphs", as Richard Salmon notes, "appear on a regular basis in James's international fiction", providing "an interesting reminder of the material-technological basis on which the cultural interchange of this fiction was able to thrive", though, Salmon argues, this technological substrate only receives a full treatment, and only on a local rather than international basis in James's later novella, *In the Cage* ("Henry James in the Public Sphere" 464). The telegraph, however, comprises only a subset of the postal system (though one with its own important distinctive qualities, which I will address in Chapter Two) addressed more generally in "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View". The extent to which the international themes in James's fictions hinge on postal communications, I argue, becomes clear in these texts, which present their fictional worlds not as constructions of human sensibility or consciousness, but of technological mediation.

This technological mediation of the mobile, spatially-scattered self uses the written word as its immediate material support, but also depends on a globe-spanning postal logistics, a logistics which, in turn, is connected to the fluidity and mobility of yet another medium, that of money. In this chapter, I demonstrate how James's epistolary fictions depict characters as selves that are more or less aware that their lives are lived through nexuses of writing, postal logistics, and money in its various forms. Freedom of action, expression, or perception is thus always conditioned by a network of technologies that construct a global yet fragmentary space. Although James's characters in these stories adopt different ways of reflecting on and operating within these conditions, demonstrating that a range of possibilities for action is open to them, a general type of subjectivity emerges in these texts that is, first, caught up the endless, dispersive movements of media and that, second, lacks the certainty of a stable, settled world that gives support or meaning to these movements. The narrative form used to depict this subjectivity likewise pushes towards a perspectivism that emphasizes discontinuity, as narration is split between numerous characters and always emerges from the concrete context provided by posted letters that are themselves fragments of absent exchanges.

James's corpus is large and full of experiments in narrative and genre. While the epistolary fictions "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View" comprise only a small and generally neglected corner of that corpus, I believe that they establish a historically-located relationship between narration, exteriority, and consciousness that differs from his other works, and, can in turn present those works in a new light. Thus, I conclude this chapter with a reading of a related yet very different text, James's story "The Jolly Corner", so as to see more clearly what is revealed and what is lost in the epistolary

experiment. For James, the importance of authorial consciousness that can be aligned with a character's interiority ultimately wins out as the means of ordering narrative. This has the effect of attributing to human thought and action the power of establishing centers and consistency for fictional worlds, while obscuring the possibility, opened in his epistolary narratives, that such a capacity is attenuated by the autonomy of technological means.

James, Technology, and the Self

The sense that there is always something or someone else beyond what is immediately present or familiar forms an inescapable background to the style of life for James and many of his contemporaries. James himself often relishes this sense of incompleteness, of an unexhausted existence beyond the particular territory with which a particular self has become associated. In an 1888 essay on London, James praises the city, in which he had by this time settled, for this very sense of endlessness:

> Practically, of course, one lives in a quarter, in a plot; but in imagination and by a constant mental act of reference the accommodated haunter enjoys the whole…He fancies himself, as they say, for being a particle in so unequalled an aggregation; and its immeasurable circumference, even though unvisited and lost in smoke, gives him the sense of a social, an intellectual margin. (*English Hours* 19)

James here values the "margin" of the unknown as much as he values the immediately present, and, for him, the global metropolis is the zone in which this feeling of

unexhausted possibility can be most readily attained. In particular, this sense emanates from the infrastructure of London that he remarks upon his first arrival in the city: "The immensity was the great fact, and that was a charm; the miles of housetops and viaducts, the complication of junctions and signals through which the train made its way to the station had already given me the scale" (*English Hours* 15). The fascination London holds for James derives less from a cultural essence or spirit that adheres to the soil of the place than from its central place within the late-nineteenth century global order, its importance as a critical node in networks of communication. The sense of "complication", of "junctions and signals" that point beyond the immediate horizon, become metonyms for a larger, interconnected space.

Art, for James, is a way of converting this sense of expansive margins into a certain order, of organizing a standpoint from which endlessness can be explored. He describes this delimiting artifice in the New York Edition preface to *Roderick Hudson*: "Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw…the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so" (*Roderick Hudson* vii). Beyond the logical or psychological implications of this statement, the world James inhabits and describes in the late-nineteenth century is one where it becomes increasingly apparent that relations, in a tangible sense, "stop nowhere", as communications and transportation technologies come to produce a dense, interdependent mesh of flows of information, money, and people. That James responds to this situation not only by drawing "circles", but also by stepping out of them to embrace the endlessness of "relations", has been noted by scholars who approach James as a writer who rendered himself vulnerable or open to "the new". In *The Trial of Curiosity:*

Henry James, William James and the Challenge of Modernity, Ross Posnock argues that Henry James, especially in his "non-canonical" later works of cultural criticism and "urban emersion", a response to the changing American landscape and mass immigration, engages the category of curiosity and "practices a politics of non-identity" (16). For James, the "practice" of curiosity, Posnock claims, quoting from *The American Scene*, is to look "over the alien shoulder…seeing, judging, building, fearing, reporting with the alien sense" (qtd. in Posnock 21). Henry Carlos Rowe likewise makes a claim for this tendency towards exploratory capaciousness in James's work by making "the new" a central category. Arguing against the claims, both pro- and con-, that James' significance as a writer lies in the difficulty or sustained concentration of his prose, Rowe makes the case that "more than any other writer of his generation, James attempted to respond to social and political transformations that often baffled and confused him" ("Henry James and Globalization" 286) and that, while these responses are "often contradictory, sometimes confused", they show James as "always intelligent and curious about the modern world that changed dramatically in his lifetime" (287). For Posnock and Rowe, this curiosity and anxious fascination with the "alien", the "other", or "the new" cuts against James' reputation as a conservative aesthete who is willing to address only a limited range of topics and becomes an argument for the author's continued topicality in literary studies and pedagogy. Rowe's presentism seeks analogies between James's turn of the century and our own, and thus appeals to two topics so broad – "modernity" and "globalization" – that they are difficult to pin down. Nevertheless, these are important concepts in James's stories, to which economic fluctuation and spatial mobility always form the background, and they can be better understood by looking at concrete examples

of communications technologies such as the letter and the post. In James, these technologies reveal selves that exist in dispersion, dislocated from any particular territory, and that instead must find ways to define themselves within and through material connections and flows.

The exploratory openness that Posnock and Rowe identify in James's writing is always tempered by an acute need to maintain precise distinctions, and to this end, James often found "circles", as well as "quarters" and "plots", necessary for defining and constructing a self, particularly in relation to his own vocation. In the same 1888 essay on London, James describes moments in which the noise and anonymous vastness of the metropolis impressed him as a "huge general blackness…hideous, vicious, cruel, and above all overwhelming; whether or no she was 'careful of the type,' she was as indifferent as Nature herself to the single life" (*English Hours* 18). The very endlessness that provides a "margin" for the "other" and for the "new" also threatens to engulf and dissolve the self. For James, the "type", or identity, that might provide him, as an "individual", with some measure of protection from formless indifference is that of the professional author of imaginative texts. The span of James's career saw a growing emphasis on publishing as an international industry, on popular journalism as the arbiter of the public sphere, and on professionalism and the positive sciences as modes of authority; scholarly works by Michael Anesko, Mark Seltzer, Sharon Cameron, Richard Salmon, and Peter Rawlings have explored the business and textual strategies James deploys to construct and define his position as a professional novelist and imaginative artist in a culture historically defined by the authority of, and over, writing.[4] By detailing how James's strategies succeeded in establishing the power of authorship, even as they

shaped his fiction, these critical approaches analyze, but also to some extent accept, the privileged position James sought to define for the author and novelist, making writing into an instrument to be mastered in the service of clearly delineated ends. My own approach to James's writing through his generally-ignored epistolary fictions reveals a James who is far less certain of the capacity to control the medium of the written word as a means of creating desired effects and who reflects this by fracturing these stories into the direct voices of multiple, conflicting narrators, which are then burdened by an added layer of fragility and contingency by their dependence on fragile papers circulating within an impersonal global system of addresses. James's epistolary narrators cannot but exist as writers, and they, like the professional authors of books and articles, have ends in mind when they turn to writing as a technological means. Yet what emerges from these stories is not an image of writing selves as cohesive, well-defined entities, using tools to draw tidy circles and make plots, but rather as beings caught up in endless movement through an "anonymous vastness". Likewise, the overarching narratives of "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View", existing as they do only in the smaller narratives of individual letters removed from a sequence of responses or continuations, are themselves fragmentary, arbitrary, and incomplete. By giving his narratives over to a certain epistolary logic and following that logic to its conclusion, James reveals an uncomfortable continuity between these narrators who are largely dependent upon technological systems and his own carefully constructed image as a novelist who has mastered the techniques of his vocation so thoroughly that they have become extensions of his being.

James's epistolary and postal fictions point towards an imperative to exert and multiply the self over extended spaces defined by the reach of communications and transportation networks. They describe a style of life lived underway and in an accommodation, at times liberating, at times disorienting, with the "complication" of technologies of transportation and communication that support it. Writing, and by extension the literate, bureaucratic, spatially-extended nineteenth-century culture it supports, was itself in the process of being transformed by technological change, and the tense interplay between openness and a defensive self-definition appears in James's relationship to these transformations. James's lifespan, from 1843 to 1915, saw an explosion of technological media that, by the turn of the twentieth century, had widely expanded the modes by which representations could be transmitted and transformed, making writing into one medium among many and, by doing so, rendering it contingent and denaturalizing it. John Guillory puts the problem of media-multiplicity in this era succinctly: "We can hypothesize that it was only the proliferation of mediums in the twentieth century, and the fierce competition among them, that forced the fact of medium into full visibility" (56). Comparisons between modes of storage and transmission bring about awareness of the inherent biases and lacks of each medium. This is particularly true for the medium of phonetic writing, which, as Friedrich Kittler argues, had been positioned throughout the modern era in the West as a universal medium for storage and transmission, up until the second half of the nineteenth century, when "the technological differentiation of optics, acoustics, and writing exploded Gutenberg's writing monopoly" (*Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* 16). Writers of James's generation were thus forced to see the technologies of phonetic writing, the hand wielding the pen and the printing press,

as only possibilities among an expanding array of choices for storing and transmitting

representations, and thus to adopt strategies that maintain a certain authority for the

writer, including writers of fiction like James. James's dual, general responses to

complexity and change – openness and curiosity in practice on one hand, strategies of

authorial self-definition on the other – can be seen in concrete terms in his response to the

challenge presented to writing by technology. Among literary authors, James was a

relatively early adopter of the typewriter as a writing instrument, as in the later part of his

career he took up the practice of dictating to an amanuensis sitting at the machine,

leaving him free to walk around the room. While embracing the new technological

medium, James also took care to subordinate it to the central authorial consciousness. As

Mark Seltzer explains, James saw the resulting alignment between thought, speech, and

instantaneous transcription as a particularly efficient mode of translating mind into text

and, despite the relaying of his words through both another person and a machine, James

always "insisted on the *transparency* or *im*mediacy of such technologies of composition"

(*Bodies and Machines* 195). Kittler, too, identifies James's practice of dictation as an

evasion of the materiality of writing to achieve a disembodied authorial consciousness,

moving "from style to 'free, unanswered speech', thus to 'diffusion' or flight of ideas"

(*Discourse Networks 1800-1900* 356). At this late point in his career, James thus resolves

the competition between media by claiming that they are frictionless, invisible extensions

of the circle formed by the super-medium of the author's mind and its incarnation in the

novel. This attitude, however, tends to elide the heavily mediated connections between

self and world that shaped James's experience of the individual dwelling in modern space

as a "particle in so unequalled an aggregation". Media both open passages and form

screens; as Guillory notes, their competitive multiplicity raises the awareness that they are anything but frictionless incarnations or modes of a single human mental substance. This sense of "immediacy" and "diffusion" of authorial consciousness is an idealization on James's part, however, and the interdependence between thought, bodies, and media that this idealization represses returns in the scene of writing. Seltzer, drawing on the testimony of James's long-time amanuensis, Theodora Bosanquet, places this embodiment in the rhythmic repartee James developed with the sound of the machine, in the absence of which he seems to have struggled to order his thoughts (*Bodies and Machines* 196). Kittler likewise describes how, after a series of strokes near the end of his life that left him often uncertain of his location or identity, James nevertheless continued to speak his delirious thoughts to Bosanquet and her typewriter, as "only the conditioned reflex of pure, intransitive dictation remained intact. Writing in the age of media has always been a short circuit between brain physiology and communication technologies – bypassing humans or even love" (*Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* 216). For Bosanquet, the traces of an idiosyncratic "style" can still be detected behind "the flight of ideas" in James's delirious, meaningless speech: "'It is a heart-breaking thing to do, though, there is the extraordinary fact that his mind *does* retain the power to frame perfectly characteristic sentences'" (quoted in Fred Kaplan 564). Writing here becomes mediated by a whole series of automatisms, from James's automatic response to the sound of the typewriter mechanism, to the grammatical and syntactic habits that continue to structure "characteristic sentences" in the face of a consciousness's dissolution, all of which put into question the unity of the author's personality and control over the medium.

The effects of the materiality of writing technologies and the resistance or support they present to consciousness stretch beyond the typewriter, however, and actually appear more overtly in a neglected corner of James's oeuvre, where they take on deeper resonance with James's overarching themes. I contend that James's decision to adopt the epistolary mode of narration in the early 1880s, a full decade before he began to employ typewritten dictation and a century after novelistic narration through letters had ceased to be a "natural" choice, provides an interesting counterpoint to the James who, as Seltzer describes, valorizes the unity of the author's consciousness and the medium of writing, and thus works to make the fact of the medium itself disappear. Epistolary fiction makes the medium of the written letter visible, drawing attention to the material support and protocols for a particular mode of communication. To use the epistolary mode as a structure for composing fiction at the end of the nineteenth century, when it had been out of fashion for nearly a hundred years, is to call further attention to the medium it imitates, and to insist that the reader wonder at its selection. The titles of the novellas are themselves descriptions of the form and the media support it imitates, rather than descriptions of content: "A Bundle of Letters" refers to the supporting medium of the epistolary narrative, while "The Point of View" uses visual metaphor to refer to the first-person perspectival framing that the letter-form provides. Both "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View" take up the theme of international travel, hinging on the connections, disjunctions, and conflicts that emerge from the mobile, transatlantic culture to which James belonged, and, by choosing epistolary narration, James foregrounds the ways selves are constructed through spatially extended interconnections in a way that is omnipresent but often submerged in his other works.

By drawing attention to the material basis for communication, these epistolary texts explicitly point towards the tension between the human self and its technological supports that would later characterize James's relationship to the typewriter. Bringing out the "fact of the medium", per Guillory, in its non-transparency and non-instrumentality puts into question the place of the unitary human being as the center of communicative practices and thus the coherence of concepts of communication itself that frame it as an intentional act that transports something – a picture, an idea, a feeling – from one mind to another. As Niklas Luhmann points out in his essay "How Can the Mind Participate in Communication?", any given system of communication, whatever its underlying substrate, proceeds via its own internal operations and is partially closed in relation to other systems: "Humans cannot communicate. Not even their brains can communicate. Not even their conscious minds can communicate. Only communication can communicate" (169). Technological systems of communication can thus be viewed non-anthropocentrically, via their distinctions from one another rather than their integration into a whole as extensions of the human being with the mind as its privileged center; indeed, for Luhmann, the integrated entity described as a "human being" is itself a nominal product of the systems of communication that offer this integrating description (183). A systems-approach to technological media shows how the intentions attributed to the relationship between the human and the technologies in which it "participates" are the productions of the descriptions of an observer. Bernard Siegert, in his book *Relays*, adopts a version of this systems-approach to the relationship between literature and the postal system, asking how various implementations of the post produce descriptions of writing, communicating subjects. For Siegert, the technology of the postal system in the

eighteenth century inculcates a sense of the "'naturalness' of writing" (*Relays* 16),

generalizing the notion that individual human beings can communicate with each other

on a free selection of topics via marks on paper as though their bodies were present in the

same space, and producing, by extension, the description of modern literature as a

transaction between humanist subjects centered on autonomous consciousnesses. The

position of observation that describes writing and literature thus, according to Siegert,

becomes questionable in the second half of the nineteenth century with the introduction

of industrial – steam and electric powered – modes of transportation and communication

that fundamentally transform the "natural" relationship of the human body to space and

time, producing an array of shocks and dislocations. Under these conditions, the

"otherness" of communication, whether postal or literary, becomes itself a topic of

description. Siegert's description of literature as a subset of the media system of postal

communication makes sense in regard to these two novellas, where James's characters

are not speakers, seers, and thinkers, as in many of his other texts, but first and foremost

writers who live their everyday lives, as depicted here at least, through a media praxis

within a network of addresses, always oriented elsewhere – the subjects of a global

communications system. Living as they do, perched somewhat precariously between the

humanist-transitive and machinic-intransitive regimes of communication that Siegert

describes, the problem of how one can communicate with another by writing is a

reflexive question for every character in these stories as they attempt to construct an

image of a self or of a world for others who are preeminently absent.

 At both its most general and at its most concrete levels, the otherness or

unknowability that fascinates and terrifies James, and by proxy, his characters, has a

specifically technological dimension, and it is the letter, the uncanny stand-in for missing

elements of human presence and co-presence – consciousness, face, gesture, voice,

duration, mobility – that gives this technological dimension a palpability in writing. The

letter is a key object for James's dramatizations of ties in space and duration in time – the

visible materialization of a certain presence in absence that enables and destabilizes these

categories by calling attention to the *other* places that establish spatial boundaries and

thus spatiality as such and to the *other* times that establish temporal distinctions and thus

temporality as such. The letter has a body, though it is a different body than that of the

human being taken as the material support for voice and gesture, even for such

idealizations as characters in a novel. Like the vital traveler, the epistle is quick, defined

by mobility. Like the corpse, it is unresponsive. This "like" but "different than" is

important, because the material support for the written epistle forms a chiasmic structure

in its relationship to the body as material support for gesture and speech. The mobile

letter or letter in transit, enveloped in its shrouds, boxes, or bags, maintains the silence of

the grave. It does no more, and no less, than establish a formal trajectory and relationship

between spatial co-ordinates – which are, of course, also senders and receivers,

addressers and addressees, writers and readers, and, thus, nodes constitutive of social

relationships. Postal systems not only to give mobility to writing but also protect it from

its own undisciplined state, substituting addresses (which are commands) and postage-

stamps (which are promises) for the contents of the text itself, giving it a supplementary

identity. Shoshana Felman observes that James's tale *The Turn of the Screw* turns on "a

chain of letters" that "relay each other or give rise to each other, by means of the very

silences, the very *ellipses* that constitute them…the *address* is the only thing that is

readable, sometimes the only thing that is *written*" (143-144). Repression of the "content"

of writing (or consciousness), to protect it from its own incoherence, reciprocally

constitutes systems of mediation and of logistics. By eliding the letters' contents in *The*

Turn of the Screw, James may present readers with an allegory for signification in the

Lacanian unconscious, as Felman argues, but what becomes clear is that he is also more

generally presenting a structure of formal movements and relations that exceed avowed

contents or meanings.

Vital, but without the memory of its origin that would render it responsive, able

only to speak itself by establishing a relationship in the moment of its movement, writing

is a form of life that, as the character Louis Leverett writes in James's "A Bundle of

Letters", lives least dangerously insofar as it passes "mechanically and

insensibly…through the post-office" ("A Bundle of Letters" 497). Yet James's

characters' struggles with meaning in written communication are counterpointed by the

fact that they are also already enmeshed in monetary systems over which they have even

less control. Leverett's description of life lived through the post as replacing conscious

being with forgetful mobility, of replacing contents with addresses, moves the medium of

the letter closer to the medium of money, the formalizing function of which requires that

it always forget its own history and start over again where it is. In 1900, Georg Simmel

described this tendency and its importance for contemporary experience:

> There is no more striking symbol of the completely dynamic character of the
>
> world than that of money. The meaning of money lies in the fact that it will be
>
> given away. When money stands still, it is no longer money according to its

specific value and significance. The effect that it occasionally exerts in a state of

repose arises out of an anticipation of its further motion. Money is nothing but the

vehicle for a movement in which everything else that is not in motion is

completely extinguished. It is, as it were, an *actus purus*; it lives in continuous

self-alienation from any given point and thus forms the counterpart and direct

negation of all being in itself. (*The Philosophy of Money* 511)

Money is itself only through movement. In its essence, money does not exist as a point,

but rather as the movement between points. For Simmel, money becomes a "symbol" of

movement and of freedom from essences, the exemplary object of modern life and the

emblem for subjects who are trained to identify themselves with its capacities for

movement, renewal, and transformation. Like the post, money is thus a technology and a

medium that founds a certain capacity for producing the self who lives beyond a

delimited territory, who has access to what James calls a "margin". Indeed, the two

mediums work hand-in-glove in James's texts. The telegraphist of James's novella *In the

Cage* remarks on the place of the post in financial transactions, stunned by the "money

her fine friends were able to spend to get still more, or even to complain to fine friends of

their own that they were in want" (*In the Cage* 848). Little investments in telegrams call

out to greater flows, money becoming communication, which, in turn, returns as money.

The liveliness or "dynamic character" of money as a medium, both in its movement and

in its self-generative power as capital, lies in a reciprocal relationship with the postal

media that, through investment, it calls into being and that, in turn, structure its addresses,

lending it speed and spatial extension.

The dispersed selves that appear in James's epistolary fictions are thus effects of this intertwining between monetary flows and postal composition. Like the capacity of postal technologies to reshape time and space, the inherent dynamic mobility of money is constitutive to the globalizing capitalism that underwrites much of James's international fiction, where the bodily locations of capital's owners are kept compartmentalized, generally on separate continents, from sites of investment and reproduction, which are then linked via the flows of communication rendered possible by postal technologies. Karl Marx's prosopopoeia is pertinent here: "Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more the more labour it sucks" (342). Expended labor becomes a certain type of money, capital, which establishes itself as death or "the negation of all being in itself" become dynamic, something undead: Capital is money as a form of inorganic "life", a certain kind of automaton that continues to work *on* some of the living, calling them to be present at the site of work and absorbing this living presence into its own, which in turn enables capital to work *for* or in the place of others, facilitating and even promoting their absence; capital after all, just like wage labor, already assumes the absence of its owners' beings and personalities from the commodities their investments produce. In this figure of the vampire that excludes human particularities in favor of specific operational tendencies also resides a figure for modern technology; the figure of capital's reproduction as vampire, which exists in an uncertain space between life and death, is also a figure for the troubling non-anthropocentric potential of technological systems in general, which through their efficacy produce and reproduce their so-called "users" according to the internally consistent parameters which define their own operations and without a necessary reference to other values. Like all

"undead", the monetary surplus of vampiric capital is especially qualified to cross spatial boundaries and forget its origins; as a technique, capital's trick of reproducing itself is an arrangement and operation that can be iterated, in some variation, apparently indefinitely, and the mobile, globalizing characters of James's fiction are reflections of this particular arrangement; their movement and dynamism are doubles of the movement and dynamism of money. At the same time, this dynamism calls into being and becomes dependent upon the logistical arrangements of long-distance communications that support these movements.

Money and the post thus reinforce each other, substituting the differences established by their own status as media technologies for older forms of spatial difference and working together to facilitate unprecedented mobility for some individuals, who may now conduct affairs and live their lives in numerous cities on multiple continents. In 1875, four years prior to the time of the events narrated in "A Bundle of Letters", the World Postal Union was created by international treaty, allowing mail to pass between all European countries and the United States at a more or less flat postage rate. Within a few years, this treaty came to include Japan, Brazil, Persia, Egypt, Turkey, British India and most of the European colonial territories in Africa and Asia. In 1878, the World Postal Union was renamed the Universal Postal Union.[5] The transcontinental epistolary strategies of one of the characters in James's "A Bundle of Letters", Miranda Hope, depend on the extent to which her "money holds out" (533), and they are thus abetted by this policy change.[6] as are, presumably, James's own epistolary strategies for maximizing his income by negotiating with publishers in markets on two continents.[7] The re-designation of the "World Postal Union" as "Universal" points toward a tension in the

terminology of Western philosophy that Russ Castronovo argues emerged during the late-nineteenth century. In *Beautiful Democracy*, his book on the considerations of the universal claims of taste made by formal aesthetics in turn-of-the-century academic discourse and their relationship to the progressive or revolutionary social practices of the same period, Castronovo argues that it is helpful to

> recontextualize the universal as a global discourse. The global materializes the universal, converting this philosophical idea into a historical phenomenon…the global does not replace the universal, and yet these two locations remain joined together by associations of wholeness and unity that mean different things to each (3-4).

In the title of the "Postal Union", the seemingly anachronistic substitution of "Universal" for "World" actually plays out a dialectical transformation in semantics: "Universal", as an abstract concept of transcendence in Western metaphysics is initially rejected in favor of "world", a seemingly more tangible, secular figure for "wholeness and unity" that takes finitude into account; the "universal" returns, however, to sublate "the world" which has meanwhile lent concreteness to an abstraction; as Castronovo, says, "the global does not replace the universal…the global materializes the universal". The switch to "universal" that designates the moment at which European colonial territories joined the Postal Union transforms anachronism into futurism, from a description into a claim on both the territory of the future and on future territories: In 1878, the year of this change, the brutal European "scramble" to stake colonial claims in Africa – future colonies that

would "join" the global network of the Postal Union – was still a few years from beginning in earnest. This point can be brought closer to bear on Henry James via a passage from his brother, William. Addressing "The One and the Many" in his 1907 lectures on "Pragmatism", a course devoted to the pragmatic revaluation of the concepts of Western metaphysics, William James makes the political, social and technological processes that we would today call "globalization" into a model for thinking about the unity and disunity of parts and wholes:

> Human efforts are daily unifying the world more and more in definite systematic ways. We found colonial, postal, consular, commercial systems, all the parts of which obey definite influences that propagate themselves within the system but not to facts outside of it. The result is innumerable little hangings-together of the world's parts within the larger hangings-together, little worlds, not only of discourse but of operation, within the wider universe…From this 'systemic' point of view, therefore, the pragmatic value of all these definite networks actually and practically exist. Some are more enveloping and extensive, some less so; they are superposed upon each other; and between them all they let no individual elementary part of the universe escape. (545)

This passage demonstrates how it is possible to characterize the "pragmatic", outcome based philosophy as a shift from "logic" to "logistics". The image of thought William James describes supplants the philosophical discourse invoking logic as a timeless, abstract formalism with logistics, or "definite networks" of "operations" "that actually

and practically exist" – activities that take the materiality of time into account. He adds that "everything that exists is influenced in someway by something else, if you can only pick the way out rightly" (545). Picking the way out rightly, not as a divine spectator, but through material operations that generate and subsume "hangings together, little worlds" so as to let "no individual elementary part of the universe escape" is precisely the task of a postal logistics that assigns addresses to entities and enacts relations between them.

"Colonial, postal, consular, commercial systems…definite networks…" As Rowe suggests in "Henry James and Globalization", the mutually intricated becoming-global of Western politics, Western economics, and Western communication networks – which, as Castronovo, argues, is also their violent universalization – underwrites William's brother Henry's dramatizations of travel. The logistics of postal relationships and their reach, concomitant with fiscal capital as undead automaton, enable the entire travel theme in James's fiction, which marks the use of space to establish degrees of possibility or constraint that affect the translation of the "universal" category of freedom into the freedom of particular individuals. For James's American travelers and *arrivistes*, money has been made in an *other* time and continues to be made in an *other* place. The letter and the telegraph tie these characters to the sites of production that enable their flight to sites of leisure, consumption, education and spectacle. The more successful, such as Christopher Newman in *The American*, George Littlemore and Nancy Headway in *The Siege of London*, the Dossons in *The Reverberator*, Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove* and Adam Verver in *The Golden Bowl*, draw on dead (past) intellectual labor that has been transformed into a body of capital sufficiently great to "work" on its own, using borrowed bodies under delegated management to produce flows of income across the

Atlantic that require minimal day to day attention or intellectual labor in the present on the part of the body of capital's owner. James's fiction is also peopled with less successful variations on this nomadic type, usually women and children excluded from work in the middle-class economy, whose labor consists precisely in minimizing or slowing the consumption of their slender capital through a forced nomadism and for whom leisure, consumption, education and spectacle are tenuous and desperate compensations: The Rooths and the child-like Gabriel Nash in *The Tragic Muse*, the Churches in *The Pension Beaurepas*, Charlotte Stant in *The Golden Bowl*, and Miss Frush in "The Third Person" are all depicted moving from pension to pension or household to household in search of those points in unstable geography of global capital where they can, for a moment, find favorable exchange rates and lower costs of living.[8]

In James's era, the circular letter of credit is the specific instrument of writing and finance that abets this mobility, allowing money in one location to have effects in another. Nineteenth-century travelers would carry letters from their home banks on their person promising to reimburse a foreign bank that advances cash to the holder. As one American travel magazine from the period advised travelers, this symbolic representation of the mobility of money serves as the passcode that enables the mobility and freedom of an embodied self:

Never go abroad without a letter of credit. Your standing, financially and otherwise, is fairly attested by this circular money letter… this document is often taken in lieu of a passport… even in Berlin, during the exciting days of 1883 to 1885, we found no trouble to satisfy the police concerning ourselves, armed as we

were only with our letter of credit from Brown Brothers & Co. ("Pleasure Travel

and Resorts" 476)

In this passage, the documentation of identity and the documentation of a financial

promise become one, a unity that causes Louis Levrett to write in James's "A Bundle of

Letters" about his mystification over "how the machinery of selection operates" in the

Parisian pension he has made his abode (499). In an earlier epoch, the name designating a

person as the addressee of a lineage had been the mechanism of selection. Paraphrasing

Friedrich Schiller, Georg Simmel notes in *The Philosophy of Money* that prior to the

nineteenth century, "credit transactions seem to reflect *a greater distinction*…noble

characters pay with who they are and not with what they do" (480). Historically,

hierarchical identity, or "blue blood", is the support that backs credit's promise. Simmel

argues, however, that by his and James's own era, "credit has become an impersonal

organization and trust has lost its specific personal character" (480). As the passage from

Outing suggests, the reciprocally determining relation between "distinction" and "credit"

is altered: Identity no longer backs credit; instead credit, theoretically purchasable by all,

backs identity.[9] Concentrations of capital, real or perceived, and the paperwork that

indexes them, become insignia that allow bodies to move across boundaries or dwell

freely in territories. This is to some extent liberating, breaking down immobile

hierarchies that evaluate persons by blood or birth, but it also renders evaluations

transitory and dependent on complex economic and logistical systems. Social evaluations

of others, and in their reflection, evaluations of the self, are instead increasingly based on

external and transitory technologies like the letter of credit, which, as James describes, also become sites of conflict and anxiety.

For James's travelers, the bank and the post-office are overlapping spaces, a shared address, and their identities as nodes in networks of finance and communication are constructed out of this overlap. In his 1878 essay "Americans Abroad", James uses the scene of travelers drawing money against circular letters of credit and collecting their mail as an opportunity to write an impressionistic sociology of Americans in Europe:

> A good way to get a collective impression of them [Americans in Europe] is to go and sit for half an hour in the waiting-room of any European banker upon whom Americans hold letters of credit. During certain hours of the morning our compatriots swarm, getting their drafts cashed and asking for their letters – those letters which they apparently suspect the banker's clerks of a constitutional indisposition to surrender. (790)

The bank waiting room is the shared social space for Americans traveling in Europe, where they congregate to draw money against their "letters of credit", as well as to collect other letters, both business and personal. For James, this is a site of spectacle, facilitating the observation of his compatriots' behavior and manners but also bringing to visibility the international postal ties, fiscal and personal, that bind them to the United States. These relations are what can be seen and read, not the texts of the letters and drafts as such. The postal system itself becomes partially visible in its opacity – appearing in the blank spaces of the margins because it *is* the margins – where the travelers' dependence

on it and lack of control over it manifests as a paranoia projected onto its most immediate

representatives and extensions, the "banker's clerks". *Logos* runs up against a certain

logistics: Texts that are ambiguously illegible – illegible perhaps because they have never

been written, or perhaps because they are being withheld by a capricious delivery system

"with a constitutional indisposition to surrender" them – are displaced into a certain

legibility as a social text for the "sophisticated spectator" (790). This "spectator" is

positioned as an apologist for the Americans, who make of themselves a "spectacle" that

he concedes is "not gratifying" (790):

> He says that in America 'everyone travels,' and that the people at the bankers are
>
> much better than the corresponding class in Europe, who languish in downtrodden
>
> bondage and never have even a chance to show themselves to the world. The
>
> explanation is highly sufficient, for it is very certain that for many Americans a
>
> journey to Europe is the reward of a period of sordid toil. (790)

This claim for the difference between the "corresponding" European and American

classes, which James makes into the observation of a third-person surrogate "spectator",

shows a concrete moment in the process of "one-way globalization" or asymmetrical

economic development for which Rowe identifies James as a prefiguring witness ("Henry

James and Globalization" 287). It also resonates with Marx's figure of vampiric capital

by marking the difference between bodies at killing or "sordid" labor in one locale and

the enjoyment or "reward" of the surplus from that labor in another. Although James

(speaking through the aesthetic stance of the "sophisticated spectator" for whom

economic activities in general would be indifferently "sordid" – physically, morally and aesthetically dirty) collapses the body of the one who dies and the one who enjoys together in a way that would draw Marx's skepticism, the adjective "sordid" reopens possibility of reading a distance between the two. "Sordid toil" implies the pain and indignity of those from whose labor the surplus is extracted, but "sordid" can also refer to the dubious, illegitimate or exploitative means by which the money may have been made. Both senses, perhaps, must be held as equally possible by the spectator James stages for the reader, since the contents of the letters and drafts go unread and the particular histories of the individuals comprising the "swarm" – their indignities, their sufferings, or their crimes – cannot be brought to legibility in the "spectacle".

The creation of the Universal Postal Union in 1875 and the process of globalization to which it is tied are counter-pointed by another event that forms the "sordid" historical background for "Americans Abroad", "A Bundle of Letters", and "The Point of View". This is the "Long Depression" of 1873-1879 – "described as the first truly international crisis" (Glasner 132) – which saw the world-wide collapse of financial institutions, the bankruptcy of countless businesses and mass unemployment, creating tremendous hardship in both America and Europe.[10] James has a character, Violet Ray, refer to this period of economic instability directly in "A Bundle of Letters". In an epistle dated September 21, 1879, she complains that her father's abandonment of the family's European vacation because he "received a telegram" "about his business" "saying he would have to come right back to New York (James, "A Bundle of Letters" 490), and his "harping on our pinching and saving" is

positively cruel…when every one knows that business in America has completely

recovered, that the prostration's all over and that *immense fortunes* are being

made. We've been depriving ourselves of the commonest necessities for the last

five years, and I supposed we came abroad to reap the benefits of it. (492)

Violet feels the stringent household economies forced by the "prostration" of the

American economy as a "positively cruel" affliction of the body, and the shifting of that

body to Europe promises its renewal or "recovery". The redemption of "sordid toil"

through "a journey to Europe" – and the interruption of this redemptive process by a

telegram – has here a historical specificity, in which global crisis, global communication,

and global travel are conjoined.

The Rays, a mother and daughter who remain in Paris while their husband and

father travels back to New York to attend to a business crisis, are a variant on the same

"type" as the mother-father-daughter triad of the Ruck family, characters who form the

center of the narrative of another non-epistolary story, "The Pension Beaurepas" and, as I

will show, reappear (by markedly disappearing) in the epistolary sequel and companion

to "A Bundle of Letters", "The Point of View". The interlocking timeframes of these

novellas would seem to place the events recounted in "The Pension Beaurepas" as

roughly contemporary or slightly prior to those of "A Bundle of Letters", suggesting that

the Rucks, who sojourn in Europe for Mr. Ruck's health until his business folds, are

victims of the "Long Depression". Mr. Ruck spends much of their vacation haunting

bank waiting rooms, waiting for letters, but only able to find American newspapers,

which are full of "'damned bad news'" that details

'nine failures in one day, and two of them in our locality…So many houses on fire, that's all. If they happen to take place right where you live they don't increase the value of your own property. When mine catches I suppose they'll write and tell me …I did n't get a blamed letter this morning; I suppose they think I'm having a such a good time over here it's a pity to break in'. (James, "The Pension Beaurepas" 440)

The tribulations of the American economy, or at least of Mr. Ruck's unnamed industry, are general or impersonal, but they are personally felt. Mr. Ruck laments the distance his delegation of management puts between himself and his business, which substitutes indirect rumor for direct communication and generalized anxiety for the ability to act. Yet it is unclear, as his image of spreading fire indicates, whether the presence of Mr. Ruck's own hand, as opposed to the presence-in-absence of his handwriting, could do much to rescue his "house": Mr. Ray, who rushes home at the first telegram, may evade the fate of his typological "double" Mr. Ruck, or he may simply defer it.[11] For Mr. Ruck, the impersonality of the market is mirrored by the impersonal silence of the postal-system and the lack of control over his fiscal fate is reflected by his inability to force the post to communicate, to overcome its "constitutional indisposition to surrender" his letters. When the post does, at last, deliver a communication, it arrives as worthless paper, crumpled refuse:

> I went in the course of the morning to the banker's…and there I found Mr. Ruck
> with a pile of crumpled letters in his lap, his chair tipped back and his eyes
> gloomily fixed on the fringe of the green plush table-cloth. I timidly expressed the
> hope that he had got better news from home…He took up his letters in his large
> hand and, crushing them together, held it out to me. 'That stack of postal matter,'
> he said, 'is worth about five cents. But I guess,' he added, rising, 'that I know
> where I am by this time'. (472)

The ailing vampire, the failing automaton of the Rucks' capital at the site of production, and Mr. Ruck's inability to nurse it "like a sick child" (404) at a distance, brings an end to the family's sojourn at European sites of leisure, consumption, education, and spectacle. Mr. Ruck, who is unable and unwilling to find his way in the physical and cultural geography of Europe and who is caught between the uncertain orientation of the market and a physical malady of an unknown etiology and trajectory, comes to know "where I am by this time" – that is to say lost – through the interpellation of the global post.[12] The circular letter of credit falls out of the ideal "circularity" of representation and exchange into the tautology of its materiality, ink on paper, "worth about five cents". It becomes a "crumpled" piece of refuse, as does the identity it serves to guarantee, and both paper and person are fated, as will become apparent in "The Point of View", to disappear.

Mr. Ruck uses the image of houses catching fire both as a figure for the destruction of capital via financial contagion and to call attention to the dangers of keeping one's hand at a distance from the "home" site of production through the

impersonal system of the post. Scott Reynolds Nelson writes of the "perverse" effects of the "Long Depression", where disaster and boom overlapped: "For the largest manufacturing companies in the United States…the panic years were golden…Carnegie and Rockefeller bought out their competitors at fire-sale prices. The Gilded Age, as far as industrial concentration was concerned, had begun" (B98). The same crash that can be characterized as the first global financial crisis, making painfully clear to many the intertwined nature of global space, also points towards a rhythm in which the personal touch or style of the businessman is replaced by the market as self-generating automaton, where the destruction of capital is no longer recognized as a source of individual pathos, but as an impersonal moment in a lifecycle that clears away what exists in favor of what James (or one of his characters) in "The Jolly Corner" terms the "beautifully possible" (314). When Louis Leverett complains of life lived "mechanically and insensibly, even as a letter through the post-office" ("A Bundle of Letters 497), he is not just figuring the mechanical counterpart to a kind of aesthetic receptiveness that underlies the individual's subjective sense of its own aliveness and agency, of its own freedom, but also the very dependence of that sense on the way that such a life is inseparable from distance and from the operations of the "post-office" that mediate it. The fates of the characters in the interlinked stories of "The Pension Beaurepas", "A Bundle of Letters", and "The Point of View" are, to a large extent, delivered to them by the global post.

In the late nineteenth century, the nexuses between money and postal technologies are critical elements in the modes of life. If human lives can be seen as sequences of movements and transformations enacted through exterior, technological means, Simmel argues that the ever expanding range of concrete possibilities available at this particular

moment in the history of the West always returns to the abstracting movement of money: "Money interweaves this sequence as the means of means, as the most general technique of practical life without which the specific techniques of our culture could not have developed" (*The Philosophy of Money* 490). Yet because of this omnipresence and strange absence, money is, as a medium, difficult to characterize in the concrete in literature; of all the media technologies that literary writing finds itself entangled with and inflected by in the nineteenth century, money is the one most resistant to material representation even as, in competitions for family inheritances, in seductions and marriages, in ambitious migrations from the provincial margins to metropolitan centers, or in sentimental falls and rises, the effects of money's movement or stagnation are felt everywhere in the plots of nineteenth-century literary narratives. For James, the movements of letters – which are, like money, afloat on global currents but are also inscribed with narrative traces, no matter how fragmentary, of their origins – become objects standing in for this most evasive of technologies.

Belated Epistolary Narrative: "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View"

For James, returning to an old form, the epistolary novel, serves as a way of bringing to light the fact of the effects of late nineteenth-century media systems on the transnational, mobile, dispersive styles of living depicted in his fictions. Eighteenth-century fiction narrated in the form of letters shows with particular clarity how the media practices of everyday life also shape descriptions of consciousness and selfhood. The epistolary novel revolutionized narrative literature during the eighteenth century, Ian Watt argues in *The Rise of the Novel*, because the letter form utilized in novels like

Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* promises the reader full access to the interiority of a

character at a given moment, and, in an epistolary exchange, to an ongoing series of such

moments. Watt writes that in the wake of eighteenth-century philosophy's renovation of

the subjective consciousness, "the nearest record of this consciousness in ordinary life is

the private letter, and Richardson was fully aware of the advantages to be derived from

his 'writing to the minute' technique" (192). As reported speech authorized by a

character's signature, the fictional letter creates the illusion of distilling the flow of

thought into a discrete utterance – the "circle" that James argues the novelist draws to

frame and enclose relationships. This utterance is bracketed rationally by its epistolary

context: By delineating speaker and addressee, marking the date and place of inscription,

and authorizing the utterance with a signature, the epistolary form is a technique for

stabilizing and regulating utterances and speaking selves. Mutations of language across

time and through subjects can be readily tracked so that readers always know that the one

who is speaking is speaking sincerely of and for their own self – or that if they are

dissimulating, they are doing so intentionally. [13] This regulation of the discourse of fiction

has a socially regulative effect on readers as well: Richardson's *Pamela* grew partially

out of the letter writing manuals he composed, which used fictional constructs to provide

formal models for aspiring middle-class subjects to imitate in daily communication

(Beebe 35). This "combination of romance and formal realism" (Watt 205), the alliance

between rationality and sincerity, practical rhetorical pedagogy and heart-felt expression,

found a ready readership and, following *Pamela*, novels narrated in the epistolary mode

dominated prose-fiction publication in the second half of the eighteenth century, both

quantitatively and in socio-cultural significance: The effects of *Pamela*, Rousseau's *The*

New Heloise, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons* were felt beyond the literary world, in private and public mores, political attitudes and the realization and presentation of selves through behavior and fashion – though, as late iterations of the form, the latter two novels consciously exploit and disrupt received conceptions of "rationality" and "sincerity". Despite this extra-literary impact, however, as Franco Moretti shows in *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, the percentage of British novels published in epistolary form fell from nearly fifty percent around 1780 to less than ten percent by 1800 (15).

The causes of this shift in the ecosystem of literary forms are unclear. While the collapse of the epistolary genre's legitimacy as a narrative mode could be seen as precipitated by technical innovations in narrative, strictly internal to the systemic renewal of fashions in literary form and style, it is also possible that those innovations were pressed into service in order to fill a void generated by a crisis in the letter-writing subject itself. For Thomas Beebe, the rejection of epistolary narrative as a literary mode resulted from a broader shift in the authority of linguistic forms. According to Beebe, the historical decline of institutional moral authorities that originally underwrote the regulative function of letter-writing manuals in Western Europe also affected the epistolary novels that are genetically derived from them. Canonical nineteenth-century writers wrestled with and partially exorcised the ghostly influence of the epistolary form because of a separation between signs and the referents that institutions such as the Church and divinely ordained monarchy had once supplied. After this separation "literature constitutes itself more and more as a unique discursive practice with language and representation as its objects [as] the letter form which had previously tied fiction to

the realm of ethics, religion and information begins to burden rather than empower" (167-68). Many nineteenth-century authors, Beebe argues, for whom the concept of literary history was rooted in the authority provided by the epistolary form, found it necessary to write differently, to invent new forms to successfully illuminate new social relations and subjectivities. Beebe offers Jane Austen, Walter Scott, E.T.A. Hoffman, Honoré de Balzac, and Fyodor Dostoevsky as examples of canonical writers who experimented with, but never fully adopted, epistolary narration in the course of their careers, using the letter-form either in early works or in mixtures with third-person narration. James can be seen as an heir to these authors from previous generations who, emphasizing the greater autonomy of language to depict the world the author wants to create, normalized the use of a third-person narrative persona with disintermediated access to the private worlds of characters in novels. However, the institutional authority that Beebe posits for the letter form would have in his case exerted less influence, and the two novellas under discussion, roughly contemporaneous with *The Portrait of a Lady*, are products of James at a fairly mature stage in his career.

Another line of thinking grounds the decline of the epistolary novel in changes in epistolary technologies and practices themselves, and it is this line that I believe is more useful for understanding James's selection of the epistolary form. The subjectivity modeled by the eighteenth-century epistolary narratives, because it regulated itself through written reflection and expressed its enthusiasms and sentiments directly, also lent itself to an independence from traditional authorities and to the establishment of direct, lateral relationships between persons that threatened to exceed old territorial limitations

and hierarchies. Siegert writes that the rationalization of the post in the nineteenth century was a movement to further establish governance over communication:

> Postage stamps and mailboxes, which in the hands of the secret police had been instruments for luring criminals and enemies of the state into the trap of communication during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, became industrialized England's supreme counterrevolutionary instrument in the nineteenth century, an instrument that submitted the uncontrollable murmuring of the people to the state's standards of writing. (*Relays* 144-45)

According to Siegert, the more the letter is subjected to a rationalized postal apparatus, the more it becomes an efficient method for regulating discourse through surveillance and taxation. The post for Siegert is always a technological system defined by protocols that organize and produce the behaviors of those who interact with it; writing now circulated increasingly according to the impersonal intermediaries of governmentally-sanctioned addresses and channels. Connecting a general shift in the circulation of writing to a shift in literary form, Mary Favret argues for a parallel between this rationalization of the postal service and the third-person narrative persona. Just as, in everyday practice, this "uncontrollable murmuring" of direct speech comes to be channeled by the post office, rendering it subject to censorship, taxation, and surveillance, so too does a third-person narrative voice that stands apart from a novel's proceedings work to dampen the reader's identification with the enthusiasms and relations of fictional characters. Favret, reading the epistolary genre beyond the canonical texts of Richardson and Rousseau to include

tales of espionage and narratives that bear witness to political upheavals, argues

persuasively that the "sentimental fiction of letters disguises, in part, a revolutionary

politics" (10). Favret shows how in the context of British literary history, the fears of

seditious communication and political conspiracy stoked by the French Revolution

brought this revolutionary potential to the foreground as something to be repressed. To

restore literature to a socially regulative function, the epistolary novel had to be rejected

as a subversive, contagious form: The history that nineteenth-century fiction constructs

for itself "would distinguish – and leave separate – the two realms of world affairs, and

private domestic concerns" and "forget the letter's volatile political past, its ability to

build coalitions and voice individual concerns" (Favret 202). Narration via letters comes

to be replaced with "the image of the Post Office, which appears in Austen's novels, in

Scott's, in Gaskell's and in Dickens", an image that "figured a general restructuring of

society…that squeezed the irregularities of correspondence out of the public sphere"

(Favret 203). While examples of epistolary novels are difficult to find in James's

nineteenth-century American predecessors, Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter",

Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener", and Nathanael Hawthorne's *The House of*

the Seven Gables all find ways of integrating "the image of the Post Office" and its

operations into the opaque metaphysics of American Romance.[14] These examples all

support Favret's thesis that nineteenth-century fictional prose puts the letter under

suspicion: Poe's tale is a detective story about sedition, Melville's Bartleby passes from

lawyer's office, to jail cell, to dead letter office, and Hawthorne's Clifford, fleeing the

scene of a possible murder, is forced to ruminate on the transcendent liberational

possibilities of the telegraph in tension with the powers of pursuit it offers the police.

Jacques Derrida writes, "in the beginning, in principle, there was the Post" (*The Post Card* 29), but as Favret and Siegert suggest, where the post is, some form of policing is already there as well.[15] James is, of course, far from recovering the "sentimental" or "revolutionary" potential of the eighteenth-century letter, but in "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View" he clearly incorporates something similar to what Favret terms the "image of the Post Office", conjoined with that of the bank, into his fiction that orients or disorients his characters, regulating their relationships, movements, and self-descriptions. The logics of media, both written letters and the flows of money, are what "police" the acting, thinking selves of James's characters in these stories. In this way, James's epistolary narratives draw on their eighteenth-century predecessors while diverging from them by emphasizing the medium itself in epistles as isolated, individual fragments over humanist individuality formulated and expressed through a temporally sustained series.

James thus makes belated use of the letter form to depict how the interiority indicated by first-person narration is in tension with the formalism of quasi-autonomous media apparatuses and systems that operate under their own logic. The titles of both of James's epistolary stories serve primarily as descriptions of narrative form rather than descriptions of the story narrated, indicating that for James the point is the mode of communication and how characters reveal themselves and their relationships through it. Unlike the canonical eighteenth-century epistolary novels, these novellas do not attempt to unfold a linear series of events through ongoing sequences of letters written by one or more characters. Instead, both "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View" treat first-person narration in a fragmentary manner. "A Bundle of Letters" suggests a conceit,

continued in "The Point of View", in which an opened mailbag, or "bundle", ostensibly provides a synchronic map of positions from which narration may begin, rather than the architecture for an overarching, strongly diachronic narrative. Pointing towards the way in which media can structure characters' relative positions, and revealing fictional social worlds that are dependent on communications systems, these epistolary texts have consequences for scholarship on James's techniques for creating perspectival narratives that structure the fictional world according to the perceptual, cognitive, or representational biases of a particular character by suggesting the importance of writing itself in constructing these narrative positions. Peter Rawlings's essay "Narratives of Theory and Theories of Narrative: Point of View and Centers of Consciousness" questions the long history of criticism that attempts to impute to James a consistent theory of restricted narration. Invoking philosophical-psychological discourse on subjectivity and perspective (William James, Friedrich Nietzsche and the eighteenth-century British empiricists are important touchstones) Rawlings does a fine job of critiquing two received ideas of Jamesian narrative theory. First, he undermines the notion that the theater and dramatic voice provided the model for James's later works, and, second, he challenges attempts to impute to James a consistent, normative theory of formal technique. There are two points in Rawlings' argument, however, that I will challenge. The first is strictly empirical: Rawlings claims that James first uses the term "point of view" in the prefaces to the 1908 New York edition and that "Seldon Lincoln Whitcomb's literary appropriation of the phrase certainly pre-dates James' in his final two prefaces" ("Narratives of Theory and Theories of Narrative" 41). Rawlings also finds an earlier use of the phrase as a literary term in an 1891 essay by Vernon Lee (the pen

name of Viola Piaget). While Rawlings is strictly correct in asserting that James's use of the phrase in his critical or theoretical writing post-dates these usages, he overlooks James' adoption of the term as the title of a novella in 1882. Philological quibbling aside (I take as granted Rawlings's point that James is not being protean here, but rather is part of a roughly synchronous shift in a broader cultural network. I likewise assume he would not want to argue that James's meta-literary theories of narrative are strictly separable from their performance in the fiction, especially in a title), this error points towards a second oversight in Rawlings's piece that would both have transformed and perhaps strengthened his argument.

By way of connecting James with a perspectival philosophy, Rawlings opposes the etymological derivation of the phrase "point of view" from painterly technique to the common critical belief that James took the theater as his primary narrative model. Rawlings identifies a "tension between a centrifugal, dramatic dynamic and a centripetal, painterly one" ("Narratives of Theory and Theories of Narrative" 40). In doing so, he executes a shift between two figures for narration, from the voice – where the point of view refers to the outside position of the audience in relation to a temporal sequence of spoken lines – to the visual – where the point of view is a spatial construction "within" the surface of the artwork. James's application of the term to an epistolary novella, a written mimesis of writing or a simulacrum of textuality, however, suggests a third model for "point of view" that challenges the assumption that "thought", "voice", and "writing" can be assimilated into a hierarchy that privileges the immediacy of speech, as well as Rawlings's counter-assumption that this hierarchy can be re-ordered with visual perception as the valorized element. Writing is no longer the representation of an internal

voice, nor is it the representation of a visual perception, but rather is itself writing, an act of what Jacques Derrida calls *spacing*, or the non-being by which the present, "dividing itself dynamically", constitutes itself via "the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space (*temporization*)" ("Différance" 13). The (re)presentation of spacing and of writing as such calls attention to itself as the necessary substitute for or supplement to presence that throws the self-presence of both voice and perception into doubt. The epistolary form crosses and re-crosses the boundary between theater and painting by sharing elements of each: Richardson's attempt to simulate the flow of subjective thought by "writing to the minute" in the first-person resembles the dramatic monologue, while the fixing of this representation in a static, non-oral, framed spatial format suggests affinities with pictorial representation. That "The Point of View" and "A Bundle of Letters" remain attached to the specificity of epistolary media, which also keeps the "fact" of the medium of writing itself in view, is readily discernible in the way "A Bundle of Letters" plays on the polysemy of the word "letter". As the material basis or support for phonetic writing, the alphabetic letter is the discrete element that allows spacing or difference to become quasi-intelligible. The letter as a piece of paper supporting discourse likewise generates a spacing effect, a spacing of spaces, which opens and encloses a segment of a virtual alphabetic continuum and assigns that segment to an "addresser" demarcated from an "addressee". With this in mind, it is possible to read the title of James's "A Bundle of Letters" multiply as a narrative event framing the novella itself, as a description of the discursive genre it claims to mimic, and as a glaringly flat self-referential statement that could stand alone or be appended to any text composed of phonetic writing. This is not to argue that James is Mallarmé *avant la letter*, but to draw

attention to the notion that the tension between the "centripetal" and the "centrifugal" – or a dispersion within a gathering within dispersion – that Rawlings identifies in James is immanent to phonetic writing itself, without resorting to supplementary figures drawn from the theatre or from painting. This specificity of media is important because writing is so critical to the dispersed selves that are at the heart of these texts; the "point of view" that appears within them is nothing like that which emerges within either the space of the theater or of the painted art work, both of which presume a stable, invisible observer that maintains an identity with a fixed location, either in relation to a community-forming audience or to a homogenous space that structures a subject's relationship to a field of objects. If each letter in these stories forms, as James's title suggests, a point of view, then it is one that is a fractured reflection, revealing more about a self that is in flux than about the stable object of its vision. A shift in the point of view does not simply bring about a new perspective on the same world seen from other points of view, as in perspectival painting, but rather seems to point towards the disjunction between these points and from the strange spaces that such disjunctions would indicate.

The emphasis on writing is thus significant for the spatial underpinnings of these two stories and of James's international fiction in general, which is predicated on communications networks and postal presences that support the territorial displacement and bodily absences of these fictions' characters. In "A Bundle of Letters", narrative tension emerges from the conceit that each character takes a turn at observing and representing the others in the closed space of a Parisian pension, communicating written impressions drawn from the bodily presence of other characters to an absent correspondent. The story is founded less upon a sequence of events, so to speak, than

upon a sequence of spectators, each of whom become in turn a part of the spectacle presented to another spectator. The differential element that gives narrative its shape is here not temporal, but instead positional or spatial, although this differential element is also under stress, as the homogenous closeness of the space also threatens to collapse the characters' prized sense of being distinct individuals; indeed, the very distance of the non-French characters from their correspondents places them in a more comfortable relation with them then with those with whom they share a dwelling. The foreign characters include three Americans: One is a "wide-eyed" cultural tourist from Maine, another a cynical fashion tourist from New York, and the third is a sickly Bostonian aesthete in search of access to "life" as a realm of direct experience distinct from the representations that appear in text. These American "types" – along with two English siblings looking to practice their French and a German scholar seeking anthropological and political intelligence – take up residence in the pension with some aim of acquiring linguistic or cultural authenticity. Louis Leverett, the Bostonian aesthete, puts this intent most strongly when he informs his reader that he is drawn there by an "intense desire to see something of *real French life*" (James, "A Bundle of Letters" *NYE XIV* 497). This desire for the authenticity of presence in perception, evoked in the desire to "see something of *real* French life" or even the other characters' more modest desire to practice their linguistic skills with native Parisians rather than tutors or books, is troubled by the presence of the other travelers and by the pension's status as a commodity marketed directly to the satisfaction of these desires.

Bodily presence here tends to draw out resemblances that threaten to collapse space and merge identities, creating conflicts between the characters. The predominance

of other foreigners over the "real" French family establishes what René Girard has described as "mimetism" that forms "a source of continual conflict" (169): Characters in search of otherness are instead confronted by reflections of themselves in the form of their compatriots inhabiting the same space, setting off a crisis of authenticity and unleashing a certain aggression. Louis, observing the two American women observing one another, writes of them: "And yet they're very much alike too – more alike than would care to think themselves; for they face each other with scarcely disguised opposition and disavowal" (James, "A Bundle of Letters" 501). Meanwhile, the German scholar, observing all of the Americans, writes: "These three little persons look with the greatest mistrust and aversion upon each other; and each has repeatedly taken me apart and assured me secretly, that he or she only is the real, the genuine, the typical American" (530). Characters who are themselves characteristic Jamesian "types" are caught in a double-bind of wanting to be both "typical" and, as Louis puts it, "select".

Yet the conflict that emerges from the closed space of the pension and the similarities between the characters is an effect of their very mobility. The characters' sense of difference is thwarted by the fact that they are never able to escape the international economic and communications systems that facilitate their ready access to Paris in the first place, and it is the pension's status as a tourist commodity that troubles the characters' desire to gain access to authenticity. Louis, caught up in a romantic aesthetic ideology, fails to see through the work of cultural commodification: "I don't quite know how the machinery of selection operates, but we unmistakeably feel we're select" (499). In contrast, Violet Ray, the New Yorker and the wealthier of the two American women, depicted by Louis as "all paid bills and extra-fresh *gants de Suéde*"

(501), is well-positioned to see through this process. She has no doubts that "machinery of selection" is solely that of the cash-nexus and declares the pension a "swindle" (493). She writes of the house's proprietor that: "Though she's a very good imitation of a *femme du monde* I never see her…without thinking of a *dame de comptoir* blooming in a corner of a shop or a restaurant. I'm sure that in spite of her *beau nom* she was once a paid book-keeper" (494). Louis, perhaps sensing that he has gone astray in his search for local authenticity, is willing to supplant the ideal of authenticity with the ideal that they are all being "furiously cosmopolite" (500). This ideal is likewise deflated by the letter of the German scholar, whose friendly facade conceals a single-minded nationalism and militarism and who couches his representation of all of the other characters in the degrading terms of a pseudo-scientific racism and cultural decline.

As these reversals show, James's "A Bundle of Letters" is structured by a certain irony. James allows the characters to expose their misrecognitions to the reader in their own words, before the letters of other characters confirm them as misrecognitions: Louis Leverett's own claims to "plunge beneath the surface" (496) of the "superficial" (498) or "flat" (500) American life are contradicted by his own superficial, undistinguishing approach to the cultural sources of his aesthetic stance: "Doesn't Matthew Arnold say that somewhere – or is it Swinburne or Pater?" (498). The third American, Miranda Hope, is quite self-conscious of herself as an example of the Jamesian "American girl" – a variation on the Daisy Miller "type" – mastering Europe on her own through "Bangor energy and gumption" (481), confidently writing to her mother that she acts "just exactly as I do in Bangor, and I find I do perfectly right. At any rate I don't care if I don't. I didn't come to Europe to lead a merely conventional society life: I could do that at

Bangor" (481-82). Like Daisy Miller, Miranda Hope experiences Europe as a liberating space, intellectually, socially and sexually, quite indifferent to the "dangerous" image she presents to others, in which a general freedom is seen as specifically sexual: "The people over here – especially the gentlemen – are much more what I should call almost oppressively attentive" (483). On one level James suggests a Daisy Miller-like disconnection between the socially unconventional image that Miranda constructs for herself and the sexually unconventional image she presents to others – the "obscene abysses" Louis sees her as "skirting" (502). In his letter, the French tutor Léon Verdier boasts of her as a "conquest": "She threw herself into my arms the very first day, and I almost owed her a grudge for having deprived me of that pleasure of gradation…For would you believe that at the end of exactly twelve minutes she gave me a rendezvous? In the Galerie d'Apollon at the Louvre I admit; but that was respectable for a beginning" (523). In the course of his paragraph Léon reveals his claim that Miranda "threw herself" into his arms to be figurative rather than literal, suggesting he has entered into precisely this misrecognition of Miranda's unconventionality, and the paragraph's sequencing repeats or performs this recognition for the reader. The English woman, Evelyn Vane, mistakenly speculates on Miranda's past in similarly licentious terms: "This other girl is quite vulgar herself – she's traveling about quite alone. I think she's a middle-class schoolmistress – sacked perhaps for some irregularity" (518). The epistolary structure of the tale, which masks or displaces the voice of an authoritative narrator, means that the judgments the characters pass on one another are subject to the same misrecognitions. The reader is given no positive, disinterested ground "beyond" the text from which to stand and judge.

If there is an "abyss", to use Louis Levrett's hyperbolic term, in a "Bundle of Letters", then, it is not that of social scandal, as Louis supposes, but rather that of ongoing irony that pursues each character's blind spot and the resulting failure of epistemological certainty for want of a grounded position from which to observe. The character of Miranda Hope, however, skirts this "abyss" "with eyes wide open" (502), even as she refuses to admit seeing or "knowing" it. The self-deceptions that block the characters from clear-eyed self-observation and render them absurd in the eyes of their fellow pension dwellers, are, for Miranda, beside the point, as the only self that matters to her is the one that she constructs out of texts for her absent audience. Miranda finds that she is able to exert power through bodily absence and postal presence, and, in certain sense, is put into the position of the novelist, taking advantage the endlessness of possible relations in order to draw a circle in which a consistent fiction appears. Like Merteuil from Laclos's great Parisian epistolary novel, *Dangerous Liaisons*, Miranda dons letters as masks, though, for the contemporary American tourist, James suggests, these masks are more comic than tragic. Her letters to her mother are acts of self-construction and self-presentation, deploying the distancing or "spacing" effect of post and text as instrument for exerting control over her image in Bangor and part of a larger project of literary self-construction: "For I'm keeping as I told you before a most *exhaustive* journal, which I'll allow you the *privilege* of reading on my return to Bangor…I assure you my journal's going to be a splendid picture of an earnest young life" (481). The address in her letters is carefully divided among multiple addressees, including her mother, her family, and a former beau: "There's one thing I hope – that you don't show any of my letters to William Platt. I wouldn't have him see one of these letters, written

for circulation in the family, for anything in the world…let him write to me first and then I'll see about answering him. You can show him this if you like" (479-80). In the same letter, she writes that the English "men are *remarkably handsome*. (You can show *that* to William Platt if you like.)" (480). Miranda's letters thus use the "circulating" aspect or auto-iterability of writing to govern multiple readings and present a divided or twin image of herself – an explicit, safe image for her mother and an implicit, more dangerous or provocative image for William Platt. Selection, injunction, interdiction, double-reading, and censorship are thus woven into the very fabric of Miranda Hope's letters, ameliorating – or redirecting onto the reader – the irony of misperception that imposes limits on the other characters throughout "A Bundle of Letters". Just as she exerts authorial control when she offer her mother the "*privilege* of reading" her journal, Miranda is forthright in admitting that she is consciously including or excluding material in her letters with her readership in mind: "If I were in any trouble I don't think I'd write to you; I'd just keep quiet and see it through myself. But that's not the case at present" (504). This hint that Miranda may be offering her various readers – including the reader of James' novella – a highly selective or coded representation is compounded by the possibility of a certain self-censorship, a refusal to "know" or to admit to knowing. As Miranda tells her mother of colloquial French, "there are a great many vulgar expressions which it's unnecessary to learn" (485). Of course, in order to identify whether an "expression" is vulgar enough to make it "unnecessary to learn" requires her to already in some measure "know" it. Elsewhere she describes how she has written in such a way as to screen her Bangor audience from such aspects of her Parisian life as might upset their mores:

She told me at the same time some things I should n't like to write to you – I'm
hesitating even about putting them into my journal – especially if my letters are to
be handed round in the family. I assure you they appear to talk about things here
that we never think of mentioning at Bangor, even to ourselves or to our very
closest. (482)

On one hand, Miranda's refusal to know "certain vulgar expressions" or to think of
"mentioning" certain things "even to" her own self – figured by her hesitance to commit
them to the "exhaustive" "picture of an earnest young life" that is her journal – suggests a
certain accuracy to Louis Levrett's description of her as a "serene self" who unseeingly
skirts "the edge of obscene abysses without suspecting them" (502). On the other hand,
the liberating aspects of Miranda Hope's journey in Europe derive in part from the
freedom to control her image in the eyes of her Bangor readership. In the novella's
concluding letter, Miranda writes that she has "gained more than I ever expected" from
Léon Verdier (532). Thus, the reader of the novella is left uncertain as to the – possibly
encoded – status of this "more" and the acuity of Louis Levrett's reading of Miranda as
an innocent who unknowingly skirts the edges of "obscene abysses" is thrown into doubt
by Miranda's apparent facility at controlling her own image. Indeed Miranda's indication
that she will continue "to *correspond*" with Léon, despite having "satisfied" herself "with
regard to France" (532) suggests the continued multiplication of addresses and image-
locations available for her to manipulate via the post. In this same letter announcing her
departure, Miranda writes: "Tell William Platt his letter has come. I knew he'd have to

write and I was bound to make him!" (532), suggesting that perhaps her satisfaction "with regard to France" has nothing in particular to do with "France" itself – much less with "the real French life" – but rather in the response her rhetorical strategies compel from her audience in Bangor, which she suggests she will repeat in the future with a newly added Parisian readership as she continues on her travels. For Miranda Hope, movement, which allows her to use the post strategically to manipulate her image at a distance in a number of locales, is freeing, and "A Bundle of Letters", far from actually confronting "obscene abysses", reflects this freedom in its essentially light-hearted tone.

The control over the other's apprehension of the self that Miranda derives from the post is not necessarily founded in sincere expression or in fidelity to its referent, but is instead carefully constructed, gaining its credibility from its own internal cohesion. Yet the self that is presented solely through the filter of the letter's communicative biases is also at risk of being overtaken by them, and the freeing mobility and transience facilitated by the post also threatens to overwhelm or take possession of that self, binding it, dissolving it, or leaving it bereft. In "The Point of View", James's second epistolary story and a piece that serves as a sequel to "A Bundle of Letters" (as well as to the non-epistolary "The Pension Beaurepas"), the strategies used to exert control over communication in ways that would be impossible in person are revealed to be of a piece with the "failure" of communication, of expression and understanding, revealing conceptions of the individual subject founded in presence and a "natural" sense of self-cohesion to be insufficient for the diffuse and mobile existence via the post. "The Point of View", reprises the epistolary first-person direct narration of "A Bundle of Letters", along with the character Louis Leverett, and continues the time-scheme of the letters'

dates. In a change from the first text, James shifts the setting from Paris to the United States and opens it out from the confines of a single pension to an array of dispersed locales. These "scenes of writing" – ship and railway cabins for example – becomes more important as a metonymies for the characters' experiences of America as simultaneously claustrophobic and empty. While "A Bundle of Letters" depends on a proximity between characters that thwarts their desire for difference and otherness, the characters in "The Point of View", always underway, feel their own transience and the dispersion of their relationships with others.

Appearances and their manipulation and misapprehension matter a great deal in "A Bundle of Letters", but in "The Point of View", as Aurora Church notes, "the appearances don't matter" (James, "The Point of View" *NYE XIV* 606). Far more important are *dis*appearances. Aurora writes that "we're not appreciated, not even by the Rucks, who have disappeared in the strange way in which people over here seem to vanish from the world" (605). The Rucks, as we know from another tale, the non-epistolary "The Pension Beaurepas", are members of a once-bourgeois family who have lost that status as a result of the economic depression that began in 1873. The Ruck family's disappearance suggests the dependence of social visibility and the authentication of identity on money, and their fate must remind Aurora of her own impoverished family's marginal status in America. Her attempt to construct a "romantic" narrative for herself is frustrated by the ready mobility of American life, which makes a mockery of her attempts to attribute enduring meanings to the words or actions of others:

> Mr. Leverett and Mr. Cockerel disappeared one fine day without the smallest
>
> pretension to having broken my heart…All the gentlemen are like that; you can't
>
> tell what they mean; the "passions" don't rage, the appearances don't matter –
>
> nobody believes them. Society seems oddly to consist of a sort of innocent jilting.
>
> (606)

In "The Point of View", "passions don't rage" via the post. Effusive sincerity cools into

the compressed irony that is bound up with unreliable communication, and then some

lines of communication cease altogether, even as life elsewhere continues. This

intermittent, faltering communication is demonstrated by James's disruption of the closed

nature of his text through the reintroduction of characters from other tales into "The Point

of View": The Churches from "The Pension Beaurepas" reappear as correspondents and

refer to the Ruck family from the same tale in their letters; we also see the continuation of

Louis Leverett's correspondence.[16] Furthermore, James appears to introduce himself as

an off-stage "character" submitted to the judgment of the visiting French scholar:

"They've a novelist with pretensions to literature who writes about the chase for the

husband and the adventures of the rich Americans in our corrupt old Europe, where their

primeval candour puts the Europeans to shame. *C'est proprement ècrit*, but it's terribly

pale" (591). The author of the novella, who withdraws himself conspicuously from "A

Bundle of Letters", appears within "The Point View", but only as an object of criticism,

producing technically competent prose that, in one character's judgment at least, cannot

convey a sense of life from its author to its readers. Throughout the novella, then, James

suggests that writing, whether it takes the form of an epistle or a novel, struggles to establish communication as a passageway from author to reader.

The disappearance and centrifugal dispersion of characters into the emptiness of American social and geographical space is contrasted in this tale with claustrophobic scenes of writing. Coherent bodies and the relations between them disappear both in the distance of extensive space and when viewed in excessive close-up in the compartmentalized spaces they inhabit. Aurora Church writes her initial letter onboard a transatlantic liner, "in the saloon, where we have our meals, and opposite me a big round porthole, wide open to let in the smell of the land" (540). The bodies of both the letter (which perhaps bears the stains and scents of the saloon to its recipient) and of the letter's writer are here commingled with the "body" of a mobile, public room and, by extension, the bodies of the other people who pass through it. The focus on "the smell of the land" which displaces the smell of food, suggests the permeability or openness of all of these bodies. The choice of the word "saloon" – slipping, like Aurora, between the "feminine" or intellectual-aesthetic space of the European salon and the "masculine" or political-commercial space of the American saloon or public house – suggests a confusion of gendered spheres, a confusion that only intensifies in other characters' subsequent letters.

This confusion between the boundaries demarcating textual bodies, human bodies, and the bodies of the architectural and technological spaces they inhabit is intensified in other characters' letters. Edward Antrobus, a member of the British Parliament who is busy researching American educational institutions, writes about the troubling effects of modern transportation technology on the self's sense of its own space from his berth aboard an overnight train:

> You must excuse me if these lines are not very legible; I'm writing them by the
>
> light of a railway lamp which rattles above my left ear; it being at only odd
>
> moments that I can find time to extend my personal researches…Whether it be the
>
> fact that a mysterious being of another sex has retired to rest behind the same
>
> curtains, or whether it be the swing of the train, which rushes through the air with
>
> very much the same movement as the tail of a kite, the situation is at the best so
>
> anomalous that I'm quite unable to sleep. A ventilator's open just over my head,
>
> and a lively draught, mingled with a drizzle of cinders, pours in through this
>
> dubious advantage. (573)

In this passage, the psychosexual anxiety of being in "odd" proximity to "a mysterious being of another sex" (the reference to "another" instead of "the other" sex already indicates Antrobus finds himself outside of comfortable categorical distinctions) is inextricably commingled with the physical sensation of "the swing of the train" that has subsumed Antrobus's own body's independence of motion and affect. A claustrophobic proximity of objects fragments and confuses the orderly separation of the senses and provokes the loss of control over their mimetic representation in the language produced by Antrobus's own hand – Antrobus's "light" "rattles above" his "left ear", rendering his "lines…not very legible". The open ventilator, which renders the berth permeable to a "mingled…drizzle", reflects Antrobus's anxiety about the fragmentation and permeability of his own body, his anxiety about the external, alien phenomena – whether "mysterious beings" or "the swing of the train" – that he cannot but feel as internal.

Antrobus's letter ceases to be a rational auto-construction and extension of the self through text and becomes instead a collection of traces of that self's simultaneous dispossession and constitution by alien forces. This dispossession affects even what is most proper to the expression of individuality in text, one's own handwriting, and it is significant that Antrobus turns to collage as part of his strategy of epistolary self-representation: "I sent you the newspaper partly because it contained a report – extremely incorrect – of some remarks I made at the meeting of the Association of the Teachers of New England…I cut out some portions I did n't think it well the children should go into…" (572). The collaging of a printed report written from an impersonal, external point of view – Antrobus's own adoption and mutilation of an already mutilated or "incorrect" account of himself – must supplement the fragmented, shaky self-production of the handwritten letter.

The dispossession of the internal sense of self by the external world – and the loss of meaning for the mutually-determining concepts of "internal" and "external" that results from it – reaches its apex in Louis Leverett's letter. In an abuse of metaphor, Louis takes the openings in spatial enclosures that Aurora and Antrobus allude to and simultaneously de-familiarizes and naturalizes them as "orifices". What James would later in the *American Scene* characterize as "the universal Waldorf Astoria" in which "the whole housed population move as in mild and consenting suspicion of its captured and governed state" (*The American Scene* 716-17) appears thirty years earlier in Louis's complaints about the house's infantilizing managed conveniences, represented by his obsession with the "unconsoling fluid" of ubiquitous iced water ("The Point of View" *NYE XIV* 584). For Louis, "mild and consenting suspicion" develops into full-blown

terror at bodily dispossession: His body is not only caged, but the difference between body and cage becomes indistinguishable.

Louis's sense of dispossession by infantilizing conveniences corresponds directly with the racial hostility and anxiety that pervades his letter, in which he complains of "black and familiar" servants who "plant themselves" at his elbow to "rub against" his body as he eats and "address" him "but don't answer" (584). Georges Canguilhem argues that the history of Western thinking on the complex of relationships between organism and machine (and thus Western thinking on technology) passes through justifications of social arrangements that exploit the labor of others by separating the soul or the mind as animating principle from the body as a passive machine: "Descartes views the animal as Aristotle had viewed the slave, devalorizing it in order to justify man's using it to serve his own purposes" (Canguilhem 52). The institution of American slavery conjoined both of these ideologies in its moral self-justification, drawing on theological and biological thought to assign the black slave a status equivalent to an animal, or a mechanistic body available for unrestrained instrumentalization by a white soul or mind. Nearly twenty years after the end of the American Civil War, this racist ideology still informs and profoundly troubles Louis's perceptions of labor and embodiment. The Cartesian separation of self-animating mind from mechanical-animal body, which becomes reified as the social separation of white minds from laboring black bodies by repressing the bodies of the former and the souls or agency of the latter, returns to revenge itself on Louis when he discovers that his mind is still attached to a vulnerable body dependent on the bodies of servants and that these servants' bodies in turn possess their own minds and

agencies and thus not only escape Louis' "mastery" or control, but threaten his own body's mastery over itself.

In a further inversion of Descartes, who sits by a stove in his chamber thinking so that his mind can wrest its autonomy from his body and senses, Louis's thought is bullied by the embodied reality of his heated room. Louis writes that he is "dying of iced water, of hot air, of flaring gas. I sit in my room thinking of these things – this room of mine which is a chamber of pain" (584-85). As in Antrobus's compartment, light ceases to enlighten, taking on an opaque materiality that obscures Louis's scene of writing as much as it illuminates. When he extinguishes the gas chandelier, he finds its light replaced by "a crude illumination from the neighboring room" that "pours through the glass openings that surmount the two doors of my apartment. It covers my bed, where I toss and groan; it beats in through my closed lids; it's accompanied by the most vulgar, though the most human sounds" (585). Neither walls nor ears can shut out the proximity of anonymous bodies indicated by "the most vulgar…most human sounds", and these sounds draw forth Louis's own passionate "groans". Recapitulating Louis's anxiety over the "unconsoling fluid" (and echoing Antrobus's "drizzle"), light is depicted through verbs associated with liquids, "pouring" through both his windows and his eyelids, "covering" him in his bed, and provoking his involuntary "tossing" as though he were at sea. This permeability and loss of self-control is brought home to him in the hallways of the boarding house, where Louis is accosted by a "swooping…pale girl on parlour skates" who orders him out of her way with a speed that recalls "Puck, who put a girdle around the globe in forty minutes", and "a black waiter" who "thrusts" a tray filled with vessels of "unconsoling fluid" into his "spine" (584), triggering racial and sexual anxieties over mixtures and hybrid

combinations that throw the secure categorical containers of his identity (white, adult, heterosexual, male, upper-class, educated, human), and the sense of mastery over self and others deriving from them, into doubt. For Louis, the unanticipated echoes of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the technologies of mobility that allow young women to "girdle the globe" undermine the sense of global possession that underwrites his identity as sophisticated world-traveler and "furious cosmopolite".

Just as Antrobus loses control over his handwriting, Louis's anxieties manifest themselves in a loss of control over the material means of communication. For Louis, this loss is oral and aural, the spoken word of the human disarticulating itself into the echo and noise of the machine on one hand and the passionate sounds of the animal on the other. He turns to his room's prosthetic mouth and ear, "a strange orifice in the wall":

> I fill it with incoherent sounds, and sounds more incoherent yet come back to me. I gather at last their meaning; they appear to constitute an awful enquiry. A hollow impersonal voice wishes to know what I want, and the very question paralyses me. I want everything – yet I want nothing, nothing this hard impersonality can give…I want to be out of this horrible place. Yet I can't confide all this to that mechanical tube; it would be of no use; a barbarous laugh would come up from the office. (585)

Louis's own human voice disintegrates into "incoherent sounds" and receives incoherence – whether echo or muddled reply – in return. These inarticulate sounds are at last "gathered" into "meaning", a contentless "enquiry" or meta-communication

concerning Louis's intention or meaning, but the articulation between non-human sound and thought, between signal and referent, that would constitute linguistic signification is still lacking. The failure to enter into coherent speech reflects not the failure of signification to act as a "vehicle" for thought but rather an incoherent or undifferentiated state of thought itself – he wants "everything" and "nothing". Finally, he fixes on an intention – animal flight, the refusal to continue communication – which he refuses to communicate, since to give voice to this desire would only provoke "a barbarous laugh". Having flirted with the possibility of signification, the transaction lapses again into two communicative options that are disarticulate, purely affective "others" of coherent language – the silence of terrorized flight on one hand, the involuntary spasm of laughter on the other.

James gives the heading "The Multiplied Apertures" to a section of *The American Scene* that describes the "diffused vagueness" for which American architecture strives "like a conspiracy for nipping the interior in the bud…for wiping out successively each sign by which it may be known from an exterior" (*The American Scene* 493). Having stated in "A Bundle of Letters" his longing "to plunge beneath the surface" (James, "A Bundle of Letters" 496), Louis discovers only these "strange orifices" or "multiplied apertures" which "wipe out" the signs by which "the interior…may be known from an exterior". The apertures open up depths that cannot be turned into surfaces of sense, smoothly reconfigured in the spaced articulation of thought, sound and sign. Instead of articulate surface rendering depth coherent, Louis finds "indifferent space" ("The Point of View" *NYE XIV* 586), or what Gilles Deleuze, reading Antonin Artaud against Lewis Carroll, describes as a schizophrenic experiencing "the surface and the skin as if they

were punctured by an infinite number of little holes…the entire body is no longer anything but depth…Everything is a mixture of bodies, and inside the body, interlocking and penetration" (Deleuze 87). In this "collapse of the surface", the boundaries between language, space, and sensation collapse:

> The entire world loses its meaning…the word loses its sense, that is its power to draw together or to express an incorporeal effect distinct from the actions and passions of the body, and an ideational event distinct from its present realization. Every event is realized, be it in a hallucinatory form. Every word is physical, and immediately effects the body…the moment the pinned-down word loses its sense, it bursts into syllables, letters and above all into consonants which act directly on the body, penetrating and bruising it. (Deleuze 87)

Louis's experience of his room as a permeable "chamber of pain", emptied of meaning, but full of fragmentary objects that both afflict and become his body, coupled with the loss of both coherent language and thought that characterizes his failed attempt to speak into "the strange orifice" in his wall – itself a fragmentary object emerging from and returning to "indifferent space" – is analogous to Deleuze's reading of Artaud's schizophrenic position. As James writes of himself in *The New York Edition* preface to *Roderick Hudson*, "a young embroiderer of the canvas of life soon began to work in terror, fairly, of the vast expanse of that surface, of the boundless number of its distinct perforations for the needle, and of the tendency in his many-coloured flowers and figures to consume as many possible of the little holes" (*Roderick Hudson* vii). The surface is

terrifying, but more terrifying is the realization that it is incoherent and alien, nothing but a "boundless number" of little holes, and for surface to become surface again it must be created through a writing that "consumes" as many as possible of these holes in "flowers and figures" – a proliferation of inorganic life devouring non-being that is for James no less terrifying than non-being itself. Writing, at first an affirmation of lively, meaningful human activity in the face of emptiness and incoherence, then takes on a mechanical or automatic tendency, multiplying according to its own operations and displacing the supposed sovereign consciousness of the writer.

The postal space in which Louis dwells is likewise a discomforting mixture of the vital and mechanical. James is representing Louis's representation (as opposed to performance) of his own loss of control over linguistic coherence; his letter itself does not become a-grammatical, fragment into syllables or otherwise exhibit the non-sense of schizophrenic speech. Nevertheless, the spaced writing that consumes, elides or glides over its own spacing or holes, that surface of linguistic sense Louis refigures himself upon, does not remain unshaken. The traces of holes remain; indeed, they become more visible in their effacement through writing. The loss of the world, which Deleuze describes and Louis claims to have experienced, is displaced from the surface of representation to the depths of the postal system, into which the material support of representation "vanishes", becoming subject to what Aurora calls the "strange way in which people over here seem to vanish from the world". Louis, unable to speak, must, in order to avoid "vanishing" or fleeing into silence, ultimately commit his written self to the post-box, a variation on the "multiplied aperture", "strange orifice", or "mechanical tube" – an act that contrasts ironically with his exhortation in "A Bundle of Letters" that

"the great thing is to *live*, you know…not to pass through life mechanically and insensibly, even as a letter through the post-office" (497). Where Louis opposes "life" to technology, James suggests that the two are actually closely aligned, to the detriment of Louis's idealizations of a coherent self and world.

There is a moment in "The Point of View" where James's prose does slip into a play of syllabic sound that points towards an absence at the heart of the nation he makes the tale's primary referent. One of James's emendations to the earlier version of the story for the New York Edition is to change the final word of the story, transforming Aurora's line "But fancy us in the West!" ("The Point of View" *Complete Stories 1874-1883* 564) to "But fancy us in Oshkosh!" ("The Point of View" *NYE XIV* 606). James seems to have opted for "Oshkosh" over "the West" both because of its sonic properties, which rescue a rather flat sentence, and because the proper name creates the illusion of concreteness. It is more concrete, but not, however, more informative: Aurora's correspondent in Paris can certainly "fancy" or imagine her in "the West", that emptiest of Jamesian territories, even if what she imagines has more to do with myth than reality; but the rhyming name "Oshkosh" resists any mythification by reducing this territory to a tangle of syllables that to Aurora's friend, is only readable and quite unimaginable.[17] "Oshkosh" of course has resonances beyond what James intends; "meaningless" in English, the town is named for a Menominee chief, Oshkosh, and means "claw".[18] By participating in a colonial process that empties a word from the Menominee language and a person's name of their meaning, James's poetics lend an even more sinister valence to Aurora's lament about the "strange way in which people over here seem to vanish from the world".

James's two epistolary stories, then, though they share characters, themes, and a narrative form, are different in tone. Where "A Bundle of Letters" maintains a comic sensibility, "The Point of View" is pervaded by a sense of emptiness and loss. Global space is felt differently in each. In "A Bundle of Letters" space provides the comforting margin to which James refers in his essay on London. In "The Point of View", global space is felt as a depopulated emptiness. The letters in each story, too, carry different affective charges. Where the characters in "A Bundle of Letters" don epistles as clothing, rendering them as forms of self-invention and self-presentation, the letters of Louis and Antrobus in "The Point of View" equate the noise that suffuses tenuous communication with a disintegration of the self. In both stories, however, the world is depicted as characterized by unending mobility, both voluntary and involuntary. Temporally sustained interpersonal relationships are maintained largely through the postal connections that are also coextensive with the narrative itself. As far as these stories are concerned, life exists insofar as it can be written down and sent through the post.

As such, the supposed positivity of "life" is also founded on the negativity of writing, on the absence of the signifier's referent and of both the addresser and addressee. In this light, it is helpful to ask whether the titles of these interconnected epistolary novellas oughtn't be switched. While the title "A Bundle of Letters" is appropriate as a narrative device that stages the scene of reading as an interception of letters posted from a single location, the novella that bears this title is more about the ironies of misperception and the strategic dissimulations and self-constructions attending differing "points of view" than the novella that takes "The Point of View" as its title. It is not really the "bundle" itself that supplies the unity to the text, but the delimitation supplied by the

general address from which they are posted, the Parisian pension that centers these lines of sight and anchors the characters in the vastness of space. Likewise, "The Point of View" is appropriate for the text it nominates in that it ostensibly presents differential "takes" on an object of observation – the "world" of the United States – from a variety of positions. Yet, these judgments, with the exception of Marcellus Cockerel's confident and celebratory letter, all more or less agree in their failure to articulate their object of observation as anything more than a source of disorientation and confusion, not only about *what* it is that they are viewing, but about *where* they are viewing it from and even about *who* they are to be able to state that they might stand somewhere in order to have a view: The narrative of "The Point of View" is about the failure to find the geographical, embodied, or cognitive standpoint to which its title alludes, suggesting the possibility that such a thing as a stable "point of view" might not even exist. The story refutes Rawlings's adoption of painting of as a dominant figure for James's narrative theory. James goes beyond "Portraits" and "Scenes", and even the cubist or futurist methods that layer perspectives of their objects: He does not offer a simultaneity of overlapping points of view that construct the "truth" of their object in its multiplicity, but rather only a "bundle of letters", signification that cannot absorb the moving excess they are intended to represent.

What remains, then, is a certain technological efficacy, postal "relations" that "stop nowhere", crossing the bounded geographical "circles" formed by political borders, prairies, and oceans, transporting the communiques left in the wake of the mirrored flights of Miranda Hope to the east and Aurora Church to the west, trajectories that promise to re-close the circle, this time as a globe. The movements of both women have

the movement of money as their support; Miranda may sojourn on the Continent because she has it, while Aurora must relocate to the disruptive moving edge of "development", the American frontier, in hopes of obtaining some, or at least not perishing absolutely for its lack. The flow of communication via letters overlaps with the flow of money, and both determine and shape the capacities of the humans with which they are enmeshed. Together "The Point of View" and "A Bundle of Letters" thus call attention to the way in which the otherness of media inflects James's fiction. James dramatizes the play between freedom and constraint through the crossing of spatial-boundaries such as oceans, borders or drawing-room thresholds and through the strategies of concealment or forgetting individuals deploy for coming to terms with the temporal weight of the past as it is felt in the present. The distances and the capacities to make and remake the self that are acquired through travel and through telecommunications are both freeing and constraining for Jamesian characters like Miranda Hope or Aurora Church because they lift the individual out of a set of constraints rooted in the territory of a locality or a family while committing her to a certain dependence on the more mobile, dispersive territories technology establishes. Such freedoms are thus both real and, at the same time, highly attenuated. The flights undertaken by James's characters are guided, constrained, and induced by the very systems of communication that enable them. In transcontinental characters like Louis Leverett, who finds himself baffled and terrorized by the machinery of international travel, James depicts individuals who initially misrecognize their own vital movements, their flights into and out of territories, their self-cultivations, as productions or extensions of an integral self, rather than of technical apparatuses and systems.

Burning the Letter: Epistolary Limits and "The Jolly Corner"

"The Point of View" and "A Bundle of Letters" are in a certain sense formal experiments, as James allows the possibilities and constraints of the letter form to shape the narrative logic of his stories. Fragmentary, giving a range of characters direct "voice", and always foregrounding the means of communication, these stories forgo the sustained psycho-social explorations of the interplay between persons and their milieus facilitated by James's more common deployment of third-person narration that blends the neutral knowingness of the author's voice with the interiorized cognitions and perceptions of central characters. This is in no small part because the epistolary logic that James pursues leads to the ultimate disappearance of a unitary point of view provided by a sustained narrative voice, a result that is intolerable for someone seeking to assert the self-moving power of the authorial mind over the techniques of inscription and transmission. Though James would never again experiment with multi-voiced epistolary narration, his giving over of narrative to the letter form in these stories, and his accompanying withdrawal of the capacity of third-person or sustained first-person narration to establish psychological depths and create coherent fictionalized worlds, point toward the autonomy of global communications technologies. This, in turn, allows for productive readings of other, better known, portions of James's oeuvre that link the epistolary to the monetary and describe the subjectivities that they produce.

One such text that resonates with "A Bundle of Letters and "The Point of View" and benefits from being read in the light of their focus on the materiality of communication is "The Jolly Corner". Published in 1908, this late story exemplifies

James's use of focused third person narration to open up the shadings of a character's subjective psychic states, but it is also important to understand the ways in which that subjectivity is entangled with transatlantic flows of communication in the form of money and letters. Spencer Brydon, the central character in the tale, is another example of the Jamesian American who dwells in Europe on revenue generated in the United States. Having taken place thirty years before the central action depicted in the "The Jolly Corner", his abandonment of one continent for the other coincides roughly with the events narrated in James's epistolary tales. Unlike the Rays and the Rucks, however, Brydon's holdings in Manhattan real estate position him to benefit from cycles of economic destruction and renewal, from which he seems to make money, almost in spite of himself, through what appears to him as a kind of automatic reflex, and this money, in turn, supports a mobile life in Europe that, like Leverett's (though rather more successfully), is oriented towards aesthetics and sensuality. Where Ruck complains in "The Pension Beaurepas" figuratively of his house catching fire, the good fortune that brings Brydon back to New York to expand his fortune is the literal collapse of one of his properties:

> He was the owner of another, not quite so "good" – the jolly corner having been, from far back, superlatively extended and consecrated; and the value of the pair represented his main capital, with an income consisting, in these later years, of their respective rents which (thanks precisely to their original excellent type) had never been depressingly low. He could live in "Europe", as he had been in the habit of living, on the product of these flourishing New York leases, and all the

better since, that of the second structure, the mere number in its long row, having

within a twelvemonth fallen in, renovation at a high advance had proven

beautifully possible. (James, "The Jolly Corner" 698)

James figures both of these properties in terms of death. The house at "the jolly corner" is

"an Egyptian tomb" (705), emptied of everything but Brydon's own paradoxically

sensuous-dissociative consciousness of its emptiness: "the mere sight of the walls, mere

shapes of the rooms, mere sound of the floors, mere feel, in his hand, of the old silver

plated knobs…which suggested the pressure of the palms of the dead (704). The "other

house" has, of course, "within a twelve month fallen in", the site of a catastrophe that

goes mostly unmarked, other than for the improvements that it makes "beautifully

possible"; there is no mention of the fate of the inhabitants from whom Brydon was

drawing revenue prior to its collapse.

Yet, as with the chiasmic structure of the epistle I outlined earlier, which

commingles inanimate matter with a mobility that rivals or surpasses the human, these

dead houses in "The Jolly Corner" are also characterized by uncanny figures of life. First,

they have a certain value to Brydon as "flourishing" rental properties, the fiscal "product"

of which has made it possible for Brydon to address himself to other, apparently aesthetic

or "adulterous", concerns. Second, the fallen house itself reveals "dormant" potentialities,

both in the economic realm, where "renovation becomes…beautifully possible" and in

Brydon himself, creating a "lively stir, in a compartment of his mind never yet

penetrated, of a capacity for business and a sense for construction. These virtues, so

common all round him now, had been dormant in his own organism" (699). Though they

are never mentioned, the names "Rockefeller" and "Carnegie" haunt "The Jolly Corner",

as Brydon contemplates how, had he not departed America thirty years before, he might

have joined the ranks of these triumphant late nineteenth-century capitalists, investing in

and developing the urban landscape. The "lively stir" of "virtues…dormant in his own

organism" awakened by his return to New York and the activity of rebuilding the "other

house" supplies Brydon with the intuition that his life could have unfolded differently,

that alongside the "self" that he was to become there had been "a strange *alter ego* deep

down somewhere within me, as the full-blown flower is in the small tight bud, and that I

just took the course, I just transferred him to the climate, that blighted him for once and

forever" (707). This glimpse of undeveloped qualities or tendencies in himself, which he

now sees reflected in his activities at the construction site, alerts Brydon to the notion that

he is a divided or "compartmentalized" being, and he becomes determined to grasp this

whole self, to find the common center around which these apparently opposed potential

selves – the contemplative aesthete and the active real-estate baron – orbit.

Brydon's acquaintance from his youth, Miss Staverton, becomes his companion in

this project of self-interpretation and self-cultivation, as they share "communities of

knowledge…knowledge of presences of the other age" from which Brydon's life as a

"wanderer" has caused him to diverge (700). Staverton also takes up metaphors of

organic germination and growth to describe this other self and pushes them even further,

towards a discomfiting excess: "'I believe in the flower…I feel it would have been quite

splendid, huge and monstrous'" (700). The excess and "monstrosity" that Staverton uses

to characterize Brydon's alter-ego is reflected in Brydon's own perception of the New

York to which he has returned. The figures of vegetal vitality and multiplication that

proliferate in "The Jolly Corner" are all ambiguously charged, both "splendid" and "monstrous". Though enamored with the thought of "other" selves, and with the conjoined expansion of his property and multiplication of his capital, Brydon is at the same time troubled by what he describes as "the dreadful multiplied numberings which seemed to him to reduce the whole place to some vast ledgerpage, overgrown, fantastic, of ruled and criss-crossed lines and figures...the vast wilderness of the wholesale…" (699-700). In this passage, James again uses an intertwined figure of death and life, but also rationalization and unruliness, in that he imagines the city as both "reduced" and "overgrown". The city appears in the abstract form of numerical text as "addresses" standing metonymically for buildings, which are then further abstracted in Brydon's to "some vast ledger page…of ruled and criss-crossed lines" by which "addresses" are rationalized and "reduced" to an order. On the other hand, this "vast ledgerpage" appears as an unruly proliferation, terrifyingly vital. It "multiplies" and appears as "overgrown, fantastic", as a "vast wilderness". The city, as "reduction" to symbols that slide between signifying an "address" in space and monetary transactions on a "ledgerpage", "multiplies" itself in the same way as Brydon's capital does and shares the same vital qualities ("overgrown, fantastic"; "fullblown", "huge and monstrous") as the "flower" Brydon and Miss Staverton use to figure his alter-ego.

In this intertwined figure for uncontrollable growth and reductive rationalization is an image of a technological order which both measures and transforms nature, but also comes to resemble the nature it replaces in that it ostensibly develops and grows beyond human control – "the wilderness of the wholesale". Brydon has benefited for decades from the compartmentalization of the day-to-day architectural and fiscal transformations

and operations connected to his capital, from the "reduction" of the sites which generate his revenue to simple "addresses" on a "ledgerpage" requiring little of his attention or energy. For him, this arrangement appears, for a time, to serve as a means to a demarcated end, his freedom to contemplate and consume. In the smooth fulfillment of that end, the means or instrument largely vanishes from consciousness. Yet the sight of this arrangement generalized and repeated over and over in a varied and monotonous "wilderness" reverses this order in his mind, as ends vanish, swallowed up by the proliferating means. Georg Simmel describes this predominance of means over ends as typical of modern life:

> What nature offers us by means of technology is now a mastery over the self-reliance and the spiritual centre of life through endless habits, endless distractions and endless superficial needs. Thus, the domination of the means has taken possession not only of specific ends but the very centre of ends, of the point at which all purposes converge and from which they originate as final purposes. Man has thereby become estranged from himself; an insuperable barrier of media, technical inventions, abilities and enjoyments has been erected between him and his most distinctive and essential being. (*The Philosophy of Money* 484)

Simmel here describes the activities of modern life as an "endless" labyrinth of means that ultimately have no center. The human being, which is idealized as their source and their goal, is in fact inseparable from these "needs", "habits", and "distractions", these "technical inventions", "abilities", and "enjoyments". It is this possibility, however, that

Brydon cannot accept. The other set of "dormant" potentials, to which active

contemplation of his construction site awakens him, calls him to seek to discover this

potential other self in its fully developed form and bring both selves into a meeting that

meaningfully reconciles means and ends around a spiritual center.

Brydon transforms the emptied nighttime house into a theater in which his

consciousness is able to stage encounters with its own otherness. What Brydon

encounters, however, cannot be assimilated to his own mind; instead, his mind and body

are overtaken first with formless anxiety, followed by a loss of identity, and then the loss

of consciousness altogether. While not a ghost story, exactly, James nevertheless renders

this encounter between the two potential Brydons in quasi-supernatural terms, using the

sustained uncanniness of the haunted house and the appearance of the spectral double as

the dominant affect and the climactic event, respectively, of the narrative's long middle

section. The "other" Brydon, however, is described less as a metaphysical ghost than as a

phantasm of media, first standing as "erect as an image in some niche" (James, "The

Jolly Corner" 724), then rendered in the detailed "intensity" of a "portrait by a great

modern master" (724), and later moving like "one of those expanding fantastic images

projected by the magic lantern of childhood" (725). Likewise, the differences in the

physical appearance of Brydon's other derive from its having been shaped through its

engagement with technology: He wears "great convex pince-nez" to correct "his poor

ruined sight" (731), presumably from the time he has spent with the letters and plans and

contracts that comprise his labor, and a maimed hand, of which two fingers are "reduced

to stumps, as if accidentally shot away" (725). The encounter Brydon had initially

imagined as a reconciliation instead turns into a horrifying confrontation between two

figures who are so opposed that they cannot be integrated: "Such an identity fitted his at no point, made its alternative monstrous" (725). At the same time, the mediatic and technological descriptions of the "other" Brydon points not only to his otherness, but to a kind of hyper-reality that threatens the "original" Brydon's own sense of ontological primacy, threating to overwhelm him with "the roused passion of a life larger than his own, a rage of personality before which his own collapsed" (725-26). In this horrific encounter, which ends when he loses consciousness, Brydon discovers that media, here in the form of a phantasm or image, block understanding or assimilation; returning to himself through architecture and images, seeking his essence as a whole human being, he finds it instead incomprehensible, alien.

Upon waking, Brydon complains to Staverton that his double, rather than a capacity that is an extension or part of him, is in fact of an entirely different nature: "'He is none of me, even as I might have been,' Brydon sturdily declared. But she kept the clearness that was like the breath of infallibility. 'Isn't the whole point that you'd have been different?'" (730). Staverton's is the only sustained voice in the story that comes from outside the third-person indirect narration that James constructs around Brydon's point of view; her gently sardonic observation that Brydon oughtn't be shocked at difference when he goes looking for it is accompanied by her assertion that, from her perspective, the differences between the two Brydons are somewhat superficial: "'I could have liked him. And to me,' she said, 'he was no horror. I had accepted him'" (730). Though there is a veneer of salvation through love or grace in the rebirth James stages, Staverton's outside perspective points out Brydon's double misrecognitions. First, he mistakenly believes his fractured or scattered existence to have a center that he can

discover and that will unite him as a whole. Second, when this movement towards reconciliation is thwarted, he believes that this mutilated self is an error or a mistake, something irrevocably other to his true nature. What Staverton suggests instead is that Brydon's true self lies precisely in this technologically mutilated and spatially scattered existence. The missing center or incomprehensible object that James delineates in "The Point of View" again returns: While Staverton's perspective can hint at Brydon's misrecognitions, it cannot offer a correct or final point of view on an object that lacks a core or essence.

The incompleteness of perspectivism is of a piece with Brydon's misapprehension of the global space through which he is defined. The foundation of difference, for Brydon, is based on location, which, according to his rhetoric of germination, transplantation, and soil, determines his two selves' divergent fates, cultivating some potentialities and exterminating others. Yet Brydon, while correct that there is a difference between them, also exaggerates the *separateness* of the two locales for him. The two locations, and the two positions Brydon potentially occupies, are mutually interdependent, and the differences between them are largely flattened by the mobility and capacity for communication upon which Brydon's life is founded. The two Brydons thus become figures for the configuration of distance and proximity in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Dwelling simultaneously in New York, where his family relationships are rooted and interest on his capital is generated, and in Europe, where he fashions himself as an autonomous individual, the "original" Brydon is distributed in space, a subject of the post, and it is no accident that, in addition to botanical figures, he also uses postal metaphors to describe his unlived alternative life:

It positively aches within me, to the point of exasperation, that it would have

made something of me as well. Only I can't make out *what*, and the worry of it

the small rage of curiosity never to be satisfied, brings back what I remember to

have felt, once or twice, after judging best, for reasons, to burn some letter

unopened. I've been sorry, I've hated it – I've never known what was in the letter.

(706)

The illegibility, and the accompanying affective charge, of the "letter" that Brydon makes

into the metaphor for his unlived life is modeled on actual letters Brydon confesses to

having felt compelled "once or twice" to burn. Rendered illegible, all that remains, as

Felman suggests in the psychoanalytic context of "The Turn of the Screw", are these

letters' addresses, to which Brydon is privy, but not the reader, however, who can only

speculate on Brydon's "reasons" for burning them "unopened". There is the possibility

that these letters were be connected to his European affairs, but my sense is that, as the

refusal to read them is of a piece with his disavowal of his native country, and their return

addresses would thus likely be those of his now entirely deceased family in New York,

who, Brydon hints, disapproved of his departure and with whom communication and

understanding appears to have always been fraught; he refers to his flight to Europe as

"my perverse young course", pursued "almost in the teeth of my father's curse" (706). In

any case, however, Brydon's destruction of the unopened letters constitutes both an

attempt to establish his freedom from unchosen relationships via a strategic use of his

mobility in space and, at the same time, a refusal to be interpellated via the postal system

upon which his life in Europe is also economically dependent. But Brydon confuses the failure to comprehend a communication's meaningful contents with the disappearance of the relationship it traces between sender and receiver, and it is only afterwards that he sees that the inchoate feeling, "the small rage of curiosity", attached to the letter that affirms these relationships cannot be escaped; whether the contents are legible or not, read or not, makes little difference.

Something similar occurs in his relationship to his other, potential, New York self that has been kept compartmentalized, sealed away from view like a letter in an envelope. Brydon, having sought to enter into communication with his other part, instead finds this other part incomprehensible. Having opened and "read" the metaphoric letter, what emerges is not understanding, but an unhinging horror and dissociation of consciousness. Upon awakening from his collapse, Brydon gives himself an ending resonant with mythic regeneration that gestures towards an ultimate plenitude or wholeness, describing his recovery to Staverton as being brought "literally to life" (727). Yet, as with the metaphors of vegetal growth and development that Brydon applies throughout the tale, the signs of resurrection or redemption are just as well, if not better, applied to things as to people; the fallen-in house reborn as a skyscraper is the true Orpheus or Lazarus – or Dracula – of the tale, and, significantly, this development, growth, or rebirth would happen no matter which position Brydon occupies, whether he takes an active hand in it or not. The capital from his properties and its transformations and mutations, whether they take the form of local modernizations like skyscrapers or of global flight along transcontinental communications networks, is constitutive to both possible Brydons. This is the shock of the alien self that he finds in the encounter with his double in the "The Jolly Corner",

discovering that his own human "essence" resides not in his consciousness, but in the otherness of technology. The multiple spaces Brydon inhabits and that define his self are determined by communications technologies, a situation that he desires and, at the same time, cannot look at too directly. That his thirty-years of humanist freedom are not really the product of his own will but are a possibility offered by technical systems is a secret he keeps from himself, represented by the letter that he receives and burns unread.

The sense of "margin", or interconnected spacing, in the sprawling global metropolis that James's imagination savors and the emptiness that he fears will swallow him up are both intertwined with the technologies that facilitate and induce the movement of thoughts and bodies. James's epistolary fictions, "The Point of View" and "A Bundle of Letters", and related psychologically-oriented post-epistolary fictions, such as "The Jolly Corner", point towards this barely-visible but omnipresent basis for the styles of life that his fictions both depict and of which they are a part. Multi-voiced epistolary writing, writing to the moment, in James's hands at least, captures the fragmentary, dispersive quality of life, but it is incapable of drawing together a united point of view on a coherent world that might redeem this condition. This coherence, though put under the same strains in "The Jolly Corner", is nevertheless attained in that tale by the joining of the author's voice and the central character's consciousness. Where "The Point of View" and "A Bundle of Letters" both end – the former hopefully, the latter anxiously – in dispersive movements, the movement in "The Jolly Corner" is towards reconciliation – reconciliation between Brydon's potential selves, reconciliation between Brydon and Staverton, and, underlying it all, the conciliation between, in descending rank, the

authorial voice, Brydon's thoughts and perceptions, and the lively materiality of technology.

In "The Jolly Corner", the labyrinths of technical means in which modern subjects are constituted, entangled, and dispersed, the "wilderness of the wholesale", are brought back to a subjective center in the authorial voice, something that is rendered difficult within the fragmented, media-inflected narrative structures of "The Point of View" and "A Bundle of Letters". The direct speech of epistolary narrative is, for James, a significant moment in his oeuvre because of the emphasis it places on a technological otherness that lies beyond an interiorized, anthropocentric consciousness, but it is also a dead end as far as his stylistic development is concerned, as the fragmentation and dispersal of the self via technological autonomy is, almost by necessity for James's understanding of his vocation, superseded by the unity that narration that can access interiorized psychic states and report thoughts provides. Yet, as I will argue in Chapter Two, this mode of narration itself runs into its own dead ends, as it depends on the precedence of a central authorial voice that can, in truth, only emulate and repeat the very technological conditions that it seeks to master.

Chapter Two

"We still have telegrams with us, don't we?":
Speed and Communication from Henry James's *In the Cage* to Theodora Bosanquet
and Clara Smith's *Spectators*

Henry James does away with the epistolary mode as a technological framework

for narration and composition because the rigidity of this framework interferes with the

composition of thought and blocks the production of writing as thought itself. But in

doing so, James adopts another technological framework centered on the typewriter that

speeds up writing by dividing its labor between two specialists, the dictating author on

one hand and the typist on the other. James's 1898 novella *In the Cage*, as Richard

Salmon points out, reflects and displaces this shift in the production of literature by

taking the telegraph as its theme, another instrument of writing that usurps both

handwriting and the conventions of the personal epistle ("Henry James and the Public

Sphere" 465). Theodora Bosanquet, James's last amanuensis, joins with fellow author

Clara Smith to restore the epistolary mode, not only as a fictional form, but also as a

method of composition, in the largely forgotten 1916 novel *Spectators*.[19] By doing so, I

will argue, Bosanquet and Smith are responding to both James's technologies of

composition and to the way the outbreak of the First World War recast technologies of

communication. Mediating between both of these fictional texts, I will also refer to

Bosanquet's *Henry James at Work*, a foundational text for critical work that seeks to

uncover James's relationship to technologies of communication. But by reading

Spectators as the necessary supplement to *Henry James at Work*, I will pose the question:

What happens if we see the latter book not as about James's relationship to writing, but about Bosanquet's?

In the event that transpires *between* James and Bosanquet, where "word processing breaks up couples and families", Friedrich Kittler sees "that gap" from which "evolves a new job: the woman author...Theodora Bosanquet became one after eight years in the delirious general staff" (*Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* 221). All well and good, if true, as far as Kittler's project to launch "the unwritten literary sociology of this century" (214) is concerned. But this sociological imperative blocks Kittler – just as the biographical imperative blocks other critics who read Bosanquet's *Henry James at Work* only to find out about Henry James – from reading Bosanquet's novel closely and reflecting on the form her authorship takes. Reading *Spectators* along with *Henry James at Work* shows, I think, that operating the typewriter for James did more than teach Bosanquet that she could replace him with herself, first transforming and then reinstating the master-slave dialectic between author and instrument by assuming the master's function. Rather it taught her that she could replace a system that can but record the outpouring of a single consciousness with another that includes a responsive interlocutor, and dictation itself, benevolent or otherwise, with an admission of finitude and an element of play.

That Bosanquet acts to displace this system rather than simply take it over is significant because in doing so she and Smith offer an alternative resolution to the problem of the technologically dispersed self that James depicts in his own epistolary fictions, "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View". Attempting his own resolution in *In the Cage*, James presents his most striking description of the way media technology

shapes and determines a human self's capacity for comprehension and action, and, in describing the phenomenon, he attempts to assert his own control over it. Nevertheless, in this effort, he reveals the limits of his own powers as an author to operate outside of these determinations; his authorial point of view is no more and no less dependent on technologies of inscription and transmission than the points of view of his characters. Where James abandons the multiply-narrated exchange of letters in favor of a unity of voice and a suppression of the materiality of writing because the epistolary method ultimately leads him towards what he finds to be an unacceptable condition, the absence of a stable point of view within a unified world, Smith and Bosanquet are able to use the reciprocity that is a potential inherent within epistolary writing to provide a consistency within a technological system of communication rather than drawn from a world that is external to it.

The Split between Subjective and Objective Culture: *In the Cage*

In the previous chapter, I alluded to Georg Simmel's description of the "insuperable barrier of media, technical inventions, abilities and enjoyments" (*The Philosophy of Money* 484) that divide human life from any fully self-present essence. But even as the sense of an eternal essence slips away, it is replaced by the sense of temporal dynamism or liveliness underlying the objects that form this "barrier": Human life is divided temporally because it "lives in the immense abundance, the marvelous expediency and the complicated precision of machines, products and the supra-individual organizations of contemporary culture" (483). One of the key themes of Simmel's *The Philosophy of Money* is that the logic of cultural objects, and particularly modern

technology, takes on a "life" of its own, undergoing changes that diverge from the ends

or intentions imposed by a human essence, a tendency that puts the instrumental

interpretation of technology in question. Criticizing the view that innovation necessarily

generates historical progress, Simmel cites the development of telecommunications as a

prime example of the growing autonomy of technologies, as

> the *relative* height that the technical progress of our time has attained in
>
> comparison with earlier circumstances and on the basis of the recognition of
>
> certain goals is extended by them to an *absolute* significance of these goals and
>
> this progress…People's ecstasy concerning the triumphs of the telegraph and
>
> telephone often makes them overlook the fact that what really matters is the value
>
> of what one has to say, and that, compared with this, the speed or slowness of the
>
> means of communication is often a concern that could attain its present status
>
> only by usurpation. (*The Philosophy of Money* 482)

The telegraph and telephone "usurp" the written epistle in the relational dimension of

speed. Simmel argues that innovation in relative categories takes on an absolute value,

and the ongoing transformation of the "means of communication" thus becomes an end in

itself. This tendency is a manifestation of what Simmel elsewhere calls "the tragic

discrepancy between objective culture, with its unlimited capacity for growth, and

subjective culture, which can only grow slowly" ("The Future of Our Culture" 102). This

tragic discrepancy is constitutive to culture in general, and Simmel only tentatively offers

positive suggestions for ameliorating it. But dismissing or limiting the scale of objective

culture appears to be out of the question, and the answer instead lies in finding ways of allowing the subjective culture of the individual or whole personality to emulate certain aspects of objective culture so that it may in turn integrate objective culture back into values which the subject has more freedom, and time, to determine. One solution Simmel offers is a valorization of the work of art as a model because "it is inaccessible to the division of labor" ("The Concept and Tragedy of Culture" 74). This is not particularly satisfactory: Mystifying notions of "genius" aside, art relies on the division of labor for its instruments, media, and in the production the "work" itself, as the publishing, film, and music industries – or James's use of amanuenses – show. A second solution Simmel suggests is for subjective culture to ground itself in the individual even as it speeds itself up, narrowing the temporal gap that separates it from objective culture: A more extensive and intensive education of the individual can reduce the "discrepancy by enabling the individual to make better and more rapid use of objective culture as the raw material of subjective culture" ("The Future of Our Culture" 102). A third possibility is for subjective culture to find new accommodations with the division of labor, making a freer use of the notion that "a cultural object grows out the efforts of different persons, a work which as a whole…*has no single producer*" ("The Concept and Tragedy of Culture" 69). As I will show, when confronted by the speed of communications, James hews more closely to the second solution, intensifying his production even as he retains the notion of the unitary creator, while Smith and Bosanquet, embracing joint composition, adopt the third.

In its incorporation of the effects of the telegraph, *In the Cage* represents James's most direct attempt to engage with the relationship between technology and self in his

fiction and, not incidentally, offers one of his most sustained descriptions of daily transactions within a crowded urban milieu, and of the lives of persons, usually marginal in his fictions, who work for a wage. Critical readings often assess James's novella in terms of its ability to critique ideologies of technological progress and usually have a strong presentist bent. For example, Richard Menke reads *In the Cage* as a deflation of fantasies that promise "technology will automatically permit us to transcend our social and economic rifts…we too might benefit from a margin of the chastened telegraphic realism sounded by *In the Cage*" (988). For N. Kathryn Hayles, James "dramatizes the contrast between the constraints of ordinary life and the freedom of information" (65) and thus "writes what might be called the prequel to the story of information in the twentieth century" (71). These arguments suggest that the significance of technology lies in the narratives that can be spun around it and that thuse have little to do with the technology itself, but rather with the ideologies that can co-opt it. The problem with these readings is that they finally evaluate technology based on a distinction between "real" and "imaginary", so the significance of the telegraph in James's tale is to make promises that it cannot keep; such readings obscure the tenacious reality of what Simmel calls "objective culture" and its effects. Other critics are more circumspect on this issue, seeing the incorporation of telegraphic technology into James's novella as depicting real possibilities for reconfiguring "social and economic rifts". Pamela Thurschwell argues that technological fantasies have a subversive aspect, claiming that "new communication technologies such as the telegraph and the typewriter are instrumental in creating transgressive fantasies of access to others who would be otherwise be inaccessible…because of gender or class barriers" (5); in following these fantasies

James's telegraphist "manufactures a sort of telepathic intimacy from a commercial transaction, in the process blurring the boundaries between money, mediation and love" (10). In one of the earlier published readings of *In the Cage*, Deleuze and Guattari note that "The telegraphic line is not a symbol, and it is not simple" (197), but that it leads the telegraphist in multiple directions simultaneously, towards "two politics…a macropolitics and a micropolitics that do not envision classes, sexes, people or feelings in the same way" (196). John Carlos Rowe, in the strongest essay to date on the novella, utilizes well-developed interpretive frameworks of class, gender, and sexuality to offer a reading that is richer in historical detail and interpretive specificity, but nevertheless reaches similar conclusions as Thurschwell and Deleuze and Guattari, arguing that the telegraph offers workers and especially women "an alternative to the alienation and thus victimization of workers under industrial capitalism" and suggests "new cooperative possibilities" that seem "more realizable in the service- and information-intensive economy of *In the Cage*" (*The Other Henry James* 168).

While Thurschwell, Deleuze and Guattari, and Rowe describe possibilities for new social arrangements suggested in the content of *In the Cage*, all conclude by reaffirming James's formal authority, if not mastery. Thurschwell notes the "desperate" response the novella evoked in James' own secretary, Theodora Bosanquet (10) but ends her essay by focusing, not on Bosanquet's own authorship, but on her attempts in the 1930s to coerce James' spirit into again dictating to her from beyond the grave. Deleuze and Guattari, also summon James as something of an ethical guide, at one point telling the reader "You cannot go further in life then this sentence by James" (197). Rowe makes a similar claim in his essay, arguing that James' provocation to decode texts like *In the*

Cage makes "all the difference, I would say, to distinguish Henry James from less worthy authorities" (Rowe, *The Other Henry James* 180). As such, they follow too closely the self-positioning as authority and spirit-guide James enacts in the imaginary dialogue and seduction with which he closes his essay "The Speech of American Women", in which he warns his interlocutor that by ignoring the linguistic and stylistic insights of the male author she utilizes "'no more than half the value of clear communication" and then promises to remedy this situation if she will let him "hover here at the gate and have speech of you when you can steal away…I'll take care of the rest'" (48-49). In all of these critical readings, looking for the gleam of the Master's lantern by the gate, the signature of Henry James, unlike that of the telegraphist of his tale, is positioned as irreplaceable.

As I argued in the preceding chapter on James's relationship to epistolary narration, however, where James begins to think and write in terms of media technologies, the position of the authorial self becomes increasingly fragile. The omnipresence of complex modern technological sequences, which subverts notions of human control over ends and goals, and the growing fluidity of the money-based economy, which dissolves the singular into the mobile and fungible, undermine notions of a privileged point of view from which an author might construct and describe a consistent fictional reality rather than simply producing more data. When in *In the Cage*, James offers his readership – and his female, working-class main character – a certain pedagogy in the proper relationship to technology, it is important to note the lessons in the text from which James exempts himself or cannot quite heed. Placing his central character in multiple cages – first, a functional automatism and existential insecurity

derived from the combination of her gender and socio-economic position, and then a limited perspective and voice restricted by the indirect narrative technique – James attempts to distance his own relationship to technology from hers.

Wrapping itself around questions of who or what may be considered irreplaceable, *In the Cage*, like "The Jolly Corner", can be read as a kind of horror story that traces out a fear of doubling and substitution that echoes the modern technological tendency to multiply, intensify, and usurp prior functions. The tenuous position of the primary character, the unnamed telegraphist, is largely defined by the importance and likely impossibility of making herself singular, irreplaceable. And the telegraph itself, a technologically reproducible prosthesis for writers, as Salmon and Rowe both indicate, cannot but have a complicated significance for James's self-regard as an author. For James and Simmel's generation, the growing excess of the "means" of objective culture poses, albeit from another direction, a similar challenge to the finitude of the human being as the Darwinian notion of life that neither begins with the image of the human nor "progresses" towards it, but only produces contingent and endless change. Sigmund Freud recognizes the fundamental disturbance wrought by logics of usurpation to human self-regard in the section of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in which he gently and not without reservations explains "Dreams of the Death of Persons of Whom the Dreamer is Fond" as expressions of childhood wishes. These "death wishes" directed against siblings and parents arise from the "childish egoism that makes him regard them as his rivals" (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* 255). The ego of the incompletely formed subject, surprised by its own coming into being, worries that one "I" can replace another just as easily. The ego, however, cannot assent to this realization in its particular case and thus

violently resists by demanding its rivals' replacement in its stead. Culture in Freudian discourse, exemplified in the incest prohibition and the Oedipus complex, is the prohibition of usurpation, the double-repression of both the recognition of fungibility and the potential violence that arises from the ego's resistance to it.

Proper names are another act of culture that seeks to arrest the fungibility of persons and places, bestowing upon them a certain singularity, and it is the repression of this non-fungibility of other persons that Freud addresses in the opening chapters of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. "The current vocabulary of our language" Freud writes, "when it confined is to the range of normal usage, seems to be protected against being forgotten" (*The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* 8). Freud goes on in a foot-note: "A suppressed thought about oneself or one's own family frequently provides the motive for forgetting a name, as if one were constantly making comparisons between oneself and other people" (8*ff*). Language, in its "range of normal usage", relies on a high-degree of fungibility and poses no threat to the ego's claim to singularity, so it is less likely to demand repression. Proper names, evocations of other persons' claims to being irreplaceable, draw troublesome "comparisons" between self and other and are thus the elements of language that are most likely to be repressed. Such violence cannot be directly avowed, however, and Western prose literature, on behalf of its characters, usually strives against the forgetting of proper names. Modern American and European novelists, in what can only be described as a reflexive convention, almost always grant proper names, even ones that are exaggeratedly uncommon or allegorical, to the primary characters that they make the subject and object of narrative.

In the Cage, however, begins with crises of naming. The subject of the tale, a telegraph operator, is introduced, not by her proper name, but by a description of "her position – that of a young person, spending in framed and wired confinement, the life of a guinea-pig or magpie" (James, *In the Cage*, *Complete Stories, 1892-1898* 835). Flaunting literary convention, this "young person" – or "guinea pig or magpie" – remains nameless throughout the text. James's refusal to bestow a name upon his character is repeated by a similar refusal on the part of this character, who is surrounded "at all times by the presence of hams, cheese, dried fish, soap, varnish, paraffin and other solids and fluids that she came to know perfectly by their smells without consenting to know them by their names" (835). For the telegraphist, the anonymous materiality of "solids and fluids" at the margins of her cage seems to bear an uncomfortable relation to her position on the margins of respectable society and to "the long stupors" (840) that accompany her work as an information-processing "function" (835). Her sovereign refusal to "consent to know" other manifestations of matter "by their names" allows her to differentiate her fate from theirs. The fate of falling into to pure matter presents itself as a very real possibility for the young telegraphist because it is a fall that has been taken by every other member of her family. The "wearing" loquaciousness of her fiancée, Mr. Mudge, a grocer who is past-master of inventorying the names and values of things, is marginally better than the silent alternative:

> …it wore upon her much that he could never drop a subject; still it didn't wear as things *had* worn, the worries of the early times of their great misery, her own, her mother's and her elder sister's – the last of whom had succumbed to all but

absolute want when, as conscious and incredulous ladies, suddenly bereft, betrayed, overwhelmed, they had slipped faster and faster down the steep slope at the bottom of which she alone had rebounded. Her mother had never rebounded any more at the bottom than on the way; had only rumbled and grumbled down and down, making in respect of caps, topics and "habits" no efforts whatever – which simply meant smelling much of the time of whiskey. (James, *In the Cage*, *NYE XI* 369-70)[20]

Mr. Mudge's inability to "drop a subject", his tendency to flood "their talk with wild waves of calculation" (James, *In the Cage*, *Complete Stories, 1892-1898* 873), the "deadly flourishy letter" he sends to her each day (838), and the telegraphist's own occupation which demands she "count words as numberless as the sands of the sea" (835) are all manifestations of language as "objective culture, with its unlimited capacity for growth" (Simmel, "The Future of Our Culture" 102) – signifiers circulating and proliferating without regard for contents or referents. Being caught up in this unceasing movement of signifiers "wears" on the telegraphist's patience and supplies the lack that drives her desire for meaning, as James describes how "she read into the immensity of their intercourse stories and meanings without end" (James, *In the Cage*, *Complete Stories, 1892-1898* 849). But this capture by the objective culture of language is still less immediately deadly then the shock and poverty that has "worn" out the bodies and minds of her family. Each of her family members have in one way or another "slipped…down the steep slope" towards anonymous materiality: Her father and brother appear to have died, James suggests an anonymous fate for her sister, who has "succumbed to all but

absolute want" (836), and her mother refuses to address "topics" as resolutely as Mr. Mudge seizes upon them, rejecting the articulations of speech for "rumbling" and "grumbling" and alcoholic stupor, "smelling much of the time of whiskey". In this context, the "solids and fluids" of the grocery that she knows "perfectly by their smells" but refuses to dignify in language, begin to bear an uncanny resemblance to her family, silenced by drunkenness, death and, in the case of the sister, a fate too sinister to be named.

Surviving the "frequent shocks" (851) of sudden economic and social catastrophe and the "wearing" routine of daily life puts the telegraphist in a defensive position. She is, James tells us, "*blaseé*; nothing could belong more, as she perfectly knew, to the intense publicity of her profession" (837). In his essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life", Simmel uses a German word with the same French derivation, *Blasiertheit*, to characterize the psychological state of city-dwellers. For Simmel's metropolitans the blasé attitude is a defensive stance, protecting individuals against the over-stimulation of "intense publicity". Simmel offers this description of the phenomenon:

> The essence of the blasé attitude consists in the blunting of discrimination. This does not mean that the objects are not perceived, as is the case with the half-wit, but rather the meaning and differing values of things and thereby the things themselves are experienced as insubstantial. They appear to the blasé person in an evenly flat and gray tone; no one object deserves any preference over any other. This mood is the faithful subjective reflection of the completely internalized money economy. By being the equivalent to all the manifold things in one and

the same way, money becomes the most frightful leveler. ("The Metropolis and

Mental Life" 414)

Money, as a symbolic system of exchange, demands an even higher degree of fungbility

than language in its "normal range of usage", and brings about "the blunting of

discrimination" between entities. As Simmel goes on to note, the danger of *Blasiertheit* is

that, having "completely internalized" the "money economy" the blasé attitude will

redound on the individual's perception of the self, rendering it, too, a mere object,

without "differing value" or "preference". This is the last step in a decline the telegraphist

will not accede to, and thus the source of her stratagems to render herself irreplaceable.

Her first strategy is the same as that of the childish ego – the negation of others.

Simmel describes the source of literary, political, and philosophical rage against modern

metropolitan life at the *fin-de-siècle* as a reaction to being made into an exchangeable

part, as "the person resists to being leveled down and worn out by a socio-technological

mechanism" ("The Metropolis and Mental Life" 409). By reluctantly acceding to the title

of "telegraphist", James's character gains a place or position, but she loses the singular

distinction conferred by the proper name, exchanging it instead for the more general

names or titles that gather entities into a set. The "socio-technological mechanisms" of

telecommunications networks require such a set of entities, at least two nodes and

practically many more: The value of telecommunications networks as industrial systems

usually depends on their scale, or maximizing the multiplication of nodes and thus

possible links. To occupy a functional place in such a network means, first and foremost,

to be both one of many and less than one, a non-autonomous part of a whole. In this

respect *In the Cage*, focused on an information worker in *fin-de-siècle* London, resonates

with Simmel's argument that the labor of logistics is an example of the "intellectualizing"

tendencies of modern social life. For Simmel, one effect of this generalized, mediating

labor is that the unique personality is bracketed and persons, to a certain degree, become

interchangeable:

> The fewer the number of independent functions, the more permanent and
>
> significant were their representatives. In contrast, consider how many 'delivery
>
> men' alone we are dependent upon in a money economy! But they are
>
> incomparably less dependent on the specific individual and can change him easily
>
> and frequently at any time. (*The Philosophy of Money* 298)

Rowe argues that the telegraphist is something of a generalist: "Mr. Buckton can be

found most often at the 'sounder', but the telegraphist and the other counter clerks know

how to use it. Labor at Cocker's…is not strictly divided, and thus the workers are not

fundamentally alienated from the means of production" (*The Other Henry James* 168).

Yet this mixture of specialization and interchangeability, where any telegraph worker can

take the place of any other, while liberating in some respects, also plays into the anxiety

of being replaceable. Lacking a proper name, the telegraphist is quite conscious of her

place in the set of telegraph offices or nodes and of the threat this poses to any

distinguishing identity beyond that of a "position" or "function". She, too, can be

changed "easily and frequently at any time":

The most she could hope for…would be that, without analyzing it, he should arrive at a vague sense that Cocker's was – well, attractive, easier, smoother, sociably brighter, slightly more picturesque, in short more propitious to his little affairs, than any other establishment just thereabouts…The great pang was that, just thereabouts, post-offices were so awfully thick. She was always seeing him, in imagination, in other places and with other girls. (James, *In the Cage*, *Complete Stories, 1892-1898* 865)

Everard's money and messages are valid currency at the post-office, and the geographical position occupied by the post-office is of necessity massively plural; Everard's attentions can be spread quite thin. The loss of her singularity or the ease with which she can be exchanged or replaced defines the telegraphist's "position". Her best hope is that she can distinguish this position in Everard's eyes through certain intangibles, the "vague sense" that she is "easier, smoother…brighter…slightly more picturesque…in short more propitious". Adapting to the "style" of the technology of the telegraph in action and attitude rather than in writing, she also adapts herself to the logic of usurpation. In a race against all other possible telegraphists to become "smoother" and "more propitious", she demands to be recognized as irreplaceable, necessary. If she cannot gain the singularity of place a proper name bestows or the singularity of a personality fully in view for others, she can instead make a desperate bid for singularity through an inimitable style within the margins of her function. This bid to negate "other places" and the telegraphists who occupy them is probably doomed: Nothing could be "more propitious" for the owners of

the telegraph company than their employees' illusion that they can render themselves irreplaceable by embracing more fully the absolute logic of usurpation.

James's telegraphist's second stratagem is to redefine her own position through narrative, to weave epithets for herself, a method that imitates not the style of the telegraph company and the logic of usurpation, but follows instead the style of her clients, who have claimed the power of naming for themselves. The telegraphist's family members have lost access to language and to the power to name or be named, while Mudge, like the telegraph system itself, has no choice but to repeat the names and prices of things *ad nauseum*. By consenting or refusing to consent to know things by their names, however, the telegraphist claims a certain agency for herself in both the authority of authorship and in the sovereign power of her wealthy and powerful customers. The power to proliferate and control names is one of the most striking characteristics of the customers "outside" of the cage: "There had once been one – not long before – who, without winking, sent off five over five different signatures" (840). The hero and heroine of the melodrama the telegraphist witnesses or composes sign their telegrams with a bewildering variety of names that attests to the richness of their lives and social relations. James does not give his own heroine a name, but within the tight third-person free-indirect discourse which he uses to narrate the tale, she often provides epithets for both herself and others: "How did *our obscure little public servant* know that, for *the lady of the telegrams*, this was a bad moment?" (841, italics mine); "Her folly had gone to the point of half believing that the other party to the affair must sometimes mention…*the extraordinary little person* at the place from which he so often wired" (870, italics mine).

Yet James imposes strict limits on this self-narration. He will not allow his character the luxury of first-person direct narration, the assertion of narrative voice as self-composing ego. Instead, the narrow margins of the telegraphist's existence and the responsibilities she accepts deny her the luxury of combating the nihilism of a "socio-technological mechanism" with the nihilism of self-obsession. Within the same paragraph the telegraphist's epithet switches to "our young friend" (870), a shift that, to my eye, designates a reassertion of an authorial narrative voice distanced from the consciousness of the heroine. This ambiguous tug-of-war between narration that is "interior" to the telegraphist's consciousness and the intrusion of another narrative voice is not uncommon in James's work, but here it repeats and reinforces the themes of the novella: The post-office patrons "speak" their telegrams to one another through the telegraphist, and she "speaks" her desires and fantasies to herself through Captain Everard and Lady Bradeen, James describing her as being "with the absent [Everard] through her ladyship and with her ladyship through the absent" (870). James, or his "absent" narrator, likewise "speaks" his novel through the filter of the telegraphist's point-of-view, and the difficulties of reading that James performs are a major theme in the text. The telegraphist is a reader who traces the "web of revelation" (866), provisionally filling in the "gaps and blanks and absent answers" (904) from a perspective limited by "the want of margin in the cage" (866). James keeps the reader of his novel within the margins of a similar cage by mostly binding the narrative to the thoughts and perceptions of a single character.

Nevertheless, just as the telegraph multiplies the possible relationships between voices, and thus imposes limitations on distinguishing between them, it also forms an irreducible outside to the narration of thought, an outside that is also personified in the

text as the "consciousness" of Mudge. Beyond the occasional, ambiguous intrusions of

authorial voice, the rigorous adherence to a limited perspective cracks completely only at

the point when James allows the thoughts and perceptions of Mudge to enter. Here, in the

representation of Mudge's consciousness, the content is not only restricted, as would be

expected in limited narration, but the form these thoughts take is also positioned as

irreducibly outside those of both the telegraphist and the "master" narrator. This

momentary shift in perspective represents not only a diversion from the opinions of one

character to another, but to an entirely different quality of thought, which cannot, in

effect, be narrated:

> What really touched him – that was discernible – was that she could feed him
>
> with so much mere vividness of reminder, keep before him, as by the play of a
>
> fan, the very wind of the swift bank-notes and the charm of the existence of a
>
> class that Providence had raised up to be the blessing of grocers…He couldn't
>
> have formulated his theory of the matter, but the exuberance of the aristocracy
>
> was the advantage of trade…the more flirtations, as he might roughly express it,
>
> the more cheese and pickles. He had even in his own small way been dimly struck
>
> with the concatenation between the tender passion and cheap champagne. What
>
> he would have liked to say had he been able to work out his thought to the end
>
> was 'I see, I see. Lash them up then, lead them on, keep them going: some of it
>
> can't help, some time, coming *our* way'. (862)

From the point of view of narrative voice, this passage is striking because it shifts the linguistic register of the text into one that Mudge the grocer *might* use – "the more flirtations…the more cheese and pickles", or "Lash them up, then, lead them on". But the narrator emphasizes Mudge's failure to actually articulate his thoughts in these terms, claiming that "he was dimly struck" and "couldn't have formulated his theory of the matter", while qualifying even the most direct statements with the subjunctive tense – "as he might roughly express it" and "what he would have liked to say had he been able to work his thought out to the end". Indeed, the homely epigram about "cheese and pickles" is immediately undercut by the characteristically arch Jamesian formulation, "the concatenation between the tender passion and cheap champagne". The narrative voice thus continuously denies that the reader is reading Mudge's actual thoughts or words, suggesting instead that Mudge, despite the apparent facility of his "deadly, flourishy" letters, is incapable of articulating impressions that have "really touched him" or with which he is "dimly struck". Like the telegraph and its endless movement of signifiers, Mudge formulates nothing with finality and can work no thought out to its end. He simply goes on and on…

And like the image and "monstrous bloom" of Spencer Brydon's robber-baron alter-ego, the "flowers of Mr. Mudge's mind" are thoroughly creatures of subjunctive grammar, of "woulds", "coulds", "shoulds" and "mights", a simultaneously empty and branching infinity. In both "The Jolly Corner" and *In the Cage* – where once again the germinal potential of flowers becomes a key figure – money and capitalism are intimately bound up with an economy between actualities and the multiplicity of virtual possibilities that every "actualization" excludes:

Preparation and precaution were, however, the natural flowers of Mr. Mudge's
mind, and in proportion as these things declined in one corner they inevitably
bloomed elsewhere. He could always, at the worst, have on Tuesday the project of
their taking the Swanage boat on Thursday, and on Thursday that of their ordering
minced kidneys on Saturday. He had moreover a constant gift of inexorable
enquiry as to where and what they should have gone and have done if they had n't
been exactly as they were. (887)

The perception of time that microeconomics embodies in the term "opportunity cost",
which for the grocer Mudge is the weighing of the matter of everyday life, becomes the
source of high metaphysical drama, the weighing of one life-course against another with
Spencer Brydon's sense of "the beautifully possible" in "The Jolly Corner". Both point
towards the complex temporalities that emerge from money economies, where the
courses of time become multiple and force the calculated risk of deciding between them.
The copula, the verb "is", appears in this passage in its subjunctive negation: Mudge
continuously enquires into what might have happened if they "had n't been". The
telegraphist on the other hand "liked to be as she was – if it could only have lasted"
(888). She too experiences the copula in its negation, but here subjunctive negation
indicates not the super-abundance of possibilities – and the sovereign power to choose
amongst them – that the possibility of exclusion implies. Rather it represents the failure
of possibility, the loss of the power to actualize a potential – in this case the duration of a
state of being – and thus the loss of potentiality itself. For both Mudge and the

telegraphist, time has a reality – perhaps even a materiality – because time is too pressingly full and thus always in short supply.

In James's story, when confronted with her misrepresentation of her arts and loves, the telegraphist's confidant Mrs. Jordan protests: "It has led to my not starving!" (917). All narrative ambiguities and self-reflexivity aside, in *In the Cage* one "fact" holds: The telegraphist takes her distasteful place as a "poor…function" so that she may avoid starvation. N. Kathryn Hayles's reading never loses sight of the centrality of "not starving" to *In the Cage* and for her the story "dramatizes the contrast between the constraints of ordinary life and the freedom of information" (Hayles 65) or the conflict between what she calls the socio-economic "regime of scarcity" and a utopian "economy of information where one might live" (70).[21] In doing so, however, Hayles positions the first as reality and the latter as imaginary, a distinction that isn't borne out by James's text. Living through the telegraph "frees" Everard and Bradeen to manipulate their identities in ways that the telegraphist cannot, but the regime they inhabit is both real and far from utopian. The dangers they face are not the same as those confronting the telegraphist, but rather result from committing themselves so thoroughly to a distributed temporality and spatiality that outruns their control.

My intent here is to extend and correct Hayles's insight by arguing that the scarcity pervading *In the Cage* is not just one of nourishment but also of time – the disjuncture between speeds that Simmel identifies with the tragic gap between subjective and objective culture. I would call the reader's attention to how heavily temporality weighs on James's narrative, which is structured around two crises. What links the dangers facing Bradeen and Everard to those facing the telegraphist is the shortage of

time, but the mode this shortage takes is defined by the side of the cage a character is on. One crisis is the "danger" facing Bradeen and Everard, which culminates in the race to determine the content of the intercepted telegram. The other crisis is the decision to finally marry Mudge and move to the suburbs, which the telegraphist is continually working to defer. "To race" and "to defer" are both anticipatory responses to an event, and to the sense that time is running out. The telegraph is not only a figure for the utopian disembodiment of information, as Hayles would have it, but, cutting against the a-temporality that utopian figures require, the telegraph also makes concretely evident the speed with which, under the pressure of technological transformation, crises unfold in modernity, and thus also becomes a figure for the irreducible outside – or the "insuperable barrier", as Simmel puts it – technology presents to anthropocentric thought.

For Mudge, who inhabits both the regime of scarcity Hayles identifies and at same time mimics the unreflective speed of the telegraph in processing information, there is no crisis in the form of *an* event. This is because for Mudge *every* moment, *every* event is certain kind of banal crisis. As Hayles notes, even critics defending Mudge as a sympathetic or even progressive figure rather than a mere manifestation of Victorian socio-economic repression have still read him solely as the one-dimensional embodiment of the shop-keeper with "his feet planted firmly in the regime of scarcity" (251*ff.*), a man "who seems to wear the future out by fingering it over and over in his calculations" (66). This is not totally wrong, but as I have argued above, reading Mudge's daily deliberations over the "opportunity cost" of taking a bath as the (intentionally) bathetic counterpart to the high-pathos of Spencer Brydon's ontological "diversion" from New York to Europe, allows us to see a temporal complexity and danger in Mudge's simplicity that

compliments the telegraphist's own. The telegraphist's "genius" for reading the "gaps and blanks" and "handling combinations" lies in her divided personality: The "identity of her function" is with the telegraphic system itself, but she manages to achieve a reflective distance from the system through narrative; oscillating between both positions allows her to keep a whole panoply of "postal resources and alternatives" (James, *Complete Stories, 1892-1898* 877) in view. But Mudge, even if he has minimal practical or reflective understanding of device or system, nevertheless mimics the telegraph more closely in the dimension of speed. Central to the telegraphist's image of Mudge is an episode in which he manhandles a "drunken soldier" with "a very quiet but very quick step", a "neatness of execution" that renders both the soldier's body and the telegraphist's heart "without resistance" (858). This episode is referred to three more times in the tale (860, 889, 902), as a continual reminder of Mudge's "latent force" and capacity for "incalculable strokes" (889). There is a certain contradiction in the deceptive character of Mudge, which juxtaposes his "deadly, flourishy letters" with a "quick" "neatness of execution", and his "waves of calculation" with a propensity for "incalculable" actions. Indeed, Mudge does not "wear the future out" so much as he makes the present disappear first in the subjunctive tense of anticipation, and then in the vanishing moment of action.

What, then, is the non-utopian reality that Bradeen and Everard inhabit? The tension between "opportunity costs" and the pathos of the subjunctive copula also emerges in the telegraphist's perception of her wealthy clients at the post office. The "wonder" these clients instill resides not so much in the contents of their "pleasures" as in the sovereign power they hold make decisions, to choose between affirmation or negation, to "propose" or "decline":

> The pleasures they proposed were equaled only by those they declined, and they
> made their appointments often so expensively that she was left wondering at the
> nature of the delights to which the mere approaches were so paved with shillings.
> She quivered on occasion into the perception of that one whom she would on the
> chance have just simply liked to *be*. (848)

Going under a variety of names and spending freely even to reject "pleasures", the telegraphist's clients demonstrate the excess of wealth and power they possess: Unlike telegraphists, they are able to multiply the "places" they inhabit and thus continuously expand and remake their being. The tension between the stated verb *to be* and the implied verb *to become* stands out in this passage. On vacation with Mr. Mudge and his incomprehensibly complex calculations, the telegraphist may like to simply "be as she was" but in the post office "simply…to *be*" means being someone else, becoming something other than she is. Furthermore, the longing "simply…to *be*" is not itself a static state, but a sensation emerging in time through stimuli by which "she quivered on occasion into the perception of". This desire to *be* or to *become*, to "simply…be" by becoming her wealthy, male customers or perhaps their glamorous female companions, or both at once, each through the other, is of course the centerpiece of the telegraphist's relationship to Captain Everard and Lady Bradeen; in her encounters with the latter, the telegraphist establishes a mediated proximity to the former, looking "straight through the cage at the eyes and lips that must so often have been near his own" (870). As with Spencer Brydon, the desire for unitary being ends in a specular encounter with, and

horrified flight from, the image of an alter-ego, the telegraphist growing "literally afraid of the alternate self who might be waiting outside. *He* might be waiting; it was he who was her alternate self, and of him she was afraid" (898). Though they are strikingly similar on many points, the readings of Deluze and Guattari and John Carlos Rowe diverge over the character of Everard: Rowe reads Everard as essentially empty and uncreative (*The Other Henry James* 170), a purely parasitic con-artist and who distracts the telgraphist from "a new working class-solidarity" that might be "built by service workers" (167). Deleuze and Guattari, whose Nietzschean interests in the powers of falsehood and suspicion of *ressentiment* prevents their Marxism from dismissing either con-artists or high-society out of hand, hold that the relationship between Everard and the telegraphist has a real value because it catalyzes the disruption of her perception of everyday life. Both Rowe and Deleuze et al. are in a certain sense correct: Everard can be both a painfully banal function of his class and yet essentially creative. He instrumentalizes the "postal resources and alternatives" that telegraphs and telegraphists offer him to invent multiples of himself in a variety of names, places, times, and even languages, in the form of private codes. Everard may ultimately be a bad artist, but bad artists have their own seductions and uses, and the telegraphist is less fascinated with Everard as an end in himself than with the means he employs. But Rowe is correct in discerning that there is a sharp difference between them: Lacking Everard's resources of invention, no matter how banal or petty the intentions or results of these inventions may be, the telegraphist can only submit herself to the dangers of imitation and similarity. Seeking to become Everard and Bradeen, the telegraphist experiences herself as doubled, but this doubling is dangerously asymmetrical. One being may be able to establish

multiple places and identities, but two beings cannot share the same time, place and identity without coming into conflict, each threatening to take the place of the other. In this telegraphic economy, Everard always remains on the side of excess and the telegraphist ultimately on the side of restriction and prohibition.

This is also what separates the telegraphist from James as an author. The figure of the confidence artist Everard lingering outside of the cage supplying her with fragments of communication from which she can steal away glimpses of a richer life finds its true double in the figure of the novelist James paints of himself lingering outside the gate offering an illicit pedagogy in language. Yet the flow of discourse is in both cases is unidirectional, and ultimately addressed not to another human being, but to a writing machine that allows for the imaginative extension of the self in space and time. Multiplying consciousness in his later work, James, like Everard, can only operate in an economy of excess dependent on new technologies of writing. There is a clear connection between *In the Cage* and the methods documented by Theodora Bosanquet in *Henry James at Work*. Thurschwell, Rowe, and Salmon all point out that James's novella is also a reflection of a change in his means of production as a writer. Salmon describes it as a story of and about amanuenses and typewriters, the product of a

> contemporaneous shift in James's own authorial practice, from writing by hand to dictation to a shorthand "amaneuensis", who later transcribed the text using another recent mechanical innovation, the typewriter… "In the Cage" thus being one of the earliest products of a method of textual production apparently reflected in its own thematic content. ("Henry James and the Public Sphere" 465)

Rowe suggests that there is a conflict between the economic demands of telegraphic style

and James's own prose, which, were it transmitted over the wire as personal messages,

would face Mrs. Touchett's judgment in *The Portrait of a Lady*: "'I never know what I

mean in my telegrams…clearness is too expensive'" (James, *The Portrait of a Lady* 61).

Rowe argues that, even as James adapts the parsimony of "telegraphic style" by leaving

gaps in his narrative, the "telegraphic mode" itself "threatens to undermine James's

customary control of discourse, especially the wonderfully complex and nuanced

sentences that have become the hallmark of his modernism" (*The Other Henry James*

159). By selecting the telegraph as a subject for his self-consciously wordy style, James is

acknowledging, and perhaps resisting, the effect both quasi-autonomous technologies of

writing and the demands of the market have on the possibilities for linguistic expression.

But we should not be too quick to absolutely conflate the two: The economy imposed on

writing by the typewriter – an economy and a device James embraced – is not one of

restriction but of excess. The idea of James sweating at the post-office window to reduce

the word-count of the *Golden Bowl* in order to "compose" it over the telegraph is a lovely

fantasy, but it is only that. Noting the "threat" that "short and economical" style poses to

"connotative complexity" (*The Other Henry James* 159), Rowe only incompletely

addresses the effects that the telegraph and typewriter have on writing, which point less

towards restrictions on content than to the speed of production, a quantitative change that

leads to qualitative distinctions. If there is a link between the telegraph and the typewriter

in James's writing that "threatens to undermine James' customary control of discourse",

it lies in the "absolute" logic of "speed" that Simmel identifies at work in communications technologies.

To better understand James's economy of writing after 1897, I would direct the reader's attention to two texts, not only Bosanquet's *Henry James at Work*, but also an essay by James's contemporary and fellow *Atlantic Monthly* contributor Robert Lincoln O'Brien, "Machinery and English Style".[22] James's struggle to exert what Rowe calls his "customary control of discourse" is a conflict between clarity and an excessive wealth of material put to paper by the method of dictation. In *Henry James at Work*, Theodora Bosanquet notes that readers of James's late work are frequently exasperated by "the multiplication of qualifying clauses, the imposition of a system of punctuation which, although rigid and orderly, occasionally fails to act as a guide to immediate comprehension of the writer's intention" (42). In "Machinery and English Style", O'Brien argues that the "economy" of telegraphic style does not necessarily derive from the "pecuniary point of view": For those transmissions concerned with business and news rather than personal messages, "wires are often leased by the hour" (467). The problem of telegraphic economy for O'Brien is not one of restricting typographic "space" – the compression of sense into the minimum of words – but rather a problem of accelerated time, where the rapidity of composition and reading, coding and decoding, forces errors (Hayles 69) and favors ready-made forms that minimize mistakes in transmission and translation.

Just as the "profligate rich" who James's telegraphist encounters spend a great deal of money "in extravagant chatter" (James, *In the Cage*, *Complete Stories, 1892-1898* 847), so O'Brien claims that "publications willing to pay for an extensive telegraphic

service would not bother with petty differences of cost" (O'Brien 467). Instead, O'Brien

continues, "errors in transmission are the constant dread of the extensive user of the

telegraph" (467). Minimizing total word-counts is a secondary concern. The sacrifices of

linguistic complexity to telegraphic style are made in order to exert control over error,

privileging regular syntactic patterns and use of "the long word" (467) – rules Everard

and Lady Bradeen ignore at their peril when they sacrifice control over error for control

over interpretation by inventing a private language that encodes their words as strings of

numbers. In James's novella customers do pay by the word, but they are largely

indifferent to the fact, indicating that the divide between customer and laborer is in some

ways starker than Hayles would have it. This divide is not simply heuristic, a pedagogy

on the difference between reality and a delusive technological imaginary, but rather

reflects a real distinction between two realities: Despite her interventions and stratagems,

the telegraphist apparently does not "use" the telegraph herself…and yet the telegraph

operates just the same, with its own triumphs and catastrophes. The crisis that threatens

Everard and Bradeen, their race to recover the contents of the intercepted telegram,

results from their inability to control the excess of addresses and codes their embrace of

postal strategies has allowed them to create, not from "pecuniary" concerns. The

"pecuniary point of view" strikes the telegraphist hardest, marking the way her

perception of economy differs from that of those consumers who actually use the

telegraph – from "the profligate rich" certainly, but also from those authors, such as

O'Brien or James, who work for media organizations like *The Atlantic Monthly* and have

access to telegraphs and typewriters by the hour and not by the word.

"Leased by the hour", the economy of the telegraph is concerned with a conflict between clarity and speed, not with stray shillings. As wage laborers, the telegraphist of James's novella and typewriter operators like Theodora Bosanquet are also "leased by the hour" or day, and not by the word, and this "lessening of the tax on words", as O'Brien puts it, has real effects on prose. In the section of "Machinery and English Style" devoted to the typewriter, O'Brien claims that with this device

> the standards of spoken language…have passed over to the printed page. This means not only greater diffuseness, inevitable with any lessening of the tax on words which the labor of writing imposes, but it also brings forward the point of view of the one who speaks. There is the disposition on the part of the talker to explain, as if watching the facial expression of his hearers to see how far they are following. This attitude is not lost when the audience becomes merely a clicking typewriter. (470-71)

For those customers and employers who dwell in that rarefied economy where communication is a superabundant expenditure, the internal possibility of prose running to excess is often submitted to externally imposed exigencies for the sake of good form – but then this sacrifice to an externally imposed economy could just as easily take the shape of a sonnet as a telegram. And, like the shillings expended on "pleasures declined", the limits good form imposes on content are themselves a demonstration of excess.

Using terms strikingly similar to O'Brien's, Bosanquet tells us in *Henry James at Work* that James grappled with "questions of compression", even as she says he claims

that his writing, when dictated through a typist, "seems…to be much more effectively *pulled* out of me" (34). Here too the problem appears to lie not in a restrictive economy but in the scandal of a material excess or superabundance of language provoked by the machine's presence:

> With a clear run of 100,000 words or more before him, Henry James always cherished the delusive expectation of being able to fit his theme quite easily between the covers of a volume. It was not until he was more than half way through that the problem of space began to be embarrassing. At the beginning he had no questions of compression to attend to, and he "broke ground" as he said, by talking to himself day by day about the characters and constructions until their actions were vividly present to his inward eye. This soliloquy was of course recorded on the typewriter. (Bosanquet 36)

Driven by the "positive spur" of the typewriter (Bosanquet 35), it is only when the "delusional" James glances backward at what at the speed of composition has wrought that "the problem of space" becomes "embarrassing". The device clearly faces no difficulties coping with James's over-flowing "soliloquy", and actually seems ideally suited to the purpose: The typewriter's speed minimizes the lag between inscription and the visions that are "vividly present to his inward eye". Furthermore, while hands and eyes, inward or otherwise, remain attached to bodies after they wear out, typewriters, both human and machine, can be replaced.

If James is in some way avenging himself on the constraints of what can be fit "between the covers of a volume" or on the anxiety provoked by the publicity and occult methodologies of secretaries, as Rowe suggests, by allegorizing them as telegraphic style ("The Other Henry James" 157-58), I would contend that he does so perhaps only to cover the "embarrassing" excess of his "inner eye" and open mouth. This embarrassment provokes him to apologize to Bosanquet, a moment she records in *Henry James at Work*: "'I know,' he once said to me, 'that I'm too diffuse when I'm dictating'" (34). Rather than constraining him, the medium of the typewriter seems to provoke James to excess, and thus to confront the possibility that the circuit of "free, involved, unanswered talk" (34) flowing between author and typewriter runs *too* smoothly, *too* automatically. As Simmel suggested, the "absolute significance" of speed puts into question James's ability to assess "the value of what one has to say". Mechanized, the author can no longer control himself. "He had", Bosanquet writes, "from far back tended to dramatise all the material life gave him" (36). What begins as a passage from the restricted economy of given material to an excess of imagination that reflexively multiplies "all the material" of life, crosses back into material excess when the "tendency" to imaginary replication is coupled with the speedy responsiveness of the typewriter; at this point, James can only watch himself stage his simulations. In this James becomes both Mudge, unreflectively producing, and, at the same time, when he imagines himself momentarily in Bosanquet's position, the grocer's horrified, fascinated spectator, the nameless telegraphist, who notes how "he produced, on the whole subject, from day to day, an amount of information that excited her wonder and even, not a little, as she frankly let him know, her disdain" (James, *In the Cage*, *Complete Stories, 1892-1898* 873).

O'Brien's point that dictation to the typewriter "brings forward the point of view of the one who speaks" is salient here, corresponding to the way the power of James's authorial voice can obscure the points of view that are theoretically rooted in the characters inhabiting the fictional worlds he creates. The "cage" that the nameless telegraphist inhabits is not only a description of the socio-technological conditions that determine her situation within the story but also a figure for the sharp limitations on her own perspective and agency in comparison with the consciousness of the author who insists on seeing and speaking so much both through her and beyond her. In his confrontation with the telegraph, James acknowledges, on one hand, the constraints and determinations presented by objective culture, while at the same time wanting to believe that he has overcome them and harnessed them through the power of his own subjectivity, differentiating his own relationship to technology from that of the telegraphist – and from that of Bosanquet – through his unidirectional flow of imaginative verbiage.

Reconfiguring Telecommunications: *Spectators*

Shortly after James's death, Bosanquet would publish her own novel, *Spectators*, as a joint composition with Clara Smith. Composed entirely of the letters exchanged between a brother and a sister in the period surrounding the outbreak of the First World War, the novel deals as explicitly with telecommunications as *In the Cage*, while also acknowledging that the constraints, limitations, and possibilities that technologically-accelerated objective culture imposes and offers to the characters within the novel are reflected in the scene of its own writing as well. The fragility of the instrumentality of

writing and control over its material means of production emerge as important motifs in the text. Confronted by wartime restrictions, one character in *Spectators*, an author, laments that "'Literature has no paper left for me'" (Oct.12 80). At the same time, when the English passenger trains that would bring sister and brother together are diverted to mobilize for war in August 1914, Nanda sends her brother Nicolas a letter that suggests the diversity of media available to them offers satisfactory compensations and substitutions: "We still have telegrams with us, have n't we?" (Oct. 12 81). Yet this rhetorical question slips free of its intent as a statement of fact to once again open a real question: The epistolary pair may have the telegraph, but, in their dependence upon it, the telegraph also seems to have them. Because the war hardens borderlines, Nanda is no longer free to visit the sites of a pan-European culture she loves, while the re-assignment of mental and material priorities means Nicolas can no longer publish his art criticism. Separated physically even in England by the emergency commandeering of personnel transport, they can only commit their lives to letter and telegram, a loss of control over movement and communication that reflects the catastrophe of the war itself.

In James's *In the Cage*, the relationship between communication technologies and the power to arrange and motivate bodies is muted but present. Comparing her own social and communicative arts to Mrs. Jordan's floral arrangements, the telegraphist of *In the Cage* brags of the power her position bestows: "Combinations of flowers and greenstuff, forsooth! What *she* could handle freely, she said to herself, was combinations of men and women" (James, "In the Cage" *Complete Stories, 1892-1898* 838). But there is a contradiction rendering this statement unconvincing: As long as the telegraphist "handles freely", she is not precisely handling "combinations of men and women" but rather

fragments and phantoms, combinations of letters and numbers that claim to represent

"combinations of men and women", and the play of symbolic combinations that results

has traction on "reality" only within her own limited capacity for anticipation or

imagination extends. Conversely, in so far as these "combinations" have traction in an

inter-subjective or social reality, then she no longer "handles freely", but works under the

exigency of a system in which she is a "poor…function" (835). To handle or arrange

"combinations of men and women" with the sovereign aesthetic freedom that Mrs. Jordan

handles "combinations of flowers and greenstuff" would require the telegraphist to shift

from the aesthetic arrangement of flowers to governing the arrangement of human bodies

– a flirtation with the possibility of forcing decisions that recalls Mudge's violent, quiet,

speedy "handling of the drunken soldier" (902).

The telegraphist comes closest to exerting this kind of control over "combinations

of men and women" via the telegraphic system when, in a superhuman act of memory,

she resolves the crisis of the intercepted telegram for Bradeen and Everard by recalling its

contents. This control is only momentary and incomplete, however, and, like Bradeen and

Everard, she quickly discovers that events have outrun her "postal resources and

alternatives". Unfolding behind her back, the "true" story of Everard and Bradeen is only

revealed to her after the fact, and her own sudden determination that "decidedly, her little

home must be not for next month, but for next week" is "at last settled for her by Mr.

Drake" (James, *In the Cage*, *Complete Stories, 1892-1898* 923) – a character who never

appears, but only dwells in the margins of the text. Menke claims, following Frederic

Jameson, that in this respect one characteristic *In the Cage* shares with other modernist

writing is "the sense that the center lies elsewhere" (987). This sense of a "vanishing"

center, and the suspicion that any notion of a center may be illusory, is clearly applicable

to the category of space in James's novella: Within the margins of her telegraph office's

cage, the telegraphist both is and isn't at the "center" of a network of characters and

communications; she is both marginal to the lives of others and one point at which these

lives intersect, a replaceable functionary who nevertheless insists on her own importance.

But, as I have tried to argue, the vanishing center of *In the Cage* also has an undissociable

temporal dimension, the sense that the present moment, the pivot between past and

future, vanishes all too easily in the speed of modern technologies of inscription and

transmission; indeed, James himself, moving words and fictional people around on the

page through the power of his thought and his voice, admits to being unable to maintain

his control over the loquaciousness to which the typewriter prompts him.

In *Speed and Politics*, Paul Virilio addresses an entire complex of "planetary"

technologies that emerged after the Enlightenment and took hold in the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries. When he opposes "imagination" to "anticipation" and evokes the

disappearance of the "present" in the following passage, Virilio could be describing the

incompatibility of consciousnesses that will not allow James to narrate Mudge and the

telegraphist in the same tense: "Contraction in time, the disappearance of the territorial

space…causes the 'present' to disappear in the instantaneousness of decision. The final

power would be less one of imagination than of anticipation, so much so that to govern

would be *no more than* to foresee, simulate, memorize the simulations" (157). The

telegraph accelerates and usurps postal communication. Indifferent to anthropocentric

meanings, values or intentions, the telegraph's "absolute significance", as Simmel puts it,

is that it speeds things up, facilitating, in Virilio's terms, "contraction in time" and

executing "the disappearance of the territorial space", causing the differentiated structure

of space – centers and peripheries – to collapse on itself in near instantaneous movement

and the present moment to disappear into the calculation or simulation of possible

futures. The categories of "time" and "space" of course do not actually disappear, but

planetary technologies of speed like the telegraph renovate and reconfigure them in such

a way that old models of "governance" or control can no longer operate in the way they

once did. New media technologies hold out the illusion of greater instrumental control to

both authors and politicians, even as they produce communication in excess of the

anthropocentric categories of judgment that have largely governed thought – in the

realms of politics and literature at least – since the Enlightenment.

This loss of control over the speed of communications determines *Spectators* in

its historical setting at the beginnings of the First World War. In *The Culture of Time and*

Space, Stephen Kern argues that the crises of telegraphic diplomacy and automated

mobilizations that preceded the outbreak of the First World War brought the loss of

control over this excess to the forefront of historical consciousness:

> In the summer of 1914 the men in power lost their bearings in the hectic rush
>
> paced by flurries of telegrams, telephone conversations, memos, and press
>
> releases; hard-boiled politicians broke down and seasoned negotiators cracked
>
> under the pressure of tense confrontations and sleepless nights…During the
>
> climactic period between July 23 and August 4 there were five ultimatums with
>
> short time limits all implying or explicitly threatening war if the demands were
>
> not met. In the final days the pressing requirements of mobilization timetables

> frayed the last shreds of patience…making a sham of the efforts of diplomats,
>
> who continued to go through the motions of negotiating as time and the peace
>
> slipped away. (260)

Kern comes close here to granting technology an overly strong historical causality, and the description of the crisis of 1914 as something akin to an industrial or railway accident in many ways stems from the self-interested personal statements and memoirs of the statesmen bearing partial responsibility. The causes of the First World War are extraordinarily complex and technological determinism here can too easily slip into alibi for human aggression, negligence and failure; and if there is a modern tendency to claim that the war was an unfortunate accident, than it was an accident that plenty of people in 1914, and not only generals and politicians, welcomed with enthusiasm. Yet the false sense of comprehension and control provided by technology does seem to have played some role. David Paull Nickles, drawing on a deeper archive than Kern to re-construct the pre-1914 cultures of diplomatic networks and bureaucracies to assess the impact of the telegraph on international relations, concludes that the speed of the telegraph helped produce the illusion of centralized control through the promise of instantaneous or fully-present communication, thus "increasing the temptation to engage in hasty action and micromanagement" and "estranging diplomatic official from local or biological cycles" (91). Caught between the technological temporality of "accelerated communication" and the subjective temporality of human personnel, Nickles claims that in the summer of 1914, "governments tended to use technology without adjusting their behavior" to it in a systemic way (Nickles 194). It is difficult to argue that the beginnings of the First World

War, and the swift failures of war planning on all sides, weren't exacerbated by a failure to recognize the reversal between means and ends, the distance between the understanding of technology as instrument, and the reality of its "absolute" logic: The tragic gap between objective and subjective culture is writ large in geo-politics. The telegraph is a "smoother" and "more propitious" means of communication not only for Everard's "little affairs", but also for the "great affairs" of states, their diplomacies and wars, seducing both the worldly con-artist and world leaders into the illusion that it is a mere instrument they can readily use to attain their own ends without danger or detour.

Theodora Bosanquet and Clara Smith's response to the crisis of 1914 and the disaster that followed was to write a novel that reconfigures the relationship between dictation and technologies of communication. As Bosanquet's first novel, it is to some degree also a response to Henry James, and, as a novel about postal relationships, perhaps a response to the desperation Bosanquet records that she felt when she read *In the Cage* (Thurschwell 10). *Spectators* was published in book form in 1916 and serialized in *The Living Age* in the United States between August and November 1918.[23] The novel itself comprises thirty letters, along with the occasional insert and telegram, exchanged between a sister and brother, Nanda Wychwood and Nicolas Romer, over the course of the summer of 1914. While the return to epistolary narration gives it the appearance of a certain formal conservatism, *Spectators* is also an example of a fairly uncommon genre, the novel composed through open collaboration, and in this sense the epistolary structure lends itself well to an experiment in modernist authorship via telecommunication, "the two authors exchanging letters by their fictional characters", with Bosanquet apparently adopting the role of Nicolas, while Smith takes on that of Nanda (Powers 9). By aligning

an authorial dyad with a narrative one, Smith and Bosanquet partially cede to one another

the claim to control an author like James imposes on all of the elements in the text,

including style, plotting, and characterization.

Spectators is constructed along three narrative lines, each of which charts the

development of a particular crisis. The first narrative, which is also the most recognizably

novelistic, centers on the question of whom, if any one, Nicolas and Nana's younger half-

sister, Betty, will marry. The second narrative concerns the mental break-down of a

portrait painter, Nicolas's friend Billy Puckle. The third line of narrative is somewhat

heterogeneous to novelistic discourse and makes its overt appearance in a sudden

eruption two-thirds of the way through the novel, though for readers with a minimum of

historical consciousness it ghosts the other two from the very moment the first letter

given a date in the spring of 1914: This is of course the coming outbreak of the war itself.

The plotting of *Spectators* – an artist goes mad, two lovers find social class an obstacle to

marriage – is to some degree disconnected and superficial, but then one of the themes

Nicolas and Nana return to again and again is the primacy of surfaces and a defense of an

ethics of superficiality. Nicolas tells his sister "there are times when your talent for being

incidental rises to the height of positive genius" (Oct 12 81), and one of the charms, or

frustrations, of the novel is the way the loose, digressive, oft-lyrical rhythm of the

siblings' letters resists the tightly bound rhythm of convoluted plotting. Osmond and

Georgina Craske, the ostensible "villains" of the marriage narrative, are precisely the

characters that, like the telegraphist of *In the Cage*, concern themselves with plots and

interpretations. Peter Dane, who has become Osmond's "rival" for Betty's hand without

really being aware of it, and who Osmond derides as "'an attractive fellow superficially'"

(Sept. 7 592) complains about the tendency to search for subtexts: "'Is n't it difficult to talk to people who always look for concealed meanings in the idiotically simple things you say?...It makes me feel that everyone, myself included, is so much more terrifying and dangerous than I had any idea of'" (Sept. 21 724). In this context, superficiality takes on an ethical and metaphysical valence for Nanda and Nicolas. As far as the plot is concerned, the defense of surfaces bears immediately on the suspicion under which Betty's guardian places the otherwise "attractive" Peter Dane in regard to his ancestry, an old European fixation on the purity of bloodlines and origins that Nanda and Nicolas find galling. Both resist the notion of any return to origins, whether defined by family, God, or even the authenticity and integrity of the self. Nanda claims that the dissolution of the self in death holds less horror for her than a Christian afterlife because "I don't think I mind alterations in my own personality at all but, I don't like being 'somewhere else.' I do want to stay in touch with this world" (Sept. 28 784). Taking up Nanda's notion of becoming someone else after death, Nicolas responds with a reflection on Darwin and Bergson, writing that he doesn't know if the notion of time as "creative evolution" is demonstrably true, but he finds it far more attractive than

> the old doctrine of antecedent perfection, perfection which had to be regained by the shedding of accretions of 'sin'…And if that picture of humanity as changing, growing, *becoming*, really takes hold of people's imaginations, there will be an end of the depressing conception which is freely expressed in the popular metaphors – used extensively in pulpits – like 'separating the dross from the gold,' and 'rooting up the weeds of wickedness'. (Sept. 28 786)

Surfaces should be taken as starting points for "change", not as "accretions" to be stripped away under the suspicion that they conceal more perfect, "antecedent" forms. This "old doctrine" of organized Christianity is one manifestation of the conservatism, the adherence to class origins or family names, that Nanda and Nicolas view as stifling.

Yet, as good aesthetes of their time and place, the narrators of *Spectators* recognize that religion, the basis of Western art, is also the source of so many of the surfaces they admire. Nanda, watching a church procession in Italy, favors the spectacular displays of "every wise religion" that "understands that beauty is an unknown god in whose honor sacrifice is always worthwhile" (Aug. 31 537) over more utilitarian demonstrations such as the English political marches that "crawl to Hyde Park to provide proofs about drink or Ulster" (Aug. 31 536) or military parades that "can be very swagger, of course, and pretty too if there are lancers and sunlight, but their gray guns and glittering uniforms stand only for organization and horror" (Aug. 31 537). Standing outside of the Church and organized religion as a spectator, Nanda can freely separate religious symbolism from the invisible world it "stands for" in order to assign it a new meaning as "sacrifice" to a truly "unknown god". But she cannot do the same with the secular demonstrations of her own country, where worldly utility assigns immutable meanings to symbols that "stand only for organization and horror". The siblings – or authors? – aren't fully in immediate agreement here: Nicolas's response is to agree with Nanda about military parades, but also to remind her "how effective" political parades "might be in the hands of more imaginative organizers! The Suffragists are the only people here who have better theories about the look of their processions" (Sept. 7 593).

Nanda and Nicolas's rigorous insistence that all good causes must have good appearances, has a comic tone, but their point is a serious one: A good aesthetics, in Nanda and Nicolas's view, must necessarily offer an element of freedom – religion freed to adore "unknown gods", love undetermined by class origins or women freed to participate in politics – and causes that promote suspicion, restriction and violence – "prohibition", "Ulster", "military organization" – cannot, despite being "occasionally pretty", produce a good aesthetics.

These polemics against a suspicion that valorizes depths and origins, however, cannot be taken as completely straight statements of authorial conviction. As Bosanquet and Smith are quite aware, skeptics of "civilization" from Nietzsche to Conrad to Freud, would argue that everyone, Peter Dane included – Peter Dane *especially* – *is* "much more terrifying and dangerous" than anyone suspects; 1914 would seem to bear them out. By the end of the novel the "attractive" and "simple" Peter has ruined the plans of Betty's guardian to make an economically sustainable match for her and departed to take part in the slaughter of the Western Front. When Nanda worries that "for the world in general – I'm childishly afraid it is almost too lovely to be true. However it's not a fear that lasts;" (Sept. 28 784), the date of the letter – July 20, 1914 – lends a melancholy cast to the statement, and positions it as a wistful memoriam of the pre-war world that is about to vanish. The innocence and good-faith that Nanda and Nicolas defend in surfaces is not rendered without a certain irony on the part of Smith and Bosanquet.

Nevertheless, Nicolas and Nanda continuously point out that even if depth itself is not an illusion, what is illusory is the belief that it can be explained or systemized: To do so is to once again attempt to assert control through "organization and horror". In a

reflection on Joseph Conrad, Nicolas argues "admiring the kingdoms of the earth from aeroplanes" is "a dangerously attractive point of view for novelists" who make "much too free a use of it. They want to show us such huge tracts of human experience that the whole picture has to be flattened into something rather map-like… nothing but watersheds and river systems" (Aug. 31 532-33). On the other hand, "Conrad's passion for atmosphere and perspective" affects the reader like a "great looming mountain or tangled growth of jungle obscuring the distance. You arrive…having seen very little with your own eyes, and dependent for knowledge on the reports of the spies he has provided for your guidance and entertainment" (Aug. 31 533). In a sense, there can be no synthesis between surface and depth: To be surface, surface must be opaque, "obscuring the distance"; to be depth, depth cannot be "flattened into something rather map-like". The epistolary form of *Spectators* is of course an exercise in limited, earth-bound point of view; more radically, the epistolary mode of its composition, its dual authorship, is an exercise in limiting the God-like "overview" of the novelist as creator and origin, instead dispersing the "author" into a system of collaborative play in real time, where each writer starts over from the surface of where the other left off.

To refuse to assimilate depth to surface thus means generating time through dependence on the reception and response another –a local temporal consistency that develops out of the rhythm of a turn-taking exchange that the postal structure enables. This temporal consistency cannot break completely with the public or global temporalities upon which modern postal systems themselves depend, however. One of the functions of *Spectators*' epistolary form is to bring the novelistic and historical timelines into resonance. Dated and addressed, each letter plays on the reader's

consciousness of the approaching outbreak of war, even as the content of Nicolas and Nanda's letters concerns mundane and peaceful topics – country scenery, art criticism, recent novels, invitations to dinner parties, and gossip over their acquaintances' affairs. Yet neither is this content quite innocent. Here, the war is first foreshadowed with a light tone, appearing as a sort of colonial competition over the Italian tourist sites listed in the Baedeker travel guide, waged between "*rundreising* Germans" and "the English people who seem to live for (though surely not by) writing travel sketches" (Aug. 17 396-97). Following carefully plotted itineraries while evading German tourists, the aggressively inquisitive Craskes, and the importune invitations of their step-aunt Daisy Brampton alike, Nanda and Nicolas use the postal system to formulate logistical strategies, gather intelligence, and conduct secret diplomacy.

The second indication of the coming war emerges in Billy Puckle's psychological collapse. In a letter dated June 30, 1914, Nicolas notes that one of the painter's symptoms is that "he has a horrible premonition of some awful impending calamity" – though he quickly tempers this whiff of prophecy with the pathologizing statement "I believe that's a fairly common symptom in like cases" (Sept. 14 656). Puckle appears to be suffering from a form of aesthetic "shock" *before* the war breaks out; though there is a touch of the fantastic in this temporal reversal of the event and its effects, it is nevertheless appropriate in that Puckle's shock appears to stem from concerns about aesthetic effects that are able to take place without organized human consciousness comprehending and controlling the entirety of the process. In the final letter that bears a date from before the August crisis, Puckle, the traditional portraitist, debates aesthetics with Guy Crittenden, a poet and painter who acknowledges, or is accused of, Vorticist, Futurist, and Imagist

aesthetic sympathies, and the brother of the research psychologist who is treating Puckle

for his symptoms. In the course of the debate, Puckle argues that representation, feeling,

and meaning cannot be dissociated. To function as representation, art demands its own

sort of "antecedent perfection" in the mind of the spectator. When reading poetry, Puckle

claims that knowledge of the concepts they represent must precede the effects words on a

page can have on a reader:

> 'You must know what the words mean, the thought they hold. It's just the same
>
> with line and color. You must *know* – without having to guess too hard – what
>
> they represent, before you can really be stirred. You're all wrong about
>
> representation not being essential.'
>
> 'You've given your case away with that admission about tone,' said Guy
>
> ready and anxious to defend his position. 'Why does tone affect people? Just
>
> because the vibrations of the sound waves, striking on the ear, set up internal,
>
> harmonious vibrations in the mechanism of the ear itself. In the same way color
>
> vibrations, striking on the eye -'
>
> He stopped because Billy was taking an unfair but excusable advantage of
>
> his condition as an invalid to turn very white. (Sept. 28 788-89)

Crittenden takes "an unfair but excusable advantage" of the example of music to argue

that "representation", or the conscious understanding of "the thought" a word or image

"holds", is secondary to those "vibrations" or "waves" that, by "striking on the ear" or

"striking on the eye", bypass the understanding to directly affect the sensory

"mechanisms" of the body. This debate is cut short here by a resonant twist: The humanist's psycho-physiology itself begins to break down under the impact of the discussion. Clearly Billy Puckle "can really be stirred" – or terrified – by the *convincing conception* of art as the reductive intersection of physiological "mechanism" and "vibrations" or "waves"; whether this "stir" or terror-stricken collapse proves Puckle's point, or Crittenden's, is an open question. But then this question is actually beside the point. In fact Puckle's problem is not precisely the theoretical reduction in the theory of painting to "waves" of light "striking on the eye", but rather the reduction in practice of representation to "waves" of light striking chemically prepared film which human hands can only manipulate through the mediation of the camera's mechanism. Smith and Bosanquet identify the source of Puckle's breakdown as overwork in his profession as a portrait painter. In 1914, the traditional painter of portraits has long been under siege, not by theorists of the avant garde, but by the mechanical tinkerers who continuously improve the speed and fidelity of photography. In his "Little History of Photography", Walter Benjamin writes: "The real victim of photography…was not landscape painting, but the portrait miniature" (514). Billy Puckle, the artist who defends a notion of the artwork as a representation that is recognized in the mind against a notion of the artwork as a mechanism that affects the body, is confronted in his very vocation by a mechanization of production that is already transforming the means of representation itself. Portraiture captures time in order to both compress and expand it; the portrait painter attempts to infuse the being of a subject into the simulacrum of a moment, to both still and distill a lifetime, a process of production which itself requires contemplation and thus takes time. The camera, unable to think or to know, but eliding the difference

between production and reproduction, and thus between artwork and mass commodity, reduces this time to the blink of a shutter and accommodates itself to the accelerated time of the market.

The industrialization of the aesthetic is thus the aspect of objective culture as a specifically technological phenomena that first pushes its way into Nicolas and Nanda's particular social cultural sphere, as Smith and Bosanquet chronicle the destruction of the aura of "sacred" art by the camera twenty years before Walter Benjamin's "Work of Art" essay.[24] In a suggestive episode from her Italian journey before the war, Nanda describes how a morose American, camera in tow, interposes himself in the battle for possession of the sites of Classical and Renaissance culture being waged between the "*rundreising* Germans" and the English literati to reveal that the "aura" of these singular sites has already been destroyed in a flash of light:

> 'I've never been so disappointed in my life…It's been a very interesting experience, but it's just this way. I used to look at the photographs and think what it would mean to me to see the Leaning Tower and the Coliseum and all the historical monuments of Rome, and if you'll believe me, I have n't had a real thrill anywhere…They're just wonderful, but I've seen them all before'. And with that he fell into a gloomy silence where no sympathy could intrude, and I could only turn back to my own life in pity for the tragedies of youth. (Aug. 24 464-465)

In front of the camera, the architectural singularities that anchor the deep time and accreted "meanings" of Western Civilization are replaced by a multitude of two-dimensional post-cards. Behind the camera, the portrait artist becomes just another "spectator", looking on at the critical, fleeting moment while the mechanism does the creative work of assembling the image itself. Simmel's "tragedy of culture" here comes into full view: The camera multiplies cultural objects at a speed greater than subjective culture, which craves holistic meanings, can absorb. Puckle's firm attachment to the temporality of subjective culture leads him to first put down the paintbrush in defeat, and then take up the scalpel to salvage what lives he can. In the case of the melancholy American tourist, the triumph of objective culture is total: Tellingly, he continues to carry a camera from site to site in order to blindly reproduce the very cultural logic he laments, even though he admits that the ancient objects he encounters can no longer "mean" to him what he had anticipated they would mean. Nanda is sympathetic to the psychic turmoil of these victims of photography as an industrial art form, but she refuses to succumb to it herself, since authenticity, or its loss, is for her of little concern. Her own prose "portraits" of other people operate like photographic postcards, rapid sketches that find their way into her letters. And like the symbols of religious processions, images, in her view, only become interesting when they can be freed from the oppressive weight of their original meanings. A photographic portrait cannot be considered a masterpiece, the product of laborious training and temporally extended concentration, the way a painting can, and a photograph of a cathedral does not mediate the social or the temporal in the same way that the painstakingly constructed original might have. Likewise, as a "minor" mode of writing, a letter carries with it a freeing sense of extemporaneity and transience

that a work of literature lacks, making it a better medium for impressionistic writing than a book, a notion that Bosanquet and Smith appropriate for their own novel. Moving from place to place, Baedeker in hand, on a modern transportation system and posting her impressions whenever she would like, Nanda is thus able to move from reproduction to original and back again in a way that coordinates objective culture with her own subjective rhythms and frees her from a melancholic approach to an old world that is passing away.

The complication, however, is that the objectivity of technology does not stay confined to the aesthetic realm, but impinges on the political as well, a fact that the outbreak of the war makes clear. The discursive and logistical mechanisms of transnational alliances and militarized nation states do their work with the same automatism as a camera, transforming human emotions of hatred, fear, and excitement into fixed commitments and actions. Trains begin to mobilize troops as well as tourists and the post comes to carry thoughtlessly worded ultimatums and irrevocable orders as readily as it transmits impressionistic sketches in prose. Nanda's subjective freedom to move and to see is drastically curtailed by the war, which imposes radical new restrictions on image, spectator, and words alike. As Paul Virilio illustrates through the story of D.W. Griffith's thwarted attempt to film the fighting, in the First World War there is nothing to see, as "to the naked eye, the vast new battlefield seemed to be composed of nothing…the famous slogan 'they shall not pass' took on a new meaning as literally no one passed across the field of vision" (*War and Cinema* 19). Bosanquet and Smith allude to this quality in *Spectators* when Nicolas contemplates Billy Puckle's potential as a war artist:

He has hopes of a war correspondence job himself, although it does n't look as if

the war correspondents are going to have much of a time in this war, between

restrictions abroad and the censor at home. Even Billy admits that it would n't be

worth while to go to the front on those terms, though I'm not sure that he is n't

just the right man to do the sort of war sketches that are publishable. He could

make lots of copy out of the sight of an abandoned knapsack by the roadside, and

could give the vivid impression of armies battling just round the corner. (Oct. 12

82)

Whether because of "the censor" at home or because of "restrictions" on the field of

vision at the front, the war cannot be represented. It can, instead, only be alluded to by

what it has "abandoned" in its wake. Representations of the fragmented, invisible battles

of the front cannot operate through imitation of the whole, but via radical metonymy,

through the "impression" left by the very absence of its subject. Likewise, the abandoned

knapsack, may stand not only as a metonymy for the absent vision of battle as a whole

but also as the specific substitute for a corpse or wounded body, the image of which the

censors would not allow to undermine home-front morale. Ultimately, neither Billy

Puckle nor Guy Crittendon, whose aesthetic sympathies with Futurism cannot overcome

his distaste for violence, will become war artists. Both instead abandon their poetic and

painterly vocations to join a volunteer medical unit, and aesthetic debates over how sound

and light affect or "strike" the mechanisms of embodied perception are replaced by

concern for the effects on the mechanisms of the body when it is "struck" by crueler materials.

The most direct "spectator" to the war itself, anticipating Virilio, will instead be the engineer Peter Dane, whose role as a pilot grants him a small measure of distance from the reality of wounded bodies and allows him to replace the blocked horizontal vision of the trenches with a vertical vision from the cockpit. "At the turn of the century", Virilio writes, "cinema and aviation seem to form a single moment. By 1914…it was becoming one way, or perhaps the ultimate way, of seeing" (*War and Cinema* 22). Patrick Deer likewise connects the disjunction between front-line experience and the abstract "oversight" of commanders governments to the distinction between horizontal vision and the vertical vision provided by maps: "If the emblematic figure for the collapse of vision was No-Man's Land, it was the strategist's map that came to represent the struggle to recapture oversight, to survey and order the mud, chaos, and horror of battle" (24). This shift of vision from the horizontal to the vertical dimension returns us to Nicolas's opposition of the omniscient narratives that writers use to present a view of "the kingdoms of the earth from aeroplanes", creating worlds that are "flattened into something rather map-like… nothing but watersheds and river systems", to "atmospheric" narrative where horizontal vision is blocked and the reader is "dependent for knowledge on the reports of the spies" provided by the author.

But there is, of course, no author for the war. There is only the framework provided by diplomats and strategists of telecommunications on one hand and the deadly restrictions on the field of vision on the other, working under its own logic without a Napoleon, benevolent or otherwise, at the master switch. As the diplomats and generals

of the Great Powers discover, their plans and plots and ultimatums, their zero-sum strategies and automated mobilizations, aren't exactly thwarted, but rather march off on their own in directions indifferent to both human control and survival. That neither Smith nor Bosanquet is *the* author of *Spectators* reflects an awareness of this vanishing illusion of unilateral control over communication. James is a "benevolent Napoleon" (Bosanquet, *Henry James at Work* 32) who marshals words and reflexive visions into narrative, playing a lonely game in which he seeks to master his amanuenses, his material, the past forms available to him, and his future readers. In contrast, *Spectators* is a joint composition structured by the novel's postal narrative, a game played in real time between two living writers, neither of whom seeks to outplay the other in order to master the game. Instead, each writer plays off the words of the other, disrupting and recreating authorial intention with each turn. In the tragic conflict that unfolds between subjective culture and objective culture, this is an admission of the finitude of the former that paradoxically recoups the temporal excess of the latter – a certain kind of peace. This is a lesson that modernist writing often failed to learn, or, like the epistolary form, would come to forget. While Joyce, Pound, and Eliot recognize that their words could never fully be their own, in turning to pastiche and citation they seek out their avowed collaborators first amongst the dead. Beyond ephemeral Dada events and unreadable Surrealist productions, collective "authorship" as joint improvisation transcribed and stored for temporally extended audiences instead becomes the province of the film and music industries – artistic endeavors that inherently demand a different approach from literary writing in the strategies of control the human subject exerts over technological media.

Within *Spectators*, death and writing are inseparable, but neither is equated with a transcendence that places the consistency of the autonomous author or narrator beyond the living here and now. Finitude and fragility are everywhere, in the tenuous epistolary existences to which Nicolas and Nanda commit themselves, in the social, political, and cultural certainties of the pre-war world, and in the very lives of the characters themselves. The chances, for example, that Peter Dane, taking to the air in 1914, will land safely in 1918 are vanishingly small. The war is the instrument that overcomes history and the class prejudices of Betty's guardian to speed her union with Peter, but it also all but assures this union will be brief. *Spectators* thus ends with a citation of from a dead author and a dialogue between would-be ghosts:

Do you remember Anatole France's story of the dead lovers, who might come from purgatory for one hour each year and kneel hand in hand to hear the mass? And the old lace-maker who cried in her dream because she was not yet a ghost to meet her lover on equal terms? I should never find you at night nor look for you in a cold church, but shall we have an assignation for the Greenways woods? Even if I too were not on equal terms, I know I could find you there in the sunlight…Will you remember Nicolas? Always in October, and we could come and look for each other often – when there were bluebells, for instance – it would be very little trouble to ghosts.

But that is a very far-away appointment, and in the meantime, I shall make a great many more temporal ones, beginning with Euston on Saturday evening next. You must tell me a definite train. (Nov. 16 407)

Letters are simulacra of presence and epistolary writing is constituted by distance and separation. Nana and Nicolas are not destined to meet in the narrative and indeed there is a narrative only in so far as the war's commandeering of trains assures they do not meet. Any assignation must take place in the unknown of the after-life or in the margins beyond what can be narrated in an epistolary novel. The reader's vision here is as restricted as at the front, and if Peter Dane catches a glimpse of the whole from above, then it vanishes with him, Castorp-like, like James's telegraphist, into the clouds. Nanda's evocation of ghosts, even as she implores her brother to send her the number of a "definite train" via the post so that the post may be overcome, resonates with a similar epistolary lament posted in 1920 by Franz Kafka to Milena Jesenská, across a newly established border line restricting the movement between Prague and Vienna, which equates telecommunications, and the loss of the self when it is transposed into writing or wires, with death – "an intercourse with ghosts, and by no means just with the ghost of the addressee but also with one's own ghost, which secretly evolves inside the letter one is writing" (Kafka 223). Yet, as Nanda states, this form of death holds little fear for her: "I don't think I mind alterations in my own personality at all but…I do want to stay in touch with this world". Committing herself to the telegraph and to writing is an admission of finitude on Nanda's part, and it is accompanied by a sense of loss, of "alterations" to the self, but by accepting these "alterations", ceding the desire for transcendent control over communication, she does not reject the world, or despair over its loss in ideal form, but instead remains a part of it.

Nanda's conscious willingness to risk "alterations" to an integral "personality" in exchange for the opportunity to "stay in touch" encapsulates the novel's approach to communication and its challenge to the hubris of instrumentalizing communication. The dual authorship of *Spectators* brings this relinquishing of claims to the unilateral organization of a self that is constituted through communication into the process of literary composition itself, while the dual-narrator, epistolary structure introduces a similar tendency into the novel's form. These twinned structures establish a sequence of reciprocal exchange in the novel that is dependent on the postal medium: Each letter composed by one author / narrator depends on the letter written by the second author / narrator that comes before it for its existence, and it cedes, in turn, control over the narrative to the subsequent letter it makes possible, and so on. The oscillation of control over the narrative, the dependence of the writing and written self not only upon the postal medium but also upon the response of the other that the medium facilitates, introduces a rhythmic temporality that exists outside of the frantic, accelerating competition that exemplifies objective culture. Though the self is given over to telecommunications technology, it does not give itself over to determination by the temporality of that technology in its pure form, but to one that is established through the conjoining of that technology with a human correspondent.

Spectators thus finds a possibility for writing novels and reestablishing a consistency of self from within and through the accelerating and dispersive tendencies of objective culture. The notion that literature might be reconstituted through a telecommunications-based collaborative authorship that makes its own time in pulsed response and exchange is familiar to anyone who has felt the incommensurability of the

traditional novel to our contemporary culture of rapid, open-ended, democratized

narratives that develop in social networks and microblogs. Nevertheless, there is a certain

richness of experience – of the body, of memory, and of the resonances between multiple

temporalities – lost in such close, realistic adherence to the forms provided by

telecommunication technologies. By undercutting the author as unitary consciousness,

Spectators represents a strategy for literary writing in a period of technological

dislocation, but it is a strategy that has its limitations. In the next chapter, I will look at

the role a very different genre, one traditionally focused less on extended descriptions of

social milieu and more on the immediate awareness of the self, might play in this

discussion by exploring the relationship between technology and the transformation of

the embodied senses in Mina Loy's early lyric poetry.

Chapter Three

Eyes Entangled:

Mediated Vision and Henri Bergson's Philosophy in Mina Loy's Early Poetry

In an essay published in the second issue of the New York little magazine *The Blind Man* (1917), a number devoted largely to fomenting the scandal surrounding Marcel Duchamp's submission of a signed urinal to the Exhibition of the Society of Independents, Louise Norton archly invokes John Ruskin to chide the show's judges, for whom Duchamp's "object was irrevocably associated in their atavistic minds with a certain natural function of a secretive sort. Yet to any 'innocent' eye how pleasant is its chaste simplicity of line and color!" (5-6). The innocent eye, according to Ruskin, sees these fundamental elements in an essentially pre-linguistic state, disassociated from signification and from pre-formed concepts of what the object of vision "means".[25] Norton thus argues for the apprehension of Duchamp's *Fountain* on the terms of these elements, while turning its scatological meanings back on the unwholesome eyes of the exhibition committee, although she quickly goes on to attach other meanings to the piece based on similarity, arguing that it is "like a lovely Buddha" and "like the legs of the ladies by Cezanne" (6). Norton is, of course, aware that there is no meaning or non-meaning attachable to *Fountain* that does not in some way refer back to its original function, and, entitling her text "Buddha of the Bathroom" and suggesting to the reader that Cezanne's women "in their long round nudity, always recalled to your mind the calm curves of decadent plumbers' porcelains", she overtly pushes the associations she enumerates towards the sacrilegious or the grotesque and fetishistic (6).

Fountain designates not so much an object as a collaborative multi-media publicity operation carried out by a group of artists, writers, and provocateurs affiliated with *The Blind Man*, among them the poet Mina Loy.[26] In the April 1917 number of the magazine, Loy, anticipating Duchamp's submission and Norton's appropriation of Ruskin to interpret it, lays the groundwork for the Independents show with a brief discourse on how the innocent vision of the artist differs from the everyday vision of the mass audience: "*The Artist* is uneducated, is seeing IT for the first time; he can never see the same thing twice" ("In…Formation" 7). According to the first part of Loy's proposition, the artist's eye is "uneducated", perceiving the world in a natural state, free of acquired habits and preconceptions. The second part of Loy's proposition, however, suggests that "uneducated" perception is itself not a state that is restored or recovered. Rather, percpetion is compulsively shaped or produced, always differing from itself, "never the same thing twice". The problem with the contemporary relationship between art and the public is, for Loy, the establishment of categories that bestow critical authority via recognition: "Education in recognizing something that has been seen before demands an art that is only acknowledgeable by way of diluted comparisons" ("In…Formation" 7). Unlike Ruskin's depiction of vision as timeless, lacking any *a priori* save line and color, "uneducated" seeing is founded in temporal difference, appearing in Loy's formulation as derived not from innocence, but instead from the experience and memory that can identify a difference in its objects and in itself. Sara Danius, in *The Senses of Modernism*, argues that, for Ruskin, innocent vision refers to the restoration of a natural, essential state of human being and is implicitly part of a Romantic project opposed to industrial and technological modernity. By the twentieth century, however, a version of innocent

vision emerges, exemplified for Danius in the writing of Marcel Proust, that valorizes the production of the new and implicitly takes historical, particularly technological, interventions into perception as the sources of novel moments of vision (Danius 115-23). In detaching, ever so slightly, vision from human meanings, technology in some sense fulfills the promise of Ruskin's concept; the camera, after all, records nothing but the play of light, and the moving vehicle transforms stationary objects, eye level into smears of color or unrecognizable geometries. The versions of "innocent" or "uneducated" sight that appears in the *Blind Man* writings of Norton and Loy on the Independents Exhibition are based in this post-Ruskin and post-Romantic approach to vision.

The linkage between vision, time, and technology plays a significant role in the poetry Loy writes during this period. Vision appears in these texts as multifarious and shifting, affected by practices and techniques that make it untenable for modern poets to describe things simply as they appear, as though sight were a self-evident or transparent medium. *Seeing* is itself never the same thing twice; time inflects and destabilizes the body in which the senses themselves are grounded. As the title of Loy's brief *Blind Man* essay suggests, the ground of seeing, rather than comprising an initial or final form, is itself always "in formation", always in the midst of a path of becoming, and thus shaped by an irreversible, qualitative temporality. Loy's conceptualization of the importance of temporality, like many modernist writers, was influenced by the writings of Henri Bergson. However, Loy also stages a positive engagement between Bergsonism and technology, taking media technology as fundamental to thinking becoming. In the following chapter, I look at how Loy's writing engages with Bergson's philosophy as a way of thinking embodied perception in terms of media frameworks that are themselves

in flux. This is particularly clear in the realm of vision, which appears in Loy's writing not as a subject's mental representation of an object constructed via the isolated and valorized faculty of sight, but as a being's embodied, active response to a complex environment, a response that itself in turn becomes a form of communication.

Bergson is significant for Loy because both writers share an interest in finding concrete ways to describe, first, consciousness' capacity to be shaped and affected by bodies in time and, second, individuality's slippery, multivalent, insistent reality. Attempting to write in relation to the lyric tradition at the beginning of the twentieth century, as Loy does in her early poetry, means establishing within a text a located consistency of self that orients, selects, and addresses, that thinks, feels, sees, and, ultimately, gives voice. To fully abandon that located consistency in favor of the aleatory or the abstract is to subtract from the lyric mode of its power to model forms of selfhood. Instead, the lyric poem's insufficiency in its contemporary form, as felt by Loy, for modern life in general and to her life in particular, demands a reconfiguration of the terms of the sensing, feeling, speaking consistency at the poem's core. Sketching out the ways in which the faculty of vision is constituted through contingent and variable events, through its grounding in the affectivity of changing bodies and in technology, and through a seeing self's own visibility to others, Loy establishes her own poetic personae by putting the conventionalized self-identity of sight itself in question. This rethinking of vision is critical because, in her endeavor to write self-consciously modern poetry from a feminist position, Loy finds it necessary to work against not only Victorian conventionality, but also against a version of modernist resistance to that conventionality that takes as one of its primary resources a consciousness that stands apart from and

superior to the objects that it describes, omniscient and omnipotent in its own invisibility. Bergson's elaboration of a metaphysics of indetermination and becoming thus provides Loy with something more than a general warrant for claiming a thoroughly "modernized" individual subjectivity that is free of the determinations of repressive discourses. Rather, this philosophy also helps her question and redefine the terms of that individuality by establishing a poetic voice that is founded not in a self as a stable fulcrum, observing and describing its changing surroundings, but in a self that is inextricably involved in and affected by them. Key aspects of Bergson's approach to the embodied senses, and, in particular, his critique of reifying, separating sight that enforces a spurious individuality on both subject and object, provide Loy with a way of accessing technologically expanded modes of vision and using them to assemble poetic personae that, having partially disentangled themselves from the determinations of past discourses, do not remain static in their discrete individuality but are instead open to further breaks and becomings.

Like many Anglophone modernists, Loy's aesthetic doctrine includes the claim that the mediation of concrete perception is central to modern writing. In her essayistic assessment of contemporary verse, "Modern Poetry", Loy states that goal of reading poetry is "to obliterate the cold barrier of print 'with the whole intelligence of our senses'" so that the experience of reading is "that of listening to and looking at a pictured song" (157). In this formulation, to read poetry and see print is to fall into tautology; the materiality of print and the mechanism of literal reading gives way to voice present to the ear and image present to the eye. Yet her contemporaries also noted the ambiguous status of visual perception in Loy's actual poetry, finding difficulty establishing a stable

relationship between her words and the embodied senses in a stable configuration. T.S. Eliot criticizes Loy for abstraction in the May, 1918 edition of *Egoist*, complaining that her poem "Human Cylinders" " needs the support of an image, even if only as the instant point of departure; in this poem she becomes abstract, and the word separates from the thing" ("Observations" by T.S. Apteryx. Qtd. in Januzzi, "A Bibliography of Works By and About Mina Loy" 542). Eliot here conflates effective poetic craft with the translation of sense perception; the "abstract" condition of the word requires a visual "support" from the concrete qualities of the thing as a "point of departure" that will orient the reader. Ezra Pound likewise identifies Loy's poetry with a disengagement from the senses, an observation that, he claims, leads him to deploy a "new" category of poetry in order to classify Loy's work (along with that of Marianne Moore) termed "logopoeia" that is "akin to nothing but language" ("A List of Books" 57). Logopoeia's adhesion to signifiers is distinct from Pound's other categories, which are based on poetic language's mimetic relationship to the senses: "Melopoeia" is aural, while "imagism" or "Phanopoeia" is visual. "Logopoeia", however, is distinct from the other two modes in that it does not emulate the senses at all, suggesting both the suppression of the capability of language to become mimetic of anything other than itself and its transformation into a self-enclosed system that fails to open out onto a more natural world. Pound's later essay "How to Read" elaborates on this classificatory schema with the claim that "logopoeia" "employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes into account in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we *expect* to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of ironical play" ("How to Read" 25). Pound's formulation of "logopoeia" is only thinkable in the context of an encyclopedic

overview of a synchronic and diachronic language-system's "usual concomitants" and "known acceptances". Because this mode of poetics detaches itself from the senses and grounds itself in the artificial conventionality of language, Pound also treats it with suspicion, describing "logopoeia" as "the latest come" and "undependable" ("How to Read" 25). Pound thus implicitly opposes the natural or universal truth of the embodied senses to the relative or merely local truth claims of language, which the historical consciousness and self-reflexivity accompanying a position of belatedness can recognize but not overcome.

Another vein of more recent criticism, however, sees Loy's odd and at times obtrusive diction not as verbal abstraction, but as a way of mimicking the palpable, material unruliness of bodies. Ryan Bishop and John Phillips pair a study of twentieth century military optics with a careful reading of "Der Blinde Junge", Loy's poem about a youth who has lost his sight in the First World War, arguing that the "mimetic density of Loy's poem…renders the visible image all but invisible" (Bishop and Phillips 175). The formal resistance to both interpretation and the physiological act of reading that this poem presents, the authors claim, shows how Loy's modernist technique can serve as a critique of the illusion of full presence claimed by modernity's weaponized optical regime. In an essay on Loy's influence on Pound's conceptualization of "logopoiea", Peter Nicholls argues for the linkage between the body and Loy's use of language by connecting her writing to the tradition of the satirical grotesque. The linguistic excess, the layers of arcane or odd usage that Loy accumulates in her writing, are of a piece with her concern with the erotic, unruly, and often socially scandalous nature of the body. The very "undependability" of writing so focused on the sounds and surprises in words

parallels the body's refusal to be identical to intentions or calculations, an unruliness that marks the sensuality and vitality of both realms. Nicholls thus contrasts Pound's preference for distancing irony and formalism with Loy's essentially satiric mode that pushes "'logopoiea' to a boisterous extreme, where even the ironist's pretensions to aloof superiority would ultimately fall victim to the 'humid carnage' of the bodily life" (Nicholls 64). In a similar vein, Rowan Harris argues that Loy's poetry at times stresses the odd autonomy of language to indicate both the distance as well as the exploratory interplay between the self and its linguistic expression that for Harris defines Loy's mature feminism. In this sense, language's relation to the body is similar to that of fantastic self-decoration, as "words are ready made objects put on to 'express' the self and its desires, but also held aloft, inviting scrutiny and emerging in their full strangeness, their superb pretentiousness" (Harris 43). For these scholars, language and the body in Loy's work, while never reducible to one another, are united in their physicality, at times even their eroticism.

Other scholarship places Loy's work in the context of contemporary discourses on the body as an object with the capacity to be transformed through technology, emphasizing the significance of a malleable embodiment for Loy. Tim Armstrong reads Loy's pamphlet on "Auto-Facial-Construction", a program Loy devised for attuning the physiognomy to the personality, in the context of early-twentieth century regimes of physical self-cultivation. For Armstrong, this tract is not only an advertisement for a commercial endeavor but also a significant aesthetic statement that makes explicit the "interest in bodily adaptation" and "sense of the body as plastic" that can be traced throughout Loy's work (*Modernism, Technology and the Body* 122). Armstrong identifies

"a preoccupation in Loy's work with the opening up of the body's boundaries" in texts that "radically reverse inner and outer" (*Modernism, Technology and the Body* 119). Like Armstrong, Alex Goody sees the transience and malleability of bodies, rather than the search for a spiritual essence, as the driving force behind Loy's aesthetics. Reading them through the lens of Donna Haraway's cyborg theory, Goody sees Loy and other members of the New York art scene during the First World War as treating bodies in their texts and performances as neither fully naturalized entities nor as material husks to be discarded in the breakthrough to a transcendent, spiritual plane. Rather, the transformation of bodies and ideas both take place on the same plane, through their creative connections and hybrid alliances, "disarticulating" the body from social categories that have come to be naturalized (Goody 117). As this scholarly work on the place of the body and technology in Loy shows, Loy does not always seek to detach the self from the material plane, and she takes a positive stance towards technology's role in establishing novelty or difference. However, this work also places emphasis on how the body appears to the visual perception of others, rather than on how it generates its own perceptions, a distinction that I maintain is important for understanding the role of seeing as an activity in Loy's poetry.

Loy's understanding of Bergson is generally not associated with, or, it is implied, is even opposed to an emphasis on embodiment. In some critical literature, Bergson's writing is described as broadly influencing the themes of becoming as self-creation or self-making that run throughout Loy's work, with Loy taking Bergson as a warrant for overcoming the boundaries of received identities. In her biography of Loy, Carolyn Burke claims that Loy was introduced to Bergson's writing by Mabel Dodge in pre-war

Florence and argues that Bergson's philosophy of "becoming", by suggesting that "the past could be set aside and the self remade", must have appealed to Loy's desire to free herself from the "contradictions between being Christian and Jewish, British and foreign, respectable and commercial" (121-22). Likewise, in her monograph on Loy, Virginia Kouidis shows Bergsonian terminology echoing in Loy's poem "Parturition" and argues that Loy sees in Bergson's notion of intuitive access to the individual *dureé* a metaphysical validation for "endless self-creation" (39). According to both of these readings, Loy finds in Bergson a catalyst for a self-determining individualism; Bergson's philosophy is primarily useful to Loy as an inspiration for liberating poetic personae, individuals, or groups from the contradictory cultural determinations of pre-existing identities. Lara Vetter, by resituating Loy's use of evolution in the context of a broader early twentieth-century discourse on the topic, has recently painted a more skeptical view of the entailments of Loy's self-creating or self-determining individualism. While her writing on Loy's interest in theories of spiritual evolution focuses on Loy's interest in the doctrines of Christian Science, Vetter notes that Bergson's ideas mesh comfortably with a whole range of beliefs that appealed to Loy through their focus on transformation, including Christian Science, religious mysticism, and popular scientific writings on evolution. Vetter describes "Loy's hybrid notion of evolution" as positing that "existence is essentially spiritual; and that evolutionary progress takes place as individuals remove the mask of materiality" (122). For Vetter, Loy's notion of evolution as the transcendence of the physical by the spiritual, of the body by the soul, is a strategy to overcome notions of race that adhere to physical bodies (Vetter 112). Vetter depicts Loy's use of "evolution" as closely intertwined with eugenicist connotations, thus leaving in place the

ideal of a self-determining subject described by Burke and Kouidis while showing the problematic way that this ideal of self-determination comes to be produced through the rules, limitations, and resources comprising a specific historical discursive field.

Vetter's contention that Loy's oeuvre ultimately points towards a rejection of the body is problematic, however, because explorations of materiality and embodiment are not only thoughtfully addressed in Loy's speculative prose but also play an exceptionally prominent role in her poetry, which Vetter generally avoids. Other critics have acknowledged the non-coincidence between spirit and embodiment that runs throughout Loy's texts while also showing the ways Loy's version of the spiritual self is nevertheless dependent on embodiment. In an essay on Loy and Joseph Cornell's shared relationship with Christian Science, Tim Armstrong argues that "instead of stressing the 'error' of any belief in the material", Loy depicts a "transcendence…paradoxically rooted in the waste and presence of the body" ("Loy and Cornell" 215). In close readings of her later poems, Armstrong stresses the ways in which Loy values metamorphoses and material processes in themselves, rather than as mere means to a spiritual end. Indeed, according to Cristanne Miller, a determinate, closed metaphysics cuts against the purpose of Loy's interest in theological matters. Heterogeneity and heterodoxy, rather than spiritual purity and unity, constitute the primary appeal of religious thought and practice for Loy, who values religion largely for "its belief in powers beyond the control of any single institution or subject and promotion of interfaith alliances" (Miller 174). Religion for Loy, then, is not the negation of the material. It is, rather, a heterogeneous field of texts, social ties, ideas, and institutions that can be developed as a zone of indeterminacy or resistance. Sandeep Parmar supports this claim by describing how the unpublished

manuscripts of Loy's autobiographical novels reiterate the belief that the "human biology cannot fix a spiritual self" (Parmar 87). This spiritual self, however, is not continuous or eternally self-identical, as demonstrated by Loy's refusal to ever finalize one of these manuscripts, choosing instead to break off and rewrite her life story anew. The act of autobiography itself, "validating existence through writing" (Parmar 93), is "an unfinished project" where "revising the voice of the past, and thereby signaling a break into which the modern can be temporally inscribed is part of the process of modernity" (94). The temporal and material practice of writing that results in these accumulating, morphing manuscripts that double and translate the self becomes an instantiation of belief in an ongoing spirit. According to these readings of Loy's religious thinking, the material and spiritual continuously unsettle each other; the speculative nature of theological thought allows for the play for the imagination that releases the self from the sense of having been determined by history and biology, even as Loy also returns in her theologically-inflected writings to the sheer variety that accompanies the unruly, conflicted materiality of embodiment, whether in poetic images, comparison of doctrines and rituals, or in textual practices, as a source of difference undercutting the totalizing aspirations of any given ideology.

The sense that spirituality for Loy largely depends upon materiality and embodiment, I believe, is particularly evident in her early poems, which frequently center on an intense desire for and the dissonant unruliness of manifold forms of communication and their foundation in difference. The tension between the spiritual and the material in these texts can be better understood when the Bergsonian resonances in them are identified. In the most general sense, Bergson's positing of "life" as a metaphysical

principle constituted through a continuous, irreversible temporality mediates between

matter and spirit, retaining the concreteness of the former while ameliorating its

determinism, and avoiding the ineffability of the latter while also making use of the

freedom its abstraction provides. More specifically, Loy's version of Bergsonism allows

her to insist on the positive importance of individuality, as well as on the importance of

bodies and of the senses, without locking any of these categories into eternal or

absolutely determined forms. Consciousnesses, spirits, or souls are never purely inner or

transcendent entities that can be conceived of, even theoretically, in isolation from

sociability and contact. Bodies, likewise, cannot be conceived of as simply the support or

manifestation of singular spirits, souls, or consciousnesses, but rather as the media in

which individuality is both constituted and blurred in relation to others via language,

gesture, touch, visibility, or communicable affect, as well as through reproduction or birth

and through dissolution or death. Influenced in part by Bergson's conception of

individual durational beings as irreducible, qualitative multiplicities, but also homing in

on the notion that this individuality is always qualified by its entanglement with multiple

durations, the selves that Loy models in her early lyric poems are thus conceivable only

in their shifting modes of communication with other beings.

It is important to note that Loy seems to be drawn towards the anti-systemic

tendencies in Bergson's philosophy instead of its potential to serve as a set of doctrines

with powers of consistent, categorical explanation. A part of this philosophy's attraction

for her seems to stem from the sense that the persona of the philosopher might operate in

the similar manner as Loy's poetic personae, turning both inwards to contemplate the

experience of a unique duration rather than an empty, universal subject, while insisting

that that results of such contemplations are open ended and evolving. Loy herself

describes her encounter with Bergson's thought not in terms of ideas read, adopted, and

applied, but as the product of a conversational and rhythmic milieu. To Loy, "Bergson"

appears as a social phenomenon, a discourse interesting for the way it flows through

others' conversations and works, not only without a necessary fidelity to what Bergson

actually intended but also without a necessary fidelity to the ultimate truth of the "reality"

Bergson's method seeks to reveal. Instead, the sympathetic side of Bergson's project

becomes more apparent. While Bergsonist sympathies appear throughout Loy's work, her

most overt reference to Bergson's thought is nevertheless appropriately indirect, coming

in the context of her encounter with Gertrude Stein's method of repetition and the effect

this had on her:

> This was when Bergson was in the air and his beads of Time strung on the
>
> continuous flux of Being, seemed to have found a literary conclusion in the
>
> austere verity of Gertrude Stein's theme – 'Being' as the absolute occupation.
>
> For by the intervaried rhythm of this monotone mechanism she uses for
>
> inducing a continuity of awareness of her subject, I was connected up with the
>
> very pulse of duration. ("Gertrude Stein" 305)

"The beads of Time strung on the continuous flux of Being" both takes up and inverts an

image from *Creative Evolution*, in which Bergson argues that the traditional philosophy

of the subject imagines a "formless ego, indifferent and unchangeable, on which it

threads the psychic states which it has set up as independent entities…it must perforce

then suppose a thread, also itself solid, to hold the beads together" (*Creative Evolution* 3).

By substituting the thread of "the continuous flux of Being" for "ego, indifferent and

unchangeable", Loy reverses Bergson's critical image of the rationalist subject, and

transforms it into a positive, if somewhat paradoxical, image of Bergson's own

philosophy. Loy's use of "monotone mechanism" to reveal "the very pulse of duration",

too, diverges from Bergson's own imagery, which he consistently deploys to illustrate

how the discrete movement of the "mechanical" works to fragment and conceal the living

flow of duration – the invariable, discrete beat of clock-hands that misdirects attention

away from the "real" flow of time, or the sequence of stills stitched together in film as a

parody of "real" movement. By connecting "mechanism" with the organically vital –

though still discrete – "pulse", Loy destabilizes the opposition between the two, setting

mechanism into the heart of the vital. Notably, Loy does so not only through a direct

reading of Bergson but also through her experience of the "intervaried rhythm" of *Stein's*

writing. By stating that "Bergson was in the air", Loy asserts the mediated and

indeterminate way in which the philosopher came to influence her own thinking. Does

Stein allow Loy to read Bergson, or does Bergson allow Loy to read Stein? Loy is not

arguing for a direct reception of Bergson by Stein, with the latter modeling her writing on

the philosophy of the former. Instead Loy turns to herself as observer and thinker to

become the mediator between the two. Accessing the rhythms of both, she discovers the

sympathies between Stein and Bergson through her own intuitive faculties and then

becomes the one who is able to assert "I was connected up with the very pulse of

duration".[27] In this movement away from fidelity to the text, Loy performs the de-

systematizing operation that Bergson calls for in his introduction to *Creative Evolution*;

she stands apart from "his" philosophy, even as she takes up and pursues the trajectories of some of the tendencies that emerge from it.

Visions in Motion

Loy's statement that "Bergson was in the air" at a formative point in her career in the early 1910s is no exaggeration. With his deepening focus on a metaphysics of flow and novelty in *Creative Evolution*, Bergson's project became both more speculative and, at the same time, phenomenally popular; "Bergsonism" detached itself, to some extent, from the author and from the institution of professional philosophy. Bergson himself seems to invite not interpretation of his philosophy, but its reinvention and transformation, a necessity he acknowledges in the preface by describing it in terms of duration and the need to put individuality into question. Here Bergson insists that

> a philosophy of this kind of will not be made in a day. Unlike the philosophical systems properly so called, each of which was the individual work of a man of genius and sprang up as a whole to be taken or left, it will be built up by the collective and progressive effort of many thinkers, of many observers also, completing, correcting and improving one another. (*Creative Evolution* xxiii)

Bergson here gives a certain validation and form to the phenomenon of "Bergsonism" that recapitulates the description of open and evolving life in his new philosophy. In opposition to a "proper" philosophical system, constructed by an individual, Bergson claims that his own philosophy is itself open and evolving, independent of the

idiosyncrasies of an individual "man of genius". It thus becomes a philosophy that seems

to depend on the contributions of participants beyond professional philosophers, opening

itself to a range of voices and divergent, resonating durations. Rather than treating the

world as a static text, it would emphasize instead the flows and divergences of a whole

multitude of observers – a philosophy whose articulation places emphasis on intuitions,

on perceptions, and on the affections that mark transitions, as much as it does on

conceptualization, altering the very identity of philosophy itself.

The notion of the continuum is fundamental to Bergson's philosophy at every

level. His main themes – temporality, freedom from determination, the constitution of

selfhood, the phenomenon of life, and the epistemological procedures that would be

needed to comprehend them – are all movements that resist division and fragmentation,

and are only available through the faculty of intuition that is capable of grasping such

movement as absolute. At the level of everyday experience, however, one of Bergson's

prime examples of a continuum is the gesture, the movement of the living body:

> When you lift your arm you accomplish a movement the simple perception of
>
> which you have inwardly; but outwardly, for me, the person who sees it, your arm
>
> passes through one point, then another, and between these two points there will be
>
> still other points, so that if I begin to count them, the operation will continue
>
> indefinitely. ("Introduction to Metaphysics" 135)[28]

That Bergson felt the need for a philosophy that begins not in the idea, the form, or the

word, but in the gesture, is tied to the growing recognition of the body over the course of

his lifetime as a complex medium and the primary mode of relating self to world. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht argues the nineteenth century marks a broad shift from Enlightenment-era schemata based on the subject as a first-order observer who takes in objects directly to more reflexive schemata that recognize a "second-order observer who observes himself observing" so that "the world could only be perceived and experienced through the mediation and under the specific conditions of the human body" (356). This shift from mind to body becomes especially clear for the culture at large with the invention of recording technologies; Gumbrecht cites photography and film as modes of seeing that generate images "unavoidably imprinted with the contingent elements of the moment of their production" (358). The body itself comes to be thought of as a complex of media registering the contingencies of its moment by moment interactions with the environment. The actions that the body undertakes at the points at which it encounters the world become the object of scientific measurement in psychophysics, but they also develop into the cognizance in lived experience of the body as a kind of excess resistant to the pure mind of idealism that projects its own forms into the world. While it is possible to label Bergson – who, despite his facility for evocative prose, does not put much effort into developing a theory of language or of signs – as a naïve metaphysician rendered passé by the linguistic turn in philosophy, it is more productive to, with Gumbrecht, see his interest in the continuous and the novel as partially responding to and shaped by the new technological media that put the contingent nature of the body front and center.

This response is, of course, complicated. Many of the technologies that make the heterogeneity and productiveness of the body visible in the nineteenth century – the

quantitative apparatuses of psychophysics, the immobile "snapshots" of the camera, the sophistic movement of the cinema – are the very counter-examples to which Bergson opposes his own philosophy of qualitative life and movement. Nevertheless, in defending the continuity of the living self, Bergson shows that in order to grasp thought, philosophy cannot simply take the living body as given, but must also see how thought is intertwined with it. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson describes the material objects of perception as "images" that are neither shut off from communication beyond themselves nor dependent on the subject, and are positioned "halfway between the 'thing' and the 'representation'" (viii). Within this universe of images, however, Bergson claims, one image is to be privileged as "distinct from all the others, in that I do not know it only from without by perceptions, but from within by affections: it is my body" (*Matter and Memory* 1). Bergson presents the body as an image, but an image that is in a state of flux, a center of continuous activity that is known through something other than distancing perception. Perception exists outside of the body, in the images of things themselves, and thus does not produce representations within a mental theater. Images instead ramify throughout an organism's nervous system to draw its "motor apparatuses" into a range of potential responses, meaning that perception, insofar as it is translated via the sense organs and nervous system of the body, is "entirely directed towards action" (20-21). To "perceive" the world, then, does not mean to produce interiorized representations, but instead to undergo a process by which a body assumes a range of virtual attitudes towards images that exist beyond it. As Lawlor notes in his commentary on *Matter and Memory*, "the body known from the inside by affection is already a body conditioned by memory", a body that knows itself via the self-differing continuum that comprises duration (11).

Thus, vision, despite the separation it posits between subject and object, is not necessarily

a function of external spatial relations. Rather, it can be seen as a function of a body

immersed and differing from itself in time. By placing the self in the affective body,

Bergson disputes a premise that he sees as underlying otherwise conflicting branches of

Western philosophy: "to perceive above all means to know" (*Matter and Memory* 17).

Perceptions residing in images comprise the world, but this world can only be said to be

"known" by anyone via an affective continuum that shapes and reshapes the body

through the attitudes it takes towards its environment.

The valorization of the moving, living body thus leads to a critique of vision

treated as an abstract, representation-building medium. Since it tends to cut the world into

discrete objects, vision for Bergson is an imperfect faculty for grasping a continuum, and

it thus struggles to reflect on its own basis in the living body. Bergson's philosophy

centers on the tenet that we are consistently incapable of thinking many aspects of reality

because our habits of perception and cognition are oriented towards stasis and fixture and

are unequipped to deal with processes of continuous flux or change; vision, as a

preeminently spatial activity, is for Bergson exemplary in this regard.[29] In *Creative*

Evolution, Bergson describes how the senses directed toward the outer world fail to

capture the continuous activity and change that define the existence of beings immersed

in and traversed by life:

> The body pre-eminently…is the living body; it is, moreover for it that we cut out
>
> the others within the whole. Now, life is an evolution. We concentrate a period of
>
> this evolution in a stable view which we call a form, and, when the change has

become considerable enough to overcome the fortunate inertia of our perception, we say that the body has changed its form. But in reality the body is changing form at every moment; or rather there is no form, since form is immobile and the reality is movement. What is real is the continual change of form: form is only a snapshot view of a transition. Therefore, here again, our perception manages to solidify into discontinuous images the fluid continuity of the real (318-19).

In this passage, Bergson argues that form is a projection and, as the phrase "snapshot view" indicates, he is thinking here primarily in terms of vision as the primary form-giving sense. Visual perception is a force that slows the body itself, the "fortunate inertia" that allows images of bodies to "solidify" or become "immobile", congealing as "form". Vision, however, does not emerge from nowhere; it is itself a production of the very bodies that perception affects and suppresses through form, and it thus is a product of duration. Modes of vision are related, but they are also, as in every instantiation of life, differentiated and dissociated from one another in durational time, a notion Bergson demonstrates by threading his arguments in *Creative Evolution* with examples of vision that range from the human eye, "an extremely complicated apparatus" in which "all the elements are marvelously co-ordinated" to the instinctive "function at its origin, in the Infusorian, where it is reduced to the mere impressionability (almost purely chemical) of a pigment spot to light" (49-50), and on to the technical emulation of these optical functions by photographic and cinematographic machines Bergson uses to ground the whole of the fourth chapter of the book.

Indeed, vision's incapacity to grasp the living body means that it is usually cut off from its own basis as an embodied duration. In the same way, the human is usually incapable of grasping its own basis in the life of the body itself. After *Matter and Memory*, according to Sanford Schwartz, Bergson shifts his perspective from the physiology and psychology of the human individual to a broader field of which the human comprises only a subset, proposing to "extend the idea of real duration from the human psyche to the evolution of organic species" (292). Beginning with his "Introduction to Metaphysics", and continuing in his *Creative Evolution*, Bergson develops the category of "intuition" to describe the capacity for reflecting on the continuous modulations of the embodied and durational self towards the world. When the modulation of the body is "riveted to the special object of its practical interest", Bergson terms it instinct (*Creative Evolution* 188). Intuition, as Bergson defines it, is "instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting on its object and of enlarging it indefinitely" (*Creative Evolution* 186). Differentiating itself from both the instinctive reactions of the living body to its immediate environment and from the analytical thinking that proceeds by abstract concepts, intuition allows the self to understand objects traversed by life – movements, emergences, or processes of becoming, including those of the self – as wholes instead of as collections of parts. Bergson thus makes a three-fold distinction between vision as the abstraction of objects from a continuum, vision as immediate instinctual response to the stimulus of light, and vision as a self-reflexive movement that links the seer to the object seen.

Two texts published in *Camera Works* in 1914, among Loy's earliest, illustrate the centrality of vital movement to this stage in Loy's writing career and the tension that

emerges between such movement and the faculty of vision. The first lines of her first poem accepted for publication comprise a manifesto for the re-inscription of metaphysics in terms of a universal fluctuation and change: "There is no Life or Death, / Only activity" ("There Is No Life or Death" 1-2). Ongoing process or "activity" accounts for a traffic across the boundary between these two mutually constitutive categories; without "death" or the nomination of "life" that simply opposes it, Loy's all encompassing "activity" conceives of existence as continuous change and transition without origin or *telos*. The world depicted in this poem is, as Bergson claims, one of infinite movement surging beneath the illusion of stability: "In the smallest discernible fraction of a second, in the almost instantaneous perception of a sensible quality, there may be trillions of oscillations which repeat themselves" (*Creative Evolution* 317). In Loy's "There Is No Life or Death", the categories of space and time that are used to schematize reality into things are ultimately illusions, leaving "only intensity" to mark the patterns and flows in this universal motion (13-14). What is missing in this early poem is a sense of the human being, as either observer or speaker, a lack highlighted by the absence of, as Eliot would complain, any sensual quality or image. The poem's voice, dissolving oppositional categories and defining universals by fiat through declarative statements, instead assumes the position of the "absolute", in which, the poem intones, "there is no declivity" (3-4).

In the decade following this first published piece, Loy rarely produces poetry quite so austere in its abstraction, instead developing voices that are more definitely located. Nevertheless, the absolute that dismisses all particular points of view and the universal palpitation that swallows them up remain in her work as challenges to the middling position of the human subject. This subject's habitual forms of perception and

cognition are, according to Loy, incapable of truly fixing the movement or change that

constitutes this ongoing activity that subsumes both life and death. In "Aphorisms on

Futurism" (1914), Loy states that, under the modern conditions to which Futurism as an

attitude and activity responds, the pre-existing forms structuring perception are no longer

sufficient for apprehending the world:

> IN pressing the material to derive its essence, matter becomes deformed.
>
> AND form hurtling against itself is thrown beyond the synopsis of vision. (141)

The "essence" of matter, according to Loy, is to "deform", or separate from the ready-

made mental forms that predetermine objects of representation, while retaining the force

of energy or movement that vibrates through them all. Loy, in this passage, conveys the

sense of this tension between vision and movement by using compact lines, urgent

capitalization, and vivid verbs to create a concrete impression of force and motion, even

while abstract nouns and use of the passive voice ("is thrown") sketch a scene where no

defined object of representation can materialize. The point or mechanism of "synopsis",

the very capacity of vision to gather these flows of moving matter into representations,

comes into question, and with it the notion of a stable human subject who stands apart

from the world, watching.

The suggestion that the failure of visual representation might have a disorienting

effect on human self-certainty is minimized in Bergson's writing.[30] Loy, however, is far

more critical of humanism as, in "Aphorisms on Futurism", she claims that an open

future worthy of "respect" emerges only through the "derision of Humanity as it appears"

(152). In a philosophical dialogue unpublished in her lifetime, entitled "Mi & Lo", Loy contrasts visual technology, which remakes the perception of the world by framing and expanding tiny portions of it, with a non-visual, intuitive or felt sense of apprehension of the interconnection of the whole:

> The struggle of man –
>
> Floundering between his descent into the microscopic universe – for which he has discovered a mode of introduction and an intuitional ascent towards the cosmic.
>
> The phenomenon of vibration is an emission from the macrocosm or divinity to humanity.
>
> It is amusing that microbes have an aspect of diabolism. Mediocosm = man. (Loy, "Mi & Lo" 283)

In this passage, the tension between vision supplemented by technology – " the microscopic" – and felt contact – "vibration" – divides the world into a series of binary oppositions – ascent and descent, macro and micro, the divine and the satanic, analysis and intuition, biological matter and spiritualized ether, the contingent and the eternal. The human is the term that unites, and is in turn split, by these oppositions, forming a zone of indeterminacy that Loy terms the "mediocosm". A double movement reveals the insufficiency of the human, as well as the its interconnectedness with the rest of the cosmos: In augmenting its gaze technologically, the human uncovers the incompleteness of its own senses, while at the same time, in turning its eye to the "microbe", this

"mediocosm" also turns its gaze to its one component of its own unstable essence, the activity of life's duration in another mode. The amusingly diabolic creatures swarming the "microscopic universe" are, after all, temporally related, via evolution, and spatially related, via composition (and decomposition), to the human body itself. Access to the invisible, at both the micrcoscopic and the cosmic levels, serves as a shock that throws human consciousness outside of itself and puts it in touch with the flux comprising it, a positive capacity that for Loy unites technology, religion, and art as fields of activity where the habits of the senses and cognition can be undone.

The emphasis on movement and transition, on forces traversing bodies, in these texts by Loy suggests an affective dimension that subtends the human subject founded in representation; laughter, embarrassment, and repulsion seem to fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the stable image, and form the basis for its critique. These affects or bodily transitions then become the terrain on which something like communication must reconstruct itself if isolation is to be avoided. In this way, Loy's writing resonates with Bergson's dissatisfaction with language as a medium and also confronts an underlying difficulty in Bergson's philosophy. Because he attempts to move thinking beyond the realms of language and quantification, solipsism becomes a central problem confronting Bergson's project. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson argues that language alters the singularity of human percepts and affects as they and the surrounding world touch on each other in an event that vanishes in the flow of irreversible time. Language makes "us believe in the unchangeableness of our sensations" and "stores up the stable, common, and consequently impersonal element in the impressions of mankind", covering over "the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness" (131-32). Bergson's

grounding concept, that of duration, appears particularly resistant to communication through discourse; to grasp the concept of duration, the reader necessarily must intuit its truth, meaning that she must enter into the conceptual "object" of duration itself, which requires a turn inwards: "We may sympathize intellectually with nothing else, but we certainly sympathize with ourselves" (*Introduction to Metaphysics* 9). As Jesse Matz argues, there is a tendency for both Bergson and his modernist-era readers and followers to formulate the differing public and private experiences of temporality as an ethical dualism, valorizing the latter term in the pair as authentic and a route to recovering an "essential selfhood" ("Hulme's Compromise and the New Psychologism" 120). The apparent difficulty of reconciling a rich and finely shaded but mute interior existence with language parallels Bergson's own problem of how to reconcile the singularity of an indivisible duration with the publicity of philosophic discourse: The substitution of a self-intuiting "duration" that exists prior to and outside of public language for the rationalist cogito or socially determined subject creates problems of solipsism.

For Loy, the notion of a Bergsonian separation between durational self and exteriorized determinants is an important mode of resistance to the demands of institutions and traditions, and, to the extent that these depend heavily on discourse, Loy shares Bergson's mistrust of the ready-made aspects of language. The problem for Loy is how to avoid this ready-made status that troubles Bergson while still allowing communication between living bodies. In her "Aphorisms on Futurism", Loy attacks the capacity of words to reify feelings of guilt and fear in repressive discourses. While the addressee of the piece watches and listens, "blushing" (a physiological response that translates symbolic into indexical sign), the Futurists, Loy claims, "shout the obscenities"

and "scream the blasphemies" so that these "sounds shall dissolve back to their innate senselessness" because "THEY are empty except of your shame." (152). Spoken language is sound imbued with meaning and differentiated from noise by habit, convention, and conditioning. An emotion like "shame" is a psychosomatic state that is named, conditioned, and rendered re-producible through the meaning for it that emerges through discourses on religion and sexuality. Emptied of arbitrary or contingent meanings through unabashed publicity, these sounds are redefined as noise on one hand, but also given a new sense as indexical extensions of the bodies that "shout" and "scream" them, which in turn, Loy suggests, points towards a community that is free of shame, possessiveness, and the suspicion that drives endless interpretation, that will emerge from the avant-garde's attempts to "evolve the language of the Future" (152). The voice and its modulations of tone and volume are important, then, as the presence of the body supplants the meaning evacuated from sound.

However, the turn towards the self that is supported by the Bergsonian suspicion of inherited language always has the potential to be misapplied as the evaluation of one embodied experience of duration as superior to another, causing a radically democratic moment to curdle into a new hierarchy based on the charismatic hold of the one over the many. Loy is highly critical of the mediating context of assaultive Futurist performance that divides a shouting elite from its shocked and shamed audience. In the poem "Sketch of a Man on a Platform", published in 1915, she satirizes the masculine avant-garde provocateur who supplants thought with physicality:

Your genius

So much less in your brain

Than in your body

Reinforcing the hitherto negligible

Qualities

Of life

Deals so exclusively with the vital

That it is equally happy expressing itself

Through the activity of pushing

THINGS

In the opposite direction

To that which they are lethargically willing to go

As in the amative language

Of the eyes (24-38)

Loy uses Bergsonian language to describe this figure as a force of "life" or "the vital" that is opposed to inanimate "THINGS". While the avant-garde figures in the "Futurist Manifesto" divest words of their magical power and authority by emptying them of metaphysical meaning, the corresponding figure in "Man on a Platform" simultaneously imposes an authority validated by a metaphysics of life that is asserted through the force of gesture, volume, and tone, or through an embodied "language of the eyes", and establishes a hierarchy, rendered explicit via his elevation atop the platform, that renders communication unidirectional and reduces his audience to objects of manipulation.

Vision as immediacy and presence becomes tied to a demagogic charisma, an instrumental stance dedicated solely to "pushing THINGS" around.

The virile body shouting and gesturing atop a platform replaces the claims to authoritative truth of discursive institutions that have come to seem abstract or arbitrary with a claim to authoritative truth based on an aggressive seizure of the immediate senses, the intuition of meaning based on physical presence. Mark Antliff shows that Bergson's valorization of the category of intuition appealed to many in the Continental avant-garde, including the Futurists, because it allowed them to posit communication rooted directly in the individual's experience, rather than in a conventional and artificial system of signs: "By asserting that intuition established an immediate relation between signifier and signified, Bergson and his followers proclaimed their ability to create 'natural' signs, signs whose temporal properties – reflective of the personality – were anterior to and at the origin of all conventional sign-systems" (11). In this notion of intuition, communication is rooted directly in the qualitative unity of the personality of the communicator and that personality's capacity to extend this qualitative unity to the matter around it, including the objects of its perception about which it communicates and of its audience, creating a "natural" equilibrium between self, other, and world by reducing the latter two terms to extensions of the former; Bergson's notion of a reflective "intuition" is thus converted into something resembling the instrumental faculty he terms the "intelligence". Loy's "Sketch of a Man on a Platform" presents this process of "natural" signification as dependent on artifice, the "platform" itself presented as a visual technology, a prosthesis that alters and frames the whole of the masculine orator's body in "equilibrium" (1) in order to structure the audience's attention and enhance the

perceived unity between personality, embodied gesture, and meaning. Loy counters this balanced equilibrium of the whole by refocusing the reader's attention on isolated parts of the orator's body or their metonymies, his "legs" (2), "feet" (3), "limbs" (4), "cuff-links" (15), "nose" (16), and "eyes" (38). Delineated separately, these body parts begin to take on an agency and a vitality of their own, dissociating themselves from the integral personality that insists on its own coherence and centrality to the world.

Recording technologies that double and fragment vocalizations and gestures pose a problem for intuitive or natural signs by tying them to impersonal modes of mechanical reproduction, draining the body itself of its charismatic presence. Such a technological stance founds Loy's piece "O Marcel --- otherwise, I Also Have Been to Louise's", which appears to be fragments of conversation in a restaurant that Loy signs not as authored but as "compiled" (15). This text appears in the second issue of *The Blind Man*, published in May, 1917, along with Alfred Stieglitz's photograph of Duchamp's "Fountain" and several written pieces devoted to the scandal surrounding its submission to the Society of Independent Artists for exhibition; furthermore, as Alex Goody notes, in the "quotidian, unaestheticised stuff of which it is composed" this piece resembles Duchamp's ready-mades, putting into question the construction of taste (Goody 103). I would also point out that the notion of café conversation as ready-made object is here structured by technological reproduction of sound; the piece is not a transparent representation but stages its own transcription or making through stenography: "Mina are you short hand?, I never knew it" ("O Marcel" 14). According to Lisa Gitelman, modern shorthand technologizes both hearing and inscription, to become "enmeshed within the rhetoric of progress that cast the reporter as a technician, contradictorily both skilled and

automatic" (*Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines* 60). Shorthand turns the embodied

attention and gestures of its practitioner into a recording mechanism for oral sounds,

theoretically installing a kind of automatism that links sounds to gestures and bypasses

sense-making consciousness. Nevertheless, such automatism is only posited; when

transcribing public speech in order to create an historical record, according to Gitelman,

the stenographer is in actuality caught between language's materiality and contingency

on one hand, taking down sounds verbatim as they are produced by the speaker's mouth,

and its formal ideality on the other, relying on memory and interpretation to smooth

tangled syntax and clarify sense. In "O Marcel", Loy intentionally pursues the former

within a noisy conversational environment, producing incomplete sentences and

disconnected phrases. Stenography, rather than vanishing into the background as an act of

observation and interpretation, becomes itself a topic of conversation and the

stenographer an addressee and participant: "I will give you some paper Mina and keep

silent to give you a rest" ("O Marcel" 14). The speaker of this line alludes to the

automatism to which Mina's role as stenographer commits her, theoretically recording

whatever is spoken regardless of personal exhaustion. Despite, or because of, this

automatism, the text that emerges is fragmentary, continually breaking off and

interrupting itself to the point of incoherence, perhaps because the recorder's automatism

overzealously fails to filter and shape the flow of conversation, or perhaps because she is

interrupting that automatism in order to take part in the eating, drinking, smoking, and

speaking in which the subjects of her observation are engaged. Lacking a third-person

narrative point of view to provide contextual visual description, the voices in "O Marcel"

are, for the reader, disembodied. The shorthand recorder transcribes only sounds, without

– other than the piece's title and signature – supplying data that identifies or describes the speaker(s). Yet the bodies supporting these voices do return, but only in multivalent pieces, as fragmented as the conversation: "Do I eat – You know why I have one – I do – I do have it – I want some tongue I will give you some – but don't do too much what? Suck it…I want tongue sandwich anyway it keeps me awake" ("O Marcel" 14). The organ of the "tongue" becomes detached from the whole body to circulate as an organ of gustatory enjoyment, a sexual organ, a cut of meat, and, in a piece centered on the stenographic transcription of voice, an organ of speech and song taken down by the hand. Living matter becomes polyvalent, exhibiting divergent tendencies that are not reducible to mechanistic predictability.

Mechanical recording through shorthand in "O Marcel" thus separates language from a neutral, central consciousness and connects it to the materiality of the body. The same operation can be seen at work in the faculty of vision throughout the nineteenth century as Jonathan Crary describes in *Techniques of the Observer*. According to Crary, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, discourses on vision were primarily inflected by geometry, taking the camera obscura as a model in order to posit the stable ground from which visual representations arise. Vision as constructed by this "classical" regime was thus determined by the way bodies reflect light external to an observer, rather than a process of filtering and construction internal to the perceptual and cognitive systems of the body. This "classical" model, Crary explains, was supplanted during the nineteenth century by a physiological understanding of vision as a process grounded in discrete bodily systems, making vision into an object open to a whole range of technological, social, scientific, and artistic transformations and manipulations. Thus, as

vision comes to be seen as strongly embodied, it also becomes de-essentialized as a medium; the subjects and media of vision, the simplicity and stability of which the classical system necessarily took for granted, become temporal, imbued with history, futurity, and contingency. For Crary, this development divides into two tendencies, or modes of second-order observation of perception. One tendency moves towards modernization, towards psychophysics, towards the quantification and rationalization of perception, while the other moves towards the visual practices of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art that develop "the sovereignty and autonomy of vision" in the seeing subject (Crary 150).

Crary's analysis of nineteenth-century discourses on optical physiology aims primarily to further understanding technologies of visual culture, but the significance placed on visual perception in British and American modernist poetics suggests parallels in the literary field as well. As Friedrich Kittler claims, "Psychophysics advances, beyond all attribution of meaning and its transparent arbitrariness, to the meaningless body, which is a machine among machines" (*Discourse Networks* 219). All media, including those of the embodied senses themselves, cease to be ready passageways to stable meanings. Thus, even if poetic vision, as Loy says, "obliterates the cold barrier of print", the vision that substitutes itself for printed letters is itself uncertain because it cannot be freed from an excess materiality that now adheres to the senses; eschewing abstraction for concrete, sensual particularity in poetic language does not guarantee a partial recovery of the plenitude that Kittler argues poetry loses in the age of psychophysics and technological media, presenting modernist poetry with its constitutive challenge. This problem appears in the writing of T.E. Hulme, for example, when he deploys the bodily

presence of vision against linguistic abstraction, using Bergsonian terminology to argue

that "poetry…is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for

a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily" ("Romanticism and

Classicism" 80). For Hulme, language grounded in the sense of sight provides the ideal

compromise between the empty mobility of "counter language" and the excessive locality

or privacy of other, more intensely embodied senses like touch and smell. On the other

hand, what Hulme calls the "compromise" between the embodied senses and linguistic

abstraction in modernist poetry is haunted by vision's strangeness and its multiple nature,

its tendency as a body in time to never quite be identical to itself. Hulme himself

recorded his doubts about vision privately in the collection of notes entitled "Cinders", in

which he worries that those twin obsessions of the last half of the nineteenth century,

evolution and entropy, undermine the stability of an aesthetic system that puts vision at

its redeeming center. Hulme reflects on the story of the evolution of the eye presented to

the generations following Helmholtz and Darwin: "Evolution of colour; dim perception

of it in the amoeba; evolved – the whole modern world of colour built up from this;

gradually made more counter-like and distinct" ("Cinders" 23-24). At the bottom of the

world of color and distinction, of aesthetic sensation and conceptual thought, still lies the

"dim perception" of the amoeba, however, and Hulme goes on to put a sharper point on

his anxieties, writing that "the eyes, the beauty of the world, have been organized out of

faeces. Man returns to dust. So does the face of the world to cinders" ("Cinders" 24). The

"perfection" of the eye is immanent to the same noisy universe of abject matter as

microbes and excrement, cinders and dust. Words, Hulme worries, are too often empty

forms, counters lacking in sensation based in the body; at the other end of the spectrum,

however, the evolving materiality of perception threatens to overwhelm the boundaries of the body. Yet this instability of the grounding for the senses and of the boundaries of the body is also the promise of the Bergsonian approach to the body that finds meaning in its activity, in its very capacity for transformation and change in relation to the world.

The desire to reconnect language with embodied vision on one side and the anxiety that a noisy materiality that includes the body will overwhelm conceptualization on the other, is addressed in the same poem Eliot selected from Loy's oeuvre to criticize for its lack of visual support, "Human Cylinders", which was published in 1917. Though Carolyn Burke sees the "cylinders" in the poem as Futurist figures (182) – the parts of an engine, apparently – I believe the full text makes more sense when read in terms of the tension between language and vision in modernist poetics that, in part, stems from Bergson. In the second stanza of the poem, language is described, in terms familiar from both Bergson and Hulme, as incapable of conveying an interior consciousness:

> When in the frenzied reaching-out of intellect to intellect
>
> Leaning brow to brow   communicative
>
> Over the abyss of the potential
>
> Concordance of respiration
>
> Shames
>
> Absence of corresponding between the verbal sensory
>
> And reciprocity
>
> Of conception
>
> And expression (18-26)

Two minds "reaching-out" to one another may produce "frenzied" activity, but Loy

questions whether this moment is truly "communicative". The "verbal" signifiers carried

by and through the air fail to unite mental "conception" with material "expression",

empty "counter language" in Hulme's terms. The emptiness of speech, however, might

be supplemented by the plenitude of the embodied senses. By entitling her poem "Human

Cylinders", Loy defines it immediately in terms of shape and form, a landscape of

geometric solids reminiscent of the classical regime of vision Crary describes. This

landscape, however, is illuminated not by a clear "classical" light that defines and

mediates an empty, object-filled space, but rather is comprised of a thick half-light, Loy

describing the titular figures as ensconced in "enervating dust" (2) and dwelling in "the

litter of a sunless afternoon" (5). Instead of gracefully disappearing from view in the

course of the transaction between subject and object, the medium supporting vision

appears as an atmosphere so thick with "enervating dust" that it becomes a body that calls

attention to its own materiality. In "Human Cylinders", vision cannot be considered the

warrant for poetry as Hulme's "visual concrete" "language of intuition" would have it.

Loy figures vision as a thing in flux, alienated from its own "natural" tendency to

disappear as a medium for a transaction between subject and object. The interiority which

vision seeks to connect with a world might at any instant collapse into the mute

materiality of the perceptual system itself. The insistent return of brute materiality raises

the question of whether "seeing" indeed has anything to do with "meaning": What visual

transmissions can take place if, as in "Human Cylinders", media and bodies are shown as

subject to the same material opacities and ethereal dissipations? Vision in this

configuration is no more of a transparent medium than is "the cold barrier of print". In place of linguistic articulation or imagistic distinction, connections or patterns only occur in "respiration", in the matched rhythms that emerge from the depths of bodies inhaling and exhaling the same thick atmosphere that both carries and distorts light and sound, a minimal pulse of life.

The end of the second stanza of "Human Cylinders" shifts the poem's visual organization from an inorganic, static landscape of abstract geometry and granular visual noise towards movement and biological figures, monstrous partial forms:

> From among us we have sent out
>
> Into the enervating dusk
>
> One little whining beast
>
> Whose longing
>
> Is to slink back to antediluvian burrow
>
> And one elastic tentacle of intuition
>
> To quiver among the stars (29-35)

The "human cylinders", no longer simplified, symmetrical and enclosed individuals, diverge into a material plane that instinctively burrows into the "antediluvian" earth on one hand and into an expansive spiritual plane that is bound up with "intuition" on the other. Loy, however, renders this latter Bergsonian faculty strange, de-anthropomorphizing it as a "quivering" "tentacle", an organ probing the future that belongs to species even more distant from the human (Cephalopods? Wellesian

Martians?) than the apparently mammalian "little whining beast" that is part of the

ancestral past. The modes of knowing the world that Bergson conceives for living beings

– instinct, abstraction, and intuition – thus all appear in "Human Cylinders", not as purely

mental modes, but as forces that both emerge from the human body and alter its image.

Nicholls points out that much that is scandalous and humorous about Loy's poetry is

connected to way the body is de-familiarized via the literary grotesque, Loy's "linguistic

density being simultaneously the measure of the unseen and, obliquely, the embodiment

of what convention seeks to hide" (64). Loy manages to draw out what is scandalous

about Bergson as well, finding a mixture of horror and pleasure in Bergson's philosophy

of a continuous metamorphoses of forms.

For Loy, intuition in the era of modern technology gives, as she writes in "Mi &

Lo", the human its sense of being a "mediocosm", a bridge between multitudinous bits

and pieces of "diabolic" life and the open sky, the certainty of its identity falling away in

both directions. Intuition is not a faculty that restores the self to its "true" senses, but

rather a disruptive, discomfiting operation in which the self feels itself at once swept up

in a temporality that pushes irreversibly into the future and splinters into a multitude. For

Bergson, continuous divergence is the movement of life itself: "Life does not proceed by

the association and addition of elements, but by dissociation and division" (*Creative

Evolution* 94). As a force, "life" does not build up, synthesize, or integrate parts into

wholes. No entity, including the self, has an autonomous base or foundation to which

qualities or aspects are added; instead it consists of divergent movements. Bergson argues

that individuality is a troublesome concept, not because local points of individuality are

liable to be re-absorbed into a greater unities or totalities, but rather because any entity

laying claim to individuality is always immersed in a process of becoming that generates parts that themselves lay claim to individuality:

> The organized elements composing the individual have themselves a certain individuality, and each will claim its vital principle if the individual pretends to have its own. But, on the other hand, the individual itself is not sufficiently independent, not sufficiently cut off from other things, for us to allow it a 'vital principle' of its own…Where, then, does the vital principle of the individual begin or end? Gradually we shall be carried further and further back, up to individual's remotest ancestors: we shall find him solidary with each of them, solidary with that little mass of protoplasmic jelly which is probably at the root of the genealogical tree of life. (*Creative Evolution* 45)

The first line of Loy's poem "The Dead" takes up this dissociative line towards individuality: "We have flowed out of ourselves" (1). The theme of a vital becoming is taken up in a movement that transcends individual beings, while also individuating them: "We splinter into Wholes" (25). Loy echoes Bergson's qualification of this individuality through an invocation of the "protoplasmic" ancestral interconnection between beings: "Curled close in the youngest corpuscle / of a descendent / we spit up our passions in our grand-dams" (8-10). Loy here echoes Bergson's "life" as a power to differentiate and divide while retaining a connection to the whole; the "corpuscles" or cells of a living being are connected at some point to all living beings that have come before.

The interconnection between beings takes in not only organisms but also their cultural and technological productions: "We are turned inside out / Your cities lie digesting in our stomachs / Streetlights footle in our ocular darkness" (19-21). Even as the "ocular" or the visual collapses in "darkness", destabilizing the spatializing subject-object relationship that vision promotes, a felt, bodily force is retained. Non-linguistic communication is presented as products of the body that fall outside of the visual or aural realms: The dead make contact with the living through babies who "spit-up" their ancestors' "passions". Conversely, the living conduct their traffic with the dead through moments at which the body exceeds the sum of its parts:

> Our tissue is of that which escapes you
>
> Birth-Breaths and orgasms
>
> The shattering tremor of the static
>
> The far-shore of an instant
>
> The unsurpassable openness of the circle
>
> Legerdemain of God (33-38)

Loy's "dead" appear in the fleeting excess that emerges at thresholds where the human body undergoes a change in intensity or a transition into a new state, in the throes of pleasure or in the first breath of life. Change or becoming takes place not in the extensive movement of a body through empty space, but in an intensive movement, the "shattering tremor of the static". "What escapes you" refers to a kind of excess produced by the body, but also to the way this excess evades capture and representation by normal visual

perception. The visual elements in the poem depend on a play between the visible and the invisible: The liveliness of "corpuscles" become visible only through the microscope; "streetlights" struggle and fail to illuminate the vastness of night; "legerdemain" – sleight of hand – is movement that falls below the threshold of attentive perception. Vision thus appears in the poem only via its incapacities and its gaps. "The dead" become, in a sense, a singular figure for the whole set of things that fall into this realm that "escapes" everyday perception, of all that is in excess of the stable structure of matter – an excess Bergson associates with the category of the "living".

Loy thus takes a Bergsonian concept, that of a vitality permeating and motivating matter in ways that can be only fleetingly intuited, and puts it into a setting that is simultaneously biological, social, and technological. The selves Loy models in "Human Cylinders" and "The Dead" are constituted through the tension between an insistent individuality implied by the simultaneous necessity and insufficiency of the classical subject of vision – that empty "I" who stands apart at a point beyond the scene that it is viewing – and a sense of interconnection with others that is marked by her use of the first-person plural, "we", to supplement or displace the lyric first-person singular.

The Poet in Urban Space: "Three Moments in Paris"

In their concern for a technologically-inflected environment crowded with anonymous beings and novel sensations, "Human Cylinders" and "The Dead" are essentially urban writing. Yet with their disorienting shifts in perspective and scale and their destabilizing approaches to individuality, they are also at odds with this tradition, diverging in their voice from a self-definition of modern writers of urban life that

depends upon maintaining a certain distance from and control over the environment that they observe and describe. For Loy, establishing her own position as a female poet in a tradition largely defined by the experience of male writers requires her to challenge the tenability of this self-definition. The excess that Bergsonian "life" presents to vision gives her a way of doing so, showing that an embodied self never exists in a complete unity or isolation structured by its distance from others, but instead move within and are affectively shaped by a multiplicity of mutual contacts. The resulting sense of entanglement with others, of simultaneous excess and incompleteness that qualifies the self, cuts against the habitual position of writer of urban life as occupying an invisible, neutral position that allows the environment to be controlled and rendered as a stable representation.

Loy engages with and critiques the self of the urban lyric poet directly in the text "Magasins du Louvre", one section of the poem "Three Moments in Paris", published as a complete text in 1915. Set in the giant Parisian department store, the "Magasins du Louvre" section of the poem takes up vision and the subjectivity of the observer and writer in modern public spaces. Walter Benjamin describes the *grand magasins* of the late nineteenth century as "the last promenade for the flâneur. If in the beginning, the street had become an *intérieur* for him, now the *intérieur* turned into a street, and he roamed through the labyrinth of commodities as he once roamed through the labyrinth of the city" ("The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" 31). For Benjamin, the figure of the flâneur, largely defined for him through the writings of Charles Baudelaire, is a transitional type in the historical development of modern capitalism, an idealized observer who takes in the spectacle of the developing metropolis without being

productively captured by its rhythms of labor and consumption. This sense of freedom for

the observer who roams space, and for the secondary observer in the form of a readership

or audience that derives its own sense of freedom from identification with his point of

view, is predicated on the assumption of certain invisibility that exempts him from

becoming himself the object of vision. Baudelaire writes in "The Painter of Modern Life"

that it is this facility to see without being seen that marks the ideal urban spectator:

> For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up
>
> house at the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the
>
> midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet feel oneself
>
> everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet to
>
> remain hidden from the world…The spectator is a *prince* who everywhere
>
> rejoices in his incognito…Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd
>
> itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of
>
> its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of
>
> all the elements of life. He is an 'I' with an insatiable appetite for the 'non-I', at
>
> every instant rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself. (9)

The intentional urban spectator, according to Baudelaire, is an "I" that can never be

addressed, interpellated, or apprehended as a "you", cutting himself out of the very scene

of which he imagines himself to be the "center". Though this spectator is part of the same

"multitude" of people he observes, Baudelaire performs a vanishing trick on by

imagining him instead as an apparatus or visual medium, a "mirror" or a "kaleidoscope", "reproducing" anything or anyone that comes into his line of sight.

The invisible spectator in the crowds of the nineteenth and early twentieth century metropolis, Deborah Epstein Nord argues, is a gendered figure: "The heightened subjectivity of the urban observer depended…on the erasure of his status as an object", while for women in public spaces, "to be ignored, to be unremarkable, was not a privilege available to their sex" (352). A woman inhabiting the streets in the same manner as Baudelaire's flâneur often would have been seen as a prostitute, treated as an object of vision rather than its subject, and thus incapable of simply disappearing into the crowd and making herself into a "mirror" or a "kaleidoscope". Nord argues that the structure of this specular relationship is constitutive of the urban poet (or artist or social critic), as "in the city of the male spectator woman appears most often as a prostitute, always objectified, always 'other', always instrumental in making the social or existential statement he is after" (353). The male author, having erased his own body, appropriates the bodies of others and pins upon them his own "freed" consciousness, a structure that itself, Nord shows, denies an equivalent capacity to his female counterpart.

In "Magasins du Louvre", Loy rejects the notion of vision as a transparent or vanishing mode by which subjects address objects, instead rendering seeing as an object of scrutiny by sketching a series of interrelated gazes or visual encounters. These entangled gazes turn on the embodied positions of those doing the looking, shifting within a few lines from a display of manufactured dolls whose simulated eyes stare out at the passing customers, to the surveilling eye of a male department store employee, to two passing female prostitutes who stop to scrutinize the dolls, to the eyes of the poem's

speaker. Loy emphasizes the spatial relationships of these lines of sight, but also,

significantly, their unfolding in time before the eyes of the reader. Loy's construction of

these shifting lines of sight in both space and time echoes the techniques of the cinema,

the mobile camera that shifts perspectives within space and montage that allows these

various perspectives to be reassembled for an audience. Walter Benjamin notes that in the

cinema, the audience empathizes not with the person being filmed but with the camera –

not necessarily the specificity of the mechanism, but with the mobile and shifting points

in space and time in which that which sees is located ("The Work of Art in the Age of Its

Technological Reproducibility" 259-60). As the title of the poetic sequence, "Three

Moments in Paris", indicates, "Magasins du Louvre" is delimited temporally, a

"moment" in time. Yet this particular moment is itself decomposed into smaller moments

that are defined by presenting the reader with new figures and their orientation within

space – what they are looking at, where their attentions are directed. As important as

what is seen is what is not yet seen, the blind spot that is also the locus of the figure

"doing" the seeing. Loy carefully controls the reader's awareness of these figures within

her poem. Though they must all exist simultaneously within the temporal boundaries of

the "moment" and the spatial boundaries of the store gallery, Loy reveals each in turn,

limiting the reader's own ability to "see" the whole scene at once. Thus, while the act of

seeing begins as transparent and familiar, a pure representation of the object of vision, it

is subsequently shown through a dislocation to be the function of a particular body

occupying a particular locus in space and time. Layers of seers thus emerge, suggesting

an infinite network of intricated lines of sight in which there is no completely invisible

territory on which a final or first seer may stand unobserved.

Loy lays the groundwork for the conception of non-human vision in the cryptic first line of the section. The proposition that "All the virgin eyes in the world are made of glass" ("Three Moments in Paris" 68), which opens the section and which then appears twice more as a refrain, refers to the manufactured eyes of the dolls that appear in the poem, but also more generally to technologically inflected vision that includes the lens of the camera and the spectacular architecture of the great department store. At the same time, the word "virgin", used here to modify "eyes", immediately marks this vision as both gendered and problematic. "Virgin" is throughout Loy's oeuvre a loaded, negative term used to signify the commodification of women's bodies within the institution of marriage. In her "Feminist Manifesto", Loy criticizes the "man made bogey of virtue" as the "fictitious value of woman as identified with her physical purity", and calls for the "surgical destruction of virginity" as a way of preventing the conversion of a physiological state into a fetishized object of economic exchange (154-55). Far from connoting innocence, the concept of virginity is, for Loy, a mystified commodity that reifies inequitable relationships between the sexes and blocks her female contemporaries from developing other values beyond a forced choice between "Parasitism, & Prostitution" (154).

In the "Magasins du Louvre" section, Loy ties the notion of "virgin eyes" to anthropomorphic commodities. Following the section's opening proposition, Loy proceeds with a visual description of a sales-display of dolls:

Long lines of boxes

Of dolls

Propped against banisters

Walls and pillars

Huddled on shelves

And composite babies with arms extended

Hang from the ceiling ("Three Moments in Paris" 69-75)

Multiplying architectural features – "bannisters", "walls", "pillars", "shelves", "the ceiling", Loy directs the reader's attention from point to point, reproducing the commercial display's capture of the consumer's perception, a process in which the dolls appear to actively participate, "beckoning" and "smiling", "with arms extended". Loy contrasts this apparent agency with the dolls' status as passive or vulnerable objects – stored in "long lines of boxes", "propped against banisters", or "huddled on shelves" – highlighting their abject materiality as bare commodities, stockpiled in the marketplace. The sequence culminates with a shift in diction from the inanimate to the animate, as the "dolls" become "babies", a term that fulfills the mimetic *telos* of the "dolls" and projects a sentimental mood, rendering the dolls mimetic not only of a visual form but also of an affective attachment. Loy simultaneously undercuts this sentiment, however, by juxtaposing the noun "babies" with the qualifier "composite" and by placing them in an unnatural, attention-seizing position, dangling "from the ceiling". She thus connects the functionally-gendered association of virtue with physical purity to figures of mass production and consumption in the glass-eyed dolls, and to an artifice that belies the tendency to correlate feminine virtue with nature, rendering it instead visible as part of the modern economy, as artificial and "man made" as any manufactured commodity.

Loy then shifts visual attention within the scene to another figure, the store's "shop walker" (79) who has "ambled to the further end of the gallery / to annoy the shop-girl" (80-81). The shop walker, whose role is typically to police both the customers and other workers, enforcing the rules of labor discipline and property rights as well as exerting a certain pressure on the attentions and tastes of consumers within the ostensibly open and public space of the store, here serves as a parodic echo of the male flâneur, his perambulations of the department store now rewarded a title and a salary, while his pretensions to heroic non-productivity and a heightened sensibility are revealed as a wandering and predatory attention, readily diverted from his duties into the activity of harassing female co-workers. The sales-girl's suffering as the target of the shop walker's attention echoes the restricted positions Loy describes as available to women in her "Feminist Manifesto"; by leaving the home to enter the public space of the department store to sell her labor on the market, the shop girl faces a masculine gaze that identifies her potentially sexually available. Ambling rather than walking, and silent rather than speaking, Loy assigns to the shop walker an almost animal like nature in his unreflective indifference to the attitudes of others. The "silence" (78) that he leaves in his wake signals both his presence in and absence from the scene in which he is no longer a seeing subject capable of reflecting upon what he sees or upon his status as something seen, but rather an object of another's vision.

From this satirical treatment of the male flâneur, Loy once again shifts the visual frame of the poem to reveal two "cocotte[s]" (87), or prostitutes, whose attentions have been captured by the dolls in "passing" (90). In staging this meeting, Loy depicts an encounter between figures for the two forms – private fetishized virtue or public sexual

availability – that she sees in her "Feminist Manifesto" as reducing women to commodities for male consumption. Initially, this encounter takes the form of a mirror that reverses the expected primacy between copy and original, the "solicitous mouth" (91) and the "static smile" (92) Loy attributes to the real women appearing as mechanized or non-organic traits that mirror the more natural anthropomorphic gestures of the "beckoning" and "smiling" dolls. This cross-over of traits, with the organic imitating the mechanical and the inorganic imitating the living, destabilizes the boundaries between nature and artifice; Goody argues that when Loy takes up images of mass-culture, and by extension modern technology and industrialism, in her writing as a cyborg strategy to "disarticulate Woman from a supposedly natural role or form" (117). In "Magasins du Louvre", however, Loy suggests that there are limits to this strategy, setting up the figure of the prostitute as the opposite pole of a socially constructed binary. Rita Felski, in *The Gender of Modernity*, points out that, while associations with "industry and technology…help to demystify the myth of femininity as a last remaining site of redemptive nature", attempts to re-construct femininity in terms of anthropomorphic artifice can also contain misogynist tendencies that are "expressed in the fantasy of a compliant female automaton and in the dream of creation without the mother through processes of artificial reproduction" (20). The figures of the automaton and the prostitute, according to Felski, are often conflated in the texts of Decadent-era male authors, for whom "the superficiality and interchangeability of women symbolizes an abstract identity and an economy of the same, an all-pervasive disenchantment of the world in which feminine sexuality, like art, has been deprived of its redemptive aura" (107). Felski suggests that the shared effect of these two apparently opposed tendencies in modernist

literature – the association of the feminine with pre-modern nature on one hand and with

technologized mass culture on the other – is to attribute to women a lessened capacity for

the detached reflection or rarified self-consciousness that many male authors of the

period see as the sign of the distinctively "modern" artist or thinker.

In the two prostitutes, Loy takes this figure of the female flâneur, the woman who

moves unaccompanied on the street and who is usually in masculine writing rendered as

an object and a mechanism, and instead renders her as the subject, rather than the object,

of vision. By shifting the poem's visual frame, Loy thus reveals the perception of the

department store gallery and its display of dolls, which was initially given directly to the

reader through the transparent sight of an impersonal observer, to be the object of these

two women, as vision, in a sense, steps outside of itself to see itself seeing. The reader

thus comes to re-read this initial scene a second time through the expressions of the two

women, as, by analogy with film, Loy's reframing shifts from the object of vision to its

subject, creating a shot reverse shot of the their facial responses, showing how at the sight

of the dolls "their eyes relax / To a flicker of elements unconditionally primeval" (94-95).

In this description, Loy again turns to the notion of vision that is inseparable from the

continuum of changing bodily states. In a moment, eyes shift from instruments of visual

perception to expressive surfaces of the affective body and potential objects of another's

vision, something Loy is able to highlight through her subtle adaptation of the rapid shifts

and reversals in perspective made possible by the technical media.

At the same time, she indicates the connection between vision and the durational

flow that constitutes the self. "Relaxation" is a term Bergson uses in the context of

describing how, through its increases or decreases in intensity, a duration, despite its

indivisible and qualitative nature, is still to be thought of as a multiplicity: "In reality there is no one rhythm of duration; it is possible to imagine many different rhythms, which, slower or faster, measure the degree of tension or relaxation of different kinds of consciousness, and thereby fix their respective places in the scale of being" (*Matter and Memory* 275). Bergson to some extent valorizes intensity or a high degree of tension within a duration as indicative of a wider compass of freedom; relaxation, conversely, brings consciousness closer to the spatiality of matter. However, it is the fluidity or variability of duration, its rhythmic movement between tension and relaxation, that affirms the living self's multiplicity, as indicated in the temporal divergences of dreaming, by which, according to Bergson, we "perceive in ourselves two contemporaneous and distinct persons of whom one sleeps a few minutes, while the other's dream fills days and weeks" (*Matter and Memory* 275). This qualitative multiplicity of the self appears in Loy's prostitutes as, upon seeing the dolls' eyes, they appear to shift from heightened, practical, social perception to a relaxed, "primeval" consciousness signified by a rhythmic "flicker". This "primeval" state should not, however, be considered a signifier for an essentially irrational nature that, as Felski argues, is used to deny subjects self-consciousness. Instead, it indicates, through variation and contrast, the absence of fixed nature, the rhythm of each woman's duration again quickening into intensified social and self-awareness as she becomes aware that her own perception is liable to become the object of another's perception. Their eyes

      Seek each other's   surreptitiously / To know if the other has seen (97-98)

The spacing Loy inserts between "other's" and "surreptitiously" reproduces in the reader's eyes the temporal pause and the searching movement of the eyes of the two women, a dynamic use of typography that connects text to body in a method similar to, though more subtle than, Marinetti's Futurist texts. But this gap or empty space also mimics the epistemological gap or problem confronting the women, the lyric speaker who observes them, as well as the reader: What, indeed, might the other have seen? What is expressed by the response of the eyes? Loy leaves suspended any description of the essential psychological content of the women's encounter with the dolls. Instead, Loy sketches a rapid series of transitions in facial affect – from smile, to relaxation, to surreptitious glance – that index a shifting duration but remain ambiguous signs floating on the surface of an observer's vision.

The uncertainty of what has occurred in this series of looks and transformations is emphasized when Loy shifts the text's visual frame yet again to reveal the perception that has captured the encounter between the prostitutes and the dolls to be neither disembodied nor neutral. Instead, it belongs to yet another previously hidden figure, who is revealed grammatically as the speaker of the poem. The object of description passes from the changes and movements of the prostitutes' eyes to those of the eyes of this speaker:

> While mine are inextricably entangled with the pattern of the
> carpet
> As eyes are apt to be
> In their shame

Having surprised a gesture that is ultimately intimate (99-103)

As Bergson argues, the qualitative multiplicity of duration remains to some extent

individualized and private, incapable of effective generalization through language. At the

same time, the women's responses are apparently identical and public, suggesting that

both are affected in similar ways by the sight of the dolls, and the speaker in the poem

goes on to describe the side-long look that passes between them as "a gesture that is

ultimately intimate". A communicative event takes place between the two women, but as

a localized "gesture", tied to living bodies, and as a "moment", a temporally delimited

span. It thus adheres to a specificity of context that Bergson identifies as "intuition",

rather than the capacity for generalization and abstraction that he connects to a

conventionalized sign system. A momentary community emerges between the two

women initially founded in unintentional or involuntary signs that nevertheless become

the source of intentional, mutual reflection.

   The relationship of the speaker of the poem to this momentary community is

ambiguous. Her movement to look away and admission of "shame" at "surprising" the

women's "intimate" exchange of gestures parallels the poem's hesitancy to psychologize

or interpret their encounter with the dolls, or to, as Nord puts it, explicitly render them

"instrumental" in making a particular "social or existential statement" dear to the

observer, speaker, or writer (Nord 353). By claiming to refuse the presumption of

intimate knowledge of this fleeting community's inner being or of its precise, meaningful

place within an overarching schema, Loy and her speaker thus partially undercut the

attributes of the poet as flâneur or urban spectator, his scopophilia and pose of

disembodied, invisibility and detachment, while also, to some extent, retaining them: The speaker in "Magasins du Louvre", after all, still sees and records the encounter, while the gesture of looking away communicates the desire *to not be seen*, to remain uninvolved, just as readily as it brings to fulfillment an avowed desire to not see. In this sense, the entanglement of the speaker's eyes with the "pattern of the carpet" is a way to avoid becoming entangled in a network of mutual looks and social relationships, a way to vanish into the camouflage of the department store's decorative interior just as the flâneur vanishes into the crowd.

     "Shame" here is multiply determined; it cannot be fully separated from the sense Loy gives the term in her "Aphorisms on Futurism", where it appears as a product of interpellation by discourses on sexuality and religion that she considers repressive and moribund (152). The speaker of the poem avows her or his shame at having disturbed a private moment, but this avowal also works as an alibi for a feeling of shame associated with prostitutes, a misdirection that indicates a further layer of shame at the inability to feel unashamed before figures reviled in Victorian morality, and thus shame at a failure to be fully, unabashedly "futurist" or "modern". A division between seeing and speaking maps onto a division or split in the poem's key persona, who is revealed through a grammatical function ("mine") as a first-person speaker who is narrating the scene, and through the metonymy of a pair of eyes as a body within the scene. Loy never quite brings these two elements, body and first-person pronoun, together, however, as the speaker describes his or her own eyes at the same remove with which she describes the series of other eyes running through the poem. The speaker's eyes thus take on a certain existence of their own, becoming displaced – figuratively "entangled with the carpet" –

and possessing an affect – "shame" – that would normally be attributed to a whole or spiritual self, a movement of separation or amputation – of disentanglement – that correlates with an impulse in the persona of the speaker to be rid of a site of pollution. Yet this purity or innocence that would disembody the living self, rendering it invisible to others or emptied of unwilled affect, is unattainable. As her refrain states, "All the virgin eyes in the world are made of glass".

The notion of being "entangled", then, operates here on multiple levels. The speaker of the poem can separate herself fully from neither the patterns of seeing and being seen that emerge in social space, nor from the patterns of affective response cultivated by history, nor from the living body that forms these patterns' basis and support. The "moment" in Paris Loy describes is the coming-together of these elements and qualities in a version of Bergsonian heterogeneous time that is, however, not confined to the solipsism of a single duration, but rather emerges out of multiple, intersecting durations. This assertion of the living body, its transitions and transformations, as well as its continuities and constraints, in a public space occupied by other living bodies is important for Loy's own self-assertion as a female poet in a "modern", urban tradition of masculine writing that posits itself as a disembodied and vanishing mediator – a "mirror" or "kaleidoscope" in Baudelaire's figuration – and thus disavows all such entanglements. For Loy, the relationship of the poet to the glassy eyes of the technical media cannot be based on the transformation of the former into the latter, causing both to vanish. Instead, the non-human or technical eye, in its very mobility, serves to bring to consciousness the self's multiple and shifting entanglements, becoming a mode of reflection that disrupts the self without emptying or purifying it of its roots in

temporality; the observer and writer thus neither transforms herself into an imitation of the technical media nor treats technical media as an instrumental extension of the self, but rather enters into a path of becoming that is inflected by it.

Bergson's philosophy of the continuum and of duration is critical here in that it imagines forms of embodied selfhood that are in a state of continual, undetermined becoming that also depends upon their memory of who they have been. Keeping this conception of selfhood in mind while writing in the lyric mode, Loy maintains a consistency of self as a series of images that are bound to the totality of other images that affect and shape it. She thus puts forward another possible resolution to the problem of univocal control that troubles authorial voice in this era. The conception of vision as emerging naturally from a point in empty, homogenous space creates the distance and unity constitutive to an equally homogenous and "natural" masculine subject that can imagine itself in unaffected isolation bringing order and meaning to the discrete objects that populate the space around it. By drawing on the mobility and the contingency that technology introduces into the concept of vision, dispersing it into a whole array of arrangements and practices that fracture the homogeneity of space but that nevertheless also remain in communication with one another, Loy is able to disrupt this ideal of the detached, empty subject and replace it, in lyric at least, with a self that is a part of the images that it creates.

Chapter Four

"People otherwise not related":

Simultaneity in Kenneth Fearing's *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*

In "Reading, Writing, and the Rackets", the preface to his *New and Collected Poems* that serves as both a retrospective on his career as a writer and a jeremiad on the cultural politics of Cold War-era America, the poet and novelist Kenneth Fearing takes as a given that changes in media technology over the course of the first half of the twentieth century have transformed the basic situation of the contemporary writer: "That the invention of the amplifier means change in every perspective of the writer-audience relationship, far greater and more swiftly than the transformation that followed the invention of movable type, is already too clear to require study" (xvi). For Fearing, the "amplifier" affects the author's claim to exert control over representation as an autonomous individual; far more complex and expensive than the pen, typewriter, or printing press, the early-twentieth century technologies of mass and long-distance communication rendered feasible by the amplifier can be assembled and sustained only through concentrations of political power or of capital, and are thus subject to bureaucratic controls. At the same time, by extending the reach of the transmitted voice and image through public address systems, long-distance telephony, sound film, commercial radio and, eventually, television, the "amplifier" is a component in and a figure for the historical shift from storage to transmission in the technical media, and thus to communities that are founded in a sense of simultaneity.

Two of Fearing's novels, *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*, experiment with fictional communities constituted via electric and electronic simultaneity and, indirectly, question the writer's relation to it. Fearing is best remembered as a leftist poet of the Depression era and as a writer of *noir*-ish thrillers during the 1940s and 1950s; these two periods of his career are not readily reconciled in the critical literature.[31] *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*, however, are located chronologically at the beginning of his novelistic career, and neither text fits under the "thriller" rubric that can be applied to his other novels.[32] Because they lack the thriller's generic prioritization of the response of the reader in the form of suspense, both of these novels must grapple in starker terms with the status of the media-dominated worlds that they present. Both novels treat these worlds as comprised of social machines, of organizations of simultaneously functioning parts that are coordinated through electrical or electronic transmission, in *The Hospital* via phone lines and power grids, and in *Clark Gifford's Body* via radio broadcasting. Both novels also investigate what can happen to a community when the usual monopolies over these systems of transmission are disrupted and diverted from their sanctioned, stabilizing usage. Both also turn reflexively to the relationship of writing and the novel itself to these communities of electric and electronic simultaneity.

That, as a career retrospective and summary statement, "Reading, Writing, and the Rackets" spends more time discussing amplifiers than the craft of verse suggests just how central mass-media are to Fearing's writing. At any given point in his career, Fearing's literary production is inseparable from the skeptical eye he casts towards the shifting media ecology of his time. In the most extensive treatment of his writing, a study of the poetry he wrote in the 1930s, Rita Barnard describes Fearing as part of a

generation of Marxians who began to base their analysis of capitalism in culture, consumption, and mass communication, rather than in industrial production and proletarian labor. Formulating her critical framework in terms of Frankfurt School theories of the effect of modernity on experience and Guy Debord's analysis of the "society of the spectacle", Barnard focuses on the passivity of the consumer entranced by technologically reproduced images that generate the illusion of plentiful, functioning economy. Walter Kalaidjian notes that Fearing's poetry commonly makes use of repetition and the second person address, as in the poem "X Minus X": "Employing anaphora, the poet's relentless direct address to 'you', the reader, seizes on the language of sales advertising so as to subvert its all too familiar categories of textual representation" (204). This mode of second person address not only satirizes the personalized appeal of advertising, and by extension the prevalence of the commodity form, but also more generally foregrounds the sense that contemporary media construct their human interlocutors as addresses, destinations, and departure points, within a network of communication that diminishes opportunities for lateral connections between individuals.

Fearing's use of first-person narration in his novels, if not as initially striking as his atypical use of the second-person in verse, becomes, in the rigor and excess with which he deploys it, an equally obtrusive characteristic. It is also, in a sense, more difficult to read. In his poetry, Fearing's ironic stance towards the linguistic formulae he co-opts from the mass media is highlighted by his ability to shift the second-person address into the form of a jeremiad that reflects more directly an authorial voice. Fearing's multi-voiced novels, in contrast, lack this clear position, simply letting the

characters' monologues run their courses without commentary from an authoritative narrator. Spanning seven novels in different genres over two decades, this shifting first-person perspective that leaps from character to character is a constant enough feature of Fearing's prose writing that it constitutes a unifying style. Occasionally, he supplements this technique with documents – newspaper clippings, statistical reports, and letters – inserted into the text. Fearing thus seems to return to a version of the perspectival first-person narrative and ensembles of found documents Henry James deploys in "A Bundle of Letters" and "The Point of View", or Bosanquet and Smith use in *The Spectators*, but with the difference that they stripped of the epistolary formatting that gives these "voices" their media-specific frame and their implied context in a communication circuit. Instead, Fearing plugs the reader directly into the character's monologue, offering neither contextual clues that might identify an audience or interlocutor, nor any framing justification given to explain why the character has commenced the act of narrating. Narrative by letter disappears, and with it the interpersonal or contextual framing of communication through its having a specific initial addressee, rendering the other half of the communication circuit open and undefined for the speaker. As Jenemann and Knighton note, "The effect is comparable to channel-surfing on the television or twisting the radio dial" (176). While this analogy suggests the kind of disjunction and parody that better characterizes Fearing's poetry than it does his novels, the general correspondence between new media and narrative technique is correct. Fearing's narrators address an audience that is both intensely intimate and composed of anonymous, faceless strangers, as though they were whispering their confessions into a microphone attached to a tape recorder, a party line, or a radio transmitter.[33]

Anonymous, simultaneous connection, the way in which persons in a large organization, community, or society exist in relationships to one another that they cannot directly perceive or understand, is central to *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*. In their soliloquies, characters are partitioned, as it were, from one another, even as they are connected via communications networks. The notion of spatial simultaneity in serial time, as Benedict Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities*, underlies the conception of community in modernity as a spatially distributed yet coordinated form. For Anderson, groupings such as nation states are founded on the individual's "complete confidence" in the "steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" of other members of society (26). The rise of print culture and the development of mass media are central to this conception of simultaneity. For Anderson, the daily newspaper provides the exemplary form of a routine practice or secular ritual that inculcates a consciousness of simultaneous separate existences and interdependence within an extended society of strangers. The most significant feature of the newspaper is the periodicity with which it appears, which generates a rough sense of immediacy or "now"-ness that renews itself every day and structures a sense of time and space conducive to the formation and stabilization of complex, anonymous societies. The nineteenth-century novel, too, Anderson argues, with its interwoven plot lines, is an instrument of both analysis and propagation of this imagined social simultaneity (25). Yet the novel, which Anderson points out is often intertwined with the newspaper through serialization and often shares its role in creating images of social simultaneity, also differs from the newspaper in its capacity for reflection, which can undercut this sense of simultaneity with a certain untimeliness. It is this generic capacity to both reflect simultaneity and differ from it that Fearing exploits in

the two novels under discussion here, although the simultaneity and immediacy in which he is interested in analyzing is not that of print culture and the newspaper, but that of electricity and electronics.

Radio both intensifies and alters the conditions of simultaneity described by Anderson, joining the temporal immediacy of point-to-point electronic communication with the printing press's capacity for multiplication and simultaneous mass-dissemination. As Bruce Lenthall argues in *Radio's America*, the establishment of transcontinental radio networks in the late 1920s and 1930s coincided with the Great Depression to establish a heightened cognizance of the intense economic and political interdependence that had developed in a quasi-submerged state over the previous century. For Lenthall, the development of radio as a mass medium allows the labyrinthine networks of commerce and communication that had once appeared as fragmentary to become, through corporate sponsorship of culture, fireside chats, and listeners' letters, the objects and agents of discussion in a more cohesive national public sphere, and thus provide a sense of companionship, continuity, and community. Electric simultaneity, however, also produces effects that cut against this image of rational cohesion. Timothy C. Campbell, in *Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi*, distinguishes "radio", an institutionalized mode of transmitting voice dating from the 1920s that mediates between the private and public sphere, from the "wireless", a technological arrangement that dates back to Marconi in the late-nineteenth century and that, Campbell argues, connects to and inscribes bodies directly without the intervention of the faculty of the understanding (xiii-xiv). Where the discourse of the "radio" structures and stabilizes, viewing the medium as a mere vehicle for ideas, the "wireless" has a disruptive, galvanizing, and mobilizing

effect, setting bodies in motion, and thus appeals to a strain of modernist avant-gardism, exemplified for Campbell by F.T. Marinetti and Ezra Pound, that valorizes an opaque poetics and a Fascist politics of mass action. Thus, the "wireless", instead of representing a more efficient medium for the liberal public sphere originally structured by print culture, comes to be seen as a mode of disrupting that sphere. Simultaneity ceases to signify a community of individual subjects whose activities, though only loosely coordinated, are also regulated by a general consciousness of a shared identity and shared topics of discussion and debate; it instead comes to indicate a technologically-founded co-presence between transmitter and receiver by which the intentions of the former become the actions of the latter.

An uneasy sense of this co-presence generated through electric and electronic media emerges in American popular culture as well, as Jeffrey Sconce shows in his study of the uncanny affectivity of electronic transmission, *Haunted Media*. Where, according to Sconce, the early point-to-point transmissions of the wireless had been often associated with the absence and loneliness of a vast and disembodied space, the institutionalization of the radio as a mass medium reaching into homes across the country produced fears of invasion, possession, and loss of individuality:

> As the fleeting transmissions of wireless – stray messages traversing the depths of the etheric ocean – were driven out by the routine and virtually omnipresent signals of broadcasting, the ether became less a free-flowing ocean and more like a net or blanket…Although utopian treatments of radio communications continued (especially in accounts of radio's bringing "high" culture to the great

unwashed masses), such enthusiasm was increasingly offset by apocalyptic accounts of "alien radio" as a medium of catastrophe and control. (Sconce 93-94)

Sconce thus traces out the ways in which the unifying, community-generating effects of radio tip over into the uncanny. The sense of simultaneity, the knowledge of the interconnected co-existence of individuals, brings with it not only the confidence and faith in a broader community that Anderson identifies, but also more discomfiting thoughts, such as the feeling of being caught in a routinized and standardized existence or an awareness of the potential for catastrophic transformations to sweep through and affect every particle within a densely interconnected whole. In either case, individuality itself is viewed as besieged concept. On the other hand, Sconce notes, these two modes of felt de-individuation in simultaneity – standardization on one hand and catastrophe on the other – are held in mutual tension. Studies of "live" electronic mass media suggest that catastrophes or disasters transmitted over the airwaves can "draw attention to the otherwise naturalized and unexamined cycle of the broadcast day and its virtually silent colonization of our lives", and event produce a "certain exhilaration in that they promise momentary liberation from the mass-mediated social order" (Sconce 115). The special media event, the interrupted regularly-scheduled program, is an extension of a fantasy of escaping the routinized and coordinated community; often it remains only a fantasy, however, readily reabsorbed into the structure of the mediatic routine. In *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*, Fearing draws on this fantasy of the interrupted broadcast routine and asks whether the effects of such interruptions can be sustained and parlayed into social transformation.

In "Reading, Writing, and the Rackets", Fearing reflects on the effect electronic simultaneity has on the perception of time, on memory, and the subsequent effect on public discourse in contrast to writing. Fearing points out that radio broadcasts (and at the time of this late essay, those of the television) exist in the present, at the moment of transmission, and vanishes thereafter:

> Once transmitted, the electronic message is gone forever, and for most of its audience, gone beyond recall…The tape and film of its most dramatic hours, its most casual – or critical – months and years cannot be found in any public library. They may exist, briefly, in private files. But there is nowhere a catalogue (nor even an effective method for cataloguing) clues to identify the nature of the electronic past…Because it can never be confronted with a previous message that might contain material to contradict it, it is also the first word, and the only word. ("Reading, Writing, and the Rackets" xvii)

Electronic transmission produces a sense of simultaneity and immediacy at the expense of memory and temporal continuity. A written text disseminates its effects relatively slowly and irregularly among a community, but it tends to leave traces of its existence that can be archived. However, where the electronic media can link together a spatially extended community in a unity during its "most dramatic hours", those same hours drop away into the unrecorded past as new transmissions take the place of old. Without this record, Fearing argues, it becomes difficult to reflect on the contradictions that emerge in extended and complex discourse. Lacking "clues to identify the nature of the electronic

past", it likewise becomes difficult to trace out the trends and continuities that give context to the present and allow for thinking about future possibilities. This eternal present of electronic broadcasting has a stabilizing effect. Yet, as it is always "the first word, and the only word", the electronic transmission assumes the form of a command that calls a reality into being at a given moment, a mystical and totalizing presence throughout an extended community, creating the potential, at least, for sudden, catastrophic transformations.

In his literary texts, Fearing sees electric and electronic communication, as delineated by Lenthall, and its disruptive or uncanny potentialities, as described by Campbell and Sconce, as central to understanding modern communities and organizations. It is the first notion of the electrified mass-medium as a national, or even global, sphere mediating between public and private that becomes the target of Fearing's mockery in poems like "Radio Blues", "X Minus X", and "Denouement", all texts which depict radio as a purveyor of ersatz companionship, impossible dreams, and false consensus. This mode also plays an important role in *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*, becoming the basis for the unity of the communities of narrative voices in these novels, and contributing to the stabilizing – or stultifying – repetition of everyday life. However, the unifying, partitioning, and stabilizing functions served by electric mediation are also explicitly shadowed in these novels by a capacity for uncanny, potentially catastrophic, events that affect the entire community. Fearing, while making the catastrophic potential of media central to these two novels, remains skeptical of such events' efficacy in producing actual positive change. In *The Hospital*, a worker who runs amok in the mechanical room threatens to disrupt the electricity that flows through the

whole institution, a moment that puts lives in danger and threatens the functionality of the hospital but that also has the potential to defamiliarize the daily repetition of isolation, poverty, sadness, and loss to which the patients and employees alike have become inured. Ultimately, however, Fearing suggests that this potential disruption is also readily absorbed by the system it threatens to undermine, and it barely registers in the consciousness of the characters. In *Clark Gifford's Body*, the charismatic titular figure intervenes into the nation's media networks in an attempt to mobilize revolutionary violence, triggering a prolonged crisis in governmental authority and disrupting the everyday order of society for decades. Yet the excesses of this violent disruption, its ambiguous outcomes, and the illegible motivations and intentions of Gifford himself make it clear that Fearing mistrusts this transformation of the medium by militarized revolutionary actors.

The depiction of social simultaneity is also the key to the forms of both of these novels. Fearing's use of far-reaching perspectival first-person narration emphasizes the simultaneous co-existence of the characters and serves to analyze a single event that affects them all. The linear bias of writing thus cuts against simultaneity and aids in the process of diagramming the multiple parts of the social machine. At the same time, however, the experimental treatment of temporality in these novels emphasizes the electrical or electronic simultaneity binding together their fictional communities. *The Hospital* repeatedly recounts the same few moments from numerous, overlapping points of view, their simultaneity marked primarily by events in the electrical media that unites them all. *Clark Gifford's Body* relates, in non-sequential order, vignettes that take place at different points along a timeline that spans several decades, but that are nevertheless all

tied to the few hours a revolutionary group spends broadcasting from a radio station they have occupied. Writing thus allows Fearing to take a critical perspective on the presence and simultaneity produced by electrical or electronic media, but he also makes clear the influence the latter exerts on writing through these novels' compressed and fractured narrative forms, which abandon some of the linearity associated with their medium.

Critical analyses of Fearing's novels generally center on his 1946 thriller *The Big Clock* and explore the impossibility of finding a position outside of a totalizing nexus of capital and technology. Jenemann and Knighton see the lack of an outside position from which to make an independent critique as the distinctive feature of Fearing's thrillers: "Instead of pursuing a romanticized exterior to the system, Fearing demonstrates the necessity of a novel politics from the inside" (191). Jenemann and Knighton are vague on what this "novel politics from the inside" might comprise, but see Fearing's determination to set his novels within institutions like the publishing corporation in *The Big Clock*, his focus on anti-heroes like George Stroud who are members of neither the avant-garde nor the traditional proletariat, his acknowledgement of mass media, and his eschewal of realism's quasi-omniscient third-person narrators who stand outside of the story as signaling Fearing's refusal to accept possible modes of opposition to capitalism that imagine themselves outside of its machinations. Brian Rajski has recently argued that *The Big Clock* is best understood if Earl Janoth, the director of the corporation, rather than Stroud, is seen as the key character opposed to the "big clock" of contemporary capitalist hegemony, serving as a figure for the entrepreneur whose idiosyncratic style of leadership is rendered obsolete by a distributed ownership and managerial bureaucracy lacking any incentive or value beyond the profit motive (136-38). What Janoth's

criminality and eventual punishment reveal is the field of possible forms open to the corporation itself, making it the true, if diffuse, center of the book. Rajski thus describes *The Big Clock* as a kind of systems-realism detailing the technical protocols of mid-century American corporations.

Both of these essays make the case for Fearing's interest as a novelist who engages with changes in communications technology and social organization. Their focus on the claustrophobia, the lack of outside, in Fearing's thrillers as endemic to capitalism means that they have to downplay the role of genre and plotting in creating these effects, however. Jenemann and Knighton portray Fearing's thriller plots as creaky to the point of intentional parody in order to argue that *Dagger of the Mind*, *The Big Clock*, and *The Loneliest Girl in the World* are only superficially highly-consumable genre texts. Rajski, on the other hand, by arguing that the plot of *The Big Clock* is not only grippingly coherent but also follows quite faithfully the logic of the mid-century American corporation, must ignore Fearing's other, at times shambling, at times convoluted – and always less commercially successful – thrillers. *The Big Clock*, whether offering a critique of the administered society, as per Jenemann et al., or of social corporatism, as per Rajski, actually succeeds largely through its adherence to the demands of the market for combining lurid material with clever and suspenseful plotting. Fearing's less successful thrillers, particularly his last three novels, are disappointing not because they are in some way intentionally subversive, but because they lack the sustained control over pacing and mood that he exerts in *The Big Clock*. Indeed, genre fiction of any kind, no matter how commodified or "low brow", is still technically demanding, and is rewarded by the market for its efficacy in producing the desired effects promised by its categorical

labels. Ten years before publishing *Dagger of the Mind*, Fearing's professional writing

had included work in another genre, erotic fiction, and Albert Halper's novel *Union*

Square provides a glimpse of the difficulties this form of writing posed for him. One of

the central characters in Halper's novel, Jason Wheeler, is a portrait of Fearing in the

early 1930s, a formerly well-regarded poet who finances his alcoholism and drug

addiction by writing pornography:

> One of the letters was a rejection from a sex-story magazine. The other was a
>
> second request from a non-paying poetry journal for material. Jason had stopped
>
> writing poetry over a year ago; he laid the letter aside. The other envelope he
>
> picked up again and read, for the second time, a personal note from the sex-story
>
> magazine editor. "You have failed to make the heroine as warm and alluring as
>
> you have done before for us, Wheeler. See if you can't send us a yarn as good as
>
> your last one, 'What She Told Him on Their Wedding Night.' That was a corker.
>
> Yours truly."
>
> Jason pulled up a chair to his typewriter, opened up the case. The keys,
>
> catching the pale light from the windows, glittered dully up at him. He sat before
>
> the silent machine and began whipping up his mind, trying to cook up a red-hot
>
> plot. A sluggish feeling flowed through his brain. (55-57)

Halper depicts Wheeler / Fearing as part of a writing machine in which he functions as a

source of libidinal production, laboring to "cook up" simulacra of desire out of faltering

drives rendered "sluggish" by narcotics and depression, which can then be laid down on

the page as a provocative, attention-arresting plot, translating in turn into effects on the bodies of consumers and readers. The resistance to "mind" by its physiological substrate, "brain", and the hostile affect attached to the mechanism of the typewriter suggests that the problem confronting Wheeler / Fearing in this position of professional writing lies not on the level of imagination or ideas, but on the interface between body and media technology. From out of feelings of boredom, loneliness, and repulsion, the author must engineer a machine that produces their opposites; a machine that, to the reader, is "warm" and "alluring".

The goal of both the thriller writer and the pornographer is to produce a "corker" with a "red-hot plot" that orders the pattern of tension and release in the reader. In both genres, the writer becomes a technician seeking to manipulate the attentions and the bodies of the audience. The thriller, Martin Rubin claims, is a "sensational form", the effects of which depend on the audience members' identification with the passivity of the protagonist, giving themselves up bodily to the sensations produced by the text or film (Rubin, *Thrillers* 6-7). The thriller's *telos* is the production of a reality in the body, a feat of bringing physiology together with textual mechanism, and the genre thus emphasizes, or even fetishizes, a certain technical efficacy in plot and mood rather than truth in representation or innovation in style; as Rubin notes, feats of architectural and mechanical engineering that capture, control, and disorient embodied perception, such as the labyrinth (22-30) and the amusement-park ride (6), are taken as models for the genre. Fearing's turn towards the genre of the thriller, then, is an instantiation of authorial construction and control in its focus on plotting and suspense. The motif of the inescapable titular mechanism that runs throughout *The Big Clock* thus can be seen as

above all referring to the form of the text itself: Fearing introduces a single, strong conceit – an investigative reporter is assigned to pursue himself as an unknown witness to a murder and must defer his own discovery – and effectively controls the pacing of this pursuit plot, putting together an efficient, suspense-producing mechanism.

Fearing is attentive to organizations or groupings in his novels, and these organizations create frames that bring a certain his numerous narrators by putting these strangers into relationships with one another. In Fearing's thrillers, this frame, as Rajski argues, derives in part from the corporations with which most of the characters are associated; the true unity, however, that brings these characters into relationships in these thrillers is derived from the mechanism of the "red-hot plot" and the clear crime from which it unfolds. This plot orders characters according to the categories of pursuers or pursued, investigators or subjects of investigation, and it holds them, very much like the reader, in its thrall. In Fearing's two non-thriller novels, the question of the conditions under which relationships between characters are established, of the framework itself, becomes more central. What are the conditions of existence for this fictional social unity established in an electrical or electronic simultaneity, and what events can transform their relationships? In Fearing's thrillers, the event, the crime, is a given, the necessary condition for subsequent plot developments; in *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*, the central events that threaten to transform the fictional community, while arguably crimes, do not readily fall into the genre pattern of pursuit, investigation, anxiety, and suspense.

The Hospital and *Clark Gifford's Body* are thus formally distinct from Fearing's thrillers. The non-linearity of the narratives in these two novels presents a strong contrast

to Fearing's other novels which, as thrillers, are obliged to adhere to a fairly conventional temporal sequence, despite Fearing's characteristic shifts in narrative point of view. These two non-thrillers, however, routinely disrupt the temporality of narrative, compressing it or fragmenting it, so that these novels operate more as diagrams that seek to grasp and depict the simultaneity of communities. Likewise, Fearing's thrillers, though taking the testimony of a number of speakers, generally give precedence to the voice of a single protagonist or anti-hero with whom the reader is invited to identify in the machinations of the plot. In contrast, *The Hospital* devotes multiple chapters to two narrators (Helen and Dr. Clayborn) whose plotlines intersect but are in no way co-extensive, and it does not subordinate the numerous other plotlines to these characters. *Clark Gifford's Body* avoids repeating narrators entirely and makes the central, titular figure (who does not assume the role of narrator in the same manner as the other characters) both so central and so uninterpretable as to resist the reader's identification. Thus, in these two early novels, Fearing rejects the position of a technician attempting to produce thrills and arousal through textual machines that he had inhabited as a pornographer and would inhabit again as a thriller-writer, and instead adopts that of a technician who attempts to comprehend and explain the operations of social machines, thus inhabiting, somewhat uncomfortably, a position of vocational self-assertion open to literary novelists in the 1930s. Indeed, for other literary figures of Fearing's generation, the technician or engineer becomes a kind of doppelgänger for the writer, both desired and feared. This identification with the technician or engineer, Cecelia Tichi argues, is the key to John Dos Passos's attempts to shift the American novel away from naturalism's focus on familial structures and organic processes to portray a social world

comprised of transitory interactions between strangers in technologically mediated urban environments. Dos Passos, according to Tichi, approaches society as a machine in order to "create a form of authorial omniscience true to the modern ethos of secularism" and "move the world of the novel out of the protagonist's mind and into the material universe" (197). *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body* both follow this mold in testing the suggestion that the operations and structures of complex social organizations and the persons affected by them can be understood through fiction.

Attempts to theorize the role of culture in the politics of the American Left during the 1920s and 1930s often centered on a question concerning the professional status of writing and the significance of the class identity of the writer. According to Jeff Allred, the question was whether the goal of revolutionary culture should be a "democratization of the writing function" by which proletarian laborers give natural, direct expression to the experience of their class through writing or whether it ought to follow a course preserving "the division of mental and manual labor", with writers as specialized cultural workers, trained in techniques of persuasion through accurate, documentary representation of reality (29). John Dos Passos and other writers who fell into the latter camp, Allred points out, were strongly influenced by the "technocracy" movement, which was influenced by Thorstein Veblen's 1921 *The Engineers and the Price System* and gained widespread attention during the Depression by pushing a program of rule by engineers as the only figures qualified to understand the technologies driving the modern economy. What the ideology of the "engineer as technocrat" has in common with the ideology of the "writer as technician" is the notion of a group of specialists whose neutrality derives from abjuring profit motive and commodity fetishism in favor of a

fetishistic attachment to creative construction and production, to the work itself – a possibility unavailable to most workers, who remain alienated from the products of their labor. This specialized, focused competence, Dos Passos argues in "The Writer as Technician", allows the writer to be "cool and dispassionate" in the production of "clean truth and sharply whittled exactitudes" (171). Claiming "dispassion" and "exactitude" has for Dos Passos the strategic value of positing a certain autonomy from the dictates of both marketplace and ideologues. As Dos Passos notes, for the writer, like the engineer, the "only safety lies in the fact that the work of an able technician cannot be replaced" (171). The association of writers with the supposedly neutral precision of science – "exactitudes" and "truths" – and with the dividends it pays in the instrumental applications of engineers and technicians, reinforces their claim to an organizing role in modern society by understanding the operations that comprise the whole on its own terms, while avoiding becoming fully aligned with the interests of neither business leaders nor bureaucratic hierarchies. For his own novels of the period, *The U.S.A.* trilogy, direct voice appears primarily in "The Camera Eye" and "Newsreel" sections of the novel. The former series, along with the sense of "exactitude" and "precision" they derive from their technological namesake, are closely identified with the subjective experience of a persona aligned with Dos Passos's own artistic and authorial vocation. The latter, comprising collages of newspaper headlines announcing contemporaneous events and other fragments of published or mass-produced culture, generally represent the voices of the dominant power structure and appear to control public time and the community's sense of simultaneity. For the characters in the main novelistic narrative, however, which delineates the ways in which these characters are seduced, driven blindly, deluded,

trapped, or compromised by cultural, economic, and political systems, Dos Passos maintains a third-person point of view signaling that they cannot be trusted to grasp and articulate the arcs of their own lives. The novelist's point of view, which is that of the technician, then becomes paramount.

That similar considerations of the writer's role in addressing economic exploitation affected Fearing is again suggested by Halper's *Union Square*. After watching a group of miners talk about their lives at a Communist Party rally, Jason Wheeler, Fearing's stand-in, delivers his own caustic speech to a collection of young artists and writers affiliated with the Party in Manhattan. The professional poet and pornographer excoriates these ideologically ambitious but amateurish bohemians for the inauthenticity of their class-consciousness and their lack of experiential understanding of the position of struggling workers; he then goes on to damn their technical incompetence as writers: "What I say…is, that, if you want to help the movement, you must first be capable in your craft. The Party doesn't want bad posters, in fact, the movement doesn't really need you at all. Two or three intelligent, articulate workers could do more good than a whole hall full of 'class-conscious' painters or writers" (Halper 297-98). Wheeler's aggression towards this audience of younger artists, who look to him as a model, functions, in Halper's text, in part as self-criticism on the character's part. While Wheeler does make half-hearted gestures towards his own proletarian credentials, these are acquired as a young bohemian drifter self-consciously seeking experience through menial labor, rather than through organic necessity, and his current artistic renunciation and bodily self-destruction seems to indicate that he sees his literary verse as meaningless to both the current capitalist dispensation and to its hoped-for communist replacement.

The one route to relevance open to the non-proletarian artist, according to Wheeler, is the technical competence of which Dos Passos is so certain; Wheeler, who is depicted in the novel as having himself mastered and abandoned the craft of verse in quick succession, implies that even this technical competence on the part of poets and novelists is insignificant in comparison with that of the operators of the printing presses, public-address systems, and radio transmitters, all instruments that can let the workers tell their stories directly in their own voices. This revolutionary scenario that gives media technology a role requires some framework for generating a sense of simultaneity and community in which these voices can enter into and transform the texture and routine of daily life; in Halper's narrative, new media play this role, as the Communist Party attempts to achieve simultaneity directly through speeches delivered via public-address systems set up in a central, public space, the titular square of the novel. In contrast, Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* avoids depictions of such interventions through new media, and the novel form itself, with its capacity for heterogeneity and delayed imitation of other forms, remains the dominant mode, its relation to the simultaneity-inducing new-media of the "Newsreel" being one of repetition of cliché and juxtaposition that shows the reader how to interpret the voices of the mass media with the detached and ultimately private knowingness of the novelist. The novels Fearing will begin to publish a few years after the period depicted in *Union Square*, beginning with *The Hospital* in 1938, will reflect, if not resolve, the tension between individuals who give voice to their experience and an authorial persona who represents that experience from a point of view that attempts to encompass the operations of a larger system.

The Social Machine: *The Hospital*

Centered on a New York medical facility, *The Hospital's* shifting first-person narration, which would become from that point onward the hallmark of Fearing's fiction style, has the effect of simulating the direct address Wheeler / Fearing valorizes in Halper's novel. Yet this direct address *is* also only a simulation, as Fearing retains authorial prerogative to construct characters at will and to shift from voice to voice to depict how these multiple speakers are part of a single, interdependent system or organization. The role of the novelist for Fearing at this point is thus a variation on what Tichi calls Dos Passos's machinic approach to literary representation, constructing a world comprised of a multitude of moving parts in simultaneous motion, and, though these parts rarely come into direct contact with or possess knowledge of one another, Fearing's novel insists that no single part, no character fulfilling a function, can be understood in isolation. Indeed, this simultaneous interdependence and isolation becomes a central tension in *The Hosptial*, as the fragmented narrative perspective is strongly contrasted against the apparent spatial and temporal unity imposed on the setting: With only three exceptions, every episode in the narrative takes place within the space of the hospital complex, while the duration of the reading, dilated over 300 pages, far exceeds the fictional duration of the events depicted, which all occur within a period of a few minutes. This apparent narrative unity only serves to highlight the way in which the institution being depicted carries out its operations by fragmenting space and time. Though the characters are located within the same building, and the experiences they narrate in turn take place simultaneously, their relationships are structured primarily by the communication networks and behavioral protocols that comprise the true unity of the

hospital, a unity unavailable to the perceptions or thoughts of the characters themselves

other than as a vague awareness.

As its title suggests, *The Hospital* takes a spatial location as its object, yet the

nature of that space itself conspires against unified representation. Set within a single

building, human space in the novel is nevertheless anything but unitary, appearing to the

characters as a disorienting complex of enclosures that isolate characters from one

another as they work and wait, and of conduits that channel patients into processes over

which they have very little control: "I then follow her down the aisle, where the little

rooms, each with a green curtain over the door way, branch off on both sides" (32).

Another patient finds herself wheeled into what she mistakenly thinks is an operating

room: "It's almost the smallest room I've ever seen, more like a clothes closet" (46).

Presented from the point of view of patients, the spaces traversed by human bodies in the

hospital appear as a mysterious labyrinth, even as the author draws back the curtain, as it

were, to reveal them piecemeal to the reader. Weaving together these spaces that enclose

or channel human bodies is an infrastructural space that directs the flows of fluids,

energy, and information. This infrastructural space, inaccessible to human bodies, and

only partially accessible to the human minds charged with its upkeep, is nevertheless

what binds together the fractured space of the institution and assembles the fictional

society for Fearing's characters. The telephone network that links voice to ear is central

to Fearing's novel; two chapters, one narrated by the hospital switchboard operator, the

other, in one of the few scenes that take place outside the hospital, by an operator at

police headquarters, are points at which Fearing's multiple story lines cross in

fragmentary form. The narration of Miss Marmon, the hospital switchboard operator,

mixes addresses and commands as she processes the flows of signals converging on her board: "Shove the jack into the plug of the green light showing on third floor private, hold the outside key at talking. Say, 'Yes, please?'" (25). Most of the novel's story lines appear in the space of this chapter's few pages, where the reader, through Marmon's switchboard consciousness – which, like James's telegraph operator in *In the Cage*, is kept frantically busy – registers fragmentary addresses – names of people and locations – that cannot take on significance until the book is completed.

No character in the novel can ultimately attain this position of an overview, however. Compartmentalized, they are effective as functions within a system but ineffective readers of the whole, a situation emphasized by the insistent use of the first-person. While Fearing uses shifting first-person narration in all of his novels, *The Hospital* is the only one in which he writes to the moment at which present perception and memory blend, simulating a subjective stream of consciousness with its distractions, tangents, and free associations for which the high-modernist novel is known. Even here, however, he gives this technique a limited scope, using it to represent states of consciousness under duress, such as the dying delirium of Dr. Gavin or the bits of self-reflection Marmon's attention snatches away from the insistent demands of the switchboard. These stream-of-consciousness moments specifically work to call attention to the Bergsonian distinction between the subjective time of duration and the socialized time of the clock appear throughout the novel, emphasizing not only the flow of subjective perception but also the way that flow is continually interrupted and overwhelmed by the protocols that synchronize the activities of the hospital. An ambulance doctor, who has just transported the blinded victim of a horrific attack,

reflects on the discrepancy between subjective and objective time that regulates his activity:

> I glance at the pink slip Gracie's stamped. Under TIME CALLED *2:16*, TIME LEFT *2:19* it now has TIME RETURNED *3:00*. For a moment I can't believe it. I think there must be something wrong with the machine…Not even an hour, but it seemed like weeks, months. I'm going to dream about those eyes for the rest of my life. (15)

 Like Marmon, the ambulance driver is closely regulated by the demands of a logistical system which must synchronize the simultaneous activities of its components.

Thus, throughout *The Hospital*, the system itself is continuously registering time in order to discipline workers and coordinate their activities. Pop Jarnecke, identified as the hospital timekeeper, is the figure who presumably monitors these registrations, collecting the pink slips and tallying the hours each employee has worked. Pointedly, however, Jarnecke himself appears to reside outside this regime of temporal discipline, drinking and sleeping during working hours, coming and going as he pleases – an unrationalized element that exists outside of the system even as it forms its center. In the course of the novel, the unstable Jarnecke becomes an engine for dramatic action when, in a drunken delirium, he goes on a spree, breaking windows, attacking the hospital engineer, Mr. Chirtz, and turning off power throughout the hospital. Despite Jarnecke's indiscipline, Chirtz explains, the timekeeper continues to hold his post because he works "cheap" for only "Twenty-five a month" (84). The system of wage discipline Jarnecke is

tasked with maintaining thus appears to turn against itself; the practice of suppressing wages creates damaging inefficiency in the system that registers and calculates them.

Yet, in truth, there is no indication that this momentary introduction of anarchy impedes the overall system that is more attuned to overall fiscal efficiency than medical outcomes. Chirtz is injured in Jarnecke's bacchanalian frenzy and the power cut endangers patients' lives and puts strain on employees, but the social function of the charity hospital is maintained. The social services director Elizabeth Crane is, as an administrator, positioned to be one of the better readers of the system, even as, like Marmon, her adherence to function limits her freedom to act on those readings. Crane describes the hospital as "a cheap form of social insurance against riots, uprisings, revolutions…It's so cheap, so dirt cheap, so human-dirt-and-ashes cheap, it's almost free. Business profits are given to a hospital are free of taxes, as public charity, but the donors still keep private control of the hospital" (215). As Crane suggests, the true measure of the hospital's efficacy in the eyes of its wealthy patrons and governors isn't in the number of lives saved within its walls, but in the social upheaval it short circuits outside of them. Jarnecke shuttles back and forth between being enclosed in the Bellevue alcoholic ward as a patient and being enclosed at Hudson General as an employee, and as long as the violence he enacts is confined within either institution, it can be made productive. Tom Pharney, the hospital employee who finally moves to end Jarnecke's spree, complains about the contradiction between the ostensibly modernizing mission of the hospital and its cynical, fiscally-oriented reality: "Science and efficiency? To save a few dollars they hire a gang of subnormals, like Mrs. Lorch and that Scully terror, or out-and-out lunatics like Jarnecke, who'll work for practically nothing and like it" (222).

Though Pharney believes he sees through the hospital administration's preference for fiscal over technical efficiency, the limits of his perspective cause him to miss the insidious way his own anger is harnessed by the system. Pharney is an advocate for unionization, but, as the contempt he voices for the other workers indicates, the simultaneous outbreak and containment of disorder and violence within the workplace has the function of keeping the employees divided, busy loathing and fighting each other instead of the ruling class.

The sort of chaos and conflict instigated by Jarnecke thus appears as a part of the banal, day to day operations of the hospital. In contradiction to its supposed rationalization, the hospital's infrastructural space is indecipherable, even to the professionals who manage it. Mr. Chirtz, the hospital's chief engineer, complains that the same fiscal rationality that Crane sees rendering the hospital as a mere cost-effective bandage on the wounds of society applies to the physical substrate of the institution itself:

> It takes a man like Job to run a house like this. Sometimes, if you just stop and take a look at all those mains, risers, returns, brine lines, air lines, cold-water conduits, hot-water conduits, wire conduits, drain shafts, gas mains, it's enough to make your head swim. You wonder why anybody wants to be an engineer. Some of those lines were put in here fifty, sixty years ago…The smartest engineer that ever lived would be all tied up in knots if he ran into serious trouble, or tried to figure out those lines. (73)

Tasked with maintaining the networks of mechanisms that make the sprawling hospital a functional unity, Chirtz finds himself in a struggle against time; the engineer, of necessity, becomes archaeologist and bricoleur, excavating the layers of infrastructure laid in piecemeal through repairs and expansions of earlier generations, and then making his own patches and additions on the fly. The society for which the hospital is a fictional microcosm thus ceases to look like a machine that can be rationally ordered and understood, and instead appears as a patchwork of modifications and alterations, an ambiguous mixture of progress and decay, that gives an overall semblance of stability.

From Chirtz's point of view, this mode of operation is intensely demoralizing, constituting a capture and diversion of his vocation by the charity hospital's true function as a means of cost-effective social control. The continuously shifting perspectival narration in *The Hospital* has the effect of taking the focus off of the stories of the individual characters and, as Rajski suggests with *The Big Clock*, ostensibly putting it onto the operations of the institution that determines their positions and fates. However, whereas the fragmentation of perspective in *The Big Clock* serves primarily as a mechanism for generating suspense within a linear narrative, the same fragmentation in *The Hospital* has no object outside of itself. Structurally, this is a matter of emphasis, and, indeed, many of the dramatic elements in the two novels are similar. Both contain adultery, paranoia, murder, suicide, financial ruin, psychological dread at the approach of death. Yet, whereas *The Big Clock* treats this sensational material as the juice for the heightened intensity of the thriller, making every event a part of an extraordinary chain that diverges from the dull day to day reality of corporate suites, seedy bars, and suburban marriages, *The Hospital* pulls the opposite trick of rendering it all intentionally

mundane, a part of the awful fabric of the everyday itself. The institutional framing of

The Hospital thus differs from that of *The Big Clock* in that the characters in the former

novel pulsate with an unarticulated but powerful discontent at their partitioned existence,

a germinal desire for some other mode of communication, accompanied by the incapacity

to establish it. The emptying of presence by institutional mediation is total, as even face

to face encounters, taking place at moments of high emotion, are perceived as though

they are structured by a technical apparatus. When a frightened patient, Helen Russell,

meets in person with a clinic physician, Dr. Clayborn, to receive his diagnosis of a

condition that she fears to be tuberculosis, she recoils from the impersonality of

Clayborn's affect: "But he doesn't seem to hear me. He's aloof, distant, like the voice of

information over the telephone. Would you dial Information, and then when you got her,

would you say, Information, please tell me how long I've got to live?" (*The Hospital*

159). What Helen perceives in a heightened state of suspense, Clayborn perceives as a

technical procedure, a variation of which he repeats throughout the day.

Her older sister having only recently died from tuberculosis, Helen spends most

of the novel nervously awaiting this diagnosis of her own cough. Suspense thus exists in

The Hospital, but, unlike the focused tension of the thriller, it is unevenly distributed

among the characters so that what appears as crisis from one perspective appears as

banality from another. The difference between the extraordinary and the typical is thus a

matter of point of view. The contrast between the sharp singularity with which Helen

Russell feels her own fate and Dr. Clayborn's mechanical approach is a variation on a

key theme in this novel: The extraordinary or atypical is consistently drawn back to the

typical. For example, as a legendary physician at the hospital, Dr. Gavin, passes away in

a small room, his surgical exploits now forgotten and his technical innovations long superseded, his final thought is simultaneously a hallucinatory memory of a summons to a difficult surgery and the fading self's desperate call to its own fading singularity and irreplaceability: "You are wanted Dr. Gavin, and no one else will do" (172). The event of a life, even one once as celebrated as Dr. Gavin's, tends to lose its resonance in the long run. Likewise, Helen Russell tells herself that the seaman with whom she is having an affair, Steve Sullivan, has "saved dozens and maybe hundreds of lives at sea, the people on the *Southern City*", but still has "to figure his income and his expenses, just like the rest of us, to the very bone" (277). Sullivan's moment of heroism at sea, the most significant event of his life both in his mind and in Helen's, confers no particular status upon him outside of this small sphere; indeed, it makes it more difficult for him to obtain work because people remember the name of the shipping company responsible for the disaster and not the name of the individual worker who mitigated it. Thus, Steve's singularity fades into the general mass of employees associated with the company, his reputation as clouded as anyone's.

The dramatic events of the novel are always tied back into a broader causality that renders them typical or representative instances of a broader set. The murder-suicide of Dr. Kane and his wife, for example, is an act of lurid, tabloid violence, but it is sparked by a disastrous investment bound up with the precarious social and financial position in which the Great Depression has placed a professional, middle class family: Fearing suggests that this disaster, though triggered by a single event, has actually been slowly unfolding for a decade. Jarnecke's drunken spree, though chaotic and bizarre, is explained as a logical outgrowth of the institution's labor policies. For Helen, being

diagnosed as having a treatable lung abscess instead of tuberculosis is miraculous; Dr.

Clayborn, however, considers Helen's good fortune a matter of historical contingency: "It

is a fact, though, that thirty years ago this patient would have very probably died. Before

X-ray technique achieved precision, and before the Jacksons had perfected

bronchoscopy" (265). The documentation inserted in *The Hospital* comprises several

excerpts of the institution's annual report interspersed throughout the second-half of the

novel. Included in the report is a table that delineates types of conditions and indicates

how many patients suffering from that condition were discharged and how many died.

From the point of view of the institution, the patients' stories, including that of Helen, can

all be reduced to the data in this table.

When Dr. Clayborn at last informs Helen that she has a readily treatable

condition, she sees the outcome as simultaneously miraculous and inevitable:

> It's like a dream, or a song. I'd like to sit here forever, never letting go of this
>
> moment of new and crazy peace. This must be what it's like to have a winning
>
> sweepstakes ticket, to become a movie star overnight, to be the pilot of the biggest
>
> and fastest airplane in the world, to inherit, all at once, a store full of ermine coats
>
> and exclusive gowns. I know, somehow, now, I know how Aunt Fay and Mrs.
>
> Donoghue became as they are, people who know how to live as though they had
>
> the answer to every single question there is, all of it. They know why they were
>
> born, what they have to do, where they are going and why it all happens. (272-73)

The certainty with which Helen emerges from her experience has an ironic edge: Aunt Fay and Mrs. Donoghue know what they have to do and where they are going because within the established socio-economic system they have no other choices. Helen's final words, and the final words of the novel, responding to Steve's sordid plan to divorce his wife, marry Helen, and immediately depart on a long, grueling shipping route, are an accession to inevitability: "What other way could there be? There is no other way" (*ibid.* 279). For Fearing, the recapture and erasure of the sense of the miraculous by the sense that nothing could be otherwise is the tragedy that underwrites all of the story lines of *The Hospital*. The apocalyptic moment, the eternal moment of "a new and crazy peace" that saves and elevates the quotidian for Helen is figured in the terms of Hollywood dreams and consumerist fantasies – lotteries, fast airplanes, fur coats. The banality of these similes used to depict the ineffable indicates a pre-emptive capture of the imagination by Hollywood pictures and glossy advertisements, short-circuiting the routes of escape. Here, Fearing allows his irony towards his characters to creep in, suggesting that this capture by mass culture can only be blocked by its absorption or reflection in what Dos Passos calls the "cool and dispassionate" work of art.

The mundane nature of mass culture is also depicted as difficult to separate from the operations of electronic media that are always on, everywhere. Fearing marks the near simultaneity of the book's chapters not only through electrical media such as the telephone and the lighting system, but also broadcast radio. A snippet of a baseball game being broadcast live via radio, for example, repeats as a motif overheard by characters in three different chapters. This snippet first emerges in the narration of Marion Kapke, a

registered nurse, as she attends to an elderly, alcoholic woman who clings to the radio in
her fear and loneliness:

> The radio beside her bed was turned on and she was getting a ball game.
>
> I heard… "Here comes the wind-up, here's the pitch, and he swings, he
> swings. It's a hit, a hit, oh, a long one, folks, a long one over the right-field
> bleachers, a homer. It's a homer, a home-run in the last of the third out here in
> Chicago on Wrigley Field, a home-run with the bases full….' (Fearing, *The
> Hospital* 178)

A fragment of this moment from the same broadcast appears again, overhead from a
patient's room by another R.N. as she prepares for the removal of Dr. Gavin's corpse
(248), and yet again by Helen Russell at the end of the novel as she exits the hospital with
Steve (278). The broadcast serves not only as a literary device to emphasize the
simultaneity of the chapters and of the activities of the characters who narrate them, but,
as it is transmitted from Chicago, also expands this simultaneity to a much wider
geographical area, reminding the reader that the social machine of the hospital is part of a
larger whole formed by radio networks. The grand-slam homerun narrated by the
announcer is a kind of "event", a relatively rare combination of conditions that pulls the
listeners out of themselves and unites them in despair or enthusiasm or interest with the
larger community of listeners. Fearing uses the cohesive refrain of the broadcast as
counterpoint to the scenes in which it appears: The unifying function of the broadcast is
contrasted with the partitioned loneliness of the patients who listen to it, while the

excitement of the grand-slam accentuates Helen's joy at her diagnosis as she exits the hospital into a bleak future. Yet the broadcast and the game are also inseparable from the normal course of activity, a part of the regular programming on an ordinary summer day, and the occurrence of the home-run itself stays within the rules of the game, the function of which is precisely to produce such moments.

The break in the power potentially constitutes a different kind of event, which causes the medium itself to operate in unexpected ways. This disruption of the hospital's electrical system, instigated by Jarnecke, does serve, in a certain sense, as communication linking each of the otherwise isolated cells and channels – the whole system "speaking" as it were, without conscious intention – as electrical devices all over the hospital, from lights to elevators, suddenly switch states, creating a difference that attracts the simultaneous attention and curiosity of narrators who will never otherwise come into contact with one another. Miss Marmon, the hospital switchboard operator, is in the best position to notice this change of state across the whole system:

> But before I can touch it every department on the board, it seems, is suddenly calling. The lights come out at me like a Christmas tree. They come pretty fast, sometimes, but nothing like this has ever happened before…I notice, then, that the switchboard fan is slowing. Now it stops. Maybe there's something the matter with the house current everywhere. (30)

The hospital is a network of intertwined systems that operate normally in predictable ways; the sudden power cuts introduce a difference into the smooth operations of these

systems, creating new, mysterious signs for the human minds to interpret. Helen, in an elevated mental state following her diagnosis, attempts to read one of these signs: "The elevator hand points halfway between the fourth and fifth floor, staying there, not moving, I wonder why" (276). Coming at a moment when she feels her life has been returned to her, when choices appear to be available, and possibilities multiply, the stuck hand of the elevator appears to be filled with significance. However, though Helen spends several moments pondering the significance of this event, it fails to connect, to reach beyond itself, and the oddity soon recedes into the background noise of everyday life. The information value produced by the difference in the hospital's power attracts attention, but whether it points beyond itself, whether it creates further differences and new potentialities for any of the characters, is left open at the end of the book. In Helen's case, Fearing suggests, and by extension, every other case, the answer would seem to be no, nothing will change.

In a contemporary review of *The Hospital*, the literary critic Mark Schorer complains that, as a literary technique, "unity achieved by place" tends to be "arbitrary" and that this, combined with Fearing's perspectival technique and refusal to create a central narrative voice, means that the novel is "doomed…to an effect of fragmentariness" (234). For Schorer, there is a key tension between the referent which Fearing is attempting to represent and the canon of literary technique: From the point of view of the novel's characters, the world of wage labor and institutionalized subjectivity Fearing describes *is* fragmented, spatially and temporally. Although the novel is set within a single building complex and a brief time span, "unity of place" and "unity of time" are both intentionally problematic concepts for *The Hospital*. The unity immanent

to this fictional world derives from technical mediation, which heavily filters and

restructures "natural" perception, and from the economic and administrative forces that

reduce all entities and events to instances of a type. The true sources of unity for

Fearing's novel are not time and place, but rather a technical event that diverts mediation.

As Schorer correctly points out, Fearing's divergent plotlines and characters, are

"brought into one frame by means of a single incident, the shutdown of electric power"

(234). Pictorially, a "frame" is a delimiting artifice with an ontology both inside and

outside of the work – a constitutive difference that is in the representation but does not

belong to it. It disrupts simultaneously the "naturalness" of the representation and the

heterogeneity, the absence of which is representation's condition of possibility. As a

literary device, the blackout is a clear authorial artifice, the delimiting break that signifies

the conversion of the dramatic relationships between characters and storylines from

"arbitrary" to "necessary". Yet *within* the world of the novel, the blackout has a

signifying function as well, the event of the power outage serving as a signal to the

characters of their own unity within an interconnected system that might allow them to

overcome their spatial and temporal reification. Nevertheless, though the storylines are

abruptly truncated by Fearing's adherence to an abbreviated time scheme, and the reader

cannot be certain of their outcomes, it appears that the outage becomes a signal clear only

to the author and to the reader, that is, only available via a representation. No character

pauses to comment on the dramatic intrusion in the text; Helen, her attention arrested by

the de-familiarizing sign of an elevator stuck between "4" and "5" comes close – "I

wonder why…" – but cannot find the space to develop the moment before her

consciousness is swept away by the quotidian (276). Only the author and, by extension,

the reader, can obtain a privileged position as observers, assembling what appear as fragments into a totality imbued with a mimetic veracity.

This is a position that Fearing seeks to confirm through another, meta-textual framing device, the acknowledgement he inserts at the beginning of *The Hospital*: "The author would like to express his thanks to the many doctors, nurses, technicians, maintenance workers, hospital and city executives, without whose generous aid in research covering the field this book could not have been written" (front matter). Gesturing toward the authority of his sources and the comprehensiveness of his research, Fearing's establishes his novel's authorial persona as a writer / technician in dialogue with other technicians, gathering their fragmented expertise and experience into a frame that might bring about a reflective awareness of the whole. Yet the characters in the novel with whom this aligns Fearing – those who, through their privileged perspectives, are able to map out some of the institution's operations, such as Mr. Chirtz, who supervises the material substrate of the institution; Elizabeth Crane, whose sociological and administrative perspective lets her see the cynical truth of the hospital's function; and Miss Marmon, whose position at the switchboard lets her trace out the network of communications between the characters' stories – are all powerless to intervene, to create events that might ramify throughout this fictional world, to create the collective epiphany that causes other characters' lines of action diverge from their original course and reconfigure the social machine. This potential, though ultimately unrealized, lies, oddly, with the novel's least articulate, least authorial character, Pops Jarnecke, whose unreflecting automatism, his blinkered pursuit of immediate ends, aligns him closely with

the technical systems with which he interferes. Perceiving and understanding, Fearing suggests, are separated from the means of intervention.

Nevertheless, whether conceived of in terms of the statistical regularity of cases of tuberculosis, of the rise and fall of a stock price, of the regimentation of the working day, or in the omnipresent flow of the radio and of electric light, it is in the mundane, the omnipresent, and the repeating that a certain hope emerges by providing a basis for delimiting and defining the charity-hospital-as-system as an object of analysis and critique. Regularity, typicality, and predictability in an object give support to the idea of the author as an outside observer who can diagnose that object's irrationalities. By opposing to blind, unpredictable action an understanding of the communication networks, protocols, functions, repetitions, everyday routines, and the values and goals, no matter how conflicted, that provide this object with its unity and identity, Fearing uses the ideology of the author as engineer to offer the hint of a utopian promise that some combination of thought and action could potentially untangle its complexities and resolve its contradictions, bringing the proper sequence of technical means into alignment with clear ends determined by the communal good. However, this technocratic ideology and the utopian potential that emerges from it still hinge on questionable, though unstated, assumptions. First, there is the assumption that the delimited social subsystem formed by the charity hospital stands as not only a functional part of, but also an analogy for, a larger, more complex social machine that could conceivably be comprehended using the same methods. This, in turn, depends on that social machine having the same capacity for delimitation as an object – the typical, the commonplace, the repeatable, and the mundane. The mundane, the world made out of the fabric of the everyday, is in *The*

Hospital is nearly unbearable for its inhabitants, but it is, after all, a world, and it thus suggests the conditions of possibility for common experiences and thus for a community which might, potentially, establish shared values and ends to which the actions of technological systems are subordinated.

The Ends of Electronic Community: *Clark Gifford's Body*

Fearing's third novel, *Clark Gifford's Body*, departs decisively from the notion of the author as documentarian and technician, and, indeed, puts into question the capacity of technicians to successfully and positively transform society. In *The Hospital*, Fearing uses the volume's prefatory acknowledgement to align the author with the neutral authority of other technicians and establish a documentary status for his work. In *Clark Gifford's Body*, Fearing transforms another paratextual element, the prefatory disclaimer, usually a terse legal prophylactic against libel claims, into a more extended framing device to establish the *non*-documentary status of the text. In this statement, Fearing emphatically denies he has drawn his materials from the contemporary world:

> This is a work of fiction. The characters in it are imaginary, not having their counterparts in real life. The events described are all inventions, loosely shaped again into one of history's much repeated patterns. The country in which the action takes place is a mythical one, of no particular time. The story alone is the true thing. (*Clark Gifford's Body* 9)

Here, Fearing, instead of claiming mimetic authority for the novel as a response to a present, referential reality, turns to the "mythical", claiming that the "repeated patterns" are the "true thing". What, exactly, this larger historical pattern might be, however, his novel does not make clear; the typical, it seems, takes on the character of permanent instability and crisis affecting the capacity to experience stability or predictability itself.

The clearest sign that Fearing is intentionally departing from his earlier novel comes from the way in which the way *Clark Gifford's Body* inverts *The Hospital*'s treatment of space and time. Where the latter compresses and focuses, picking up stray thoughts and gestures so that a flicker in the lighting can, for a moment, ramify throughout the whole system to appear, potentially, as a visitation or a catastrophe, the former novel expands time and space to the breaking point, cutting back and forth across decades and continents, leaving more holes than surface in the texture of its reality. The "pattern" of history, though founded in repetition, differs from the documentary detailing of the typical or the quotidian that Fearing emphasizes in *The Hospital*. Confronted by an overt disavowal of mimetic reference from the author one hand, and the invocation of repeated patterns on the other, the reader must therefore attempt to establish a framework to grasp the nature of this particular fictional world in order to determine the historical laws governing it. Given the context in which Fearing's book was written, in the midst of World War Two, just prior to the U.S. entry into the war, what Fearing produces could be seen as a speculative novel in which the United States has suffered a constitutional crisis paralyzing decision making and where the Second World War has continued to drag on in Europe for nearly two decades. Yet Fearing also avoids any contextualizing references to Fascism, and he only alludes in the most general terms to racial or religious tensions

within his fictional world, without dramatizing them or making them integral to any character or plotline. Class tensions, though suggested by the avowed socialism of various political factions in the novel, remain similarly vague. Though it appears that the dissatisfaction of Gifford's group with the current regime stems primarily from its imputed failure to effectively organize production and distribute resources, specific conflicts, like the descriptions of the diversion of small amounts of capital into charity as a form of cheap social control or to the problems of wage labor and the organization of workers that form the background to the events in *The Hospital*, never appear.

Thus, where *The Hospital* insists on a correspondence between the novel's fictional world and the "real" one, *Clark Gifford's Body* takes the opposite tack, forcing the reader to account for the split between the fictional world the novel portrays and the "real" world in which it exists. Where media like radio, telephone cables, synchronized clocks, and electric lighting serve in *The Hospital* as robust supports for the repeating, relational structure that comprises the stable reality of the system, *Clark Gifford's Body* treats an electronic medium, radio, as a support for the creation of historical events through their simulation – not the reflection of reality, after the event, through fiction, but fiction's production of the event itself. Skipping all over the map, spanning decades related in non-chronological order, denuded of the context of a world supplied by realist writing, the novel pushes literary unity of time and unity of place to their limits, but also forces their divergence. Fragmentation results not only from the absence of contexture, but from the fact that contexture exists only potentially, as the reader reaches to fill in the blank spaces in the speculative world Fearing sketches.

Like *The Hospital*, *Clark Gifford's Body* depicts an event that disrupts communication, in this case the seizure of a radio station by a small group of revolutionaries, as a device to bring a whole array of characters into some kind of relationship with one another. In *The Hospital* recognition of this framing event seems to evade Fearing's characters, but in *Clark Gifford's Body* one of the key players, a bemused President Holling, verges into near-metafictional territory by remarking on this artifice: "Curious…The attack at Bonnfield seemed, somehow, to establish a lasting connection between so many people otherwise not related to each other at all" (259). The constitution of the social via a technological event here re-iterates Tichi's elaboration of Dos Passos's novelist-as-technician who attempts to frame meaningful, secular stories about the relationships between strangers; the connection between "people otherwise not related to each other at all" mimics the capacity of radio broadcasting to produce simultaneous geopolitical unities never before possible. Yet the narrative effects of the event described in Fearing's novel also exceed that capacity, leaving causality unexplained in a manner that verges on the mystical or the mythical. This meta-fictional commentary thus emerges from disruptions of the boundary between the diegetic and authorial worlds. Holling's statement, which within the consistency of the fictional world of the novel is simply a person reflecting on the inconsistency of his experience of that world, can slip out of the context of this consistency to serve as meta-fictional commentary because the character Clark Gifford himself assumes a certain *authorial* position, even as the voice of Fearing's authorial persona largely withdraws.

Holling's feeling that the sequence comprising the world he inhabits is "curious" – puzzling, improbable, or unlikely – stems from his sense that Gifford's action in some

way really constitutes an event, an interruption of the quotidian course of things that pulls a group of strangers out of their original trajectories and sets them, and the world, on a different course. Yet the status of this event is also uncertain. Gifford's seizure of the radio station and his news bulletins of fictional events may, after all, be just more noise in a sea of meaningless and disconnected violence. It might be, as Fearing says, an iteration of a "a much repeated pattern", an empty repetition of the mundane on a larger historical cycle. If *The Hospital* attempts to find an authoritative position for reflection that might bridge the gap between modernist subjective perception and a realist / naturalist social description of the typical, *Clark Gifford's Body* withdraws this reflective capacity. When Fearing writes in his brief introductory note that "the story alone is the true thing", he is not conjoining "story" to "true thing" to bolster the authority of "story" with the value normally attached to the term "truth". He is, rather, using the term "story" to render the term "truth" as something created or made: Fearing's central actor's own plotting depends on the notion that the story alone can make the thing true. Gifford's broadcasts are examples of performative speech that masquerades as constative. By announcing and narrating a revolution where one does not exist, Gifford hopes to bring one into being.

Fearing's speculative novel can thus be seen as a response to the discourse of the writer as technician. Gifford's action depends on his intervention into the nation's communications infrastructure itself in order to disseminate fictions that, through their simultaneous broadcast, have the potential to be accepted and acted upon, and thus become true, reconfiguring the social machine from the position of a Dos Passos-like third-person narrator. The backstory Fearing gives Gifford positions him as a literal technician, as a writer and rhetorician, and as a theologian who is capable of thinking in

terms of third-person, omniscient points-of-view. Though he comes to reject and abandon each of these positions, they can nevertheless be seen as informing his subsequent course. A seminary student as a young man, Clark Gifford subsequently abandons this path because he disagrees with both the epistemological and aesthetic effects of its discursive practices: "Sermons…merely serve to disguise the few grains of truth that are in them, and in a very bitter coating at that" (172). He thus begins his career, not as a preacher, but in a "metallurgical research laboratory", a technical position that he, like the technocrats and Dos Passos, equates with an "honesty" that is opposed to the mindset of business managers (267-68). Finally, in a synthesis of the materialist engineer and the theological rhetorician, Gifford at last becomes a professional political agitator and revolutionary, forming a group called the Committee for Action, likewise comprised of members "mainly engaged in engineering" (108). Gifford's media coup is an attempt to create an image or representation: "We will go on the air-waves with well-prepared scripts in the hands of competent actors competently directed, with our equipment being run by capable engineers" (65). For Gifford, intervention into both social organization and into the political discourse about social organization ought to be characterized by "competence" and "capability", making a certain efficacy in producing results into the measure of truth. The name of his organization is telling: "The Committee for Action" does not suggest any particular content, any values that orient its "action", but rather a valorization of movement and transformation in and of themselves.

Likewise, the title of the novel is *Clark Gifford's Body*, not *Clark Gifford's Mind*, shifting attention from Gifford's conscious thought and ideals to the corporeal, the somatic, the material, the abject, the noisy, and the potentially meaningless. One element

shared by *Clark Gifford's Body* and *The Hospital* is that in both Fearing renders the interiority of the key actors inaccessible or incomprehensible. In *The Hospital*, Pop Jarnecke's seizure of the building's power supply is an event that becomes a potential "frame" for the other story lines, but Jarnecke is never presented as anything but an unwitting agent, his behavior a product of drink and delirium. Though Jarnecke and Gifford are the authors of actions that ramify outwards from nodes at the center of webs of electrical communication, it is precisely this propensity for action, rather than reflection and discourse, that characterizes them. Fearing, whose technique of multiple first-person narration seems to offer every character, no matter how minor, an opportunity to tell their side of the story, significantly excludes precisely these characters from the novels' narrative structures. Despite sending reverberations throughout the other story lines, Jarnecke is never given a chapter of his own to narrate, and his barely coherent speech appears only as quotes in the narration of other characters, reinforcing the reader's sense of his unreflective status. Clark Gifford, the chief plotter of the seizure of the radio network, is likewise never given his own first-person narrative, and his speech, too, usually only reaches the reader after it has been filtered through the narratives of the other characters. More charismatic than Jarnecke, he is allowed a kind of first-person address in the form of an inserted document, a letter full of bleak metaphysical reflections on death that Gifford writes to his young son on the eve of his execution. However, this shift away from Fearing's usual mode of direct, reliable first-person narration to one that is overtly mediated and that in its content appears digressive or even evasive, offers the reader little insight into Gifford as an agent in the narrative; in contrast to Fearing's multitude of other first-person narrators, who speak, as it were,

without motivation and into nothing, the sudden awareness of medium and of audience that frames Gifford's direct discourse has the effect of rendering it *less* informative. The quality of Gifford's agency thus comes to be a central ambiguity in the novel: Is he an unreflective madman like Jarnecke, throwing the switches of media power randomly, or is he a political genius, engineering the wars and the eventual peace that follow in the wake of his death, scripting the actions that others continue to carry out long after he is in his grave? Does Holling, who first orders Gifford's execution and then subsequently allies himself with Gifford's movement in order to be elected president, and who, like Gifford, is never given his own narrative voice, become the agent carrying out Gifford's intentions, or does he co-opt "Gifford's body" – his corpse – as a symbol to drive forward his own, thoroughly obscure, designs?

Fearing does not hesitate to ironize Gifford, though he does so only from the point of view of characters who may have their own reasons for seeing the worst in him. Archibald Danton, a radio producer and reluctant core member of Gifford's revolutionary movement who testifies alternately to both Gifford's madness and to the effects of his charisma, describes the décor of the apartment Gifford uses as his headquarters prior to the coup as unsubtle shrine to iconic leaders:

> At first sight it might have been ordered by a number in a catalog. Now I noticed a few personal touches. The mantel above a fireplace in which rested a mound of ashes, burned papers no doubt, supported photographs of Lincoln and Roosevelt. A line drawing of Lenin filled the space between the two windows. There was a biography of Garibaldi on the table in front of me, and another of Martin Luther.

A plaster figurine of Christ on the cross hung on the wall opposite the windows.

(59)

On one hand, the images with which Gifford chooses to surround himself all carry a potent symbolism for a movement that aspires to transform society; on the other hand, Gifford's decoration of his bourgeois interior with images of this eclectic group as "personal touches" that perform or reveal his own identity seems of a piece with an overblown narcissism and a drift of revolutionary symbolism toward stultifying kitsch. Danton, resisting Gifford's efforts to recruit him, complains: "You belong in a museum. You ought to be a statue of somebody from a long time ago, in a park somewhere" (57). No matter whether becoming a "statue of somebody from a long time ago" is Gifford's goal, this will more or less be his fate, as the first chapter of the novel, set thirty years after the attack on the radio station, reveals. Gifford may be committed to both science and to myth, but his work is himself, as his own identity becomes bound up with the fictions he creates. There is thus a certain instability to this identity from the point of view of the reader who can gain no access to his interiority. Yet, in the same moment, Fearing turns this instability back onto the status of the text itself, keeping Gifford's practices aligned with that of the author, who, after all, puts the dry mockery of excess allusion into the mouth of a revolutionary conspirator he has himself named "Danton". If Gifford appears to be patching himself together over a fundamental incoherence, the fiction he inhabits appears to be, quite knowingly, doing the same.

The incoherence or unreadability that affects Gifford also applies to the identities of the political organizations struggling to establish the power to determine the values

and ends that will drive the larger community. The novel spends little time differentiating

the various factions' policies or ideological specificities, with the possible, but unvoiced,

implication that their beliefs or ideologies are largely shifting conveniences for

mobilizing political authority and military power. Governor Holling, Gifford's opponent

at the time of the raid on the station and his eventual executioner, soon aligns himself

with the surviving members of Gifford's Committee for Action and announces a mandate

to establish "a social, political, and industrial order based upon public ownership and

management of all the means of productions and all the avenues of intercourse with

foreign powers" (71). Holling's opponent, General Estevan, complains that the "rival

factions" brought together in Holling's coalition render its program incoherent and

incomprehensible (70). These contradictory statements are themselves presented as

official speeches amplified through media announcements, so, in the absence of framing

narration, it is impossible to assess what truth value, if any, either of them may have in

Fearing's cosmos; certainly, an extended thread of the plot set during Holling's putatively

socialist regime centers on the smuggling of black-market goods in collusion with

governmental authorities. Polito points out that Gifford's use of political spectacle

doesn't appear to differ a great deal from that of the system he seeks to disrupt; Gifford's

political methods may thus be "new" in the relative historical sense that they take

advantage of the novel effects of the "new" medium of radio, but they do not really break

with the methods of persuasion that had already been developed by the media

professionals of the existing regime (Polito xx). These two possible readings of Gifford's

broadcasts – as either an event or as a return of the same – are an ambivalence about his

central character, and about the effectiveness of the revolutionary course he pursues, that Fearing builds into the novel.

On one hand, Gifford, an engineer, takes technology and technological solutions to be fundamental to the construction of a rational, utopian society. The version of socialism espoused by Gifford is founded not in the proletariat, but in technocracy. When he presents his plan to Danton, Gifford begins by assuming that there is a unitary problem to be solved and that it is his job to develop means or instruments that will effectively solve it: "The basic program is everywhere the same. There is not a twelve-year-old child in the civilized world who does not know it, doesn't understand it from the ground upward. The only difference is, how to put it through" (56). Whether this universalizing assumption about communal values – that "the only difference" or source of conflict in society derives from disagreement about the best way to establish a self-evident "basic program" – is read as a convincing take on the materialist roots of human conflict or as disingenuous simplification is an index of the reader's sympathy toward Gifford and of the reader's perception of Fearing's attitude toward him as well. Gifford's statement posits a society where conflict between classes is subsumed by a common struggle against both basic nature and against the second nature of a dysfunctional economy that has run out of control, both of which can best be mastered by the technocratic vision of the engineer, who, having found a need for a solution, is trained to rationally determine "how to put it through". Radio, from this point of view, is an instrument for establishing a community, a means for delineating a simultaneous world which would form the ground for common values and ends, and give shape to the plans of collective action to attain them. Here, the potential utopian utility of communications technology and mass media

parallels that of the *The Hospital*: To become aware of its mundane omnipresence, even through its wrenching re-orientation, is to become aware of one's co-presence with others. It is this very world-building or reality-constructing consistency that Gifford's plan to hijack the broadcasts from stations around the country in part depends upon.

Yet this need to disrupt and reorient technological media is bound up with a certain mysticism that contradicts its claims to support a common, mundane world. If radio as a stabilizing social medium supports afternoon ball games, harmless comedy routines, endless advertisements for the commodities of everyday life, and, potentially, if not in actuality, serious deliberation about the common goals of the community and the means to attain them, radio is just as often portrayed in Fearing's novel as having a fugitive, uncanny quality, with the potential to slip, ghostlike, across boundaries and introduce interruptions into an orderly, established reality or to drive action blindly towards irrational or unforeseen ends. During the seizure of the radio station, Gifford's shortwave radio operator, Emory Wallach, uses the station's equipment to scan the airwaves for signs from the rest of the globe long cut off by war. The signal that captures his attention is a broadcast from a guerilla group within one of the enemy countries, claiming the usual propagandistic litany of military successes, but also insisting on a far-flung solidarity with mysterious allies (204-205). Later, when Wallach sits in prison, awaiting execution, he muses on the possibility that these "allies" may have meant Gifford's group, indicating a far larger conspiracy than Wallach had imagined, and one which will not end with their deaths; Gifford confirms this hope with an oracular statement: "It is so…I have been informed" (249). Again, Gifford makes a cryptic claim that mimics the omniscient position of the prophet. In its global reach and messages of

obscure significance that arrive from beyond the edge of the known, radio begins to merge with a sense of the mysticism that is an extension, Fearing suggests, of Gifford's charismatic appeal.

Radio thus becomes conflated with direct action at a distance, technology merging with Gifford's charisma to remotely motivate militarized bodies, in a mode akin to that which, to distinguish it from the "radio" as a discursive public sphere, Campbell calls "wireless" (169). Danton recalls how on an earlier expedition he had undertaken with Gifford, "our conversation had been mainly by mental telepathy. So nightmarish, so fantastic, so ridiculous that I could not now really believe it had actually taken place" (Fearing, *Clark Gifford's Body* 49). The broadcasts that follow the seizure of the radio stations volatilize and mobilize the audience through their immediacy, as listeners identify their own desires with the exhortations of the radio announcers, producing contradictory responses. One listener, with a son already in the military, interprets the broadcast as a declaration of peace (93); at the same time, a group of youths interpret the broadcast as an injunction to take to their automobiles, commandeer explosives, and use them to wreck a government train (87-89). The supposed community of listeners, though constituted by the reach of the radio network, is also fractured by it, sent off on divergent paths. As this divergence illustrates, in this militarized, "wireless" mode, radio succeeds in tearing apart the mundane fabric of the stagnant old regime, but it, at the same time, takes on an essentially unpredictable quality, putting into question the capacity of complex communication technologies to effectively orient the social mechanism.

Near the end of *Clark Gifford's Body*, Fearing introduces commentary on another technical medium, the silent cinema, as a contrast to that of the radio. Radio appeals to

Gifford because the instantaneous transmission of radio is not dependent on the past, on the "having been there" of the referent, and is thus suited to the kind of projection of a highly charged fictional "now" that might develop into a future reality. Where the radio produces simultaneity, however, film depends on a non-simultaneity, a temporal delay between the moment of inscription and the film's preparation and viewing. In the novel's penultimate chapter, set thirty years before the attempted coup, Gifford's fiancée Catherine Kallinbeck, whose primary interest is in dramatic theatre, argues that cinema's *telos* is the production of alternate visual worlds that nevertheless resist the very principle of reality:

> I explained to Clark, "You see, the appeal of the movies is completely a matter of illusion. We don't see real people, just shadows…Now, when they add speech," I went on, "they destroy their biggest asset, illusion. The actors aren't dream people, any more, they're real. The movies won't be magic any more, they've got to be just as realistic as a newspaper story, don't you see?" (264)

For Kallinbeck, images of body and gesture without speech produce "dream people" who exist outside of the everyday reality constructed in newspaper stories. The addition of sound to the visual simply creates a documentary double of the quotidian world. For Gifford, however, both arrangements are unsatisfactory. The audience's knowledge that they are lost in a dream, that the figures that populate their world are only shadows, is useless if the play of those shadows transfixes the bodies of the audience, and, by analogy, the structure of society, in place. Gifford instead wants to be rid of the illusion

entirely, and sets out to deploy the radio voice as a way of inserting fiction into the present to create an event that sets reality off on a new course. In both Kallinbeck's silent film and Gifford's radio transmission, the division of senses into separate channels appears to be the key to affecting their audiences; where the silent cinema puts imaginary bodies in motion in dream worlds, fulfilling wishes of the audience while immobilizing their real bodies, the radio or wireless mobilizes its audience, setting real bodies in motion with remote control fantasies.

With the radio, then, mobilization and action take the place of representation and interpretation. Just as audiences are no longer entranced by images from the past thrown up on the screen, readers no longer hold still to pore over traces of the past printed in texts to divine their possible meanings. Fearing performs this in his own text, stringing together incident and action with an implied pattern that nevertheless remains indiscernible, opaque to interpretation. His characters and narrators come to see their own experience as similarly uninterpretable. At the height of the decisive battle in the civil war, an officer in the radio bureau of the war ministry is privy to a conversation between Macres, the minister of war, and President Holling about the fate of Danton. Arrested and sentenced to death along with Gifford, Danton – possibly a double agent – escapes from prison, is pardoned, serves the government in the civil war, and, at some point, commits suicide:

Mr. Holling said, at length, "I was never entirely satisfied about that business."

"The suicide, you mean?" The President did not reply. "Or the escape?"

Mr. Holling appeared not to have heard him. Mr. Macres added, smiling broadly,

"Or do you mean the raid at Bonnfield?"

The President was impassive, and Mr. Macres' smile slowly died. He did

not follow the subject further. (260)

Holling, who as governor directs the operations that thwart Gifford's coup, oversees his

trial and execution, and finally ascends to the presidency, is portrayed as being the only

figure in the novel as historically pivotal as Gifford himself. The eventual alliance

between Gifford's supporters and his executioner insinuates that Holling, upon meeting

the captured revolutionary, in some way intuits Gifford's own vision of history and,

insofar as he is the only figure capable and resolute enough to author or engineer events,

is responsible for either its fulfillment or its perversion. Yet this conversation, which

occurs at would should be the dead center of power, the radio room that links up with and

remotely controls what appears to be the most powerful military and political force in

Fearing's fictional cosmos, reveals that in even Holling's mind there is neither certainty

that Holling has received and understood Gifford's message, nor certainty that Gifford

ever had any message, nor, for that matter, certainty that Holling ever actually held the

power to shape historical events with a coherent aim in mind. The one character who

could answer the reader's questions about what actually happened in the novel seems

utterly uncertain himself. Thus the reader arrives at Holling's puzzled, potentially meta-

fictional commentary: "Curious…"

The effect of *Clark Gifford's Body* is of possibilities that are never fully resolved into a stable image of a world, as Fearing generates from his fictional media ecology an excess that undermines the notion of representation still contained in *The Hospital*. Where the portrayals of the media systems in *The Hospital* render the polity it depicts interpretable by author and reader, the portrayals of media systems in *Clark Gifford's Body* continually return the reader to irresolvable questions about how reality and fiction in can be distinguished in that text's cosmos. Fictions create events, but these events cannot, after the fact, be interpreted to anyone's satisfaction because there is no such thing as a stable representation of reality that emerges from communication in the novel. When the story alone produces the true thing, interpretation loses its grounding. No matter which political or economic entity is in control of the radio broadcasting apparatus, its adherents and agents tell stories meant to bring a favored reality into being. Several years into the civil war, Fearing has one nameless citizen describe how communication has become disconnected from truth or belief:

> Not that the government had placed any ban upon literature of any sort, or prohibited listening to the enemy radio. It was simply that no news could be had. The government's communiques monotonously minimized reverses and exaggerated successes. The enemy radio had never done otherwise. News, such as it was, came chiefly by word of mouth. Most of it was guesswork that, as it circulated, became rumor and fantasy. (74)

Communication, rather than working to correct error, to repair itself, instead becomes

richer the more it tends toward fiction, rumor, and fantasy. Having begun as a fiction,

Gifford's revolution never quite turns into a referential reality; it instead splinters into

actions on one hand and *possible* realities on the other. Information – along with food and

currency – comes largely to be supplied by the black market. These illegal operators,

represented in the novel by Marty Fenchon, are "conscripted personally" by the local

authorities, with whom they soon begin to merge, putting in question the extent to which

the socialist ideals ostensibly promoted by Gifford and Holling have found any purchase

on social and economic reality (74). This instability of channels of information is the

source of one of the subplots of the novel not directly tied to Gifford. This narrative

thread concerns the attempts by Mary Rayhill, a singer at Fenchon's restaurant, to locate

Tony, the son she was forced to abandon in an enemy territory a few years prior to

Gifford's coup. Diplomatic channels having collapsed, she attempts to make contact

through coded radio broadcasts, and then, though the wars have shattered the sanctioned

global postal union, through territorial or national postal networks that can only be

connected illicitly, if at all. Fenchon provides one of these illicit links, but is unable to

attach a current address to Tony. Eventually, convinced Tony could not have survived the

war, he fabricates a reply for Rayhill, tracking down old letters that she had previously

sent as evidence, and then producing a blurry photograph of a tombstone to confirm

Tony's death.

A counterpoint to the undeliverable letters with which Mary Rayhill attempts to

reach her son is the letter the condemned Clark Gifford writes to his own son from

prison. As Polito notes, this letter is primarily characterized by "clichés and bromides"

(Polito xx) that seem to cut against the image of Gifford's character as a committed

visionary. Foremost among these is the final confession Gifford delivers as advice:

> A man must value something, his beliefs, his country and its people, his personal
>
> honor, *something*, *whatever it may be*, so much that he is prepared to die for it if
>
> that should be necessary. Otherwise he *is just empty*. Like that funny scarecrow in
>
> a frock coat we saw on our trip through Salamander Island. How you laughed at
>
> that! (172)

On one hand, for an ostensibly socialist revolutionary, to "value something" as an end

and a good in itself can be construed as a kind of resistance to a society dominated by the

tendency of money to render all values as transient and fungible. On the other hand,

Gifford's indifference to the content of the belief in favor of its form has the sense of a

too-easy existentialism about it – commitment, even fanaticism, become instruments for

constructing selves, selected from a menu, an operation that, in the end, may be little

more than a symptom of the very fungibility valorized by the commodity based system –

one must choose to die for something, but *what* one chooses to die for is of no

consequence – rather than real resistance to it. Though Gifford claims to have embarked

on a "new kind of politics", his advice here is to bind the life of the self to some

traditional or standard claimants on human self-sacrifice – faith, nationality, honor – that

may have absolute value in and of themselves, but that within Gifford's system become

strangely exchangeable, all subordinated to the valorization of action and to the

willingness to die.

In Fearing's novel, the future appears to lie not with this commitment to death, but with a style of living that also ignores these ultimate values entirely. The events Gifford triggers via the radio produce in the novel's final chapter a new kind of character who lacks attachments not only to the absolute values Gifford enumerates, but also to the lineaments of community as structured by language. Having grown into a teenager, been conscripted into a whole series of opposed armies, and finally captured when his bomber is shot down during an air raid over a city in Fearing's imagined nation, Rayhill's lost son, Tony, is found living in a POW camp among "various nationals" who are "dressed in the uniforms of two or three defeated armies" (283). He has, as one guard explains, "been taken care of by five or six different armies while he was growing up, first on one side and then on the other, according to the interpreter, and the only language he understands ain't even a dialect, it's just a mixture of them all" (284). This fragmentary relationship to language appears to limit Tony's participation in communities founded in discourse; his linguistic identity is rooted almost solely in his proper name, which remains "the same in any language" (285). Through his name Tony retains an address, and a capacity to be ordered or directed; such language as he possesses is connected to commands that result in action, that put bodies and machines in motion. It is via this address that he is eventually reeled in through Fenchon's communications network, bringing *Clark Gifford's Body* to a dubiously happy, fairytale conclusion in which Tony is restored to his rightful place as the property of his biological mother under the legal rubric of a forced labor program. This capacity to be addressed and ordered into action via the minimal linguistic structure of his name connects Tony to the militarized, remote-control characteristics of the radio that Gifford exploits, as does his seemingly intuitive,

post-linguistic integration at a young age with his previous "home", the advanced technology of an intercontinental bomber.

Clark Gifford's Body is inhabited by a crowd of narrators describing their experiences, and a few central figures like Gifford and Holling who, though never becoming narrators, have interiorities and subterranean motivations attributed to them (though never confirmed) which are then subjected to much scrutiny and speculation in the narration of others. As his muteness and the ambiguous play of laughter and imitative gesture that surrounds and composes him indicates, Tony is out of place among this cast, less a character than a cheerful and uncanny image emerging from the catastrophe. Yet, imitating the silent cinema, controlled by the wireless, hunted through the post, he is also the figure in the novel most closely identified with the media technologies that opaquely dominate the novel's world, and it is a world which, unlike the other characters, he seems to inhabit comfortably and cheerfully. This close identification with media technology points towards Fearing's refusal to depict Tony in terms of intentions, interiority, or idealism, even as he remains, unlike Gifford, unapologetically alive. A patchwork of uniforms and languages, a repeat orphan and a serial deserter, cheerfully disconnected from both the imperative to choose an authentic interiority to express and the means to express it, Tony is a version of the "funny scarecrow" towards which Gifford cruelly directs his son's mockery. The employee who, on Fenchon's orders, retrieves Tony from the POW camp confirms this parallel as he watches Tony accustom himself to the habits, gestures, and techniques of yet another community or people: "I had to laugh, the way he imitated me, and when I laughed he caught on why, and laughed himself" (285). Laughter and miming of gesture are ambiguous forces, at once satisfying and unsettling,

aggressive and reconciling, negating and affirmative; they are also modes of

communication that exist outside of and beyond the signification of language, reinforcing

the association of Tony with a post-nationalist utopian moment at the end of Fearing's

novel's global war. This post- or trans-linguistic status also connects Tony to the new

media, particularly the silent cinema: A revenant, a "dream person" who is returned from

the dead, and who communicates primarily through gesture, affect, and indication, Tony

visually embodies the silent film that Catherine Kallinbeck so valorizes. Derived from a

whole range of languages, and repeatedly torn loose from the territories of land, nation,

and family, Tony's fractured, a-signifying idiolect opposes the hallucinatory "mental

telepathy" exerted by the charismatic, prophet-like Gifford who attempts via his

electronic apparatus to communicate with a nation's populace and persuade them of the

necessity of breaking their passivity and embarking on a course of concerted action.

Without loyalty to a nation or an ideology, and existing outside of language, Tony is

immune to such persuasion. Yet, because he is always ready to act at the command of the

war machine to which he currently belongs, regardless of who or what it claims to

represent, he doesn't need to be persuaded. Whether Tony is a utopian possibility or a

disaster remains, at novel's end, uncertain.

The speculative nature of *Clark Gifford's Body* becomes clear by its final chapter,

as Fearing extrapolates from the present a potential future for the relationship between

humans and the electronic media; the representation of this future, however, is

ambiguous, riven with gaps and uncertainty. The fictional present Gifford establishes

through electronic simultaneity replaces world and community with a common, unfolding

catastrophe, but that simultaneity exists only in the moment, becoming impossible to

trace from one point to another on a temporal line, escaping intention, prediction, planning, or instrumentality. This unreadability becomes evident when both the status of media and the literary techniques that Fearing uses to build fictional "worlds" are contrasted in *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body*. In *The Hospital*, the media, the electrical and electronic systems that create and connect the addresses for characters and regulate their functional positions, generate a kind of systemic consistency and predictable regularity that makes the charity hospital a small territory that stands in for a larger, recognizable territory, even if, Fearing suggests, its very meaning and existence is ultimately a ruse of capital that has transformed the medical function it serves into a kind of artificial life support system for an exploitative society and a bereft, ersatz individuality. In *Clark Gifford's Body*, however, the tendency of media, as exemplified by the slide from the radio to the wireless, is towards entropic inconsistency: Messages cannot be delivered to specific addresses and communications cannot can be interpreted with any certainty of fidelity. For Fearing, as an author, *The Hospital* develops a certain consistency through a claim to documentary authority, through attention to detail, procedure, psychology, causal sequence, and typicality, and through the sense provided by these techniques of realist representation that characters and events are embedded in a context or coherent, meaningful world. *Clark Gifford's Body*, however, deliberately strips away context, creating characters, locations, and events that are loaded with apparent significance but then rendered ultimately interpretable and cast adrift on blank seas of static. Here, Fearing seems to surrender the basic tenets of the modern literary project to mediate between the self and society through the consistency of worlds created via poems or novels.

As an heir to a modernist poetics that attributes historical agency to aesthetics and as a participant in a politically activist literary culture, Fearing believes on some level that a medium, specifically that which carries into the hands and minds of readers imaginative writing put down on paper according to the intentions of an author, has the capacity to – over time and incrementally – make, remake, or unmake real worlds as well as fictional ones. Yet he also writes at a moment when writing itself, from his point of view, is being overthrown in this capacity, the plodding dominance of the manuscript and the printing press apparently collapsing in favor of the simultaneity and collectivity generated via the amplifier, radically altering, as he says, the relationship between, and thus the identities of, author and audience. Writing then shifts from a means of direct intervention in the communication that constitute societies to a somewhat attenuated power of reflection on how the actual means of direct intervention might take form and who, if anyone, might be capable of creating them. *The Hospital* and *Clark Gifford's Body* answer the question of who might undertake these interventions in similar fashion – someone who, in their opacity to full comprehension or interpretation by others, in a certain sense emulates the action of modern technological means. Likewise, both novels show how the simultaneity generated by electric or electronic media can be exploited to switch from stabilizing to disrupting the communities constituted by it, though with differing results: Where the electrical blackout in *The Hospital* fails and is rapidly reabsorbed and forgotten in the repetition of the everyday, the electronic intervention in *Clark Gifford's Body* appears to "succeed"; what this success signifies, what has been gained and what has been lost in the process, remains impossible to evaluate, even for the writer ostensibly charged with chronicling it. It is the fact of this impossibility and

uncertainty, lost in the "now" of the simultaneous broadcast, that writing, precisely

because it has been diminished in many ways for Fearing through comparison and

competition with the new media, gains a certain power to illuminate. There is thus a

certain humility, and a melancholy, in the position Fearing develops for the novelist in

the age of media technologies that wrap whole communities in a strange, new co-

presence and the radical accompanying possibilities for unpredictable and uncontrollable

events. Yet dwelling on and in the electric and electronic media's regimes of intense

simultaneity, Fearing brings a non-synchronic or untimely perspective to bear on it,

contrasting the delayed temporality of alphabetic writing, its twentieth-century resistance

to achieving the illusion of immediacy, with the electric or electronic interventions that

volatilize the present with a throw of the switch or of the dice.

[1] Few copies of the book version of *Spectators*, which was published in Britain in 1916 by Constable & Co., are available. I am therefore relying on the version of the text serialized in the United States by the weekly digest *The Living Age* in 1918.
[2] Significant works that have in the past thirty years done much to lay the groundwork for thinking about the relationship of a range of media technologies to culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include Stephen Kern's *The Culture of Time and Space*, Friedrich Kittler's *Discourse Networks 1800-1900* and *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Lisa Gitelman's *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines*, and Jeffrey Sconce's *Haunted Media*. A number of works focus on the relationship between modernist aesthetics and specific media technologies. These include Laura Marcus's *The Tenth Muse*, which assesses the relationship between cinema and modernist writing in the early twentieth century, Timothy C. Campbell's *Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi*, which describes the relationship between the wireless and the Italian Futurist avant-garde and Ezra Pound, and Michael North's *Camera Works*, which looks at the impact of photography on American literary modernism.

There are a few recent works that focus specifically on the relationship between modernist literary aesthetics and a broad spectrum of technological media. Sara Danius argues in *The Senses of Modernism* that "the emergence of modernist aesthetics signifies the increasing internalization of technological matrices of perception" (Danius 2). According to Danius, through the new media and new modes of vehicular transportation introduced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, writers came to recognize aesthetics not as a function of an integrated, a-historical human body but as a fluctuating, exteriorized, fractured field structured by the material productions of modern technologies. As modes of perception multiply, so too do ways of knowing, a process that Danius argues is reflected in the encyclopedic, multiform aesthetics found in the novels of Thomas Mann, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce. Danius privileges the stylistic heterogeneity of the novel form, then, as a way of making sense of technologically driven modernity. In *Beautiful Circuits*, Mark Goble characterizes the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as "a world entirely immersed in the technicalities of communication", suffused with the "sense that any form of contact, no matter how visceral or close, could be experienced as somehow 'mediated', remote, or artificially sustained" (14). For Goble, this destabilization of the opposition between the "remote" and the "visceral" produces an erotics of technical media that is readily discernible in the erotics of reading embodied in modernist literary texts (13). Such texts, then, become a method of tracing the ways in which the materiality of media create desire, rather than serve as its mere conduit 18-19). In *Pop Modernism*, Juan A. Suárez takes the new media of this period as the basis for reimagining modernist literary practice not as an elitist reaction to popular or mass culture but as a method of defamiliarizing everyday life. Because they capture the a-signifiying matter or noise that escapes symbolic representation, phonography and cinematography hint at relationships between bodies and things that undermine traditional hierarchies of perception and knowledge, energies that writers in the first half of the twentieth century either sought to regulate or release within the symbolic medium of writing itself. For Suárez, literature and the new media can thus work together to establish a "sensual knowledge" where abstract thought can "capture the object, but also allow itself to be caught by it and yield to the concreteness of

things" (13). These scholarly works all suggest ways in which the proliferating media technologies that coincide with the modernist era put the ready-made conceptions of the categories of perception or feeling into states of flux that are in turn recoded in literary texts that are produced and read according to what have since become recognizably modernist formal and thematic values.

[3] The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are the key period in which the problematic relationship between human life and technology becomes central to culture in a particularly clear way. Efforts to delineate a metaphysics that takes into account a complex tension between continuity and change, and the difficulties this tension produces for technological instrumentalism and determinism alike, are a key part of this era's thought. The work of figures such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Wilhelm Dilthey, Georg Simmel, Henri Bergson, Charles Peirce, and William James, despite vast divergences in focus and tone, all represent attempts to connect philosophy to a pressing sense that change is not clearly driven by teleology or ends and to evaluate what this would mean for human thought, feeling, perception, and communication. While this sense is explicitly driven by the challenge of theoretical thinking in the natural sciences that comes to present an image of a universe rife with variation and chance, my feeling is that the experience of technological change itself plays a key role in making these concerns intuitively tangible for a wide range of writers and readers during this period. Simmel, in his thoroughgoing considerations of the role of money as a medium or means, has important points to make about the way changing media technologies affect the experience of self and society, and in the first and second chapters I turn to his thought to help illuminate the effects telecommunications have on the relationships between space, time, and self in the texts by James, Smith, and Bosanquet. Bergson, though focused on neither communication nor technology, makes the experience of time and change the key themes of his influential philosophy, and in Chapter 3, I look at the way Mina Loy draws on elements of Bergson's thought in her poetry to depict vision as a process bound up with technology and with the social, communicating self. In bringing these literary texts and philosophical resources together, an image begins to emerge of nineteenth and early-twentieth century selves that are unthinkable without their entanglements with media technologies and yet are also highly conscious of the difference that inheres in the relationship and which opens possibilities for both reflection and action.

[4] In his elegant study *"Friction with the Market"*, Michael Anesko uses James's correspondence with his publishers, editors and confidants to show how the author attempted to use the differences between the American and British publishing industries and literary markets (36), as well as between differing formats – serialization in periodicals, "triple-decker" editions for lending libraries, cheap mass-market volumes and, of course, the theatre – to maximize his income and retain a certain control over the published form of his writing. According to Anesko, one of James's favorite strategies for negotiating more favorable contracts was to construct an image of himself as an artist beyond the market, unworldly and rather helpless in financial matters (48). Thus, James constructs a certain version of the litterateur as claimed by a "vocation" that cannily conceals and facilitates the extra-literary work of constructing writing as a "profession", where the utterances of the contract, the copyright, the bank draft and the dunning letter are as central to the production of "literary" works as "literary" language itself. Likewise, in *Henry James and the Art of Power* Mark Seltzer argues that James's writing

"participates in a general movement of professionalization and that part of this movement involves a partitioning and segregation of disciplines and discourses, the demarcation of exclusive domains of expertise" (146). James invites critics to "read him as the very exemplar of an aesthetic outside the circuit of power" and "this ruse is itself the ruse of power" (147). For Seltzer, James's claims for aesthetic autonomy – the resistance of the aesthetic to the social or the political – conceals the complicities his narrative techniques share with Foulcauldian technologies of surveillance and discipline. James uses the supposed disinterestedness of the literary to claim for the literary professional an authority similar to that of the doctor, psychiatrist or criminologist to interrogate, categorize or represent – that is construct – objects of knowledge within a certain field. This "general movement of professionalization" places professional discourses in both an antagonistic and mutually reinforcing position. James, like Howells, works to differentiate his writing from the "mass culture" of mere dilettantes, for-profit entertainers and newspaper reporters, even as he buttresses the authority of literature to narrate reality against the claims of other professions, recognizing the validity to make such claims in general, which attempting to refute them in particular cases. In *Henry James and the Abuse of the Past*, Peter Rawlings seeks to demonstrate how James borrowed from the reconsiderations of temporality undertaken by turn of the century psychologists, physicists, philologists and philosophers such as his brother William, Henri Bergson, Albert Einstein and J. Ellis McTaggert against the claims professional historians make to authoritatively unite science and history. According to Rawlings, James, in response perhaps to "the obscure hurt" and sense of a loss of potency related to his non-participation in the American Civil War, uses the discourse on the relativity and the "unreality" of linear time to exert a claim for his authority to reconstruct or rewrite the past, restoring himself as simultaneously an actor in history and as its recorder. For Sharon Cameron, James, particularly in the last decades of his career, differentiates the author's power of and over thought from psychological approaches to the individual mind. This notion of consciousness as impersonal, diverse, and capable of exerting power over the world is the defining feature of James's "novelistic project" (1). In a key text for Cameron, James's non-fiction account of his tour of the United States, *The American Scene*, the real subject lies in the ability of the author's thought to become co-extensive with the landscape: "Disparate points of view are not significant because they exemplify conflicts in consciousness. Rather they are significant because they exemplify the omnipresence of consciousness, identifying it with all points of view, demonstrating that there is no place in the book where consciousness has not been made to penetrate" (5). In Cameron's reading, stable points of view are elided in order to create the defamiliarizing radical subjectivity and impersonality of narrative "voice" in *The American Scene*. James's writing at this late stage of his career spreads consciousness everywhere. To make his "own" consciousness and its "cacophony" or multiplicity the real object of investigation, James must thus empty "the American scene" of individual voices and individual psychologies, infamously favoring impressions of architecture and crowds over thoroughgoing descriptions of persons and their positions or interactions. For an analysis of James' contentious relationship with the press, see Richard Salmon, *Henry James and the Culture of Publicity*, 116-148.

[5] See Bernard Siegert's *Relays*, 140-45; David M. Henkin's *The Postal Age*, 172-73; The Universal Postal Union Website, http://www.upu.int/en/the-upu/history/about-history.html.

[6] For the American economics professor Elisha Benjamin Andrews, the Universal Postal Union not only smoothed the flow of international business but also offered a model for smoothing the international flows of money itself. Andrews writes in the April 1893 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*:

> The formation of an ecumenical postal union, in 1863,1874, and 1878, was one long and benign step in this development. If we mistake not, the next, equally imperative, and destined, when taken, to be viewed as equally advantageous, will be the practical recognition of money as a matter for international agreement and action. How splendid an achievement it would be if the nations of Europe and America would provide themselves with a few gold coins for use in common! (544).

If postage stamps could become "universally" recognized currency for the transport of material objects, why could money itself not be given a universally valid form? Indeed, Andrews argues for a dematerialization of money that would render it independent of transport via post, or transform it into the post itself. The assimilation of money to communications networks is quite familiar to us today, when e-mail and e-money are media that pass through a common electronic medium.

Georg Simmel's *The Philosophy of Money* is the best modernist philosophical work that analyzes the materiality of money as a dematerializing or liquidating technology, and its effects on communication, thought and subjectivity. A lucid historical account of money's dematerialization and the corresponding ideological repression of its own materiality can be found in Mary Poovey's "Financing Englightenment, Part One: Money Matters".

[7] See Anesko 36.

[8] I am focusing on mobility here, but of course mobility can also be read through what or who is *immobile*. It is for James' rare characters engaged in wage labor that formalized social relations mediated through the post take their most perverse and totalitarian turns. As John Carlos Rowe demonstrates, the asymmetrical relations of power between the governess and absent uncle in *The Turn of the Screw* resides in the condition that the former may never write to the latter (Rowe, *Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James* 127-31). For the bookbinder Hyacinth, in *The Princess Cassamassima*, frustration at being trapped at the site of production in the asymmetrical structure of production and consumption compels him to commit himself to an international organization of revolutionary militants. This organization, however, is itself a stringently hierarchical asymmetrical structure of power and postal relations, in which commands flow from an anonymous leadership through equally anonymous intermediaries. Even as he contemplates flight into a broader world, a letter addressed to Hyacinth through the postal network of underground militants formally reminds him of his place in this hierarchy. An order to commit an assassination, delivered anonymously, this letter cannot be "responded" to or escaped, except through Hyacinth's own death.

[9] This passage from a 1889 issue of the magazine *Outing* deserves to be quoted in full:

> Never go abroad without a letter of credit. Your standing, financially and otherwise, is fairly attested by this circular money letter. A house like Brown Brothers & Co. would never issue a letter of credit except to a person properly introduced to them. For this reason this document is often taken in lieu of a passport, except in countries where martial law prevails, and even in Berlin, during the exciting days of 1883 to 1885, we found no trouble to satisfy the police concerning ourselves, armed as we were only with our letter of credit from Brown Brothers & Co. ("Pleasure Travel and Resorts")

This excerpt is fascinating not only because it equates fiscal guarantees with an attestation to authentic identity strong enough to "satisfy the police". The column is also an example of advertising only partially masked as personal testimonial. The columnist tells us that "standing" or the authenticity of identity can guaranteed by opening an account with "Brown Brothers & Co." who "would never issue a letter of credit except to a person properly introduced to them". This proper introduction, however, is actually the opposite of a third-party's selective personal recommendation that is implied by the passive-construction "introduced". Rather it consists of Brown Brothers & Co. being introduced or recommended by the columnist to an anonymous mass-readership, who will then go and "introduce" themselves and their money to the bank.

[10] See the article "Crisis of 1873" in *Business Cycles and Depressions: an Encyclopedia*, Ed. Dave Glasner (1997). In a 2008 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Scott Reynolds Nelson argues that while the "Long Depression" began in Central Europe, the underlying source was a collapse in commodity prices stemming from the globalization of markets for American agriculture and industry. The tribulations of European financial institutions soon rebounded on American banks and railways and then on American industry in general (Nelson, B98).

[11] The family names point to their "doubling" as variations on the same "type": Not only are both monosyllabic and beginning with "R", but they have communicating etymological resonances. "Ray" suggests a line beginning at a point and extending "forward" into infinity, while "Ruck" suggests, from the German, moving backwards. While Mr. Ray acts in the crisis, hurling himself into space to suspend both Violet's and the reader's knowledge of his ultimate fiscal fate, Mr. Ruck schleps the burden of fiscal failure on his back wherever he goes, much like the "rucksack" he probably shoulders to explore the Swiss Alps he so loathes.

[12] The 1873 economic crisis was characterized by the collapse of banking institutions. The following anecdote from *The Independent* in 1875 claims to demonstrate how dependent foreign travel was on the institutional and systemic guarantees represented by circular letters of credit:

> A certain ambitious lawyer, who had been economizing for some years, that he might gain the distinction of foreign travel, at last accomplished his object. On landing in Liverpool, he gave the last shilling in his pocket to pay his cab fare to a hotel, and then went to present his letter of credit and replenish his purse. To his horror, he learned that his banker in New York had failed and that his circular

> letter of credit was worthless. He could do nothing but return by the steamer, which left the next day. ("Coming Back" 16)

Like the Rucks, the "ambitious lawyer" in the passage finds himself quite literally left at sea by a structural failure that renders his letters of credit "worthless".

[13] In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, V.N. Voloshinov discerns two tendencies in reported speech, which recapitulates the opposition between rationalist language systems that rely on synchronic stability, and organic systems that emphasize diachronic change. More rational or authoritarian models of language "strive to forge hard and fast boundaries for reported speech. In such a case, the patterns and their modifications serve to demarcate the reported speech as clearly as possible, to screen it from penetration by the author's intonations" (Voloshinov 119). Synchronic stability is valorized and the framework or context in which the word was transmitted is marked within a clear schema, though the *texture* and nuance of the context of transmission, of the original utterance, is somewhat reduced. I would argue that what Voloshinov calls the "linear" or rationalist style of reported speech also works as a formal description of the epistolary narration that dominated the eighteenth-century novel. By presenting the novel as a collection of letters assembled or edited by a third party, the writer provides "hard and fast boundaries" for the reported speech of his or her characters.

[14] Favret's "image of the Post Office", as her use of capitalization should indicate, is specific to the centralization of authority over communication in the British historical context. For a good analysis of this role this image played in the context of nineteenth-century American social and cultural life, see David M. Henkin's *The Postal Age*.

[15] See Siegert, "'The Horrifying Ties, from which the Public Order Originates': The Police in Schiller and Mercier".

[16] This continuity of characters and narratives between texts is rare in James, who, in contrast to Balzac's interwoven narratives and more continuous fictional world, prefers to multiply examples of "types" in slightly different circumstances, in essence rewriting characters from piece to piece, reinforcing them as particulars subsumed under a more general type.

[17] James likely also chose "Bangor" as Miranda Hope's hometown for its sonic qualities and lack of widespread reference, and Miranda's continuous invocation of the name gives a somewhat absurd cast to her cosmopolitan pretensions; the New Yorker Violet Ray is unable to "fancy" Bangor, writing that it must be in "Vermont or Minnesota or some such place" ("A Bundle of Letters" 495).

[18] See the Dictionary of Wisconsin History at the Wisconsin Historical Society Website: http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term_id=3708&term_type_id=2&term_type_text=places

[19] Lyall Powers mentions *Spectators* in his introduction to Bosanquet's *Henry James at Work*, and I am in debt to his sparse but helpful notes on its genesis and method of composition. Powers, however, does not offer much commentary on the novel itself, other than to identify it as stylistically derived from James's "A Bundle of Letters", "The Point of View" and *The Awkward Age* (9). While a reading of *Spectators* clearly benefits from reference to its Jamesian heritage, I argue that the novel does not accept this heritage unquestioningly and deserves closer examination on its own merits.

[20] The passage connecting the "wearing" effect of Mudge's words to the "wearing" effects of "things" is an addition to the New York Edition version, rather than James's original 1898 version, which is my primary source in this chapter.

[21] For Menke, this critique is also aimed at the epistemological transcendence posited by nineteenth century realist fiction, arguing that James definitively breaks with "telegraphic realism" in favor of "telegraphic modernism".

[22] I found my way to O'Brien's essay through Stephen Kern's book *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Kern 115). Kern, I think, misreads the essay somewhat when he identifies the compactness of telegraphic style primarily with fiscal economy; he also ignores O'Brien's references to writing "machinery" other than the telegraph.

[23] See endnote 1.

[24] See Walter Benjamin's description of image and aura in "A Little History of Photography" (*Selected Writings Vol. 2, Part 2* 518-519) and his fuller treatment in the famous essay "The Work of Art in its Age of its Technological Reproducibility" (*Selected Writings Vol. 4* 251-283).

[25] Ruskin discusses his theory of the "*innocence of the eye*" in an extended footnote to his introduction to artistic technique, *The Elements of Drawing*. See Ruskin 21-22 *ff*. 1.

[26] For more on Loy's relationship to Duchamp and New York Dada, see Marisa Januzzi's essay "Dada Through the Looking Glass, or: Mina Loy's Objective", and Carolyn Burke's biography of Loy, *Becoming Modern*, pp. 211-33.

[27] This mode of reading Bergson has significance for the reception of his philosophy, especially in aesthetic circles. Jesse Matz describes how, by 1911, Hulme had broken with Bergsonism largely over the growing popularity of the philosopher amongst the general public – the fatal indication of which, for Hulme, came from the numbers of women attending Bergson's public lectures (Matz 348-49). The development of a wide spread and inclusive "Bergsonism" necessarily comes into conflict with Hulme's desire for a select, priestly hierarchy in the arts.

[28] This figure runs throughout Bergson's oeuvre. See also: *Time and Free Will* 111-12; *Matter and Memory* 246. Bergson also uses the indivisibility of the gesture as a figure of thought in *Creative Evolution* when he asks the reader to imagine the pattern left by the unified movement of an invisible hand passing through a collection of metal filings as analogous to the organs and organisms left by the unified movement of evolution as it passes through matter (99-100).

[29] According to Martin Jay, Bergson's critique of the tendency to spatialize time and to fix or determine the future is bound up with his critique of "the hypertrophied role of vision" in Western culture and thought (195). Jay points out that Bergson argues for an embodied conception of memory in which "the senses are equiprimordial. Auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory memories play as vital a role as do visual ones" (194). Bergson's defense of the elan vital involves an "implicit linking of the domination of the eye with a deathlike rigor mortis" (198).

[30] Quirk suggests that Bergson invites readers of *Creative Revolution* to see themselves as intimately connected to infusoria – microscopic organisms that dwell primarily in decayed flesh. Bergson, Quirk writes, elaborates "the point of view of the lowly, single-celled infusorian by means of the 'intellectual sympathy' that he called 'intuition'", a faculty that Quirk sees as "perhaps synonymous with, the literary term identification";

Bergson's reader thus "sees and can identify with the infusorian as a dramatic character in the pageant of life" (57).

[31] Barnard passes a somewhat negative tacit judgment on Fearing's novels by largely excluding them from her extensive survey of his career. Jenemann and Knighton, who have written the widest ranging essay on his later novels, dismiss his verse as "confined by the formal limits of his man-on-the-street style and the impressionistic nature of poetry itself" (174). My sense, which I don't elaborate upon in this chapter, is that Fearing's poems and his novels are complementary, generally addressing separate moments in life under twentieth-century American capitalism.

[32] The novels I include among Fearing's crime thrillers include *Dagger of the Mind*, *The Big Clock*, *The Loneliest Girl in the World*, *The Generous Heart*, and *The Crozart Story*. There is, of course, some variation among these texts. *The Big Clock* is Fearing's most tightly constructed thriller, and *Dagger of the Mind* is an effective psychological whodunit, also well-constructed, if overly-complex. *The Loneliest Girl in the World* digresses frequently from the main arc of the plot, which concerns a woman's search for some missing stock certificates she has inherited, and while many of these digressions are interesting, they both detract from the suspense of the plot and fail cohere into a fictional world beyond this plot that would allow it to stand alone as a novel. *The Generous Heart* and *The Crozart Story* also concern business intrigue, though their unfocused plots and stereotyped characters render them more or less unpleasant to read.

[33] Recording via audio tape plays in a role in several of Fearing's thrillers (*Dagger of the Mind*, *The Loneliest Girl in the World*, and *The Crozart Story*), usually in the context of surveillance. In these texts, being audiotaped is equated with losing control over both narrative and self, reflecting an inability to compose the self in real time for the consumption of an unknown, invisible audience.

Works Cited

Allred, Jeff. *American Modernism and Depression Documentary.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Revised Edition. London: Verso, 1983, 1991. Print.

Andrews, Elisha Benjamin. "Money as an International Question." *The Atlantic Monthly*. April 1893: 543-51. Electronic Database: *Making of America*. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

Anesko, Michael. *"Friction with the Market": Henry James and the Profession of Authorship*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986. Print.

Antliff, Mark. *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993. Print.

Armstrong, Tim. "Loy and Cornell." *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*. Eds. Rachel Potter and Suzanne Hobson. London: Salt, 2010. 204-20. Print.

---. *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: a Cultural Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. Print.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Carol Emerson and Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981. Print

Barnard, Rita. *The Great Depression and the Culture of Abundance*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. Print.

Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. Ed. and Trans. Jonathan Mayne. London: Phaidon, 1964. Print.

Beebe, Thomas O. *Epistolary Fiction in Europe, 1500-1850*. Cambridge: Cambridge

    UP, 1999. Print.

Benjamin, Walter. "Little History of Photography." *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2, Part 2.

    Eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. Trans. Edmund

    Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter. Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard UP, 1999. 507-31.

    Print.

---. "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire." *Selected Writings*, Vol. 4. Eds.

    Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Trans. Harry Zohn. Cambridge:

    Belknap-Harvard UP, 2003. 3-92. Print.

---. "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, Third

    Version." *Selected Writings*, Vol. 4. Eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W.

    Jennings. Trans. Harry Zohn and Edmund Jephcott. Cambridge: Belknap

    Harvard University Press, 2003. 251-83. Print.

Bergson, Henri. *Creative Evolution*. Trans. Arthur Mitchell. London: Macmillan, 1911.

    Print.

---. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Trans. T.E. Hulme. London: G.P. Putnam's, 1912.

    Print.

---. *Matter and Memory*. Trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. New York:

    Macmillan, 1913. Print.

---. *Time and Free Will*. Trans. F.L. Pogson. MacMillan: New York, 1956. Print.

Bishop, Ryan and John Phillips. "Sighted Weapons and Modernist Opacity: Aesthetics,

    Poetics, Prosthetics." *Boundary 2* 29.2 2002: 157-79. Electronic Database: *Project

    Muse*. Web. 29 July 2012.

Bosanquet, Theodora. *Henry James at Work*. Ed. Lyall H. Powers. Ann Arbor: U of

Michigan P, 2006. Print.

Bosanquet, Theodora and Clara Smith. *Spectators*, serialized in *The Living Age* 10 Aug.

1918: 339-45; 17 Aug.1918: 396-402; 24 Aug 1918: 458-66; 31 Aug. 1918:

531-38; Sept. 1918: 589-97; 14 Sept. 1918: 654-62; 21 Sept. 1918: 720-26; 28

Sept. 1918: 782-789; 5 Oct. 1918: 20-27; 12 Oct. 1918: 78-85; 19 Oct. 1918:

142-49; 26 Oct. 1918: 206-213; 2 Nov. 1918: 269-276; 16 Nov. 1918: 401-407.

Electronic Database: *Hathi Trust Digital Library*. Web. 7 July. 2014.

Burke, Carolyn. *Becoming Modern: the Life of Mina Loy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and

Giroux, 1996. Print.

Cameron, Sharon. *Thinking in Henry James*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989. Print.

Campbell, Timothy C. *Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi*. Minneapolis: U of

Minnesota P, 2006. Print.

Canguilhem, Georges. "Machine and Organism." *Incorporations*. Eds. Jonathan Crary

and Sanford Kwinter. Trans. Randall Cherry and Mark Cohen. New York: Zone,

1992. 44-69. Print.

Castronovo, Russ. *Beautiful Democracy: Aesthetics and Anarchy in a Global Era*.

Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2007. Print.

"Coming Back." *The Independent ... Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and

Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts (1848-1921)* 9 Sep. 1875:

16-17. Electronic Database: *American Periodicals Series Online*. Web. 7 Nov

2010.

Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer*. Cambridge: MIT, 1992. Print.

Danius, Sara. *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics*. Ithaca:

    U of Cornell P, 2002. Print.

Deer, Patrick. *Culture in Camouflage: War, Empire, and Modern British Literature*.

    Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *The Logic of Sense*. Trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale. New York:

    Columbia UP, 1990. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi.

    Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. "Différance." *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago:

    University of Chicago Press, 1982. 1-28. Print.

---. *The Post Card: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Trans. Alan Bass.

    Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. Print.

Dos Passos, John. "The Writer as Technician." *The Major Nonfictional Prose*. Ed.

    Donald Pizer. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1988. 169-72.

Favret, Mary A. *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters*.

    Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Print.

Fearing, Kenneth. *The Big Clock*. New York: New York Review Books, 2006. Print.

---. *Clark Gifford's Body*. New York: New York Review Books, 2007. Print.

---. *The Crozart Story*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1960. Print.

---. *Dagger of the Mind*. New York: Bantam, 1947. Print.

---. "Denouement." *Complete Poems*. Ed. Robert M. Ryley. Orono: National Poetry

    Foundation, 1994. 115-20. Print.

---. *The Generous Heart*. New York: Harcourt, 1954. Print.

---. *The Hospital*. New York: Random House, 1939. Print.

---. *The Loneliest Girl in the World*. New York: Harcourt, 1951. Print.

---. "Radio Blues." *Complete Poems*. Ed. Robert M. Ryley. Orono: National Poetry Foundation, 1994. 150-51. Print.

---. "Reading, Writing, and the Rackets." *New and Selected Poems*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1956. ix – xxiv. Print.

---. "X Minus X." *Complete Poems*. Ed. Robert M. Ryley. Orono: National Poetry Foundation, 1994. 97. Print.

Felman, Shoshana. "Turning the Screw of Interpretation." *Literature and Psychoanalysis: the Question of Reading: Otherwise*. Ed. Shoshana Felman. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982. 94-207. Print.

Felski, Rita. *The Gender of Modernity*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vols. IV – V. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1966. Electronic Database: *Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing Website and Digital Archive*. Web. 19 Jan 2014.

---. *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. VI. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1960. Electronic Database: *Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing Website and Digital Archive*. Web. 19 Jan 2014.

Girard, René. *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns

    Hopkins UP, 1977. Print.

Gitelman, Lisa. *Scripts, Grooves and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the*

    Edison Era. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999. Print.

Glasner, David. "Crisis of 1873". *American Business Cycles and Depressions: an*

    Encyclopedia. Ed. David Glasner. New York: Garland, 1997. 132-33. Print.

Goble, Mark. *Beautiful Circuits: Modernism and the Mediated Life*. New York:

    Columbia UP, 2010. Print.

Goody, Alex. *Modernist Articulations: a Cultural Study of Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy and*

    Gertrude Stein. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007. Print.

Guillory, John. "Enlightening Mediation." *This is Enlightenment*. Eds. Clifford Siskin

    and William Warner. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010. Print.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. "Perception Versus Experience: Moving Pictures and Their

    Resistance to Interpretation." *Inscribing Science*. Ed. Timothy Lenoir. Stanford:

    Stanford UP, 1998. 351-64. Print.

Halper, Albert. *Union Square*. New York: Viking, 1933. Print.

Harris, Rowan. "Futurism, Fashion, and the Feminine: Forms of Repudiation and

    Affiliation in the Early Writings of Mina Loy." *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*.

    Eds. Rachel Potter and Suzanne Hobson. London: Salt, 2010. 17-46. Print.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The House of the Seven Gables*. Ed. Robert S. Levine. New York:

    Norton, 2006. Print.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *My Mother Was a Computer*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005.

    Print.

Henkin, David M. *The Postal Age: the Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth Century America*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006. Print.

Hulme, T.E. "Cinders." *Selected Writings*. Ed. Patrick McGuiness. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1998. 18-36. Print.

---. "Romanticism and Classicism." *Selected Writings*. Ed. Patrick McGuiness. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1998. 68-83. Print.

James, Henry. *The American*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962. Print.

---. "Americans Abroad." *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*. Notes by Richard Howes. New York: Library of America, 1993. 786-92. Print.

---. *The American Scene* in *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*. Notes by Richard Howes. New York: Library of America, 1993. 351-736. Print.

---. "A Bundle of Letters." *The Novels and Tales of Henry James, New York Edition*. Vol. XIV. New York: Scribners, 1908 and 1936. 478-533. Print.

---. *English Hours* in *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*. Notes by Richard Howes. New York: Library of America, 1993. 1-263. Print.

---. *The Golden Bowl* in *The Novels and Tales of Henry James, New York Edition*. Vol. XXIII-XXIV. New York: Scribners, 1908 and 1936. Print.

---. *In the Cage* in *The Novels and Tales of Henry James, New York Edition*. Vol. XI. New York: Scribners, 1908 and 1936. 365-507. Print.

---. "The Jolly Corner." *Complete Stories 1898-1910*. Notes by Denis Donoghue. Library of America, 1996. 697-731. Print.

---. "The Pension Beaurepas." *The Novels and Tales of Henry James, New York Edition.* Vol. XIV. New York: Scribners, 1908 and 1936. 391-476. Print.

---. "The Point of View." *Complete Stories 1874-1884*. Notes by William Vance. New

      York: Library of America, 1999. 519-564. Print.

---. "The Point of View." *The Novels and Tales of Henry James, New York Edition*. Vol.

      XIV. New York: Scribners, 1908 and 1936. 535-607. Print.

---. *The Portrait of a Lady*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. Print.

---. *The Princess Casamassima*. New York: Penguin, 1987. Print.

---. *The Reverberator* in *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*, *New York Edition*. Vol.

      XIII. New York: Scribners, 1908 and 1936. 1-211. Print.

---. *Roderick Hudson* in *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*, *New York Edition*. Vol. I.

      New York: Scribners, 1908 and 1936. Print.

---. "The Siege of London." *The Novels and Tales of Henry James, New York Edition*.

      Vol. XIV. New York: Scribners, 1908 and 1936. 143-271. Print.

---. "The Speech of American Women." *The Speech and Manners of American Women*.

      Ed. E.S. Riggs. Lancaster: Lancaster House Press, 1973. 15-49. Print.

---. "The Third Person." *Complete Stories 1898-1910*. Notes by Denis Donoghue. Library

      of America, 1996. 255-86. Print.

---. *The Tragic Muse*. New York: Harper, 1960. Print.

---. *The Wings of the Dove*. New York: Penguin, 1986. Print.

James, William. *Pragmatism* in *Writings, 1902-1910*. Ed. Bruce Kuklick. New York:

      Library of America, 1987. 429-624. Print.

Januzzi, Marisa. "A Bibliography of Works by and about Mina Loy." *Mina Loy: Woman

      and Poet.* Eds. Maeea Shreiber and Keith Tuma. Orona: The National Poetry

      Foundation, 1998. Print.

---. "Dada Through the Looking Glass, or: Mina Loy's Objective." *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity*. Ed. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse. Cambridge: MIT, 1998. 578-612. Print.

Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993. eBook Collection: EBSCOhost. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

Jenemann, David and Andrew Knighton. "Time, Transmission, Autonomy: What Praxis Means in the Novels of Kenneth Fearing." *The Novel and the American Left: Critical Essays on Depression-Era Fiction*. Ed. Janet Galligani Casey. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2004. Print.

Johnston, John. "Mediality in *Vineland* and *Neuromancer*." *Reading Matters: Narrative in the New Media Ecology*. Eds. Joseph Tabbi and Michael Wutz. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997. 177-92. Print.

Kafka, Franz. *Letters to Milena*. Trans. Philip Boehm. Schocken Books: New York, 1990. Print.

Kalaidjian, Walter. *American Culture Between the Wars: Revisionary Modernism and Postmodern Critique*. New York: Columbia UP, 1993. Print.

Kaplan, Fred. *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius*. New York: William Morrow, 1992. Print.

Kern, Stephen. *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983. Print.

Kittler, Friedrich A. *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*. Trans. Michael Metteer and Chris Cullens. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990. Print.

---. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Trans. Geoffry Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz.

    Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999. Print.

Kouidis, Virginia M. *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State

    UP, 1980. Print.

Laclos, Choderlos. *Dangerous Liaisons*. Ed. and Trans. Helen Constantine. New York:

    Penguin, 2007.

Lawlor, Leonard. *The Challenge of Bergsonism: Phenomenology, Ontology, Ethics*.

    London: Continuum, 2003. Print.

Lenthall, Bruce. *Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass*

    Culture. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2007. Print.

Loy, Mina. "Aphorisms on Futurism." *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*. Ed. Roger Conover.

    New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996. 149-52. Print.

---. "The Dead." *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*. Ed. Roger Conover. New York: Farrar,

    Straus and Giroux, 1996. 72-3. Print.

---. "Feminist Manifesto." *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*. Ed. Roger Conover. New York:

    Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996. 153-6. Print.

---. "Gertrude Stein." *The Transatlantic Review*. Vol. II, no. 3. Paris: Herbert Clarke.

    1924. 305-9. Reprinted by Klaus Reprint Corporation, New York, 1967. Print.

---. "In…Formation." *The Blind Man*. No. 1. Apr. 1917: 7. Electronic Resource.

    Scanned Facsimile: Tout Fait.com: The Marcel Duchamp Online Studies Journal.

    http://www.toutfait.com/issues/issue_3/Collections/girst/Blindman/7.html

    Web. 26 Nov. 2013.

---. "Mi & Lo." *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy*. Ed. Sara Crangle. Champaigne: Dalkey

    Archive. 265-84. Print.

---. "Modern Poetry." *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*. Ed. Roger Conover. New York: Farrar,

    Straus and Giroux, 1996. 157-61. Print.

---. "O Marcel - - - otherwise I Also Have Been to Louise's." *The Blind Man*, No 2.

    May 1917: 5-6. Electronic Database: *University of Iowa International Dada*

    Archive. http://sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/blindman/2/index.htm Web. 26 Nov.

    2013.

---. "Sketch of a Man on a Platform." The Lost Lunar Baedeker. Ed. Roger

    Conover. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996. 19-20. Print.

---. "There Is No Life or Death." *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*. Ed. Roger Conover. New

    York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996. 3. Print.

---. "Three Moments in Paris." *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*. Ed. Roger Conover. New

    York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996. 15-18. Print.

Luhmann, Niklas. "How Can the Mind Participate in Communication?" Trans. William

    Whobrey. *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*.

    Ed. William Rasch. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002. 169-84. Print.

Marcus, Laura. *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period.* Oxford:

    Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: a Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*. Trans. Ben Fowkes.

    London: Penguin, 1990. Print.

Matz, Jesse. "Hulme's Compromise and the New Psychologism." *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism*. Eds. Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. 113-32. Print.

---. "T.E. Hulme, Henri Bergson, and the Cultural Politics of Psychologism." *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America 1880-1940*. Ed. Mark S. Micale. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004. 339-51. Print.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge: MIT, 1994. Print.

Melville, Herman. "Bartleby, the Scrivener." *The Piazza Tales*. Ed. Harrsion Hayford et al. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1996. 13-45. Print.

Menke, Richard. "Telegraphic Realism: Henry James's *In the Cage*." *PMLA* 115.5 (2000): 975-90. Electronic Database: *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Dec. 2010.

Miller, Cristanne. *Cultures of Modernism*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005. Print.

Moretti, Franco. *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*. London: Verso, 2005. Print.

Nelson, Scott Reynolds. "The Real Great Depression." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Oct. 17, 2008. B98. Print.

Nicholls, Peter. "'Arid clarity': Ezra Pound, Mina Loy, and Jules Laforgue." *The Yearbook of English Studies* 32 (2002): 52-64. Electronic Database: *JSTOR*. Web. 11 Aug. 2012.

Nickles, David Paull. *Under the Wire: How the Telegraph Changed Diplomacy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003. Print.

Nord, Deborah Epstein. "The Urban Peripatetic: Spectator, Streetwalker, Woman Writer." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 46.3 (1991): 351-75. Electronic Database: *JSTOR*. Web. 26 Nov. 2013.

North, Michael. *Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth-Century Word.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

Norton, Louise. "Buddha of the Bathroom." *The Blind Man*, No 2. May 1917: 5-6. Electtronic Database: *University of Iowa International Dada Archive*. http://sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/blindman/2/index.htm Web. 26 Nov. 2013.

O'Brien, Robert Lincoln. "Machinery and English Style." *The Atlantic Monthly* Oct. 1904: 464-72. Electronic Database: *Hathi Trust Digital Library*. Web. 22 Dec. 2010.

"Oshkosh". *Dictionary of Wisconsin History*. Wisconsin Historical Society. 2014. Web. http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/. 19 Jan. 2014.

Parmar, Sandeep. "Loy's 'Unfinishing Self': 'The Child and the Parent' and 'Islands in the Air'." *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*. Eds. Rachel Potter and Suzanne Hobson. London: Salt, 2010. 71-98. Print.

"Pleasure Travel and Resorts." *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885 – 1906)* Sep. 1889: 476. Electronic Database: *American Periodicals Series Online*. Web. 20 Sep. 2010.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Purloined Letter". *The Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*. Ed. Gary Richard Thompson. New York: Norton, 2004. Print. 367-81.

Polito, Robert. "Introduction." *Clark Gifford's Body*, by Kenneth Fearing. New York: New York Review of Books, 2007. ix-xx. Print.

Poovey, Mary. "Financing Enlightenment, Part One: Money Matters." *This Is Enlightenment*. Eds. Clifford Siskin and William Warner. U of Chicago P, 2010. 323-35. Print.

Posnock, Ross. *The Trial of Curiosity: Henry James, William James, and the Challenge of Modernity*. New York: Oxford UP, 1991. Print.

Pound, Ezra. "How to Read." *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*. Ed. T.S. Eliot. New York: New Directions, 1968. 15-40. Print.

---. "A List of Books." *The Little Review*. Vol. VI, no. 11. March 1918. 54-58. Reprinted: New York: Klaus Reprint Corporation, 1967. Print.

Powers, Lyall H. Introduction to *Henry James at Work*, by Theodora Bosanquet. Ed. Lyall Powers. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2006. 1-10. Print.

Quirk, Tom. *Bergson and American Culture: the Worlds of Willa Cather and Wallace Stevens*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1990. Print.

Rajski, Brian. "The Organizational Aesthetic: Kenneth Fearing's *The Big Clock*." *The Arizona Quarterly*. Vol. 68, No. 1, Spring 2012. 113-142. Electronic Database: *Project Muse*. Web. 5 Aug. 2013.

Rawlings, Peter. *Henry James and the Abuse of the Past*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005. Print.

---. "Narratives of Theory and Theories of Narrative: Point of View and Centers of Consciousness." *Palgrave Advances in Henry James Studies*. Ed. Peter Rawlings. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007. 35-58. Print.

Rowe, John Carlos. "Henry James and Globalization." *Palgrave Advances in Henry James Studies*. Ed. Peter Rawlings. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007.

283-300. Print.

---. *The Other Henry James*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998. Print.

---. *The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1984.

Print.

Rubin, Martin. *Thrillers*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.

Ruskin, John. *The Elements of Drawing; in Three Letters to Beginners*. New York: John

Wiley and Sons, 1877. Print.

Salmon, Richard. *Henry James and the Culture of Publicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge

UP, 1997. Print.

---. "Henry James in the Public Sphere." *A Companion to Henry James*. Ed. Greg W.

Zacharias. West Sussex: Blackwell, 2008. Print.

Schlegel, Friedrich. *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*. Trans. Ernst Behler

and Roman Struc. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1968.

Schorer, Mark. "Fiction Coming and Going: *Night of the Poor* by Frederic

Prokosch; *Tommy Gallagher's Crusade* by James T. Farrell; *The Hospital* by

Kenneth Fearing." *The Kenyon Review* 2.2 (1940): 232-35.

Electronic Database: *JSTOR*. Web. Oct. 1 2013.

Schwartz, Sanford. "Bergson and the Politics of Vitalism." *The Crisis in Modernism:*

Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy. Eds. Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass.

Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992. 277-305. Print.

Sconce, Jeffrey. *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*.

Durham: Duke UP, 2000. Print.

Seltzer, Mark. *Bodies and Machines*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

---. *Henry James and the Art of Power*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984. Print.

Siegert, Bernhard. "'The Horrifying Ties, from which the Public Order Originates': The Police in Schiller and Mercier." *This is Enlightenment*. Eds. Clifford Siskin and William Warner. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010. 357-67. Print.

---. *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System*. Trans. Kevin Repp. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999. Print.

Simmel, Georg. "The Concept and Tragedy of Culture." *Simmel on Culture*. Eds. David Frisby and Mark Featherstone. Trans. Mark Ritter and David Frisby. London: Sage, 1997. 55-74. Print.

---. "The Future of Our Culture." *Simmel on Culture*. Eds. David Frisby and Mark Featherstone. Trans. Mark Ritter and David Frisby. London: Sage Publications, 1997. 101-2. Print.

---. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Ed. and trans. Kurt H. Wolff. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1950. 409-26. Print.

---. *The Philosophy of Money*, Third edition. Ed. David Frisby. Trans. Todd Bottomore and David Frisby. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Suárez, Juan A. *Pop Modernism: Noise and the Reinvention of the Everyday*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2007. Print.

Thurschwell, Pamela. "Henry James and Theodora Bosanquet: on the Typewriter, *In the Cage*, at the Ouija Board." *Textual Practice* 13.1 (1999): 5-23. Electronic Database: *EBSCOhost Academic Search*. Web. 15 Dec. 2010.

Tichi, Cecelia. *Shifting Gears: Technology, Literature, Culture in Modernist America*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1987. Print.

"Universal Postal Union History." *Universal Postal Union*. Universal Postal Union,

    2010. Web. http://www.upu.int/en/the-upu/history/about-history.html. 19 Jan.

    2014.

Vetter, Lara. *Modernist Writings and Religio-scientific Discourse: H.D., Loy, and*

    Toomer. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.

Virilio, Paul. *Speed and Politics*. Trans. Marc Polizzotti. Los Angelos: Semiotext(e),

    2006. Print.

---. *War and Cinema*. Trans. Patrick Camiller. London: Verso, 1989. Print.

Voloshinov, V.N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. Ladislav Matejka

    and I.R. Titunik. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1973. Print.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, Second

    Edition. Berkeley: U of California P, 2001. Print.