

TELEPATHY AND THE VISUAL IN THE LATE NOVELS OF HENRY JAMES

by

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: LOOKING INTO	11
CHAPTER TWO: LOOKING BACK	28
CHAPTER THREE: LOOKING BEYOND	42
CONCLUSION	54
LIST OF WORKS CITED	61

ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the tripartite relationship between telepathy, the visual and in the psychologically complex late novels of Henry James, with particular focus on *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). It acknowledges that significant research has been done into telepathy (Thurschwell 2001; Luckhurst 2002) and the visual (Crary 1990; 1999) in fin de siècle studies, but also that further insight can be accessed by attending to the two areas of enquiry to each other. By juxtaposing non-literary materials from the fields of psychical research and visual culture, and situating them together within the work of James, I attempt to excavate parts of patterns of thought in the period compassing the end of the nineteenth century and the dawning of the twentieth. My work is especially concerned with revealing the slipperiness of the borderlines between three dualisms: observation and imagination, subject and object, and the verbal and the visual. A chapter is dedicated to each. Reading James in this innovative way allows me to conclude by situating his late novels within an extended milieu of literary antecedents, particularly in terms of their debt to the older fictional trope of sympathy.

INTRODUCTION

In *The Invention of Telepathy* (2002), Luckhurst remarks on the surprising cultural connections suggested by recent critical work done around the nexus of late nineteenth literature and the occult. Material, he writes, is now ‘contextualised within...multidisciplinary networks’ (2002: 234). To illustrate this point, he draws on a letter from the novelist Henry James to his sister, Alice, in which the ‘writer of complex scenarios of “occult relation” or “mute communication” “practically without words” in the late novels’ is ‘gossiping...about the Zancigs’ (2002: 235). Agnes and Julius Zancig were a popular stage act in which the wife received the telepathic impress of her husband’s thoughts (they wrote *Two Minds but with a Single Thought* (1907)); and James’s epistolary comment dismisses newspaper claims of fraud against them. Luckhurst argues that this letter resituates James in subtle ways ‘in relation to psychical research in the 1890s and beyond, to popular cultures of occult *doxai*...and in relation to the obsession in his late fiction with “relation itself”’ (2002: 234).

Although my research takes as its object James’s late texts themselves, rather than contributing overtly to ‘the vast critical industry on the James family’ (Luckhurst 2002: 234), the connection between telepathy and the novels is a valuable one insofar as contemporary accounts of thought transference such as James’s can be used to historicise the author’s literary depictions of intersubjectivity. However, my project’s distinctive critical contribution relies on the addition of a third term to the relation. It is one which is also touched upon by James in the letter to Alice, but to which Luckhurst does not draw particular attention in his monograph: the question of the visual. Luckhurst notes that a portion of the note is dedicated to discussion of Stuart Cumberland’s theory of hidden codes (2002: 234), but it is the way in

which James articulates this which I find illuminating. For James, the theory of hidden codes is predicated on the questionable need for Agnes Zancig to wear “telescopic eyeglasses” of great power’, James averring that ‘I confess the sense of her glasses, - watched through an opera glass, - did a little worry me... Yet their communication by word is almost nil, & in fine, the operation of their code becomes a greater marvel than the idea of their thought transference’ (James 1907: 197). The implicit interchangeableness of telepathy and telescoping in James’s account is striking. It suggests a contingency between occulted seeing and knowing which, I contend, is also characteristic of experience with nineteenth century visual toys such as the stereoscope, which as Crary (1992) notes, placed the object of vision in the subjective as well as corporeal immediacy of the observer. Fin de siècle encounters such as these suggest that telepathy and the visual test the limits of perception in similar ways: they are part of the same discourse, and as such, the cultural work one accomplishes may illuminate that of the other.

My thesis explores and expands upon this hypothesis, and is in this manner distinctive: whilst important work has been done into telepathy (Luckhurst 2002; Thurschwell 2001) and visual culture (Crary 1990), nobody has brought these fields together and considered their full import. By situating them together within the work of James, I use them to reveal the slipperiness of the borderlines between the three dualisms of observation and imagination, subjects and objects, and words and images; which in turn emphasises James’s novels’ alignment with the wider scope of modernity. A chapter is dedicated to the treatment of each of these dualisms. To this end, I draw particularly on the ‘trilogy’ of novels which Matthiessen dubs James’s ‘major phase’ (1944: iii), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904), so that the cultural ramifications of their peculiar emphases on intersubjectivity, the visual, and the limits of consciousness can be

explored. My thesis concludes by situating James's novels within an extended milieu of literary antecedents, particularly in terms of their use of affect.

To negotiate these varied fields of enquiry, the critical value of extant multidisciplinary research must be acknowledged. In terms of extant research on telepathy, the work of Luckhurst (2002) and Thurschwell (2001) is highly important, as they trace its pervasiveness in all manner of turn-of-the-century discourses. It is of particular pertinence that they situate psychical research within the inchoate domain of science and scientific naturalism, thus illuminating the relevance of Victorian experiments in psychical phenomena to discussions of what constitute empiricist explorations of the limits of perception.

These critical texts are also suggestive in terms of their use of source material. Luckhurst borrows a theoretical appellation from Bruno Latour (1999) in declaring telepathy the 'black box' (Luckhurst 2002: 70) or uncontested claim upholding much of the investigations carried out by the Society for Psychical Research, and thereby justifies the use of its *Journal* and *Proceedings* as historical sources for his study. My work, too, is alive to the research potential of these archives, and I use them to establish the provenance of concepts contingent with telepathy whose cultural resonance I refer to, such as Myers' 'subliminal consciousness' (1892: 298), as well as a source of nineteenth century accounts of occult encounters with telepathy and the visual.

Thurschwell, on the other hand, asserts that psychical research also found a hospitable place for its investigations at the vanishing points of the nascent science of psychology. The interpenetration between these psychology and telepathy partly facilitates my analysis of the latter's broader historical resonance. Freud's and Ferenczi's attitudes to telepathy in

particular are sensitive to the parallels between thought transference and psychoanalytic transference, as Thurschwell (2002) asserts, whilst Bergson (1896) and William James (1890) both posit a collective consciousness which exists outside the corporeal boundaries of the self. More recent critical works such as Royle's *Telepathy and Literature* (1991), and Derrida's *Telepathy* (1988) on the other hand, coordinate psychoanalysis and telepathy by positing the notion that both are fundamentally textual. In addition, in looking at the cultural work which 'telepathy' performs in the fin de siècle, it is important to demonstrate the historically localised resonance of the term, and to this end, my research is informed by criticism which establishes how intersubjective thought was delineated as sympathy in the preceding Romantic and Renaissance eras (Marshall 1986; Crewe 1986).

To explore the negotiations telepathy has with the visual at the end of the nineteenth century, it is also necessary to acknowledge criticism which treats the visual in historical terms. As Phillips (1993) notes, the history of vision is commonly conceived of as synonymous with the history of artistic representation, but whilst I recognise that important work has been done which uses paintings as windows onto the role of the visual in the nineteenth century, my research sets its parameters wider than this. Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* (1990) has been influential in forming this viewpoint: it posits 'a relatively unfamiliar configuration of nineteenth century objects and events, that is...bodies of knowledge, and technological inventions that rarely appear in histories of art or of modernism' (Crary 1990: 3). Crary's text's scope thus emerges as interdisciplinary, interrelating painting with philosophy and both with new visual technology. The effects of nineteenth century optical toys are particularly efficacious to Crary's historicised conception of vision, and his conclusions, as well as those of Horton (1995), Warner (2006), and Krauss

(1982) help to inform my interpretation of the slipperiness of the boundary between the visible and the invisible in the period.

Krauss also emphasises the reflexivity of vision – the idea that when using optical toys, the pleasures of seeing could easily change into the fear of being seen. This configuration recapitulates the theoretical parameters of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975), which presents surveillance and spectacle as two sides of the same coin, and is particularly pertinent to my discussions of subject-object relations in this thesis. I also engage with extant research which negotiates the confluence between verbal and visual planes, with particular deference given to Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes* (1994), where the critic describes how language is infused with visual metaphors, the visual manifesting its dominance not merely in terms of perceptual experience, but also as a cultural trope. Post-structuralist thought (Althusser (1965), Barthes (1980), Foucault (1966)) is also useful in this regard due to its recognition of the arbitrariness of semiotic categories, whilst discussions of the more dynamic relations created between picture and text by the nineteenth century vogue for ekphrasis are discussed by Curtis (2002), and Wagner (1996).

In bringing telepathy and the visual into relation with the late novels of Henry James, my research is supported by the sections of Luckhurst's and Thurschwell's monographs which draw out the ways in which James's fiction engages with the discourse of psychical research from a historicist perspective, but also by works of criticism which read James's texts in terms of their preoccupation with being and seeing from a more broadly philosophical viewpoint. Of these, Williams's (1993) and Armstrong's (1983) readings of the late novels in relation to phenomenology are pertinent to the portion of my thesis which deals with subject-object relations, whilst Cameron (1991) interrogates the transpersonal nature of

consciousness in James's texts so persistently as to parallel the slipperiness of the self's boundaries encountered by experiments with vision and thought transference in the fin de siècle. My research also builds upon the methodological insights provided by work in Jamesian studies by Britzolakis (2001), Seltzer (1984), Posnock (1991), and Rowe (1998) which places James's formal innovations in a dynamic relation to modernity.

The methodology I use to bring these disparate areas of study together owes much to Michel Foucault's theory of 'discursive formations' (1969: 34), the term which he uses in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to describe the 'regularities in the dispersion of statements' (1969: 121) at any specific historical moment. Discursive formations are not necessarily unified and do not pretend to stand in for a single, inescapable mode of constructing knowledge for an epoch: they may include statements which contradict each other or point in different directions, but at the point at which they intersect, they constitute a 'region of interpositivities' which may help illuminate some contemporaneous 'systems of thought' (Foucault 1969: 176). My thesis takes a view of history which is similarly synchronic: it takes a cross section of the fin de siècle¹, and examines a range of texts produced within it, and draws conclusions based on the ways in which they overlap.

As such, my thesis is also in tune with criticism from the field of cultural studies which takes its cue from Foucault in viewing the non-hierarchical combination of discourses as 'a kind of alchemy for producing useful knowledge' (Johnson 1996: 75). It is unconcerned with cause and effect: how and why events happen and lead on to other events. It rejects overarching schema in favour of local knowledge, and extrapolates broad patterns from a relatively small number of disparate texts. As Geertz has it 'cultural analysis is intrinsically

¹ I use the term 'fin de siècle' interchangeably with 'turn-of-the-century' in my work to denote the period spanning the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, when James's last novels were written.

incomplete' (1973: 29), and amounts to 'guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape' (1973: 20).

Indeed, because my thesis reaches its conclusions in this way, it can be argued that a certain emphasis is placed on the space between its key discourses of telepathy, the visual, and the late novels of Henry James. Anderson's concept of the 'intertext' is apt:

'...the intertext is a convenient term for a relationship or a series of relationships with a single text or multiple texts that enrich and reorient the signification and reception of the text in question. The intertext can be imagined on a continuum between deliberate imitation and intentional allusion, on the one hand, and on the other, an intertextuality in which the unlimited agency of the signifier operates virtually without regard for context, whether sentential and textually specific or broadly cultural, societal, and historical.'

(2008: 1)

This space is not empty or dead, but full of unvoiced discourses, a conductor for the interdisciplinary communications which my thesis charts.

It could be argued that this transfer of ideas between remote discourses, as a methodology, constitutes an uncanny echo of the dominant theme which tacitly underpins the tripartite relationship of my thesis: a kind of 'distant intimacy' which is bound up in the very etymology of telepathy² and echoes through the fin de siècle discourses of the visual and the

² From the Greek tele- 'at a distance', related to teleos 'the completion of a cycle' and -pathy 'intimacy or touch'. Frederic Myers first used the word 'telepathy' in December 1882 in the first volume of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*. Myers wrote '...we venture to introduce the words Telasthesia and Telepathy to cover all cases of impression received at a distance' (1882: 147).

‘occult relations’ of James’s late novels (1903: 311). This idea recurs through my three chapters.

The first chapter explores how the relational aspects of *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Ambassadors*, and *The Golden Bowl* can be elucidated through a dialectic between observation and imagination. Entitled ‘Looking Into’, it draws on a range of non-literary materials from the fields of psychical and visual research, with particular focus on the cultural configurations revealed by interrelating James with crystal gazing and stereoscopy. Together, these cultural examples establish a common focus on the latent meaning in apparently empty space, which can be discerned by the workings of consciousness when it is ‘looked into’. This idea is properly encapsulated and magnified in my discussion by the Bergsonian concepts of the ‘virtual’ and ‘duration’, before being finally framed with contemplation of turn-of-the-century speculation about the fourth dimension as a cultural figure encompassing the ways in which the clearness of perception in James is stymied by the inseparability of observation and imagination.

My second chapter engages with the embattled dualism between subject and object in James’s novels. This builds upon the conclusions of my first chapter: visual evidence as the product of the combined operations of observation and imagination is unreliable, and the objective mastery of the perceiving subject over object is therefore problematised. Titled ‘Looking Back’, it focuses on the objects in James’s fiction which return or reflect the observer’s gaze. I contend that meaning is co-opted between people and things in James, and that because of this they double the conclusions of contemporary experiments with thought transference and experiences with new visual toys in the fin de siècle, both of which attribute a striking amount of agency to objects. Moreover, I argue that if meaning is therefore created

in the occulted space between subjects and objects, this is properly framed conceptually with Kristeva's notion of the abject (1982). My chapter concludes by depicting the way that the object elides subject in James's late novels as symptomatic of wider cultural anxieties at the end of the nineteenth century stimulated by the object's nascent role as commodity, and draws this out through reference to contemporary accounts of visits to the Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris.

My third chapter incorporates the conclusions of the previous two by turning attention to the experience of reading James's novels itself – a process which combines the dual operations of observation and imagination (as explored by chapter one), and rapport between subject and object (the relation investigated by chapter two). It attends to the elision of the difference between the visual and the verbal in the mode of address of James's late novels. Building upon post-structuralist thought and recent research which underlines the ubiquity and historical resonance of visual metaphors in language to establish the dynamic relations James's texts create between semiotic categories, it nonetheless concludes that a good proportion of visual experience cannot be expressed in words, and vice versa, and that meaning in the novels is therefore always, to an extent, deferred. In the light of this, it posits the notion that because the novels are written in this way, they emulate visual art's ability to engage us in a telepathic relation where we 'complete the incomplete', developing meaning from the texts' vacuities and unvoiced qualities. The chapter's title, 'Looking Beyond', is a reference to this intuitive mode of reading.

My conclusion reflects on the embattled dualisms interrogated by my thesis, and then gestures toward further enquiries lying at its margins. It sketches a study of the textual memories immanent behind Henry James's late novels' 'telepathic' exchanges by

contemplating their relation to the older fictional trope of sympathy. Adam Smith's definition of sympathy in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) is used in conjunction with eighteenth century semiotic discourse on the inconclusiveness of the musical sign, and the Romantic poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge to elucidate the subtleties of this concept from which James's telepathic connections descend.

CHAPTER ONE: LOOKING INTO

The evocation of an image which is a peculiar admixture of physical and abstract presence has a vast literary cache in the fin de siècle. It can be traced in countless contemporary ghost stories. For example, in M. R. James's 'Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad', the protagonist, Professor Parkins, finds himself terrorised by a spirit, which moves through space with 'formidable quickness... groped and waved', propels Parkins 'halfway through the window backwards', although it is later concluded that there 'seemed to be absolutely nothing material about it save the bedclothes, of which it had made itself a body' (1904: 90). It also has wider cultural collocates: as Flint notes, the 'separation between illusion and hallucination could function as a necessary demarcation in the later nineteenth century, at a time when anxieties about increasing amounts of psychological disturbance and nervous disorders were growing in circulation' (2000: 264). This chapter aims to chart the cross-cultural tensions between imagination and observation by linking the conjured image as it operates in James's fiction, produced by a combination of these two processes, with its collocates in contemporary discourse concerning psychical research and the limits of vision. To this end, I will attend in turn to the relation between images and the objects with which they are coincident, the suitability of the stereoscopic image as a model for perceptual experience and space in James's late novels, and the movement of the image through time in James, before concluding by contemplating the relation of the image in James to the wider scope of modernity in terms of its engagement with the contemporaneous formulation of theories of higher dimensions.

To negotiate these interdisciplinary leaps, I make frequent recourse to the contemporary philosophical texts of Henri Bergson. Through their meditations on perception

they not only participate in the vast cultural figurations which I am attempting to uncover, but via the strikingly imagistic mien of certain passages, help me to articulate some of the more complex concepts involved in my argument. One such passage is in *Matter and Memory*:

‘When a ray of light passes from one medium to another, it usually traverses it with a change of direction. But the respective densities of the two media may be such that, for a given angle of incidence, refraction is no longer possible. Then we have total reflexion. The luminous point gives rise to a virtual image which symbolises, so to speak, the fact that the luminous rays cannot pursue their way. Perception is just a phenomenon of the same kind...it is like an effect of mirage.’

(Bergson 1896: 29)

Bergson’s mirage simile here hints at the role which imagination plays in perception; and this, together with the invocation of a luminous ‘virtual image’ coincident with the object being observed facilitates a lateral link with a late nineteenth-century narratives concerning crystal-gazing. Kate Flint uses crystal gazing as a means of measuring Victorian attitudes towards ‘hallucination and illusion’ (2000: 258), and draws on the testimony of Andrew Lang, a Scottish man of letters, poet, novelist, and literary critic who was also president of the Society for Psychical Research in 1911, who notes that ‘people who, when they think, see a mental picture on the subject of their thoughts, people who are good “visualisers”, are likely to succeed best with the crystal’ (Lang 1894: 222, cited in Flint 2000). In a complementary passage found in a letter from Lang to the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, he recapitulates the statement of a Miss Angus, who describes her experience of crystal-gazing thus:

‘It is difficult to state exactly how pictures appear to me, when I look in a crystal. After focussing my eye for some time on a particular spot of light in the ball, my mind becomes aware that it may expect to see a vision; but, as far as I can judge, the moment the *vision* comes, the *ball* seems to disappear, so it is difficult for me to say if my pictures are actually seen *in* the crystal, or *only* projected outside in the space between the eye and the ball.’

(Lang 1898: 223)

Echoing Bergson’s vocabulary, these testimonies underline the relatedness of the operations of mind’s eye and eye’s mind in producing images which come into existence in the vicinity of a physical object in space.

These images exist on the borderline between physical and abstract presence, and thus echo the metaphysics of James’s late novels, where protagonists experience the object-world as showing them ‘...in some mirrored form [their] impressions and conclusions’ (James 1903: 149). This tendency is particularly pronounced in the character’s meditations on the titular object of *The Golden Bowl*; and can be observed when James’s text is brought into dynamic relation with the H. G. Wells story, ‘The Crystal Egg’ (1897)³. The magic crystal of the latter narrative has exceptional properties: after a thin shaft of daylight has been shone upon it, the egg glows luminously, and ‘being peered into at an angle of about 137 degrees from the direction of the illuminating ray gave a clear and consistent picture of a wide and peculiar country-side. It was not dream-like at all; it produced a definite impression’ (Wells 1897: 293). Whilst the story ends with the final and decisive comment that ‘No theory of hallucination suffices for the facts’ (Wells 1897: 300), this conclusion is only credible so far as it can be accommodated to the persistent counterargument that the world seen through the

³ Flint also draws attention to this story in relation to hallucination and vision (2000: 276-7).

glass is influenced by the emotional state of the gazer. This interpretation allows us to contemplate the similarity of this impulse to the metaphysical meditation prompted by the ‘gilded crystal bowl from the little Bloomsbury shop’ (James 1904: 292) in James’s novel. The object becomes a repository for the central characters’ reverie in *The Golden Bowl*, and on such occasions the borderline between imagination and observation becomes unclear. The shiftiness of this division is particularly pronounced when on staring at her reflection in its surface Maggie visualises an alternative present of unrealised perfection: ‘the golden bowl — as it *was* to have been . . . The bowl with all our happiness in it. The bowl without the crack’ (James 1904: 475).

Because this example from *The Golden Bowl* posits the co-presence of object and image to a perceiving subject, it can be averred that perceptual experience in this instance submits to the logic of the ‘virtual’, as it is delineated by Bergson (a concept which I will return to when I come to discuss the way in which the image moves through time). In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson explains it as follows:

‘. . . if we suppose an extended *continuum*, and, in this *continuum* [Bergson’s emphasis], the centre of real action which is represented by our body, its activity will appear to illuminate all those parts of matter with which at each successive moment it can deal. The same needs, the same power of action, which have delimited our body in matter will also carve out distinct bodies in the surrounding medium. Everything will happen as if we allowed to filter through us that action of external things which is real, in order to arrest and retain that which is virtual: this virtual action of things upon our body and of our body upon things is our perception itself.’

(Bergson 1896: 232)

For Bergson the part is virtual and the whole is real. Consciousness extracts virtual images from the whole, which ‘are not pictured in consciousness without some foreshadowing in the form of a sketch or a tendency, of the movements by which these images would be acted or played in space...and set free all that they implicitly contain of spatial movement’ (Bergson 1896: 339). The golden bowl therefore exists in itself, but on the other hand is in itself, pictorial, as Maggie perceives it with her own subjectivity. The image she perceives is immaterial, yet appears to occupy a position in space: in Bergsonian terms, this is ‘the meeting point of mind and matter’ (1896: 325), and, by implication, imagination and observation.

This phenomenon can be observed elsewhere in James, as I shall explore later. Moreover, complimentary emphases are given in *The Ambassadors*, where it is frequently suggested that thoughts about objects can be externalised and perceived visually by others. We are told ‘a thousand unuttered thoughts hummed for him [Lambert Strether] in the air’ (James 1903: 389), and that these may be perceived by Sarah’s ‘conscious eyes’ (James 1903: 389). Later, Strether notes that for Miss Gostrey and himself, ‘things unuttered were in the air’ (James 1903: 508); and the emphasis here on ‘things’ not ‘words’ crucially establishes the imagistic quality of consciousness. If objects are consistently encountered in this way in James’s later fiction, it follows that the material world will be experienced, in Bergson’s words, as an ‘aggregate of images’ (Bergson 1896: 3). However, I would argue that this model of perceptual experience also has something in common with what Jonathan Crary refers to as ‘the most significant form of visual imagery in the nineteenth century, with the exception of photographs’ (Crary 1990: 116): the stereoscope. Providing the eyes of the viewer with two different images, representing two perspectives of the same object, with a

minor deviation similar to the perspectives that both eyes naturally receive in binocular vision, this instrument ‘presuppose[d] perceptual experience to be essentially an apprehension of differences’ (Crary 1990: 120), and because it treats vision in this way on this basis I would argue for the inclusion of those aspects of James’s and Bergson’s texts discussed above into the distinct stratum in the history of ideas which, for Crary, the stereoscopic view heralds. This provides a framework for the complex phenomenology of James’s later texts where the relationship between the perceiving subject and the object is constantly shifting depending on negotiations between self and the incrementally changing, multifarious object-world. Thus, Strether on finding that in her ‘museum of artefacts’ Maria Gostrey has ‘made their encounter a relation’, also elucidates that ‘the relation profited by a mass of things that were not strictly in it or of it; by the air in which they sat, by the high cold delicate room outside and the little splash in the court, by the First Empire and the relics in the stiff cabinets, by matters as far off as those and by others as near as the unbroken clasp of her hands in her lap and the look her expression had of being most natural when her eyes were most fixed’ (James 1903: 239). His perceptual experience is involuntarily shaped by the protean configurations of images and objects in a manner which echoes the conclusions of the latest experiments with visual technology.

A further function of the stereoscopic view in James’s late novels is that it disrupts classical ideas of space: if perspective as outlined by Newton (1687) is absolute - in the sense that it existed permanently and independently of whether there were any matter in the space, in James’s novels it is a causeway through which the ‘crammed consciousness’ (James 1903: 158) of a community flows. As Crary notes, the fundamental organisation of the stereoscopic image is such that ‘compared to the strange insubstantiality of objects and figures located in the middle ground, the absolutely airless space surrounding them has a disturbing palpability’

(1990: 125). The space between things is thus brought into being; it is transpersonal, empty, yet full of latent meaning for those able to discern it. Because it has these qualities, I believe it can be interpreted as contingent with turn-of-the-century psychical and psychological writing which conceived of consciousness in spatial terms. William James's concept of 'stream of thought' asserted that 'every definite image in the mind is steeped and dyed in the free water of consciousness that flows round it' (1884: 16); and Frederic Myers developed this theory to arrive at his idea of the 'subliminal consciousness' (1892: 298). 'The Subliminal Consciousness' which, as Luckhurst (2002) details was first published in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* between 1891 and 1895 before being revised posthumously for the book *Human Personality and the Survival of Bodily Death* (1903), also transcends the limits of a life in one place, asserting that each of us 'is in reality an abiding psychical entity far more extensive than he knows, – an individuality which can never express itself completely through any corporeal manifestation. The self manifests itself through the organism, but there is always some part of the self unmanifested, and always as it seems some power of organic expression in abeyance or reserve' (Myers 1903: 278).

Moreover, I would contend that Henry James's late novels are particularly in tune with such speculations about space and consciousness when their protagonists subtract from pregnant voids in search of meaning. 'Abyss', as Brooks (1976) notes, is a word that recurs with insistent frequency in James's writing and holds a particularly significant place in *The Wings of the Dove*. Our first direct perception of Milly Theale shows her seated on a slab of rock overhanging 'gulfs of air' (James 1902: 88); and Susan Stringham's reaction grasps at the possibility of 'some betrayed accordance of Milly's caprice with a...hidden obsession' (James 1902: 89): the possibility of a plunge into the gulf, or making her choice of the kingdoms of the earth. Brooks asserts that this image ramifies metaphorically throughout the

novel, as ‘plumbing the abysses... comes to mean almost literally positing the mass and contours of the unseen from the gestures of the observed’ (1976: 184). Brooks asserts that its latent presence is principally aligned in the novel with the taboo subjects of Milly’s illness and the illicit relation between Kate and Densher; and that after these topics are semantically crystallised in the critical interview between Milly and Lord Mark in Venice, the abyss yields up this revelation to Densher. As he circles restlessly in the storm-lashed Piazza San Marco, ‘the drawing-room of Europe, profaned and bewildered by some reverse of fortune’ (James 1902: 404), he is brought to a halt ‘with the force of his sharpest impression’, having caught sight of Lord Mark, seated in Florian’s. The instantaneous recognition of his identity at once has ‘all the effect of establishing connexions – connexions startling and direct’ (James 1902: 405): ‘The vice in the air, otherwise, was too much like the breath of fate. The weather had changed, the rain was ugly, the wind wicked, the sea impossible, *because* of Lord Mark’ (James 1902: 406). Without a word of recognition being exchanged between the two, things are ‘as plain to Densher as if he had had them in words’ (James 1902: 406). Perceptual experience in this instance demonstrates the imbrication of observation and imagination insofar as sensory impressions are combined with a subtraction from an ethereal intersubjective reserve to penetrate behind and beneath the surface of people and things.

However, whilst such images may overlap in space, the idea that images may co-exist in different locations in time – which was one of considerable currency during the *fin de siècle* – can also be traced, if obliquely, in James’s novels. As Warner has noted, ‘Telepathy was “thought at a distance”... but before Einstein’s theory of relativity, it was also often conceived in temporal terms, and inspired excited dreams of communications from one time to another between spirits and other, occult forces’ (2006: 265-6). In Warner’s view, Freud’s model of consciousness and Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious can be viewed as part

of a general wave of speculation at the turn of the century, which also included Myer's theory of the subliminal self, and was characterised by a homologous attention to the phrenic movement between memory and perception. In the world of literature, in H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), the eponymous invention 'translates a faculty of mind – projective imagination – into an actual piece of technology, and embodies it physically in time and space', as Warner (2005: xiv) also notes in an introductory essay to a recent edition of the text. I contend that despite their apparently dissimilar literary mien, James's novels are in contact, like Wells's, though not overtly, with this contemporary discourse concerning a fixation with time travel, through the way in which their protagonists experience perception as bound up with lateral movements backward and forward in time.

Furthermore, I believe that this can be elucidated by investigating the ways in which perceptual experience in James engages with Bergson's concept of the virtual. Bergson asserts that the virtual image 'thus shaped [by subtraction from the whole] implies the perception, no longer successive, but simultaneous, of a before and after, and that it would be a contradiction to suppose a succession that was only a succession, and which nevertheless was contained in one and the same instant' (1889: 101). This temporal movement toward actualisation implies a virtual multiplicity of images, none of which are identical. In the context of James, this movement is best understood in conversation with Bergson's theory of time and consciousness, duration (1889; 1896; 1907; 1920). The latter concept is a kind of lived time. It is mobile, and belongs to objects as much as to subjects. It is qualitative, multiple, indivisible, and constantly interpenetrating itself, so that a person's duration is disclosed by other durations, which are implicated in and that unfold it. In combination with the virtual, it renders perception the experience of a selection of infinite potential actions which simultaneously belong and do not belong to the perceiving subject. Bergson explains

this by giving the example of a simultaneity of fluxes in which while ‘seated on the bank of a river, the flowing of the water, the gliding of a boat or the flight of a bird, the ceaseless murmur of our life’s deeps, are for us three separate things or only one, as we choose’ (Bergson 1920: 210). As Ansell-Pearson elucidates, ‘here there is an apportioning without dividing, a being of the one and the many at the same time...The observer’s duration both encompasses and discloses other durations and the virtual multiplicity of actions with which they reverberate’ (2002: 10). I would argue that an analogous dynamic can be seen at work in James’s late texts, destabilising the opposition between imagination and observation, asserting that time is no longer something thought, but something lived.

It is particularly pronounced in the opening of *The Wings of the Dove*, where, waiting for her father, Kate paces in and out of her room. ‘Each time she turned in again, each time, in her impatience, she gave him up, it was to sound to a deeper depth, while she tasted the faint, flat emanation of things’ (James 1902: 5). As Schweizer (2005) notes, in her impatience she awakens to an uncanny quality of waiting, namely her endurance of the indifferent continuity of her inner life, and the inner life of ‘things’ – indifferent to the exigencies of official time. She looks ‘at the sallow prints on the walls, and the lonely magazine, a year old, that combined, with a small lamp in coloured glass and a knitted white centre-piece wanting in freshness, to enhance the effect of the purplish cloth on the principal table’ (James 1902: 5). Each thing is pulled loose from its delitescence to have its idiosyncrasies exposed, its virtual actions drawn out. Just as Kate waits for the end of her enforced imprisonment in such existential consciousness, so ‘each object seems likewise waiting to be released from her gaze to resume its invisibility in the universal flux of what Bergson mystically calls “the Whole”’, so that Kate is seen to be ‘dwelling too long on a note; instead of a melodic duration she hears a succession of notes’ (Schweizer 2005: 788).

Consciousness in this way becomes the space where time unfurls variegated yet mutually inclusive durations in simultaneity. Ostensibly mismatched timeframes disclose themselves, in palimpsest style, on top of each other.

Moreover, as Bergson asserts, ‘between brute matter and the mind most capable of reflexion, there are all possible intensities of memory, or what comes to the same thing, all the degrees of freedom’ (1896: 296). The virtual and actual always coexist in perception, but whilst in the languor of Kate’s ennui, the overlapping durations of objects evidence the subtractive mechanics of this figuration, elsewhere in James’s late fiction, protagonists experience the world as a perceptual shock, as it is expressed in Plateau’s concept of the persistence of vision: ‘If several objects which differ sequentially in terms of form and position are presented one after the other to the eye in very brief intervals and sufficiently close together, the impressions they produce on the retina will blend together without confusion and one will believe that a single object is gradually changing form and position’ (Crary 1990: 109). Crary asserts that such an experience of visual intensity carries a historically localised meaning at the end of the nineteenth century in that is consistent with the cultural impact and perceptual shock of railroad travel (and perceptual experience more generally) as it is delineated by Friedrich Nietzsche in *Human, All Too Human*. Nietzsche asserts ‘With the tremendous acceleration of life, mind and eye have become accustomed to seeing and judging partially or inaccurately, and everyone is like the traveller who gets to know a land and its people from a railway carriage’ (1878: 102). I would argue that this formulation of visual experience permeates *The Golden Bowl*: for Maggie it serves as a metaphor for existential flux, whereby her life is disrupted by the ‘lurches of the mystic train’ and the ‘vision...suddenly swarmed’ which results from the sudden movement of a ‘mystic train in which...she was travelling’ (James 1904: 390), whilst for Fanny Assingham, the

realisation of her imbrication with the tangle of romantic relationships at the novel's core is analogous with a sudden flash of 'blue daylight towards which, through a darksome tunnel, she had been pushing away, and the elation in her voice, combined with her recovered alertness, might have signalled the sharp whistle of the train that shoots at last into the open' (James 1904: 93).

However, the above optical illusion, like any other, depends on point of view. It is therefore pertinent to recall that as Helmholtz contended, the eye owns vision, but in two ways, focal and peripheral vision:

'To look at anything means to place the eye in such a position that the image of the object falls on the small region of perfectly clear vision... Whatever we want to see we look at, and see it accurately; what we do not look at, we do not as a rule care for at the moment, and so do not notice how imperfectly we see it. '

(Helmholtz 1866: 138).

Isobel Armstrong (2008) draws on the example of a Zoetrope (discrete images on the inside of a rotating drum viewed from the outside through slits cut in the drum) in the Bill Douglas Centre to explore the limits of Helmholtz's distinction. It is worth recapitulating the observations about its operation in the context of my argument. Concentrating on a single slit area as the drum rotates 'produces a sequence of climbing and vaulting actions in succession, as minute blue and red figures repeatedly bend, rise, and jump' (Armstrong 2008: 350), but the effectiveness of this illusion depends on visual choices. Factors such as the regularity of the rotation and tilt of the drum (controlled by the viewer) affect vision by degrees; and there

is an alternative way of viewing, through a succession of slits, where segmented parts of the otherwise fluid vaulting process appear.

The multifarious range of partial, distinct perspectives which the different ways of interacting with this device suggest evokes the choice which the virtual necessitates in subtracting from the actual, or whole: whilst the image relates to the object, it does not represent it in the wholeness of being. The temporal aspect of the toy, moreover, shows perception's submission to duration in Bergsonian terms: since time is mobile, as soon as one attempts to measure a moment qualitatively, it is gone. Perception, thus figured, measures the possible action of a body upon things, and vice versa. As Ansell-Pearson notes, for Bergson, 'memory operates in terms of a similar virtuality [to observation], beginning with a virtual state and leading step by step up to the point where it gets materialized in an actual perception' (2005: 1117). In 'Memory of the Present and False Recognition' Bergson asserts that recollection is created alongside an actual perception: 'Either the present leaves no trace in memory, or it is twofold at every moment, its very up-rush being in two jets exactly symmetrical, one of which falls back towards the past whilst the other springs forward towards the future' (Bergson 1908: 55). Bergson conceives of 'pure memory' as engaging with the past either via 'image-remembrance' (1896; 1908), whereby recollections rise up spontaneously into consciousness to meet the present moment.

The function of this latter, fluid interrelation is most perceptible in Densher's final interview with Maud at Lancaster Gate in *The Wings of the Dove*. Having previously been unable to perceive of Milly beyond the transcendent images of 'dove, angel, saviour, or priceless pearl' (King 2000: 1), merely by 'speaking of his supreme personal impression' of Milly, Densher 'pictures the case' for Maud (James 1992: 459). By the 'queer turn' (James

1992: 459) of bringing his etherealised memory of Milly into scenic relation with the shades of squalor of her decline, he spatialises perception, and makes time simultaneous, thus building bridges between past, present, and future. As Freud asserts in ‘Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through’, ‘as long as the patient is in the treatment he cannot escape from this compulsion to repeat; and in the end we understand that this is his way of remembering’ (1914: 394-5), but in this interview, which has the atmosphere of a psychoanalytic therapy session, Densher moves beyond this stage, and the spontaneous promptings of memory find him ‘uttering to the elder woman what had been impossible’ (James 1992: 460).

Moreover, as I established earlier in this chapter, the unconscious in James’s texts is transpersonal; and it can be asserted that the spontaneous promptings of Densher’s pictorial memories constitute the progeny of a deep telepathic connection across time. As Cameron asserts, ‘to think of death in Sir Luke Strett’s chambers, as Milly does, is to make of death a picture, looked at by others, into which the self will be transmuted’ (1989: 142); and it can be contended that this image is materialised in Densher’s ‘picture’ of Milly as it forms in the process of his interview with Maud, so that his contemplation that ‘the thought was all his own’ (James 1992: 460), may be perceived ironically. Just as Ralph meditates on the portrait of himself, in *The Sense of the Past*, ‘it was when life was framed in death that the picture was really hung up’ (James 1917: 48) – these images allow James’s protagonists communion with the Other across the void of time. They also allow the co-ordination of Bergson’s concept of the virtual with contemporary discourse on the potential for human personality to survive bodily death. Indeed, James’s own essay, ‘Is There Life After Death?’ affirms the power of artistic consciousness to live on, to survive outside itself via the representations it leaves behind, given its ‘enormous multiplication of our possible relations... carrying the

field of perception further and further, making it lose itself in the ineffable'. 'How can we after it', James asks, 'hold complete disconnection likely?' (1910: 607, cited in Luckhurst 2002) This contention seems to be mirrored in *The Wings of the Dove*: Milly, dead, only seems more alive. She is, as Cameron notes, 'so rich with life as to loosen Densher's hold over the woman he loved and the riches he desired so that he can embrace instead a remembered image of the dead girl' (1989: 151). This distant intimacy is so strong that Kate accuses him of 'fallen in love with [Milly]' (James 1992: 451), love being in Myers' words 'a kind of exalted, but unspecialised telepathy' (1903: 281)

We are returned, then, to the idea with which this chapter began: the contemplation of an image, between a physical and abstract presence, not definitely wholly observed, or wholly imagined. I have shown this concept to be a vast receptacle for the complex phenomenology of James's late novels: it is the meeting point of mind and matter, and infinitely multiple across space and time; existing as something between a physical and abstract presence, and ultimately it troubles the opposition of observation and imagination. Moreover, its ubiquity is such that the higher faculties of Jamesian subjectivity are depicted pictorially: in Maggie's vision of an alternative present of unrealised perfection in the reflections of *The Golden Bowl's* titular object, Strether's spatial elucidation of consciousness, and the telepathic transfer of images across time between Densher and Milly. It is on the basis of such pictorial emphases that I believe the existential phenomenology of James's texts can be seen to engage with a wider grappling with the limits of perception in fin de siècle culture.

Specifically, it can be contended that Henry James's texts are in contact with late nineteenth century theories about the possibility of existence in four (or more) dimensions.

The concept of four dimensional space differed from three-dimensional space, as enshrined by Euclid's *Elements*, in that it posited an additional dimension, indistinguishable from the other three. As Jann (2006) details, it was first established in the early nineteenth century by European mathematicians such as Nickolai Lobachevsky and Janos Bolyai, and later popularised by the German mathematician Hermann von Helmholtz. The concept's wide cultural impact extended to literature, being 'exploited as a plot device by authors such as H. G. Wells in 'The Remarkable Case of Davidson's Eyes' (1895), 'The Wonderful Visit' (1895), and 'The Plattner Story' (1896), and that higher dimensions also figure in Oscar Wilde's 'The Canterville Ghost' (1891) and Joseph Conrad and Ford Maddox Brown's *The Inheritors* (1901)' (Jann 2006: xxix). I would assert that despite their apparently dissimilar literary mien, James's novels are in contact, albeit at a slightly occulted distance, with this contemporary popular fixation; and this is most clearly evidenced by evoking the example of Abbot's *Flatland* (1884), where the possibility of fourth dimensional and higher geometries are voiced by analogy with the perceptual shock visited on its protagonist, A Square, who is supplanted from his linear world to the three-dimensional 'Spaceland'. It is the way in which this prospect is articulated which is crucial: his thirst for knowledge stimulated by the teachings of the emissary Sphere, A Square vows to 'arouse in the interiors of Plane and Solid Humanity a spirit of rebellion against the Conceit which would limit our Dimensions to Two or Three or any number short of *Infinity* [emphasis mine]' (Abbott 1884: 102). The stress on perception's subtraction from an infinitude of theoretical space allows a resonance with Bergson's delineation of the virtual and the abstraction from the actual with which it is established. It is this latter theory which has been so productive for establishing a theory of the occulted phenomenology of James's late texts, and it hereby extends its contextual valency by showing Jamesian phenomenology to be connected with the same wave of speculation which as the innovations in nineteenth-century geometrics which 'occupied such

a central position in Victorian debates about the accessibility of absolute truth' (Jann 2006: xxiv).

James's characters thus explore a material world which throngs with virtual action, memories, and images. It can be averred that the idea of a virtual realm is tackled head on in *The Spoils of Poynton*, where Fleda notices, walking with Mrs Gereth in the rooms of Ricks, something subtle and wonderful: 'a presence, a perfume, a touch...a soul, a story, a life'. 'There's ever so much more here than you and I'. 'We're in fact just three!' 'Does it happen,' her companion asks, 'to be in your power to give it a name?' 'It's a kind of fourth dimension' (James 1896: 203). Flint uses the fourth dimension in a general sense to establish 'the binary between the visible and the invisible' (2000: 283), and in fact, I believe it may stand as an effective metaphor for the number of ways in which the clarity of perception in James is occluded by the inseparability of observation and imagination that this chapter has explored: the coincidence of image and object in space, the stereoscopic view and the spatial conception of consciousness which it supports, and the movement of the image through time. Just as Abbot notes in *The Kernel and the Husk*⁴ that we cannot 'conceive of space of Four Dimensions... although we can perhaps describe what some of its phenomena would be if it existed' (1886: 259), meshing together the operations of the eye's mind and mind's eye, so do the aspects of perception which this chapter examines necessarily involve the intertwining of imagination and observation. The mutual inclusiveness between these two terms prepares the ground for my next chapter: their imbrication renders the nature of perceptual evidence protean and multiple, and the objective mastery of the perceiving subject over the passive object is disturbed. It is the embattled dualism between subject and object in James's late novels which is explored in the chapter which follows.

⁴ A theological work written by Abbott around the time of *Flatland* which explored the history of human imagination bycoordinating religious belief with scientific concepts.

CHAPTER TWO: LOOKING BACK

As explored in my previous chapter, James's late texts exhibit a preoccupation with the mechanics of seeing. However, the later novels in particular also show a preoccupation with the limitations as well as the possibilities of vision. Hazel Hutchison notes that 'in his middle years, James's own eyesight began to alter and deteriorate, lending an urgency to the treatment of vision within his fiction' (2005: 40); and links this causally to aspects of the innovative narratives of the 1890s – '*What Maisie Knew* with its carefully controlled use of focalisation, *The Awkward Age* with its successive "aspects", *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Sacred Fount* with their frustratingly first-person narratives' (2005: 41) – all of which Hutchison asserts can be read as technical experiments in limited point of view. However, I would argue that James's late novels can also be seen as engaging with the wider scope of modernity - in particular the developments in visual culture at the end of the nineteenth century in optics, painting and philosophy, which constructed an observer whose body was important precisely for the way it could be examined, quantified, fooled, and controlled by objects. In this chapter I will build on Hutchison's analysis to move beyond the narrow context of the personal and biographical to the wider scope of modernity in terms of James's texts' engagement with changes in visual culture – with particular emphasis on the shiftiness of the boundary between the fin de siècle observer and the object world.

My argument draws on Crary's model of the history of visibility as espoused in *Techniques of the Observer* (1990). He asserts that in the nineteenth century a long-enduring account of vision, which took the operations of the camera obscura as its model, was displaced by that suggested by other optical devices such as the kaleidoscope, the diorama, and most significantly, the stereoscope. Whereas the camera obscura positioned vision on a

plane severed from the human observer, and associated with a unifying order or logic, these new technologies represented vision as relocated within the corporeal immediacy of the subject. Crary's analysis seeks to uncover 'the conditions and forces that defined or allowed the formation of a dominant model of what an observer was in the nineteenth century' (1990: 7), and via a methodology which is Foucauldian. Crary appropriates the conclusions of *Discipline and Punish* (1975) by asserting that the body of the modern viewer, no less than that of the labourer or prisoner, becomes an object of standardisation, regulation, and control, and attempts to prove this hypothesis by negotiating individualised 'series' (that is, the name Foucault (1969) gives to historical phenomena in specific areas of intellectual history), which are juxtaposed to one another, track, overlies, and interconnect. In this way, the 'fundamentally disunified and aggregate field of disjunct elements' (Crary 1990: 125) produced by visual toys can be linked to the personal exploration of nonclassical space by proto-modernist painters, and contemporary philosophers.

I argue that this kind of negotiation can also be traced in James's later texts. Indeed, it can be traced in *The Ambassadors*, which is, for Hutchison, the novel that provides the foundation for her thesis, as it 'deals most explicitly with problems of vision and perspective and makes use of lenses, mirrors, frames, and spectacles in its attempt to focus the blurred impressions of Strether's experience' (Hutchison 2005: 40). In her analysis of Strether's engagement with the Lambinet landscape, Hutchison interprets it as an 'aid to sight' (2005: 46) homologous to the protagonist's spectacles which allows for a connection between opposites: 'New England and Europe, art and reality, imagination and action, past and present' (2005: 45). But the picture also fragments and dislocates Strether's view of reality, confronting the Woollett editor with an image equable with disunified visual experience associated with the visual toys Crary (1992) deals with in his analysis. Whilst there is room

in Hutchison's analysis for the view that such a distorted vision can offer keen insight – she notes that Strether's musing on the Lambinet painting demonstrates awareness at quite a sophisticated level that his perceptions are artificial constructs, and links this to Rivkin's assertion that a 'logic of delegation' ensures that nothing in the novel fulfils its original purpose, 'that the ambassador's fate is inevitably a straying from authority' (Hutchison 2005: 48) – this perspective is only posited insofar as it can support her overarching thesis, that James's interest in the visual was intensified by the deterioration in his own eyesight. Hutchison asserts that 'the knowledge that the world is more rich and strange than he had thought becomes for Strether the most precious thing he carries home from Paris' (2005: 48), and I am broadly in agreement, but would suggest that the Lambinet portrait is for James's protagonist more than a 'lens' (Hutchison 2005: 46) – that because it is an object which fragments and distorts, challenging the subjects clarity and consistency of perceptual judgment, its effect is more resonant with that of the stereoscope and other more complex visual technologies which Crary (1990) describes.

Moreover, the creation of meaning between subject and object here is curiously co-optive and in this way echoes Horton's delineation of the experience of spectators at diorama displays in the nineteenth century as feeling as if they were both watching a performance, and being part of it (1995). A further collocate can be found in the model of art and spectatorship promoted by contemporary art criticism, not least James's own, which as Bartel notes was 'characterized by the sort of subdued engagement...associated with dialogue between friends or polite strangers' (2005: 175). For example, in one review, he writes that the painting of Burne-Jones is 'almost alone in having the gravity and deliberation of truly valuable speech' (James 1882: 205, cited in Bartel 2005). This transcendental relation, Butte argues, thus approaches the Benjaminian ideal of an art in which the rendering of realities could divulge

‘something like an optical unconscious, a repository of unmanaged details that could “manage to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action”’ (Bartel 2005: 174).

The relations between art objects in James’s novels and the subjects which perceive them can therefore be said to interlace with concomitant developments in visual culture. Such a conclusion brings to mind James’s insistence, in the preface to *Roderick Hudson*, that ‘really, universally, relations stop nowhere’ (1875: 37). It can be argued that this trope is particularly pronounced in James’s later fiction. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, Isabel Archer can assert a relationship of mastery and service between subject and object by claiming that ‘...nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; everything’s on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one’ (James 1881: 253). Coulson (2004) asserts that by controlling and abjuring the world of objects Isabel shores up her sense of her own integrity, her subjectivity, but that in the later texts of James, and particularly *The Wings of the Dove*, the structure of subjects and objects persists only by ‘suppressing its unconscious, the messy underside that constantly threatens this orderly opposition’ (Coulson 2004: 120). This interpretation is contiguous with my own: it is especially in tune with my discussion of the virtual in James, and the fecund transpersonal space which renders James’s protagonists subject to the presence of images which ‘bore on the situation but that it was better not to touch, pass[ing] in silence between them’ (James 1903: 151).

Coulson (2004) asserts that the phenomenology of James’s late texts can be understood via Kristeva’s idea of the abject; and this theoretical framework is worth recapitulating. Kristeva argues that ‘if the object..., through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which...makes me ceaselessly and infinitely

homologous to it, what is abject, on the contrary, ...is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses' (1982: 1-2). Kristeva's 'abjection' is a state of limbo that blurs the dichotomy of subject and object, insisting on the original formlessness of both self and thing. In Coulson's view, and as a result of abjection, subjectivity unfolds as a process and configuration of structuring in James's novels. I would argue that, definitions of subject and object are thus imbricated when, in *The Wings of the Dove*, Milly overhears an American woman and her two daughters evaluating some object of their gaze as 'handsome...in the English style' (James 1902: 98) and turns to discover that object to be not a painting but Merton Densher, who is unaware of her presence. She gazes at him until she discovers that Kate Croy is watching her watching, thereby transforming her into the object of surveillance. For George Butte, this moment of crisis 'mirrors exactly the paradigmatic moment of exposure and shame that for Sartre is always implicit in the gaze' (2009: 135). To gaze is always to open oneself to the rupture of the other's gaze: 'Being seen by the Other is the *truth* of seeing-the-Other. . . . He is that object in the world that determines an internal haemorrhage'" (Sartre 1940: 345, cited in Butte 2009).

Moreover, though 'the space of the abject' can be relational between subjects and objects, it is excluded through 'language as a common and universal law' (Kristeva 1982: 71). I contend that it might therefore provide a definition for the pregnant abysses and voids in *The Wings of the Dove* which I delineated in the previous chapter as interpersonal spaces within which taboo subjects (Milly's illness, Densher's illicit relationship with Kate) are deposited, and drawn from in moments of crisis. In this way the abject may provide an opening via which 'telepathic' connections in James's novels may be explored. This argument can be developed further by coordinating Kristeva's emphases on the interchangeableness of subject and object, and the relational processes which facilitate this

configuration, with the conclusions of research into thought transference during the fin de siècle period. The records of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* from the period are highly populated with discussions of objects which exert power over human subjects. For example, Mr R. Hodgson, writing in 1892, recounts how in his sittings with the medium Mrs. Piper, the aforementioned having gone into a trance, and being passed certain objects belonging to a Mrs Holmes – ‘a lock of hair cut close to the head’ and ‘a piece of ribbon she had worn around her neck’ could give detailed and intimate information about the personal relations of the owner, despite having not met her, on the basis that the inanimate things ‘had “influence”’ (1892: 140). Other objects of occult influence in nineteenth century popular culture would include the hypnotically passing hands of the mesmerist, the evil eye, and the Ouija board. In all these cases, telepathy dismantles control: it involves touch, even if it is at a distance, and even the most passive participation is active in a sense. The relationship between subject and object in late James is therefore like that between the analyst and patient as Ferenczi (1932) describes it, whereby the analyst can read the patient’s unconscious thoughts, but the patient is also able to read the analyst’s – a process which, as Thurschwell (1999) details, Ferenczi aligned with telepathy. As Hutchison (2004) notes, Strether’s ambivalent reaction to the spectacular array of art objects in the Paris gallery in *The Ambassadors* neatly matches Lacan’s reading of Holbein’s painting of the same name: paintings are not merely objects of our investigation; instead it is they who fix the viewer with their gaze, thereby holding the observer in thrall. There is, therefore, a sense in which looking itself becomes a scrutinised object, requiring ‘a relay to the inter-subjective matrix to unfold its indexical gesture’ (Savoy 2001: 274), a relation which seems itself to echo the Society of Psychical Research’s ‘examination of the nature and extent of any influence which may be exerted by one mind upon another, apart from any generally recognised mode of perception’ (‘Objects of the Society’ 1883: 3). James’s protagonists and readers act as a

frame within which meanings are hazarded. As we try to discern them, they metamorphose into a series of imbricated, autonomous screens of insight and provenance.

Observers in James's novels, therefore, find themselves within a milieu in which perception is constantly in question. In James's late novels meaning is produced in collaboration with material objects – as Hopkins puts it, through a 'progression from description to evocation and symbolization' (1961: 566) – and for any protagonist who realises that he, like Strether, can perceive 'thoughts... in the air' (James 1903: 389), comes the fear that his own thoughts can be seen. This configuration evokes Foucault's delineation of modernity as a pervasive system of panoptical surveillance, which is penetrated through and through with the voyeuristic joy of spectacle (1975). It is such a psychosocial environment which makes a lateral link with the pragmatist philosophy of William James pertinent. Indeed, it can be argued that his concept of 'the selectivity of attention' (James 1890), whereby a conscious state of complete focus is quite easily transformed into its opposite, a disjunctive situation of extreme distraction becomes a site for James's late novels' experimentation with perception's unstable state. The critical currency of the idea was considerable during the late nineteenth century, as Crary attests to at length in his *Suspensions of Perception* (1999), and it can therefore be considered in tune with James's novels. In the field of visual art, Cezanne's *Pines and Rocks* is shown to engage in a sort of rhythm, one that tacitly grapples with modernity's promise of completeness, but repeatedly arrests the brutal realisation of attention's dissolving perceptual syntheses, and Crary elucidates that such vacillations were intrinsic not only to the optical gratification created by the stereoscope and other visual toys, but also to the flux between subject positions involved in perceptual experience more generally. The choices of attention and distraction are, according to Crary, 'two enormous spaces of possibility, on one hand the opening up of new

experimental forms of life, of freedom and creation ... on the other the elaboration of countless procedures' (1999: 358).

It can thus be posited that selectivity of attention holds the key to Lambert Strether's strange talent for making the transition from Woollett norms to Parisian mores, and then to his own highly individualised mode of interpreting his ever-complicating circumstances. As Williams writes,

'One of the most engaging aspects of William James's writing, from a phenomenological point of view, is his treatment of the relationship between consciousness and body...one can live within a number of different frames of reference, and each world retains its own reality, after its own fashion, while the subject is interested in it...Once his attention is withdrawn, the reality of 'the world' also lapses.'

(1993: 14-15)

In such a way, adrift amongst a horde of powerful commodities, Strether possesses 'the oddity of a double consciousness', there being 'detachment in his zeal and curiosity in his indifference' (James 1903: 56); and it is his ability to move consciously between the contrary states of observation and being observed (and by implication, subject and object) that allows him to work through the psychological disturbances of Paris's 'fine free range of bliss and bale' (James 1903: 483).

Thus, as Armstrong puts it, in James's fiction 'perfect transcendence escapes us and opacity looms everywhere' (1983: 135) in relations with the hyperactive object world. Representing objects thus becomes a problem as Jamesian protagonists struggle to depict

what emerge to be powerful agents in their heterogeneous universe. This is moreover, a situation symptomatic of wider cultural anxiety in the nineteenth century: just as Strether admits to little Bilham ‘Oh I do see, at least; and more than you’d believe or I can express’ (James 1903: 215), so does Marx, in his famous chapter in *Capital* on commodity fetishism have to shift metaphors every few sentences to do justice to the commodity’s pervasiveness and malleability as a form of depiction. Even here, as Richards notes:

‘The very conditions of language function to invest commodities with many of the attributes of the human agents of history... Because language has an maddening way of transforming the description of objects into a high drama of human agency and intention, a study of the barest facts of commodity culture always turns out to be an exploration of a fantastic realm in which things think, act, speak, rise, fall, fly, evolve.’

(Richards 1991: 11)

Richards further contends that by the mid to late nineteenth century, the ‘era of spectacle’ (in Debord’s sense) had begun. Richards regards the World’s Fairs of this period, in particular the Great Exhibition of 1851 as ‘semiotic laboratories for the labour theory of value’, and symbols of how ‘the capitalist system had not only created a dominant form of exchange, but was also in the process of creating a dominant form of representation to go along with it’ (1991: 3).

I believe this formulation can be traced in the way that the object elides subject in James’s late novels. The Crystal Palace in which the Great Exhibition was housed is described by Richards as ‘a museum and a market’ (1991: 19); and subsequent World’s Fairs replicated this archetype which brought ‘together a host of rare and exclusive things and

promising, in a way that is very hard to pin down, that each and every one of them would one day be democratically available to anyone and everyone' (1991: 19). It can be posited that they posit their own kind of distant intimacy, of the kind which Stewart outlines in her delineation of the function of the souvenir: 'The double function of the souvenir is to authenticate a remote experience and, at the same time, to discredit the present. The present is either too impersonal, too looming, or too alienating compared to the intimate and direct experience of contact which the souvenir has as its referent. This referent is authenticity' (1993: 139). To put this another way, the cult of the collectible object generates the discourse of the occulted object via an escalation of value: the rarer the object, the more distant its openness, the more effulgent its allure and the more substantial its pledge for subjective gratification. We are thus reminded of the thrall and mastery in which objects such as the Lambinet painting in *The Ambassadors*, the Bronzino portrait in *The Wings of the Dove* and the eponymous *Golden Bowl* hold James's protagonists: the World's Fair provides a cultural archetype pertaining to the way in which these objects manipulate the distance between the present and an imagined, prelapsarian experience, experience as it might be directly lived.

Moreover, amongst such events, I would argue that the Exposition Universelle of 1900 held in Paris, is of particular pertinence, not only due to its rough chronological concurrence with the publication dates of James's later novels, and geographical agreement with the setting of *The Ambassadors*, but to its evocation of specific epistemological values: it provides a kind of blueprint for James's characters' psychoanalytic attachment to objects. As Eric Savoy asserts, the phenomenology of James's late texts is such that 'the ontology of objects, the "thingness" of things, is profoundly recessive in discursive apprehension; moreover, it is precisely the impossibility of the thing (or the Thing) that redirects attention to the subjective emergence in the field of the thing and thus participates in the quasi-religious

pursuit of transcendent value' (2001: 271). In the light of this evaluation, it is possible to see in Strether's vision of Paris as 'a jewel brilliant and hard, in which parts were not to be discriminated nor differences comfortably marked...and what seemed all surface one moment seemed all depth the next' (James 1903: 118) a visual double of the view of the Grand Palais – the large glass exhibition hall that was built for the Paris Exhibition – as seen from a distance. As Woolacott contended in his article for the *Harmondsworth Monthly Pictorial Magazine*, 'these iron-and-glass palaces have an ephemeral charm, and fill us with a child's sense of amusement and festivity. They will fade almost as soon as flowers; they are as brittle as the toys on a Christmas tree' (1900: 51). The building reflected its environs, and unless you were in close proximity, you could not see the multitude of commodities it enclosed. Richards notes that the opacity of the Crystal Palace also did more than conceal its commodities, placing them 'in a kind of casing that duplicated on a grand scale the little cases and slipcovers that affluent Victorians used to protect speciality items like pocket watches, thermometers, cutlery, and umbrellas' (1991: 23), and this analogy will stand for the Grand Palais too. Viewed from the outside, the Grand Palais was both an objet d'art and a reliquary, conferring sentimental worth on the things it enclosed and preserving them indefinitely in a gargantuan glass case. But glass's efficacy to display back the subject's own reflection tacitly posits the potentiality for the observer to become an object as well.

Contemplation of the souvenir therefore rapidly collapses in the face of what Susan Stewart calls the 'logic of the gigantic' (1993: 70), our most fundamental relation to which is articulated in our relation to landscape, our lived relation to the object-world as it surrounds us. Her positioning of the body within the object-world is of particular pertinence to my discussion: we are enveloped by the gigantic, enclosed within its shadow. Whereas we know smaller commodities as a spatial whole or as temporal parts, we know the gigantic only

partially. We move through it; it does not move through us. Consequently, both the miniature and the gigantic are described through metaphors of containment – the miniature is contained, the gigantic as container. The Exposition Universelle exercised such dominion over its visitors most dramatically via the Trans-Siberian Railway Panorama, a simulated train ride, using a moving panorama, which recreated the most interesting stages of a journey from Moscow to Beijing on the Trans-Siberian Railway. The installation, as Bransford (1994) describes it, included three 70-foot-long luxury railway cars, complete with saloons, dining rooms, and bedrooms. The audience would sit in the railway cars, and view the panorama through the windows. This gallery faced a stage-like area where the immediate reality of a railway journey whereby objects close at hand seem to pass by more rapidly than distant ones was simulated via an inventive contraption involving multiple layers of moving objects and scrolling paintings. The nearest objects were sand, rocks, and boulders attached to a horizontal belt that moved at a speed of 1000 feet per minute. Behind was a low screen painted with shrubs and brush, which moved at 400 feet per minute. Next was another screen with paintings of more distant scenery moved at 130 feet per minute. The final screen was 25 feet tall and 350 feet long, and showed mountains, forests, and cities. It moved at just 16 feet per minute. The net result of the operation of these four layers was to produce a simulated perspective of great depth. As Crary notes, such installations ‘removed...autonomy from the observer...Like the phenakistoscope or the zootrope, the diorama was a machine of wheels in motion, one in which the observer was a component’ (1992: 113). Stewart contends that the category of the gigantic, which includes such dramatic renderings of the natural landscape, is properly extended to include the modern city (1993: 78), and we are thus reminded of Strether’s fear that any acceptance of the ‘magical object’ of Paris ‘might give one’s authority away’ (James 1903: 118).

Moreover, the autonomy of the objects in the Grand Palais was such that a close philosophical parallel with solipsism suggests itself: the *Edinburgh Review*'s anonymous contributor writes of the collection of paintings inside as so unsympathetic to each other that amidst 'the chaos of painted canvases...old friends and new, clamouring for attention', 'one sought in vain at least some guiding thread through the Daedelian labyrinth' ('Pictures at the Paris Exhibition' 1900: 182). The objects on show were so multifarious that visitors were virtually forced to adopt the selectivity of attention which I have established as symptomatic of the perceptual experience in James's late novels, with the abovementioned reviewer concluding that 'it is beyond question that in a natural state of things a great show of pictures should be in the sum, and not in the parts only, pleasant to the eye. This is not the case here. But it is easy to understand wherefore. It is the vast and inexpressible mixture of styles that is at fault...' ('Pictures at the Paris Exhibition' 1900: 187) as he struggles to come to terms with the concomitant relational phenomena of spectacle and surveillance.

It can therefore be concluded that the relationship between subjects and objects in James's late novels is not an opposition but an unheirarchical system which produces meaning in a co-optive manner as it is projected into a continuum of space between the two agents. The invocation of telepathy and visual culture in my argument, along with the 'semiotic laboratory' of the World's Fair (Richards 1991: 3), allows this literary phenomenon to be viewed as contiguous with cultural tropes as voiced by a heterogeneous range of fin de siècle discourses. It can, moreover, be asserted that this rapport between subjects and objects is most compelling in the experience of reading itself. As Friedrich Kittler (1992) has traced in detail, the discourse network of 1900 is bound up through and through with the materialities and corporealities of reading and writing. These investigations make mind

reading inseparable from the matter of reading generally, and as my next chapter will explore, they become particularly entwined in Henry James's mode of address.

CHAPTER THREE: LOOKING BEYOND

Just as the opposition between subject and object is destabilised by the interplay of surveillance and spectacle in James's fiction, so are the differences between visual and verbal signification dissolved in the author's mode of address. Such epistemological explorations engage with a vast semantic cache: as Martin Jay notes, 'even a rapid glance at the language we commonly use will demonstrate the ubiquity of visual metaphors' (1994: 1). Enlighten, examine, foresee, imagine, outlook, point of view, and perspective are but a few specimens. Moreover, as Wartofsky has contended, 'human vision is itself an artefact' (1979: 272) – and visual metaphors therefore have a historical resonance. In this chapter, I hope to explore how the language of James's last three novels is permeated by a conception of vision which allows them to develop the theme of the efficacy of the image in working from within the arbitrariness and instability of language in an attempt to find meaning.

This is particularly efficacious when what a character's thoughts fuse with their visual impressions, prompting meditation on the role of the visual in knowledge, so that 'to see' is also 'to understand'. Such an equation is established through the textures of language in *The Ambassadors*. For example, when Strether makes his trip to the country and reflects on his European career, 'the village aspect' affects him 'as whiteness, crookedness and blueness set in coppery green; there being positively, for that matter, an outer wall of the White Horse that was painted the most improbable shade' (James 1902: 254). Mme. de Vionnet's parasol makes 'a pink point in the shining scene' (James 1902: 257). As Hopkins notes, the primary emphasis in the description of the village where he stops for dinner is 'not on the thing modified by the adjective; instead, adjectives are converted into substantives' (1961: 569), a grammatical move which places the accent on the sensory aspect of the visual experience as

opposed to on the thing itself. Williams (1993) also notes the particular emphasis on what Strether sees in this passage: the ambassador is very much concerned with establishing how phenomena are to be grasped and interpreted; and the critic links this with the nascent philosophical method of existential phenomenology, as formulated by Husserl and recapitulated by Merleau-Ponty.

Williams's approach is complementary to my own: the critic places high importance on the illuminating effect 'epoché' (defined by Husserl (1931) as the process of bracketing all accustomed attitudes and reactions so that the world may appear as pure phenomenon) can have on a reading of James's novels, and this meshes with my investigation into the ways in which James's characters' struggles to articulate their experience highlights the arbitrariness of categories of signification. However, Merleau-Ponty also claims in 'Eye and Mind' that 'to see is to have at a distance; the artist gives visible existence to what is normally believed to be invisible, so that the eye lives in textures as a man lives in his house' (1961: 166); and this makes me think not only of the historicised version of vision Crary describes in *Techniques of the Observer* (1992) and *Suspensions of Perception* (1999) as both collapsing and reinforcing space, but of telepathy, which constitutes 'an oxymoronic distant (*tele-*) intimacy or touch (*pathos*)' (Luckhurst 2002: 1). There is an analogous relation between vision and affect in James's late novels, which sees sensory perception become contiguous with extrasensory forms. For example, in *The Golden Bowl*, in the scene in which Maggie and Adam Verver watch each other across the intervening space of the gallery at Fawns, as Charlotte lectures to her guests, silent communication is uninterrupted ("Poor thing, poor thing" – it reached straight – "isn't she, for one's credit, on the swagger") (James 1904: 527) until Adam 'turns short away' (James 1904: 527) severing the ocular commerce between them, and simultaneously the intersubjective union. Cameron concludes in her commentary

on *The Wings of the Dove* that ‘Regent’s Park becomes the site of thinking. To be in the park is to see the externalisation. For thought is not like a mental activity. It is rather associated with benches and sheep’ (1989: 145). Such textual examples illustrate the extent to which the visual stands in for the verbal to formulate meaning in James novels by showing that ‘inner’ thoughts can be externalised and perceived visually by others⁵.

Moreover, I would contend that by coalescing the verbal and visual, James’s novels fulfil Foucault’s assertion in *The Order of Things*, that ‘between words and objects one can create new relations and specify characteristics of language and objects generally ignored in everyday life’ (1966: 294). As such they have a deep cultural resonance with the intermedial negotiations in contemporary periodicals with which James’s original readership would have been familiar. *The Yellow Book*, for example, juxtaposed avant-garde literature with provocative illustrations to create a mounting edifice testament to its status as the apotheosis of the new in fin de siècle culture. However, as Fletcher asserts, Beardsley, the publication’s art editor ‘mostly widened the gap between text and illustration, and had little interest in the total book’ (1979: 194). The mien which I trace in James’s work, however, has more in common with ‘the Mallarméan suite of blank pages, infinitely interpretable, in the notoriously empty second issue of the *Equinox*’ (Fletcher 1979: 191): insofar as it emphasises the material quality of words.

⁵ By showing the externalisation of ‘inner’ thoughts, these examples from James’s novels also show themselves to be in tune with the Society for Psychical Research’s investigations into crystal-gazing, which explored the confluence between visual perception and telepathy. Indeed, as Lang contends, writing again about Miss Angus’s crystal gazing:

‘...the stretching of the telepathic hypothesis was almost forced on me during her experiments with a glass ball...Again and again Miss Angus, sitting with man or woman, described acquaintances of theirs, but not of hers, in situations not known to the sitters, but proved to be true to fact...the crystal pictures appeared to be directed by the mind of a person present, not always the sitter. Nothing remained for the speculative theoriser but the idea of cross currents of telepathy, between Miss Angus, a casual stranger, the sitters, and people far away, known to the sitters or the stranger, but unknown to Miss Angus.’

(Lang 1900, 48-49)

Foucault asserts in *The Order of Things* that for language to become an ‘object of knowledge among others’ it must render once more ‘noisy and audible the element of silence that all discourse carries with it as it is spoken’, so that the words become ‘isolated, tactile’ (1966: 301). This dynamic is in evidence in *The Golden Bowl*: in Maggie’s last private meeting with her father at Fawns, where strategically placed silences give speech and thought their utmost scope, as they explore the nature of their familial bond. Williams’s analysis of this passage is notable for its emphasis on the materiality of words: ‘language is “folded over” upon silence, and silence upon language; speech wells up out of the diversity of experience, and flows back to reshape and redirect that experience’ (1993: 207). Thus, James perceptively shows how the act of conversing allows language to be turned over and examined in the hands of its speakers, generating a fresh range of meanings. This mode of address, as encountered by the reader, together with James’s own circuitous, nuanced narration fulfils Foucault’s expectation of language as object: ‘a silent, cautious deposition of the word upon the whiteness of a piece of paper, where it can possess neither sound nor interlocutor, where it has nothing to say but itself, nothing to do but shine in the brightness of being’ (1966: 300).

It follows that the opposite of this process can occur: that the object can become a text. Barthes states that everything from painting to objects, to practices, and to people, can be studied as a text (1980); and illuminated by this formula, we can see James’s novels as participating in this discourse on semiotics. It is evidenced in the phenomenological existence of the characters. For example, in *The Wings of the Dove*, Densher senses that Mrs. Lowder represents the overwhelming power which makes Kate exploit Millie. He reads it in ‘the huge, heavy objects that syllabled his hostess’ story’ (James 1902: 73). It is ‘the

language of the house itself that spoke to him, writing out for him, with surpassing breadth and freedom, the associations and conceptions, the ideals and possibilities of the mistress'(James 1902: 74). Moreover, on contemplation of the Lambinet painting which Strether imagines entering in *The Ambassadors*, 'not a single one of his observations but somehow fell into a place in it; not a breath of the cooler evening that wasn't somehow a syllable of the text' (James 1903: 458), thus tacitly positing the view, as Mitchell does, that 'there is no essential difference between poetry and painting, no difference, that is, that is given for all time by the inherent natures of the media, the objects they represent, or the laws of the human mind' (Mitchell 1994: 160-1).

However, this confluence of semiotic categories in James does not necessarily mean submitting to what Bann refers to as 'the risky presumption that the visual work of art can be translated into the terms of verbal discourse *without remainder*' (1989: 28). There is room in the semiotics of James's novels for the conviction that a good proportion of the visual experience which cannot be expressed in verbal terms, and vice versa. Strether's assertion that 'Oh I do see, at least; and more than you'd believe or I can express' (James 1903: 215), which I cited in the chapter previous to this, is a development of his earlier declaration in conversation with Miss Barrace and Bilham that 'You've all of you so much visual sense that you've somehow all "run" to it. There are moments when it strikes one that you haven't any other' (James 1903: 207). Moreover, it can be argued that the dualism James's late novels portray is not between visual and verbal varieties of perception, but between sign and signified. As Wagner asserts, 'ekphrasis has a Janus face' (1996: 13): as a form of mimesis, it stages a paradoxical performance, promising to give voice to the allegedly silent image even while attempting to overcome the power of the image by transforming and inscribing it. As Stevens notes in reference to *The Wings of the Dove*, 'James insistence on "an adopted, a

related point of view”, the filtering of events through a “recording consciousness”, entails a recognition of the distance between signification and signified, the difficulty of getting to the “signified” beyond the particular modes of signification used’ (1998: 22). In this way, James sustains the tension between experience itself, and his characters’ flourishes of creative elaboration, and meaning is postponed through an endless chain of signifiers.

This constant deferral of meaning suggests a mode of reading which can be labelled ‘symptomatic’, after Althusser’s definition. In *Reading Capital* (1965), the author emphasises the ‘opacity of the immediate’ and the difference which it implies between the ‘imaginary’ (derived from Lacan, and denoting a pledged completeness) and the true. According to this model, the gulf is bridged by the reader attending to the absences, gaps, and declensions of a text. In terms of reading James’s late novels, this implies craving the abysses courted by their protagonists in search of meaning. The reader is thus faced with the complex task of tracing out the interweaving patterns of ambiguity, and of following through the machinations by which the text overlays stratum upon stratum of interlocking significations. Such demands are made of readers of any novel; yet as Williams (1993) notes, James’s later fiction represents a special problem, because it relies so heavily upon the creative interpretation of what Iser calls ‘spots of indeterminacy’, ‘the unwritten part’ of the text ‘that gives us the opportunity to picture things; indeed without the elements of indeterminacy, the gaps in the text, we should not be able to use our imagination’ (Iser 1974: 11, cited in Williams 1993).

Moreover, it can be argued that because James’s novels anticipate our conclusions in this way, this way of reading constitutes a kind of thought transference which, in the historical moment in which the novels were written, would be delineated as ‘telepathy’.

Royle asserts that telepathy may appear ‘as some uncanny reading-machine, a sort of reader-response criticism in reverse’ (1991: 7), anticipating our conclusions before we reach them; and the interpretation of the process of reading James’s novels posited above shows that this formulation can work in reverse. As has been discussed, in James’s late novels, meaning is ciphered through the subjective faculties of the protagonists, which in turn is filtered through a circuitous mode of address which elides the boundaries between visual and verbal signifiers only achieving its measure of plenitude once the contributing aspects begin to coalesce with one another. Things are always ‘seeming’ and ‘appearing’ and ‘as if’, and Wood has listed a host of words and phrases of discovery in James’s later work: ‘see that’, ‘see how’, ‘make out’, ‘recognise’, and of course ‘learn’ and ‘know’ (2005: 15). We may experience the slow revelation of knowledge in the process of reading, as Wood suggests, ‘ideas have their present and past life in written words, that in being read they become what they are, which is already a paradox, like slouching towards Bethlehem to be born, and also become what they have been’ (2005: 10).

James’s novels seem to call forth our unformed thoughts, lending force to Myer’s argument that the faculty for telepathy is located in the unconscious (1903), a hidden stratum comprised thoughts and feelings that seldom emerged into the field of attention, habitually identified with the self, so that thought transference is a process of articulating one’s own feelings, not only those of which the mind reader is aware, but also those thoughts and feelings beyond the margins of his or her consciousness. They can therefore be used to help advance the thesis that psychological phenomena are fundamentally textual. This concept has a persistent cross-cultural currency in the *fin de siècle*, with its nexus in the critical process behind Myers’ formulation of coining of ‘telepathy’. As Brocklebank (2005) also notes, it is in theorizing what it means to read that Myers first articulated the concept of telepathy: in a

lecture addressed to the ‘general reader’ and given at the request of the Dublin Afternoon Lectures Committee, he declared: ‘the best way to read other people’s minds,—which we know very little about,—is not to set to work imagining what they are likely to feel, but to tell them what one feels oneself’ (1868: 5, cited in Brocklebank 2005). Myers titled his speech ‘Books to Read: A Lecture’, subsequently printing it privately under the same title, and his assertion of a link between reading and psychic force exemplifies the kind of comments that he put forth in articles for the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychological Research*, as well as those made by contemporary treatises on reading, such as the anonymous reviewer cited by Brocklebank, who explains that the sympathetic force of a novel such as *Villette* would ‘operate upon’ the reader by causing ‘the deepest and saddest secrets of his own being’ to emerge (Brocklebank 2005: 234). The theory of telepathy is therefore inextricably linked to the question of reading, and this formulation is borne out by the circuitous mode of address James employs in his novels. The coordination of these concepts, moreover, echoes the mechanics of intersubjectivity between characters in the texts: for example, in *The Wings of the Dove* Densher relates knowing with reading, pronouncing Kate ‘a whole library of the unknown, the uncut’ (James 1902: 151).

Moreover, Myers emphasises that the ‘readable’ telepathic messages of texts are ‘addressed’ to their specific recipients (1868: 15, cited in Brocklebank 2005), asserting an occult intimacy across space and time, and their interconnectedness with emergent and established forms of written communication can therefore be elucidated.⁶ As Derrida argues, telepathy is governed by a logic of ‘destinerrance’. He writes that ‘The ultimate naivety would be to allow oneself to think that Telepathy guarantees a destination which posts and telecommunications fail to provide’ (1988: 110). Appropriately, telepathic communications

⁶ Thurschwell engages thoroughly with this relation in the third chapter of her monograph, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1992*, with particular emphasis on the typewriter and telegraph and their bearing on intersubjectivity in Henry James’s *In the Cage*.

in *The Wings of the Dove* are doubled by the telegram which beats Densher to his destination, and the letter from Milly to Densher, which is burnt, unopened, as he and Kate ‘recognised it, knew what it was, without touching it’ (James 1902: 441).

Moreover, it is worth noting that, as I will explore in greater depth in my conclusion, a telepathic relationship can be said to exist between texts. For example, Kate Croy’s attestation to Densher in *The Wings of the Dove* that ‘I exist in you’ (James 1902: 261) simultaneously exists in Svengali’s phrenic co-presence with the eponymous heroine of the contemporary popular novel, *Trilby* (1894), and W. T. Stead’s contention in *Real Ghost Stories* that ‘each of us has a ghost inside him’ (Stead 1897: 16). Just as the reader enters a ‘telepathic’ relationship with James’s late novels by coalescing their various and complex aspects to fill the ‘gaps in the text’, so the literary critic or cultural analyst may draw on a relatively small number of literary texts or other cultural exempla to suggest the wider scope of systems of thought at a certain point in history. This insight returns us to Althusser, and *Reading Capital*, where he asserts that the ‘oversights’ of ‘symptomatic reading’ (1965: 20), these intriguing blanks in the crowded text are not only dissociated from conscious authorial intention, but need ‘an informed gaze, a new gaze...produced by a reflection of the “change of terrain” on the exercise of vision’ (1965: 25) to identify them.

Thus, separated from the publication of James’s novels and their cultural milieu by a century, it is now possible to view their characteristic inconclusiveness as a dramatic echoing of inconclusiveness in the wider scope of modernity, and particularly in the context of contemporary visual art. Specifically, they evoke the contours of late nineteenth century debate over the hermeneutic value of Impressionism, which Jay (1994) refers to as the beginning of the ‘antiocularcentric discourse’ in Western thought. This cultural configuration

can be most persistently observed in *The Ambassadors*, in the scene referred to at the beginning of this chapter, where Strether retreats to the French countryside to meditate on the events of his European excursion thus far. ‘The valley on the further side was all copper-green level and glazed pearly sky, a sky hatched across with screens of trimmed trees, which looked flat, like espaliers’ (James 1903: 459). The scene is, as Hopkins also notes, unmistakably of the impressionist mien: ‘Colour details are rendered with greater precision...Distant objects are not described as if the perspective were conventional’ (1961, 569). Moreover, the discovery of Strether’s with which this episode climaxes, that ‘he was mixed up with the typical tale of Paris’ (James 1903: 472) is analogous with the impressionist privileging of the transcendental truth of ‘a world, the phenomena of which are in a state of constant flux and transition, produces the impression of a continuum in which everything coalesces, and in which there are no differences but the various approaches and point of view of the beholder’ (Jay 1994: 174).

However, *The Ambassadors* as a whole suggests a more complicated ontology. The novel achieves its measure of plenitude once the contributing aspects of Strether’s adventure begin to confirm, complement and perfect one another. Nonetheless, the story is complete, but unfinished, as the fates of the characters remain in doubt. As Righter asserts, ‘the absence of emotional fulfilment is a precise area of Jamesian knowledge’, and Milly’s fate in *The Wings of the Dove* is tragic because of its ‘deep and terrifying emptiness’ (Righter 2004: 160); because ‘it is not the result of things that happen to her but of things that don’t’ (Righter 2004: 161). The novel may therefore be said to receive a corrective impulse from the post-impressionist reaction to impressionism characterised by Gauguin’s dismissal of the latter movement (‘they heed only the eye and neglect the mysterious centre of thought’ (Jay 1994: 180)), with the novel in its totality perhaps closer to approximating Seurat’s method. Just as

A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grand Jatte uses tiny juxtaposed dots of multi-coloured paint to allow the viewer's eye to blend colours optically, rather than having the colours blended on the canvas or pre-blended as a pigment, James gives away none of his conclusions, and the reader is obliged to work very hard to judge 'the whole piece by the pattern' (James 1903: 45), though a contrived unity can be achieved by 'viewing' the piece from a hermeneutic distance. A further analogy could be drawn on this basis between James's mode of address and the development of halftone printing. The reprographic technique simulates smooth tone imagery through the use of dots, differing either in size or in spacing, which are merged into continuous tones by the human eye. It was, moreover, prevalent in the multifarious literary culture which my study insists James's novels participate in: as Twyman (1970) asserts, the use of halftone blocks in popular journals became regular during the early 1890s.

Moreover, we might find in Seurat's scientific approach to the emotional and symbolic qualities of line and colour an attitude suggestive of the occulted facility for objects in James's late novels to speak as texts identified earlier in this chapter. According to William Innes Homer (1964), influences on Seurat included the mathematician Charles Henry who in the 1880s delivered monologues at the Sorbonne about the emotional properties and symbolic meaning of lines and colour. Seurat's letter to Maurice Beaubourg in 1890 captures his feelings about the scientific approach to emotion and harmony. Seurat states 'Art is Harmony. Harmony is the analogy of the contrary and of similar elements of tone, of colour and of line, considered according to their dominance and under the influence of light, in gay, calm or sad combinations' (1890: 113).

The inconclusiveness of James's novels therefore illuminates a wider inconclusiveness in fin de siècle culture. In the process of disclosing a fresh perspective on the world which, as my first and second chapters have delineated, is fragmented into multiple perspectives, James forces the reader to enter telepathically into the impressions of another, encountering a tangle of emerging images, halfway between verbal and visual signifiers, which through their engagement with nascent representational tropes in fin de siècle culture, substantiate Wartofsky's assertion of the testimonial value of vision, that it 'is itself an artefact' (1979: 272).

CONCLUSION

I began this thesis by invoking Henry James's assessment of Agnes and Julius Zancig's late nineteenth century stage act involving thought transference, in which the novelist dismisses claims of fraud against the pair, and acknowledges the possibility of telepathy, insofar as it can be co-ordinated with the mysteries of vision and the theory of a 'hidden code' (James 1907: 197). Against the critical backdrop of research such as Luckhurst's, which asserts the subtle ways in which the obsession in James's late fiction with relation itself (2002: 234) can be seen to engage with such fin de siècle encounters with telepathy, I asserted the importance of the visual, as a third term, to fully excavate the cultural work which James's novels are involved in. In my last chapter, this culminated in the delineation of the strange codes compassed by James's novels via the reading process itself: via their constant deferral of authority between verbal and visual signifiers, they emulate the ability of the nascent visual tropes of post-impressionist art and halftone printing to engage us in a kind of telepathy, where we 'complete the incomplete', deriving meaning from absences and declensions. This final conclusion is anticipated by the illations of the preceding chapters: in my second chapter, the abolished philosophical opposition between subject and object as master and slave in James' texts makes way for a nonlinear system of rapport which in turn provides the foundation for the exploration of the aforementioned relation between the reader and novels themselves; and the coordination of the processes of observation and imagination delineated in my first chapter, provides the foundation for an understanding of the strange process of negotiating the peculiar admixture of presences and absences in James's late novels.

However, if texts can be telepathic, is there not a sense in which they can read each other? If, as Derrida asserts, ‘each text is a machine with multiple reading heads for other texts’ (1979: 107), what do *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Ambassadors*, and *The Golden Bowl* read with their mechanical promontories? In the last chapter I asserted that the intersubjective relation between Kate and Densher is contiguous with thought-transference in *Trilby* and *Real Ghost Stories*; and because of the historical moment in which they appeared, all three instances might be delineated as examples of telepathy. But, granting literature the requisite agency to perceive and ‘read’, we are reminded that according to the Bergsonian formulation which my first chapter engages with, recollection is created alongside perception (Bergson 1908), and as such a range of textual memories may be said to be immanent behind the portrayals of intersubjectivity in James’s texts. If, in addition, one considers the contention by Royle that ‘the history of the term “telepathy” is intimately related to that of the concept of sympathy’, a relation which can be traced ‘through the work of David Hume and Adam Smith or, in poetry, through Wordsworth and Coleridge’ (1991: 4), the potential for further research, beyond the borders of this thesis, is revealed in terms of locating the ‘telepathic’ exchanges in James’s late novels within a literary genealogy of affect.

Let us imagine what the parameters of such a study might be. Sympathy is defined in Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* as that which denotes ‘our fellow-feeling with any passion whatsoever’ (1759: 13). Its efficacy for a study of predominantly textual phenomena is affirmed by the way Smith expands on its definition in the *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Here, Smith deals explicitly with the power that the writer has to produce a wide range of sympathetic responses in the reader: ‘We enter into their [sc. Human beings] misfortunes, grieve when they grieve, rejoice when they rejoice, and in a word feel for them in some respect as if we ourselves were in the same condition’ (1764: 90). Royle asserts:

‘...the emergence of Romanticism in the second half of the eighteenth and through the early nineteenth century, was directly linked to an intensified, even unprecedented preoccupation with notions of sympathy; and that in some ways the historical appearance of ‘telepathy’ could be viewed as the inevitable outcome, or hyperbolisation, of the importance of ‘sympathy’ in Romanticism.’

(1991: 4-5)

The embryonic project sketched here would give deference to this critical perspective: the similitude is to be acknowledged between the resonance of Smith’s definition of sympathy with the democratisation of the poetic form by Wordsworth and Coleridge insofar as their emphasis on the vitality of the living voice that the poor use in *Lyrical Ballads* helps point out the universality of human emotions, and the ease with which James’s texts’ tacit invitation to complete the incomplete is accommodated to discourse on telepathy at the end of the nineteenth century.

There is moreover, a limited sense in which sympathy is predicated on a relationship with the visual; and future research into this eighteenth century trope might therefore reasonably build upon the triangulated relationship between telepathy, the visual, and Henry James’s late novels in my current thesis. As Broadie (2006) notes, for Smith, sympathy cannot be detached from spectatorship, for it is spectators who sympathise. According to the doctrine of sympathy as developed in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, sympathy is consequent on a spectator’s cognition of a person’s feelings or emotions. But it is to be noted that when describing sympathy’s most extreme intersubjective leaps, Smith (1759) recurses to aural metaphors such as ‘dissonance’ (14), ‘concord’, and ‘harmony’ (23). With this in mind, I believe it would not be efficacious to pursue the literary and cultural antecedents of

Jamesian intersubjectivity with the same emphasis on the visual as sustained in my current thesis. Instead, it might be contended that the complexities of sympathy are best compassed by showing how the concept engages with purely aural modes of expression such as music. As Foucault asserts in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), a discursive formation continually generates new statements, and some of these usher in changes in the discursive formation that may not be adopted. Therefore, to describe a discursive formation, one must focus on expelled and forgotten discourses, as their differences to the dominant discourse also describe it. This configuration would properly be contextualised by recent research into the eighteenth century discourse on semiotics, semantic tropes in contemporary poetry, and, indeed, the earliest of nineteenth century experiments with telepathy.

Whilst my current thesis is able to conclude by drawing attention to the characteristic indeterminacy of James's late style as a dramatic echoing of inconclusiveness in the wider scope of contemporary visual culture, especially in the context of post impressionist art, which engages the viewer in a kind of telepathy, encouraging him, like the reader of James's texts, to 'complete the incomplete', such a configuration is not available to a discussion of the cultural determinants of sympathy in the eighteenth century. As Barry contends, 'during the eighteenth century...painting stands as the type of the "full" sign, and holds first place in any theory of representation' (1987: 2). Hipple (1954) explores the ways in which painters and poets entered into a complex agreement in their 'imitations' of the sublime, of the beautiful, of the picturesque, and of the natural and social landscape, tacitly appropriating John Locke's 'doctrine of signs' (1690). Locke argues that signs are marks which stand for things: that is, 'their proper and immediate signification' (1690: 290). These are not the 'abysses' to touch at a distance with those in *The Wings of the Dove*. But, as Barry has contended,

‘...little attention has been given to the ways in which eighteenth-century thinking also includes another interaction: that between a concept of language and a concept of the “empty” sign. Such an interaction presupposes ideas about the inadequacies of representation. It looks to music, rather than painting, in order to describe an alternative and conflicting model of interpretation and of value’

(1987: 11)

Barry goes on to elucidate that given that a piece of instrumental music must seem, according to Lockean principles, to be void of signification, the gratification it supplies is proof of the need for an aesthetic subtle and intricate enough to include ‘the pleasures of uncertainty in interpretation and of some free subjectivity in response’ (1987: 21). The analogy with music is used here to classify and to express the association between signs and their reception, between words and reading. I would suggest that the response of the listener to the ‘empty’ signs of music may therefore become a model of the response of the reader to the text recalling the emphasis by Iser on the creative interpretation of ‘spots of indeterminacy’ (Iser 1974) in the work of art as recapitulated earlier in my third chapter with specific reference to James’s gnomic mode of address.

It would be argued that Romantic literature is particularly receptive to this configuration due to its peculiar tenor and mode. Criticism appears to buttress this perspective: Minahan (1992) and Donelan (2008) also contend that a persistent figure exists in Romantic poetry which posits language as a kind of music, the emptiness of which contributes to its intensity. This trope can be observed in Book V of Wordsworth’s ‘The Prelude’, where the mysterious sound of a shell is ascribed visionary power so that the speaker hears ‘...an unknown tongue, / Which yet I understood, articulate sounds, / A loud

prophetic blast of harmony' (1850: 175, cited in Royle 1991). Elsewhere, the enigmatic music of the Abyssinian Maid in Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' becomes the site of ekphrasis, imaginatively recreating in air the Khan's 'sunny dome' and 'caves of ice' through a kind of synaesthesia so that 'all who heard should see them there' (1816: 103).

Thus establishing sympathy as a purely aural phenomenon, it would be investigated how far telepathy might also be defined as such. It would be posited that Smith's insistence on the terms 'dissonance' and 'concord' to show the varying degrees of sympathy, echoes the vocabulary used in the nineteenth century to explain thought-reading. In 1882, William Barrett explained:

'...the brain might be regarded as the seat of radiant energy like a glowing or sounding body. In this case, the reception of this energy would depend upon a possibility of synchronous vibration in the absorbing body; which, moreover, may be constituted like a sensitive flame in a state of unstable equilibrium, so that a distant mental disturbance might suddenly and profoundly agitate particular minds, whilst others might remain quiescent.'

(1882: 62, cited in Luckhurst 2002).

Oliver Lodge, attempting to explain telepathy to a general readership in *Forum* magazine, pointed to the synchronous vibrations of tuning forks: 'A couple of tuning forks, or precisely similar music instruments, isolated from each other and from other bodies, suspended in the air, let us say. Sound one of them and the other responds – i.e. begins to emit the same note.

This is known in acoustics as sympathetic resonance' (1909: 56, cited in Luckhurst 2002)⁷. Building upon these collocations between sympathy and telepathy, my prospective study would attempt to compass what traces of 'sympathetic resonance' remain in Jamesian intersubjectivity, rising up from the texts' unconscious, to encounter the present moment, performing the function of 'true memory' as Bergson (1908) defines it. Academic work which identifies the common tendency of late nineteenth century opera and James's novels towards indeterminacy (Jordan & Kafalenos 1989) would be marshalled as further critical context for this prospective work.

Thus, by elucidating the parallelism between the labyrinthine narratologies of James's late novels and contemporaneous musical compositions, the conclusions of my current thesis might be engaged with and extended, as the tripartite relation between telepathy, the visual, and the novels of Henry James is re-imagined as situated within a web of confederate discourses including sympathy, Romantic poetry and the musical sign.

⁷ Any discussion of 'sympathetic resonance' would necessarily also refer to John Tyndall's lectures on sound (1867), which Luckhurst (2002) co-ordinates with theories of Barrett and Lodge in his analysis.

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