

PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA AND THE BODY IN THE LATE NOVELS OF HENRY JAMES

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

School of English, Drama and American and Canadian Studies

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The University of Birmingham

April 2013

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the connections between fin de siècle accounts of psychical phenomena and the extraordinary bodily capabilities of the characters in Henry James's late novels. In reaction to the scholarly commonplace that these characters are simply refined out of corporeal existence, I posit the alternative that their bodies are unconventionally constituted: hyperaesthetic like the Society for Psychical Research's 'sensitives', or materially reconfigured like the 'etheric bodies' of the dead envisioned by Sir Oliver Lodge, and thus perfectly adapted for life in the phantasmagorical world of James's 'major-phase' and beyond. Against the backdrop of recent scholarly work on the material world of James's novels by Thomas Otten, Victoria Coulson and others, and theories of embodiment such as those of Didier Anzieu, I assert the importance of fin de siècle psychical research narratives of the hyperextension of human bodily capabilities and their historical collocates in art, literature, and occult philosophy to fully excavate the cultural work with which Henry James's late novels are involved.

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INTRODUCTION

On New Year's Day, 1907, Henry James wrote a letter to his neighbour, Mary Frances Prothero, wife of the Cambridge academic Sir George Prothero, in which he recalled a performance by the London telepathists Julius and Agnes Zancig. The Zancigs' show, entitled 'Two Minds With but a Single Thought', comprised a series of instances of Agnes apparently reading the mind of her husband. Their performances at music halls took the following form. They took the stage in front of a simple drop scene. In front of this, close to the footlights, in the middle of the stage, Madame Zancig took her position, holding a piece of chalk by the side of a slate. After a few words of introduction, Mr Zancig appealed to anyone in the audience to give him any article, name, or number as he ran hither and thither about the hall, and Madame Zancig instantly described it or wrote it upon the slate.¹ In his letter, James writes:

The Zanzig [sic] stuff in the newspaper strikes me as, in its cheap crudity, most unfortunately compromising to the theory of the *reality* of their performance (which it appeared to me, under that *1st* impression, the only one to be held.) But I wish you & Mr George could go for a *second* impression – I wd. myself if I were remaining. Stuart Cumberland (the old conjurer & trickster) has written somewhere to *declare* it a trick – the result of a very wonderfully elaborated code of signalling them (& that he, – an arch-juggler – having seen them, judges this possible, is a little striking.) 'Why does he always wear a white coat? Why

¹ See W. T. Stead, 'The Next Wonder of the World', *Review of Reviews*, 34 (1906), 592–597.

does she wear “telescopic eyeglasses” of great power?” 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. Also Stead – John Hare told me last night at the Lewis’s – had them at his own house, one upstairs & one down, & with an outsider making the signal (thump on the floor,) when he – the man, above, – had ‘taken’ the article, & another outsider recording in the room below the woman’s infallible naming of it. No ‘code’ there if Stead’s story be veracious. But I haven’t seen it! They had at any rate better, the couple, stop ‘writing.’ And so had I! Ever yours

Henry James [emphases James’s]²

This letter is remarkable for two reasons in particular. Firstly, it shows James directly engaging with discourse on the psychical, a subject which other extant epistolary evidence shows he treated very cautiously.³ There is even, in James’s statement that he, too, had better ‘stop “writing”’, a tacit admission that his own textual performance is analogous to the Zancigs’. Secondly, it equates the psychical gift of telepathy with the

² Letter, Henry James to Lady Mary Frances Prothero (1 Jan. 1907), *Dear Munificent Friends: Henry James’s Letters to Four Women*, ed. by Susan E. Gunter (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 195-197 (p. 197).

³ See for example how James’s assent to reading his brother William’s paper on the spiritualist medium Mrs Piper at a meeting of the Society for Psychical Research is balanced by his writing to one of its leading members in advance of the date, and stating ‘my complete detachment from my brother’s labour and pursuits, my *outsideness*, as it were, to the S.P.R.’ (Letter, Henry James to Frederic W. H. Myers (7 Oct. 1890), *Henry James Letters: 1883-1895*, ed. by Leon Edel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), III, p. 302.)

extension of bodily capability, specifically Agnes Zancig's vision, enhanced by her "telescopic eyeglasses" of great power'. In what follows, I will show that these emphases are of the utmost significance to our understanding of Henry James's fin de siècle fiction.

The centrality of the psychical to the aesthetic of James's late works reveals their imbrication with discourses not complementary to their accepted status by conservative literary critics as 'high art'.⁴ James's invocation in his letter of the integrity of the opinion of the journalist and editor W. T. Stead is highly suggestive in this regard. James writes in his letter that the record of Stead's tests would dispel any lingering doubts over the truth of the Zancigs' abilities, were he to read it. Stead did indeed publish his own defence of the Zancigs, in an article for the December 1906 issue of the *Review of Reviews*, entitled 'The Next Wonder of the World'. It covers in detail both the Zancigs' performance at the Alhambra Music-hall, and, indeed, some tests carried out at Stead's house, which seem likely to have been the subject of the gossip heard by James. Though no record survives of James's response to this particular article, scholarship suggests that James's wide reading of the periodical press would have included Stead's writing on the occult.⁵ James's letter therefore draws attention to a point of contact between two writers, whose authorial voices are ostensibly so distinct from each other. Whilst Stead was the pugnacious purveyor of a brand of New Journalism, hugely influential in shaping public opinion, James wrote

⁴ See, for example, the trends in modern James scholarship criticised in Leo Robson, 'The Master's Servants: On Henry James', *The Nation*, 2012 <<http://www.thenation.com/article/170785/masters-servants-henry-james#>> [accessed 9 March 2013].

⁵ Kate Campbell, "Other Agencies at Work" in W T Stead: Journalism and the Occult' (presented at the W. T. Stead: Centenary Conference for a Newspaper Revolutionary, British Library, 2012).

highbrow, complex, and ultimately poorly selling prose fiction. However, the correspondence between the two goes beyond the statement of a common interest. The way in which Stead imagines the phenomenon of telepathy correlates with James's presentation of a strata of communication between characters in his late novels which is 'practically without words'.⁶ In Stead's article on the Zancigs, he draws attention to the *physical* reality of thought transference between the pair. Stead states that the Zancigs 'had their respective mental batteries so perfectly adjusted, each to each, that the vibration of the thought-current of the man instantly registered itself upon the mind of the wife'. He goes on to describe the development of psychic capabilities as a perfection of the human organism in step with the most recent technological achievements, borrowing his vocabulary overtly from scientific discourse on wireless telegraphy, as developed by Guglielmo Marconi. He cites scientific research which confirms that 'the human brain is based upon the same principle as the coherer and de-coherer of the Marconi instrument for receiving and transmitting messages', proclaims thought to be electricity, and brain cells to be 'storage batteries to store the electricity generated by the life processes'. Stead writes that telepathy 'simply requires two minds very congenial thinking the same thought to the same metre – that is, whose electrical vibrations are the same as in the Marconi instruments – and then to generate a sufficient current to produce a conscious communication'. Two highly receptive minds, keyed to the same thought-vibration would be in conscious communication all the time. He argues that the fact that we have not had such conscious, continuous telepathy is proof that 'no two highly

⁶ Henry James, *The Golden Bowl* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 260. All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations from the text.

receptive minds in history have been in the same thought-vibration'.⁷ James's late novels share a focus on the physical reality of psychical phenomena; the very vocabulary used by James to describe the psychical suggests a thorough engagement with occult discourse. Often psychical ability is figured as sensitivity to reverberation, à la Stead - for example, in *The Spoils of Poynton*, Fleda Vetch perceives that '[t]he very vibration of the air [...] told her that whatever Mrs Brigstock's spirit might originally have been, it had been sharply affected by the sight of Owen [emphases mine]'.⁸ I aim to show that a variety of sense impressions are marshalled to suggest the degree to which the psychical blends with the material – pertaining to a range of fin de siècle textual 'doubles' from diverse cultural fields. These connections with contemporaneous writing on psychical phenomena contradict the most lasting characterisations of James's late works as detached and unworldly, such as H. G. Wells's famous admonishment of them for being 'superficial' 'tales of nothingness' which 'omit everything [from life] that demands digressive treatment or collateral statement'.⁹

Following the cultural connections James's late work makes with occult discourse means diverging from critical commonplaces pertaining to James's use of the bodily and the supernatural. Instead of regarding the bodies of James's characters in the late novels as refined into irrelevance, I will argue that they are unconventionally constituted: often hyperaesthetic or materially reconfigurable. I

⁷ Stead, 'The Next Wonder of the World', p. 595.

⁸ Henry James, *The Spoils of Poynton* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 149. All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations from the text.

⁹ H. G. Wells, *Boon, the Mind of the Race; The Wild Asses of the Devil; And the Last Trump* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2007), pp. 315, 110, 107.

posit James's late novels, not his experiments with more traditional modes of supernatural fiction, such as the ghost story, as an unexpected still point around which the diverse facets of fin de siècle discourse on the occult assemble; fin de siècle psychical narratives of the hyperextension of human bodily capabilities and their historical collocates in art, literature, and occult philosophy are required to fully excavate the cultural work with which Henry James's late novels are involved. The trio of works which are held to constitute the author's 'major phase' - *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904) – form the theoretical centre of my thesis. Sustained reference is also made to other fin de siècle novels by James which share the 'psychical' characteristics of the major phase works: *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), *The Sacred Fount* (1901), and *The Sense of the Past* (published posthumously in 1917, but the first part of which was written in 1900). The short story, 'The Jolly Corner' (1907) is also discussed in depth for the reason James made it a vessel for the themes of time travel and dispersed bodily presence first explored in *The Sense of the Past*, before the hitherto abandoned latter work was revisited by its author in 1914.

In connecting James's fiction with contemporaneous occult discourse, I necessarily build on what is known of how the author's personal life brought him into contact with this body of knowledge. The author's familial ties allow me to position him as an occult 'native' who 'comes home' when developing the psychical emphases in his late work. James's father, the theologian Henry James Sr., ensured that non-conventional spirituality was prominent in the novelist's early life. In 1844, when Henry was one year old, James Sr. experienced a 'vastation', causing him to experience, in his own words, 'a perfectly insane and abject terror, without ostensible cause, and

only to be accounted for, to my perplexed imagination, by some damned shape squatting invisible to me within the precincts of the room, and raying out from his fetid personality influences fatal to life.’¹⁰ James Sr.’s experience prompted a two-year crisis of faith, which was ultimately only settled through a thorough immersion in the work of Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish Christian mystic. Among the conclusions James Sr. subsequently reached, was the idea that through the intuition of true, strictly spiritual reality, freedom from the deceptions affected by the physical appearance of things– which include normative notions of time, space, and selfhood – was possible.¹¹ Both William and Henry attempted to engage with their father’s work, and scholars have noted the correspondences between the writing of the three Jameses.¹² William James would go on to engage in the scientific investigation of a range of psychical phenomena from the late 1880s on, especially focussing on mediums, and trance phenomena.¹³ He was president of Society for Psychical Research¹⁴ in the United Kingdom between 1894 and 1895, and co-founded the American Society for Psychical Research in 1885, becoming its first president. William corresponded with Henry on the topic of psychical research, and urged his brother to take a close interest in it. As Roger Luckhurst notes, James’s sister, Alice, ‘had a different relation to the psychical,

¹⁰ Andrew Taylor, *Henry James and the Father Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 41.

¹¹ See Taylor.

¹² See C. Hartley Grattan, *The Three Jameses: A Family of Minds: Henry James, Sr., William James, Henry James* (New York: New York University Press, 1962); Alfred Habegger, *The Father: A Life of Henry James, Sr* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Taylor.

¹³ See William James, ‘Report on Mrs Piper’s Hodgson-Control’, in *Essays in Psychical Research*, ed. by Robert A. McDermott (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 253–360.

¹⁴ Subsequent references to the Society for Psychical Research are abbreviated to SPR.

as the resistant object of “neurotic science”.¹⁵ She had her first breakdown at the age of nineteen, and her condition was called, at various points in her life, hysteria, nervous hyperaesthesia, and spiritual crisis.¹⁶ As is explored in my first chapter, her nervous receptivity connects her to both the female ‘sensitives’ depicted by Henry James and those studied by psychical researchers. The psychical sympathy that apparently existed between the James siblings and its possible influence on James’s writing has also been noted by critics. Luckhurst, for instance, connects Alice reporting that Henry had comforted her by ‘assuring me that my nerves are his nerves’ with the latter sketching a story in which a brother and sister ‘vibrate with the same nerves’: ‘He has to tell her nothing –she *knows*: it’s identity of sensation, of vibration [emphasis Henry James’s]’.¹⁷ Analysis of the psychical facets of Henry James’s fiction is necessarily expedited by reference to scholarship on the family of ‘psychical Jameses’.¹⁸

Records of James’s social activity buttress our sense of James’s imbrication with psychical discourse. Peter Beidler cites epistolary evidence to prove that James was acquainted with the leading figures in the SPR and their ideas: for example, that he corresponded with the psychical researcher Edmund Gurney, and owned a copy of his study in hallucinations and thought transference, *Phantasms of the Living* (1886), and discussed his own ghost stories with Frederic Myers, a founding member and one time president of the SPR who theorised about the presence of what he called the

¹⁵ Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 239.

¹⁶ Jean Strouse, *Alice James: A Biography* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), p. ix.

¹⁷ Henry James, *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. by Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers, annotated edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 111, 112; cited in Luckhurst, p. 235.

¹⁸ Luckhurst, p. 237.

'subliminal self', a deep quarter of the unconscious which he believed could account for paranormal events.¹⁹ James's close friend, the novelist, Constance Fenimore Woolson read Thomson Jay Hudson's *Law of Psychic Phenomena* (1892) and enthused about the 'new science of telepathy'.²⁰ After her death James occupied her rooms in Oxford. Lyndall Gordon writes:

[F]or a man alert to the extra-sensory it meant a chance to know Woolson through her rooms: [...] Woolson herself had believed in posthumous telepathy: she had said that the recently dead, whose acute feelings have pervaded their rooms, can make themselves felt there.²¹

James's last amanuensis, his typewriting secretary who took dictation from 1907 until his death in 1916, was Theodora Bosanquet, who was also a psychical researcher, and later went on to edit the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, and even contacted the 'spirit' of Henry James in 1933.²² Such social linkages help to trace the discursive formations which James's novels participate in; whilst he becomes the realist novelist par excellence during the fin de siècle, it is to be noted that he never leaves the world of spiritual and psychical experience into which he was initiated at a young age.

¹⁹ Peter G. Beidler, *Ghosts, Demons, and Henry James: The Turn of the Screw at the Turn of the Century* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989).

²⁰ Lyndall Gordon, *A Private Life of Henry James: Two Women and His Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998), p. 204.

²¹ Gordon, p. 204.

²² See Pamela Thurschwell, 'Henry James and Theodora Bosanquet: On the Typewriter, In the Cage, at the Ouija Board', *Textual Practice*, 13 (1999), 5–23.

James also made a number of direct personal contributions to occult discourse during the fin de siècle. In 1890, he read William's paper on the medium Mrs Piper at a meeting of the SPR in his brother's absence. The uncanniness of this act of ventriloquism was not lost on the brothers, as their correspondence shows, William writing to Henry that 'I will *think of you* on the 31st at about 11a.m. to make up for the difference in longitude [emphasis William James's]'.²³ Henry would subsequently remark on his astonishment at 'Mrs Piper's so striking – to me very wonderful – echo of Mother' as communicated to William's wife, and express a desire to sit with the medium which he admitted reached 'the degree of an obsession'.²⁴ Early in the twentieth century, James engaged with Theosophist pedagogy and proposed publishing his findings. On 5 March 1907, he wrote to Elizabeth Jordan, the editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, offering a number of 'American notes & impressions' for publication in the magazine, including his 'little visit to that extraordinary place Point Loma, Southern California, the neo-Buddhist (educational) paradise of the amazing lady who runs it, (Mrs Tingley)'.²⁵ Philip Horne's footnote in *Henry James: A Life in Letters* elaborates that James visited Point Loma in late March or early April 1905; in 1904 Katherine A. Tingley, successor to Blavatsky in charge of the Theosophical Movement, had established there her Raja-Yoga College, Theosophical University, and School for

²³ Letter, William James to Henry James (20 Oct. 1890), *William and Henry James: Selected Letters*, ed. by Elizabeth M. Berkeley and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), pp. 245-246 (p. 245).

²⁴ Letter, Henry James to Alice Howe Gibbens James (14 March 1906), *Dear Munificent Friends: Henry James's Letters to Four Women*, pp. 61-65 (p. 62); Letter, Henry James to William James (17 Nov. 1906), *William and Henry James: Selected Letters*, pp. 477-479 (p. 479).

²⁵ Letter, Henry James to Elizabeth Jordan (5 March 1907), *Henry James: a Life in Letters*, ed. by Philip Horne (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 446.

the Revival of the Lost Mysteries of Antiquity.²⁶ In the early months of 1910, Henry joined eight other prominent figures in contributing to a symposium on the subject of immortality for *Harper's Bazar*. James's essay appeared in two monthly instalments the following January and February; the nine submissions were then re-issued collectively by Harper and Brothers as a volume of consolatory essays under the title *In After Days: Thoughts on the Future Life*, which opened with a meditation on the subject by the American realist author, William Dean Howells, whose photograph occupies the frontispiece, and closed with James's thorough metaphysical enquiry entitled 'Is There a Life after Death?'. James's interventions on the topic of the occult emphasise its paradoxical everydayness; the accessibility of psychical discourse for the author undermines the argument of biographers who downplay its significance in James's life.²⁷ James's fin de siècle non-fiction thus offers distinct avenues into the author's novels from the period, in which engagement with the occult is more veiled.

Reading James's work against the context of contemporaneous writing on psychical phenomena is therefore rehabilitatory. In this way, I situate it amidst the cultural milieu within which it was produced. Moreover, the species of occult thought during the period are diverse. I draw on this diversity to position James's work as enmeshed within complex historical networks. The main strands of fin de siècle occult thought can adumbrated as the scientific, the popular, the religious, and the aesthetic. The SPR was founded in 1882 as 'an organised and systematic attempt to investigate the large group of debateable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric,

²⁶ *Henry James: a Life in Letters*, p. 446.

²⁷ See, for example, Fred Kaplan, *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius : a Biography* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

psychical and Spiritualistic'.²⁸ The Constitution and Rules of the SPR were explicit about its indebtedness to scientific naturalism: to be a psychical researcher, it stated, 'does not imply the acceptance of any particular explanation of the phenomena investigated, nor any belief as to the operation, in the physical world, of forces other than those recognised by Physical Science.'²⁹ Early indications of the Society's inherent sympathies towards Spiritualism in the face of 'scientific incredulity' were belied by a series of debunkings of well-known occult practitioners during the 1880s.³⁰ W. T. Stead expressed the opinion that the Society's indefatigable scepticism (as he saw it) risked stalling progress in the field.³¹ Stead's own journal, *Borderland*, published 1893-1897, professed the aim of 'popularising Psychical Research',³² and his *Real Ghost Stories* (1897) published under the auspices of the *Review of Reviews*, requisitioned the Christmas annual format for the democratising, educative purpose of

²⁸ 'Objects of the Society', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1 (1882), p. 3.

²⁹ 'Objects of the Society', p. 4.

³⁰ See Luckhurst, p. 57.

³¹ Edith L. Harper states that 'What are known as psychical research methods were abhorrent to him. He held them truly unscientific in the most extended meaning of the word. He said he would rather die in the workhouse than believe that anyone would tell him a deliberate falsehood for the mere purpose of deceiving him' (*Stead, the Man: Personal Reminiscences* (London: W. Rider, 1918), p. 136). Lewis Spence notes how in a speech before members of the Cosmos Club in 1909, Stead lampooned the SPR's sceptical attitude towards the reality of communication with departed spirits by depicting himself shipwrecked, in danger of drowning, and desperately calling for help. Stead envisioned that instead of taking immediate life-saving action, would-be rescuers from the society would engage him in the following conversation: "Who are you? What is your name?" "I am Stead! W. T. Stead! I am drowning here in the sea. Throw me the rope. Be quick!" But instead of throwing me the rope they continue to shout back: "How do we know you are Stead? Where were you born? Tell us the name of your grandmother" (*Encyclopaedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), p. 882).

³² W. T. Stead, 'How We Intend to Study Borderland', *Borderland*, 1 (1893), 3-6 (p. 6).

finally dispel[ing] the absurd and unscientific prejudice which has hitherto rendered it almost impossible to persuade ordinary people to admit that they have seen or heard anything of the kind which it is popularly described as 'supernatural'.³³

Periodicals such as *Light* (the organ of the London Spiritualist Alliance), and the *Occult Review* disseminated material to the reading public which was unambiguous about prepossession of belief in the spirit world. Stead's work acknowledged the religious impulse behind non-scientific writing on the occult. *Letters from Julia*, for example, a 'guidebook to the hereafter' dictated to Stead via automatic writing by the departed spirit of Julia Amnes, an American journalist he met in 1890, printed first in *Borderland* in 1897 and reprinted in book form as *After Death* in 1905, drew on non-monotheistic religious language: there were good and evil 'angels'; reincarnation was true 'but not a universal law'.³⁴ Swedenborg's visions of 'heavenly realms', which so fascinated Henry James Sr. were also integral to the religious strand of spiritualist belief.³⁵ Fin de siècle Theosophy was a branch of spiritualist philosophy which combined religious, scientific, and popularising elements. It drew on religion of Eastern as well as Western origin, its purpose initially having been the 'study and elucidation of Occultism, the Cabala etc.'³⁶ However, its practitioners did not see the

³³ Letter, W. T. Stead to F. W. H. Myers (October 1891), 'Book of the Month: *Real Ghost Stories*', *Glasgow University Library Special Collections Department* <<http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/month/dec2007.html>> [accessed 3 April 2013].

³⁴ W. T. Stead, *After Death* (London: Stead's Publishing House, 1921), pp. 33, 149–150.

³⁵ See Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998).

³⁶ 'Notes of Meeting Proposing the Formation of the Theosophical Society' (New York, 1875).

pursuit of spiritual truth as mutually exclusive to the goal of making a contribution to scientific knowledge; clairvoyant vision was professedly vital to the theses of works such as C. W. Leadbeater's 'Occult Chemistry' (1895). Their work was not clandestine; the Theosophical Society's leader, Madame Blavatsky was a well-known public figure, and in some quarters an infamous one, the SPR's 1885 'Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate Phenomena Connected with the Theosophical Society' concluding that Theosophy was the product of a 'woman's monomania' and her 'morbid yearning for notoriety'.³⁷ If indeed invention was fundamental to the theosophical writing of Blavatsky and her colleagues, this was by no means its only intervention in occult discourse. Sarah Crofton has argued convincingly for the shared aesthetic of works of 'automatic' spirit writings as a genre, and Dorothy Scarborough asserts that records of psychical experience were used as the raw material for fiction during the nineteenth century.³⁸ The complex interconnections of this web of confederate discourses reminds us that it is not sufficient simply to state that a text is inflected simply by 'the occult', as to James's intellectual milieu this label could mean different things depending on the persons and ideas under discussion. My reading will show that James's late work, commonly viewed as the harbinger of the highbrow movement of literary modernism, is in fact thoroughly pervaded with ideas from contemporaneous non-literary texts which spark across various fields of discourse.

³⁷ Richard Hodgson, 'Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate Phenomena Connected with the Theosophical Society', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1885, pp. 313–314.

³⁸ Sarah Crofton, "'Julia Says': Spirit-writing and the Editorial Mediumship of W. T. Stead" (presented at the W. T. Stead: Centenary Conference for a Newspaper Revolutionary, British Library, 2012); Dorothy Scarborough, *The Supernatural in Fiction* (London: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1917).

One of the shared values connecting these approaches to the occult was an emphasis on the bodily and the relation of the physical to the psychical. As I will explore in depth in my first chapter, nervous sensitivity, especially in women, was considered by psychical researchers a quality in mediums which enhanced their ability to contact discarnate spirits. *Light* professed astonishment that the SPR ‘should expend about £1000 a year in a subtle attempt, under the disguise of a Greek synonym [“telepathy”], to insinuate into the inquiring mind a quasi-scientific form of materialism’.³⁹ When Stead made his comparisons between human psychic capabilities and recent technological developments, his figurations had a corporeal basis; in his analogy for telepathy, it was his *body* not his soul which he described as being ‘like a bifurcated telephone’.⁴⁰ Alex Owen writes that the production of fully materialised spirit bodies at séances was considered ‘the acme of mediumistic development’ during the late Victorian era.⁴¹ The effect of the full body materialisation can be seen as a consequence of the widespread belief in occult thought of a counterpart to the physical body existing on another plane of materiality, called the ‘thought body’ by Stead, ‘etheric body’ by the physicist and psychical researcher Oliver Lodge, and ‘astral body’ by theosophists.⁴² The prominence of the body in fin de siècle discourse on psychical phenomena compels its use in my thesis as

³⁹ ‘The Telepathy Theory’, *Light*, 1885, p. 122.

⁴⁰ Stead, ‘How We Intend to Study Borderland’, p. 5.

⁴¹ Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England*, New edition (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), p. 42.

⁴² W. T. Stead, *Real Ghost Stories: a Revised Reprint of the Christmas and New Year’s Numbers* (London: Grant Richards, 1897); Oliver Lodge, *My Philosophy, Representing My Views on the Many Functions of the Ether of Space* (London: Ernest Benn, 1933); Arthur E. Powell, *Astral Body and Other Astral Phenomena* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 1998).

a means of connecting this body of thought with James's work – a connection not made by extant criticism.

This is not to say that valuable scholarly work has not been done on the psychical aspects of James's work. A number of scholars assert that James's fiction, especially *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), draws directly on documents from the field of psychical research. Francis X. Roellinger's 'Psychical Research and "The Turn of the Screw"' (1948-9); Elizabeth A. Sheppard's *Henry James and The Turn of the Screw* (1974), and most recently, Peter G. Beidler's *Ghosts, Demons, and Henry James: The Turn of the Screw at the Turn of the Century* (1989) are exemplary of this strain of Jamesian criticism. Beidler applies rigorous close analysis to both James's novella and 'cases' from the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* with a view to unveiling correspondences. He concludes:

Henry James knew the people who were at the very centre of certain controversies about ghosts and demons, that he had read widely in the published books and articles about such subjects, and that he was careful to write 'The Turn of the Screw' in such a way that it would have sounded realistic to those at least generally familiar with spiritualism and psychical research.⁴³

By submitting both the James texts and psychical 'cases' to rigorous close analysis this strain of criticism produces convincing discourse-based connections. However, due to the methodology used, these connections are necessarily local; I believe that the criticism of Beidler et al can be built upon by drawing on a larger sample of James

⁴³ Beidler, p. 16.

texts, and by attending to the connections between the psychical and other seemingly disparate fields of fin de siècle discourse.

James's fiction is also drawn on at length in wider ranging studies of the psychical during the period. Pamela Thurschwell's *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking* (2001) and Roger Luckhurst's *The Invention of Telepathy* (2002) mix cultural history and literary analysis, devoting discrete sections to *The Sense of the Past* and 'In the Cage' in detail in the case of the former, and a broad sweep of James's life and works in the case of the latter. One of the advantages of this approach is that it shows how their historicised key terms – Thurschwell's 'magical thinking' and Luckhurst's 'telepathy' – connect in unexpected but ultimately convincing ways to a surprising range of fin de siècle contexts. My research will also exploit the channels of occult discourse to draw together a complex network of intellectual fields. By making these connections on the basis of their traceability in James's work, I hope to evince, without entering into the debate as to whether James consistently believed in the reality of psychical phenomena, the prevalence of interest in spiritualism and the psychical among thinking men and women during the period.

More recent criticism uses the ghostly metonymically in analysis of James's texts. A number of these theoretical approaches are collated in the edited collection, *Henry James and the Supernatural* (2011).⁴⁴ For example, Greg Zacharias and Gert Buelens focus on the ghostly character of James's narratologies, whilst Kevin Ohi contributes to the growing critical discourse on queer spectrality in his essay on James's tale 'Maud-Evelyn', disentangling the tale's intricate narrative configurations

⁴⁴ Anna Despotopoulou and Kimberly C. Reed, *Henry James and the Supernatural* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

to reveal the concealments and absences inherent in both the epistemology of the ghost story and the closet.⁴⁵ My research extends the collection's stated aim to investigate the inherent ghostliness of James's mode of address by synthesising it with contemporaneous texts from a variety of fields – scientific, aesthetic, spiritualist – in which the analogous tendencies can be traced, and drawing historicising conclusions on the basis of these discursive formations. However, aside from Kristin Boudreau's chapter on *The Wings of the Dove* there is little focus in the volume on James's longer fiction; my work will address this absence.⁴⁶

My thesis posits a shift in focus in relation to the vast majority of scholarly work on the psychical in James. Whilst *Henry James and the Supernatural* largely takes its cue from the extant criticism in the field, which has focussed on James's short stories, and especially, almost obsessively, on 'The Turn of the Screw', I make James's late *novels* my subject, with the intention of showing the psychical to be a central rather than marginal aspect of his aesthetic.⁴⁷ In James's 1909 preface to the New York Edition of *Roderick Hudson*, the author notes that 'Really, universally, relations

⁴⁵ Greg Zacharias, "'The Complexion of Ever so Long Ago': Style and Henry James's Ghosts", in *Henry James and the Supernatural*, ed. by Anna Despotopoulou and Kimberly C. Reed (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 13–34; Gert Buelens, 'Uncanny Doublings in "Owen Wingrave"', in *Henry James and the Supernatural*, ed. by Anna Despotopoulou and Kimberly C. Reed (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 149–164; Kevin Ohi, 'Queer Maud-Evelyn', in *Henry James and the Supernatural*, ed. by Anna Despotopoulou and Kimberly C. Reed (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 137–148.

⁴⁶ See Kristin Boudreau, 'Immensities of Perception and Yearning: The Haunting of Henry James's Heroes', in *Henry James and the Supernatural*, ed. by Anna Despotopoulou and Kimberly C. Reed (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 35–58.

⁴⁷ In this sense, my work seeks to emulate that accomplished in Helen Sword's *Ghostwriting Modernism* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2002). Sword focusses on the work of later, canonical modernist writers including James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, H. D., James Merrill, Sylvia Plath, and Ted Hughes and remaps the field to show spiritualism, unexpectedly, at its heart.

stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily *appear* to do so [emphasis James's].⁴⁸ James notes that *Roderick Hudson* was

[...] my first attempt at a novel, a long fiction with a 'complicated' subject, and I recall again the quite uplifted sense with which my idea, such as it was, permitted me at last to put quite out to sea. I had but hugged the shore on sundry previous occasions; bumping about, to acquire skill, in the shallow waters and sandy coves of the 'short story' and master as yet of no vessel constructed to carry a sail.⁴⁹

In James's long works of novelistic maturity I find that the scale and complexity of the geometric patterns created by the relations between the protagonists becomes so great as to recall the reported conditions of psychical phenomena during the fin de siècle. I note Martha Banta's prescient, but little-heeded remark in *Henry James and the Occult*, that in the ghost stories, '[James's] artistic manipulation so transforms the basic notions that he no longer seems to be writing about the occult'.⁵⁰ In the late novels, on the other hand, there are special characteristics present which make connections to the occult credible. Of primary interest is the shifting materiality of the physical in these texts, which accounts for that strand of criticism including the chapter on James in F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948) that prefers the works of

⁴⁸ 'Preface to *Roderick Hudson*', in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York, NY; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 3–19 (p. 5).

⁴⁹ Henry James, 'Preface to *Roderick Hudson*', p. 4.

⁵⁰ Martha Banta, *Henry James and the Occult: The Great Extension* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 5–6.

his early and middle periods on the basis that they are more solidly real, and Bill Brown's more recent judgment that the material in James's late work is to be understood as 'a matter of aura'.⁵¹ I argue that the physical world of the late novels corresponds to the physics of the spiritual world imagined by fin de siècle commentators. Another pertinent characteristic of James's late novels is the strange ability shared by a number of his protagonists to communicate non-verbally and by occult channels. This facility seems to realise the fantasy of telepathy interrogated by the SPR; there is even in the term telepathy's coinage as a paradoxical 'distant touch' a sign of its aptness as a tool via which to interrogate the ethereal world of the late novels. Myers glossed the coinage as 'feeling at a distance'; Luckhurst asserts that "The Victorian ear would hear distant yet *physical* touch in *tele* + *pathos* (sympathy had the same root in physiology) [emphasis Luckhurst's]".⁵² The full exploration of how far and in what ways the psychical mode of intimacy negotiated by fin de siècle investigators and spiritualists, and James's characters' occulted interaction in the strange 'air of reality'⁵³ of the late novels are imbricated with each other requires the scope of a full length study.

In making the bodily the point of contact between James and the psychical in my thesis I oppose one of the most longstanding conventions in criticism on the author's work; that the corporeal existence of James's intellectually well-endowed

⁵¹ F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1948); Bill Brown, 'A Thing About Things: The Art of Decoration in the Work of Henry James', *Henry James Review*, 23 (2002), 222–232 (p. 226).

⁵² F. W. H. Myers, 'Entry on Telepathy in the Glossary', in *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1903), I, p. xxii; cited in Luckhurst, p. 70.

⁵³ Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction', in *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*, ed. by James E. Miller (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), pp. 27–44 (p. 35).

characters is so impoverished as to not be of scholarly interest. Early twentieth century accounts of Henry James's late fiction as populated by characters not truly alive in a bodily sense have surely been influential in fostering this critical commonplace. Joseph Conrad's description of James as a mere 'historian of fine consciences', and Virginia Woolf's account of James's characters in her review of *The Golden Bowl* as 'so many distinguished ghosts', equipped with 'thoughts and emotions,' but effectively refined out of corporeal existence are cases in point.⁵⁴ Gert Buelens and Celia Aijmer cite such scholarly works as a possible reason why '[Collin] Meissner's analysis of the significance of experience, for instance, focuses on hermeneutics and the formation of knowledge rather than on how experience in James is connected with sexuality, illness, ageing and death'.⁵⁵ This testifies to the critical hegemony's longevity.

However, more recently, critics have addressed this scholarly silence on the topic of bodies in James's work. A number have focussed on hidden desires in James, often taking a cue from biographies of the author, such as Sheldon M. Novick's, which foreground the novelist's veiled homosexuality.⁵⁶ Hugh Stevens demonstrates the importance of passions pertaining to homosexuality, incest, and masochism in James's

⁵⁴ Joseph Conrad, 'Henry James: An Appreciation', in *Notes on Life and Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 15–20 (p. 19); Virginia Woolf, 'Mr James's Latest Novel', in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), 22–24 (p. 23).

⁵⁵ Gert Buelens and Celia Aijmer, 'The Sense of the Past: History and Historical Criticism', in *Henry James Studies*, ed. by Peter Rawlings, Palgrave Advances (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 192–211 (p. 197); see also Collin Meissner, *Henry James and the Language of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁵⁶ Sheldon M. Novick, *Henry James: The Young Master* (New York, NY: Random House, 1996); Sheldon M. Novick, *Henry James: The Mature Master* (New York, NY: Random House, 2007).

body of work.⁵⁷ Ronnie Bailie centres on James's unconscious fantasies concerning the human body, but still exhibits deference to the critical hegemony inaugurated by Conrad and Woolf – stating ‘On the face of it, the fiction of Henry James offers so little of anatomical interest that any attempt to place the body at the heart of an interpretation of his work is more likely to provoke amusement or derision than critical sympathy’.⁵⁸ Others, including Bill Brown, Victoria Coulson, and Thomas Otten have integrated the human body as part of the object world in James.⁵⁹ The work of Otten in particular is built on in my thesis as it draws attention to the telepathic ‘distant touch’ facilitated by objects in *The Spoils of Poynton*.

Nonetheless, despite these advances, I do not believe the bodily in James's novels has been dealt with fully by critics in terms of its relation to the psychical. There is a spectral emphasis in Woolf's original dismissal of the corporeal in James which rebuttals of her argument also need to acknowledge; if we aver that James's sensitive protagonists are indeed alive in a bodily sense, a positive statement needs to be made about how this conception of them affects their ghostliness. Woolf's review itself states that ‘Mr James's eyes, we are often led to think, must be provided with some extra fine lens, the number of things he sees is so extraordinary. It follows that

⁵⁷ Hugh Stevens, *Henry James and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁸ Ronnie Bailie, *The Fantastic Anatomist: A Psychoanalytic Study of Henry James* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), p. 1.

⁵⁹ Brown, ‘A Thing About Things’; V. Coulson, ‘Prisons, Palaces, and the Architecture of the Imagination’, in *Henry James Studies*, ed. by P. Rawlings, Palgrave Advances (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 169–191; Victoria Coulson, ‘Who Cares About Charlotte Wentworth?: Fancy-work in Henry James’, *The Henry James Review*, 31 (2010), 21–26; Thomas J. Otten, *A Superficial Reading of Henry James: Preoccupations with the Material World* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2006).

his characters are similarly endowed'.⁶⁰ One of the tenets of my thesis is that the characters of James's late novels are 'hyperaesthetic', defined by the OED as the sensory state of being 'excessive or morbidly sensitive', and associated in fin de siècle discourse on the psychical with a capacity for telepathy and clairvoyance. Contrary to what appears ostensibly to be Woolf's thesis in her review (she wrote to Violet Dickinson that following substantial editing, the published version was now 'worthless and doesn't in the least represent all the toil I put into it'),⁶¹ she does provide the basis of an argument that James's characters can be both ghostly and alive. This configuration would be familiar to early twentieth century readers through accounts by spiritualists and psychical researchers of those 'sensitives' whose heightened sensory faculties apparently allowed them access to an occulted plane of reality.

There are, to summarise, three main needs which my thesis addresses with relation to extant scholarship: the need to read James's late novels against cultural milieu within which they were produced, bringing out his work's relation to high and low discourse on psychical phenomena; the need to address the psychical in the late novels with the thoroughness with which extant criticism has treated 'The Turn of the Screw' and James's other ghost stories; and the need, in doing so, to acknowledge the bodily as a primary point of contact between fin de siècle accounts of psychical phenomena and James's work, and as of central importance to understanding of these texts, contrary to critical commonplace. To do these things is to reimagine as difference the corporeal absence identified in late James by influential early critics; the

⁶⁰ Woolf, 'Mr Henry James's Latest Novel', p. 23.

⁶¹ Letter, Virginia Woolf to Violet Dickinson (mid-February 1905), Virginia Woolf, *The Flight of the Mind: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, 1888-1912*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson, 6 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1975), I, p. 178.

bodies of the author's late protagonists are not constituted like those of normal human beings, but like séance mediums and the 'sensitive' subjects of psychical research. Like their real-world analogues, the characters can touch, see, and hear things which would be beyond the spatial and temporal reach of the normal human sensorium. Moreover, as I shall explore in detail, the discourse of the psychical in late James claims resonances with fin de siècle psychology, physical science, hypnotism, spiritual philosophy, painting, poetry, and market forces, thus establishing surprising levels of imbrication between these discourses.

In chapter one I explore how, in *The Spoils of Poynton*, the relay between Fleda Vetch and Mrs Gereth's tactile impressions and the psychological demonstrates the text's engagement with late nineteenth century discourse on the 'sensitive'. A variety of 'sensitive' identities are posited for the novel's characters to reveal the range of their sensory capabilities. First, I focus on the potency of skin as a metaphor for the psyche and the slippage between the mingling of bodies and the mingling of minds which therein inheres. Didier Anzieu's theory of the 'Skin Ego', which asserts that the skin acts as the threshold for both exogenous and endogenous stimuli on behalf of the bodily consciousness, is used to bring out the character of Fleda Vetch and Mrs Gereth's tactile hyperaesthesia. I argue that the pair's sensitivity evokes that of the nervous female invalid in fin de siècle culture, with the example of Henry James's sister, Alice, claimed as illustrative. Subsequently, I explore how this faculty results in the troubling of temporal boundaries, as the handling of ancient objects by Fleda and Mrs Gereth activates dormant traces of the past in the present, in a manner which suggests a structural parallel with the performance of psychometry by spiritualist mediums. Finally, this chapter culminates by focussing on how Fleda's identity as an

aspiring impressionist painter aligns her with a third category of sensitive in the novel – the artist. I explore how impressionism's application of the model of touch to the distance sense of sight ('haptic vision') helps elucidate, in the person of Fleda, the ability to extend the boundaries of the self, and ultimately reach an increased sensitivity to the pregnant textures of the object world which borders on what Frederic Myers called the 'telaesthetic'.⁶²

The idea that the basic configuration of the senses is alterable becomes the focus of chapter two. Using Lambert Strether's synaesthetic perception of Sarah Pocock as 'dressed in a splendour of crimson which affected [him] as the sound of a fall through a skylight'⁶³ as my starting point, I delineate the cultural resonances of James's protagonist's intersensory mode of vision in *The Ambassadors* in the fields of literary Symbolism, Impressionist painting, and Theosophy. The Parisian setting of *The Ambassadors* allows for these contexts to be examined both in terms of their instantiation in French culture, and in terms of their translation to James's British intellectual milieu. First, I examine Strether's mode of vision via the work of symbolist poets such as Arthur Rimbaud. I not only read James's novel as theoretically in tune with the literary movement which heralded Western culture's wider acquaintance with synaesthesia, but given the distillation of medical literature on subjective visions in, for example, 'Voyelles', interpret Strether's condition as empirically explicable, albeit by the most distant frontiers of scientific thought. William James and Francis Galton's presence at a plenary session on 'the subject of Abnormal Association of

⁶² F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1903), I, p. xv.

⁶³ Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), p. 176. All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations from the text.

Sensations of one kind with those of another' at the Paris Congress of Physiological is cited as evidence of the direction of the current of intellectual progress on the issue between France and Britain.⁶⁴ Here, as in my first chapter, discourse on impressionism provides a means to culturally situate the intersensory in late James, but in this case it is through the artists' equating of the visual with the auditory through the 'harmony' of colour combinations, rather than with touch. I argue that Strether's visual 'compositions' aspire to the affectual power of music after the manner of paintings by Claude Monet, Edouard Manet, and Georges Seurat. The association of colours with emotions in *The Ambassadors* leads to my equating the novel with theosophical discourse circulating in Britain and France during the fin de siècle. In particular the concept of 'thought forms', as articulated by Besant and Leadbeater, the shapes apparently made of coloured light which simultaneously indicate not only vestiges of personality and emotional states, but access to an occulted stratum of reality on the part of the perceiver, help illuminate Strether's developing ability to understand the treacherous existential conditions of Paris, where 'what seemed all surface one moment seemed all depth the next' (43). Through this last comparison the basis of a non-verbal system of communication between the highly sensitive individuals in James's late work (in *The Ambassadors*, between Strether and Maria Gostrey) is advanced.

The potential for the extended sensory capabilities of James's characters to facilitate intersubjectivity is explored further in my third chapter, on sound. I assert that the privileging of sound in *The Sacred Fount*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The*

⁶⁴ William James, 'The Congress of Physiological Psychology at Paris', *Mind*, XIV (1889), 614-616 (p. 614).

Golden Bowl leads to the carving out of a shared auditory space, the limits of which are determined by the intersubjective bonds between characters who communicate by all manner of sonorous signals. This is elucidated theoretically by way of Anzieu's concept of the 'sound envelope', a pre-individual psychical cavity whose internal rumblings, echoes, and resonances give psychoanalysts a model for unconscious communication between persons. The theoretical argument is advanced in support of an overarching historicising one: that the appearance of such sonorous phenomena in James's late novels indicates their imbrication with the contemporaneous discourse of spiritualism whose veneration of a spirit world which coexists with the physical world was evidenced, especially in séances, by auditory phenomena. I elucidate how sympathetic vibrations, disassociated voices, and mesmeric music suggest the presence of a protean auditory space for both James's characters and fin de siècle witnesses of psychical phenomena.

Reading James's major phase novels in relation to the phenomenology of the séance draws into question the nature of materiality which they depict, especially with regard to bodily matter. My fourth chapter focusses on how, in James's later, more overtly experimental fictions, *The Sense of the Past* and 'The Jolly Corner', the physical re-configurability of bodies gives rise to intercorporeality. In these works, James's protagonists, Ralph Pendrel and Spencer Brydon, change places with ghostly alter-egos after stepping inside their ancestral homes, in which multiple temporalities play out palimpsest-like, on top of each other. This intercorporeal exchange is experienced as both dismemberment and materialisation. I argue that the two texts draw for their vision of a fecund and immanent parallel world, on the open connections between literary and psychical discourse during the late Victorian and early Edwardian period.

I argue that the shifting physical reality which is depicted as existing in the houses in *The Sense of the Past* and 'The Jolly Corner' is a logical development from that which I have identified in the other late James novels which I draw on in my thesis, and that it focalises the essentiality of the psychical to the aesthetic of all these texts as a body of work.

In my final chapter the figure of the reconfigurable body is used as a metaphor for the afterlife of James's body of work, allowing us to connect his textual output with the frontiers of postmodern theories of agency, especially the posthuman which makes of bodily consciousness 'an "I" transformed into the "we" of autonomous agents operating together to make a self'.⁶⁵ This dispersal of bodily agency is traced through the interaction of the James corpus with other entities during the course of its existence: the texts it shared the nineteenth century marketplace with, variants of James's own texts, Theodora Bosanquet and her typewriter, the writers of biographical fiction, and the various human and non-human actants involved in the composition of electronic texts. I conclude by explaining how these configurations bring to the fore the latent spectrality of twenty-first century theories of bodily consciousness.

By reading James's late texts in terms of their relation to the bodily and the psychical I hope to offer manifold new routes into their culture and our own. As I will assert at a number of junctures in this thesis, and especially in my third chapter, the telepathic in late James is commonly figured as experienced in a bodily sense as a kind of sympathetic vibration, produced in one body by the vibrations of the same

⁶⁵ N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 9.

frequency in a neighbouring body. James described the effect of literary reception in similar terms in his critical work, popular literature being figured as producing a ‘vibration’ to which a significant number of readers are attuned. For example, in his review of the work of the French poet, Edmond Rostand, reprinted in the *Review of Reviews*, James writes:

His freely figurative, his boldly macaronic style, his verbal gymnastics and pictorial somersaults, his general romp through the unexpected – which is largely his hunt for rhyme through not only the past and present but the future of the language – all represent the elements of toughness and good humour required for so much exposure and such a pitch of *reverberation* [emphasis mine].⁶⁶

Ostensibly, as the producer of highbrow, complex, and ultimately poorly selling novels during his late career, James would appear to have little in common with the popular Rostand, named in the title of the article from the *Review of Reviews* from which the above quotation is taken as ‘The Poet of the Cosmic Boom’.⁶⁷ However, I hope to show that the psychical emphases in James’s late novels, tuned to another frequency, resonate with a discursive intellectual network of texts of their own. In view of these correspondences, I posit a remapping of the way in which fin de siècle texts relate to each other.

⁶⁶ ‘The Poet of the “Cosmic Boom”’, *Review of Reviews*, 1901, 506–506 (p. 506).

⁶⁷ The use of idea of reverberation to describe the reception of the written word is an often repeated trope in James’s work, finding its most extended exploration in *The Reverberator* (1888). In my conclusion I reflect further on this aspect of James’s short novel.

CHAPTER ONE: TOUCH AND THE SENSITIVE

In *The Invention of Telepathy*, Roger Luckhurst notes that in Henry James's fiction, 'Telepathic or clairvoyant hyperaesthesia is associated with the feminine from "Sir Edmund Orne" (1892) onwards'.⁶⁸ Luckhurst argues that this connection emerges from 'a matrix of cultural and scientific conventions [...] narratives of the intrinsic superiority of feminine nervous sensitivity, or its utopian potentials of transcendent, telepathic affinity, that offered potential value to the female nervous "invalid", the New Woman, and the woman medium alike', and uses the term 'sensitive' to designate the (usually female) persons to whom these qualities and roles pertained.⁶⁹ In this chapter I will build upon Luckhurst's criticism by attending in detail to a James novel which he does not include in his argument, *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), and the sense of touch, which he deals with only in passing. The sensitives in this novel are women - Mrs Gereth and Fleda Vetch - and their nervous sensitivity is in stark opposition to the moribund sensibility of Owen Gereth and his fiancée Mona Brigstock, who is characterized as masculine in her aggressive self-assertion. Mrs Gereth and Fleda experience the world ontologically through touch. This evokes the occulted efficacy of the nerves as delineated by fin de siècle science, situated as an interstitial system facilitating communication between mind and body (the material constituents of nerves and the nature of nerve-force being unknown).⁷⁰ My argument will explore

⁶⁸ *The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 243; Hyperaesthesia is defined by the *OED* as 'Excessive and morbid sensitiveness of the nerves or nerve-centres'.

⁶⁹ *The Invention of Telepathy*, pp. 214–5.

⁷⁰ See Janet Oppenheim, *'Shattered Nerves': Doctors, Patients, and Depression in Victorian England* (New York, NY; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

how this relay between tactile impressions and the psyche demonstrates engagement with the aforementioned discourse on the 'sensitive'.

The argument will be advanced in three stages, connecting James's characters with three types of fin de siècle 'sensitive'. The first section focuses on the potency of skin as a metaphor for the psyche in *The Spoils of Poynton*, and the slippage between the mingling of bodies and the mingling of minds which therein inheres. Mrs Gereth and Fleda's sensitivity is compared to the 'dangerous permeability between body and mind' attributed to the nervous female invalid in contemporary culture.⁷¹ Henry James's sister Alice, a patient on whom hypnosis techniques incorporating tactile manipulation were used with some efficacy, is used synecdochically to represent the sensory and psychical investments of this group. The second section is concerned with how tactile hyperaesthesia results in the blurring of temporal boundaries, as Fleda's handling of Mrs Gereth's collection of ancient objects activates dormant traces of the past in the present. The correspondence between this ability and the medium Mrs Piper's gift, to read the personal history of objects handed to her in séances, as reported by William James, is explored. The culminating third section focuses on Fleda's status as an impressionist painter in *The Spoils of Poynton*, and how her training is linked to her ability to see haptically. I build connections between Fleda and female impressionist painters of the fin de siècle such as Berthe Morisot, and assessments of their abilities which tend toward the psychical. I argue that through Fleda's combination of the proximity sense of touch with the distance sense of vision, she extends the boundaries of the self, and ultimately attains an increased sensitivity

⁷¹ See Athena Vrettos, *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 89.

to the pregnant textures of the object world which borders on 'teleesthesia', the facility which Frederic Myers attributes to the figure of the painter in his chapter on the 'Genius' in *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903), as the ability to directly perceive conditions or objects independently of the normative channels of sense.⁷² I use this structure to show the development of the figure of the sensitive in *The Spoils of Poynton* from a mere receptive subject for whom the self inheres in the physical surface of the body to one for whom this passivity is rendered a kind of power and ultimately an aid to artistic production, whilst also giving expression to the range of cultural fields through which it is focalised.

I

At the start of this trajectory, I will use Didier Anzieu's psychoanalytic concept of the 'Skin Ego' to elucidate how the relay between touch and the psychical in *The Spoils of Poynton* is directed by certain faculties of the skin.⁷³ Anzieu's theory develops the psychical topography established by Sigmund Freud in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), that 'the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations', and therefore may be 'regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body'.⁷⁴ Anzieu summarises its operativity in the following way:

⁷² F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1903), II, p. xv.

⁷³ See Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁷⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id - First Edition Text* (London: Martino Fine Books, 2010), p. 78.

Every psychical activity is analytically dependent upon a biological function. The Skin Ego finds its support in the various functions of the skin. [...] I shall briefly indicate three of the functions [...] The primary function of the skin is as a sac which contains and retains inside it the goodness and fullness accumulating there through feeding, care, the bathing in words. Its second function is as the interface which marks the boundary with the outside and keeps that outside out; it is the barrier which protects against penetration by the aggression and greed emanating from others, whether people or objects. Finally, the third function – which the skin shares with the mouth and which it performs at least as often – is as a site and a primary means of communicating with others, of establishing signifying relations; it is, moreover, an ‘inscribing surface’ for the marks left by others.⁷⁵

For Anzieu, the skin marks the crossover point between the phenomenal world, and the all that which we figuratively refer to as interior to the self - the emotions, the psyche, and the soul. In *The Spoils of Poynton*, the exceptional refinement of the skin as seat of tactile perception in James’s protagonists allows for an enhanced range of potential outcomes for both self-formation and intersubjectivity.

Anzieu asserts that developmentally, skin to skin is the foundational mode of communication between human beings: ‘the skin is the first organ through which meanings are exchanged; echopraxes and echolalias can only develop against an original background of echorhythmias, echothermias and echotactilisms’.⁷⁶ In *The*

⁷⁵ Anzieu, p. 40.

⁷⁶ Anzieu, p. 152.

Spoils of Poynton, the way of the skin structures complex and unspoken social connections. The precise nature of these configurations can be explored through Anzieu's concept of 'thermal envelopes': the 'envelope of warmth' and 'envelope of cold'. The 'envelope of warmth', Anzieu writes:

(so long, of course, as it does not become too hot) is evidence of narcissistic security and a cathexis of the attachment drives sufficient for the patient to enter into a relationship of exchange with the other, on condition that the exchange is based on the respect of each other for the individuality and autonomy of the other: everyday speech significantly terms such relations 'warm'. This envelope marks out the boundaries of a peaceful territory, its frontier posts allowing the entry and exit of travellers who are simply checked to make sure they are carrying neither evil intentions nor weapons.⁷⁷

Intimacy between sensitive characters in James's novel, and indeed between the characters and the object world, is often presented in terms of temperature. To be at Poynton is to experience 'warm closeness with the beautiful' (41). Similarly, when Mrs Gereth invites Fleda to Ricks, she writes that she 'shall have warmed the place a little by simply being [there] for a week' (73). Taking this principle to its extreme, the oppressive clutter of Waterbath causes Mrs Gereth's face to 'burn' (37). The efficacy of the 'envelope of warmth' for the purpose of framing the subtle intersubjective relations between characters in *The Spoils of Poynton* is brought into more complete relief by the deployment of its inverse: 'the envelope of cold'. The 'envelope of cold' is

⁷⁷ Anzieu, p. 175.

explained in *The Skin Ego* through 'the case of the writer'. The 'first phase of creative mental work' is:

a 'chilling' phase, represented metaphorically by a plunge into the cold [...] with the accompaniment of shivering and recourse to physical illness and fever to restore the body heat, a fatal sensation of losing one's bearings in the whiteness of a freezing fog, and a 'cooling' of relations with friends and lovers.⁷⁸

The external face of the Skin Ego becomes a 'cold envelope', which suspends relations with the outside world by freezing them. The inner face of the Skin Ego, thus protected, finds itself maximally available to thoughts repressed or not yet symbolised, whose elaboration will give the work its originality. The phenomena elucidated here are evocative of Mrs Gereth's description of her removal to Ricks: 'It has been like plunging into cold water. I saw the only thing was to do it, not to stand shivering' (73). It is this freezing of relations with the outer world which allows her to complete, alone, the creative work, not of writing, but of decorating Ricks through the exercise of her 'infallible hand' (202) before self-consciously warming the atmosphere in preparation for the arrival of her friend. These examples demonstrate how the fundamental penetrability of the skin becomes a model for the inner lives of James's characters.

The degree to which the Skin Ego can serve, in Freud's terms, as a 'mental *projection* of the surface of the body [emphasis mine]' ⁷⁹in *The Spoils of Poynton* also

⁷⁸ Anzieu, p. 176.

⁷⁹ Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p. 78.

finds expression in the character of Mrs Gereth, whose psychical integrity becomes theoretically contiguous with the protecting walls of Poynton. As James's narrator notes, Mrs Gereth 'couldn't leave her own house without peril of exposure' (41), and, as already noted, the poor taste exhibited at the Brigstocks' home of Waterbath causes her skin to 'burn'. Anzieu also notes that the failure of the Skin Ego's containing function – 'when the psychical topography consists of a kernel without a shell' – results in 'an instinctual excitation that is diffuse, constant, scattered, non-localisable, unquenchable' and the ultimate pursuit of 'a substitute shell'.⁸⁰ This crisis is played out in James's novel through Mrs Gereth's flight to the smaller family house, Ricks, bringing with her 'the very best pieces – the *morceaux de musée*, the individual gems' (81) to recreate the enshrining aura of the collection at Poynton. James therefore constructs Mrs Gereth's psychical sensitivity as connected to bodily responsiveness, by working within what Claudia Benthien calls 'the long iconographical and metaphorical tradition' of the analogy between house and body.⁸¹

The Spoils of Poynton's engagement with this tradition incorporates nineteenth century discourse on the relationship between homes and their inhabitants, and thereby accommodates the idea of the skin as a felt boundary that can be penetrated from the outside through the sensory perception of pain and pleasure. Mrs Gereth figures the loss of her objects as an 'amputation' (79); Thomas Otten notes that her references to her own nervous system reflect a typical way of explaining how houses

⁸⁰ Anzieu, p. 98.

⁸¹ Claudia Benthien, *Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and the World* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 23. Benthien argues that, in the language of the German philosopher, Hans Blumenberg, the house is the 'absolute metaphor' of the body, since it can be considered, at least in Western thought, as universal and self-referential.

become such extensions, how ways of thinking about the detail of architectural design shape ways of thinking about the details of the body and vice versa. Otten argues that for late nineteenth century writers, the physiological effects of the house seem so strong that sometimes the difference between the body and house 'simply drops out'. For example, he notes:

a character in Stowe's 1871 novel *Pink and White Tyranny* suggests that women 'have nerves all over their house[s],' or when the narrator of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wall-Paper' (who like Mrs Gereth is kept awake by ugly wallpaper) imagines a body like her own behind the 'sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin' that 'confuse the eye' and 'irritate' the nerves with their optic horror.⁸²

The convention which James's novel engages with is clearly gendered, too, coordinating the 'separate spheres' ideology which situated women protected within the privacy of the home with the viewpoint expressed in such works as the British physician and psychologist Havelock Ellis's *Man and Woman: A Study of Secondary and Tertiary Sexual Characteristics* (1894) that 'a woman instinctively responds more easily than a man to influences from without' and had 'unquestionably superior' tactility due to her more elaborate nervous system.⁸³

Because the psychic topology of *The Spoils of Poynton* is laid out in this way, I contend that it is discursively linked to the investigative borderlines of fin de siècle

⁸² Otten, p. 47.

⁸³ Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman* (London: A. & C. Black, 1894), pp. 408, 400; cited in Luckhurst, p. 218.

science which engaged with hypnotism and related trance-states. To prove this it is first useful to establish the debt which the concept of the 'Skin Ego' has to such practises. Anzieu is explicit about the debt his theory has to Sigmund Freud's 'contact-barrier'. First named in a manuscript Freud sent to the German otolaryngologist Wilhelm Fliess in 1895, the 'contact-barrier' closes when something comes in contact with it, and thereby permits partial passage. It should, Anzieu asserts, be read as contingent with the evolution of Freud's therapeutic techniques, which at the time included hypnosis, and the cathartic method which often combined 'mental concentration' with 'the application of the doctor's hands to the patient's forehead'.⁸⁴ The American psychologist, G. Stanley Hall, writing for the journal *Mind* in 1881, asserted that 'all the secrets of the soul are somehow or other bound up in those of the nervous system', citing as evidence the work of the Scottish physician James Braid, who had proven that the 'abnormal inhibition of the will' of hypnotic subjects could be achieved by bodily 'passes, fixation, rubbing [...] also by walking the subject up, down, and around'.⁸⁵ It is this mingling of the sensitivity to physical and psychical pressure which is a preoccupation in James's novel, where tight embraces are figured as opportunities for divination.

The potential for coterminous mingling of bodies and minds is delineated through Fleda's judiciousness with regard to displays of physical affection. As David Lodge notes, she 'allows Owen only one embrace, and is most characteristically seen

⁸⁴ Anzieu, pp. 71–76.

⁸⁵ Stanley Hall, 'Recent Researches on Hypnotism', *Mind*, 6 (1881), 98–103 (pp. 103, 98).

as running away from him [...] whenever he shows signs of being amorous'.⁸⁶ She is however so often described kissing or being embraced by Mrs Gereth, that Victoria Mills has suggested that the nature of their relationship 'moves beyond that of romantic friendship into the realms of same-sex desire'.⁸⁷ In these instances, the degrees of physical and psychical intimacy correspond: one embrace with Mrs Gereth leads to a near immersion of Fleda's psyche in the older woman's: 'at the moment of their embrace Fleda felt on her shoulders the return of the load, whereupon her spirit quailed as she asked herself what she had brought up from her trusted seclusion to support it' (170); 'She had the sense of being buried alive, smothered in the mere expansion of another will, and now there was but one gap left to the air' (175). On another occasion, Fleda's friend's mere proximity leads her to determine that 'if Mrs Gereth so popped in and out of the chamber of her soul, she would at least return the freedom' (122-123).

These passages are permeated with fin de siècle discourse on feminine sensitivity. This can be explicated through reference to the diary and correspondence of Henry James's sister, Alice. Alice, as an adult, was perpetually invalided. As Jean Strouse notes in her biography of Alice, she was 'delicate', 'high-strung', 'nervous', and given to prostrations; and her life can be seen especially in the context of 'the history of nineteenth century women, and the science of nervous disorders'.⁸⁸ Alice had her first breakdown at the age of nineteen, and her condition was called, at various points

⁸⁶ David Lodge, 'The Art of Ambiguity', in *After Bakhtin: essays on fiction and criticism*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 129–142 (p. 134).

⁸⁷ Victoria Mills, "'A Long, Sunny Harvest of Taste and Curiosity': Collecting, Aesthetics and the Female Body in Henry James's *The Spoils of Poynton*", *Women's History Review*, 18 (2009), pp. 669–686 (p. 672).

⁸⁸ Strouse, pp. ix, x.

in her life, hysteria, nervous hyperaesthesia, and spiritual crisis⁸⁹ – a range of diagnoses which corresponds to the gamut of physical and psychical pliancies attributed to the ‘sensitive’. Luckhurst has noted ‘The sister haunts the instances of trance-women who stand at the boundary of [...] Henry’s work’,⁹⁰ and Alice herself claimed that Henry ‘has embedded in his pages many pearls fallen from my lips, which he steals in the most unblushing way’.⁹¹

Luckhurst also provides an account of Alice’s accepting hypnotherapeutic relief in her last years, on the suggestion of her older brother, William James, who wrote to her in November 1890 stating, ‘If I were you, I would seriously try *hypnotism* which might do you good. Dr Lloyd Tuckey has written what seems to me a very creditable book on its therapeutic effects. [F. W. H.] Myers if asked could give Henry his London address [emphasis William James’s]’.⁹² Alice’s letter to William in December 1891 attests to how Tuckey’s methods prompted a psychological calming via the interstitial system of the nerves: ‘What I *do* experience, is a calming of the nerves & a quiescent passive state, during which I fall asleep, without the sensations of terror which have accompanied that process for many years [emphasis Alice James’s]’.⁹³ Tuckey’s ‘credible book’, *Psycho-Therapeutics* (1889) reveals that his mode of hypnotism combined verbal suggestion with rubbing of the physical seat of the affliction. Where his patients suffered from nervous disorders, like Alice, Tuckey rubbed and kneaded

⁸⁹ Strouse, p. ix.

⁹⁰ Luckhurst, p. 239.

⁹¹ Alice James, *The Diary of Alice James*, ed. by Leon Edel (London: Penguin, 1982), p. 212; cited in Luckhurst, p. 239.

⁹² Letter, William to Alice James (26 Nov. 1890), *Correspondence of William James* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), p. 114; cited in Luckhurst, p. 239.

⁹³ Letter, Alice James to William James (2 Dec. 1891), *The Death and Letters of Alice James*, ed. by Ruth Bernard Yeazell (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 199-200 (p. 199).

the spine. In cases of insomnia – the condition she was especially afflicted with at the time – he would gently stroke the forehead.⁹⁴ Alice suggests that the rapport established between herself and her doctor – like that between Fleda and Mrs Gereth – is bilateral: ‘He seems to be much penetrated with my abnormal susceptibility’.⁹⁵ What is of particular pertinence to the figure of the sensitive in Henry James’s work is that Alice’s companion Katherine Loring has ‘very much better results’ at establishing rapport with the patient than Tuckey does.⁹⁶ Luckhurst argues that this perhaps owed to the unusual fellow-feeling between the two women, whose relationship was suspected within the James family of being sexual.⁹⁷ Physical and psychical intimacy are contingent in Alice and Katherine’s relationship, and this turn is echoed by the clinch between the *The Spoils of Poynton*’s pair of highly sensitive women, in both cases somewhat mirroring the warnings from contemporary medical discourse on the sensitive which argued that affective ties between women risked becoming ‘morbid’ through over-stimulation of their more sensitive nervous systems, producing lifelong perversities of sexual function.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ C. Lloyd Tuckey, *Psycho-therapeutics* (London: Balliere, Tindall, & Cox, 1889).

⁹⁵ Letter, Alice James to William James (2 Dec. 1891), *The Death and Letters of Alice James*, p. 199; cited in Luckhurst, p. 240.

⁹⁶ Letter Alice James to William James (2 Dec. 1891), *The Death and Letters of Alice James*, pp. 199–200; cited in Luckhurst, p. 240.

⁹⁷ Luckhurst, p. 240; R. W. B. Lewis draws attention to Alice James’s sister-in-law (William James’s wife, also named Alice), saying of Alice James that ‘she is not made as other women’, and takes this as a reference to Alice James as lesbian (*The Jameses: A Family Narrative* (London: Deutsch, 1991), p. 365). Jean Strouse writes that ‘Henry’s continuing unease about Alice’s relations with Katherine showed up in the novel he was working on in the 1880s’, *The Bostonians*, and the language ‘rich in sexual nuance’ with which he describes the ‘Boston marriage’ between the characters Verena and Olive (244, 246).

⁹⁸ See Luckhurst’s chapter on the ‘new woman’ in *The Invention of Telepathy*, pp. 219–227.

In *The Spoils of Poynton*, Mrs Gereth's sense of touch is so acute as to be symptomatic of tactile hyperaesthesia.⁹⁹ The movement from sensory stimulus at the surface to 'inner' contemplation is evident in the explicit connection between the handling of antique treasures and her emotional and intellectual life. Explaining her attachment to the objects in her collection to Fleda and Owen, Mrs Gereth rhapsodises 'There isn't one of them I don't know and love [...] Blindfold, in the dark, with the brush of a finger, I could tell one from another' (53). Fleda observes that 'Mrs Gereth had really no perception of anybody's nature – had only one question about persons: were they clever or stupid? To be clever meant to know the marks' (126). In fact, Mrs Gereth's sense of the meaning that can be derived from surfaces is even applied to her appraisal of Fleda after the latter's perceived failure in not having married Owen: 'One doesn't know what one has hold of in touching you' (183). This development reveals a further resonance of the 'Skin Ego' in James's novel through the surface of the body's capacity to register traces. The Skin Ego, Anzieu states, is 'the original parchment which preserves, like a palimpsest, the erased, scratched-out, written-over first outlines of an "original" pre-verbal writing made up of traces upon the skin'.¹⁰⁰ It is 'not merely a containing sac; it plays an active role in putting the psyche into contact with the external world and gathering and transmitting information'.¹⁰¹

Topographically, like Freud's contact-barriers, the Skin Ego is 'a two sided, dissymmetrical envelope [...] with one side turned towards the excitations of the external world [...] this side being shielded by a protective screen – and the other

⁹⁹ The name given in the field of psychical research to abnormally acute sense of touch. See Charles Richet, 'Further Experiments in Hypnotic Lucidity or Clairvoyance', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 6, 66–83.

¹⁰⁰ Anzieu, p. 150.

¹⁰¹ Anzieu, p. 83.

towards the internal periphery of the body'.¹⁰² Endogenous excitations can be recognised only if they are transformed into excitations of the other type, projected into the outside world, associated with visual, auditory or tactile representations, and, finally, registered by the Skin Ego itself.¹⁰³ In *The Spoils of Poynton*, this function manifests itself through two forms of anxiety. First is the fear of having one's body marked by shameful messages emanating from one's soul within, in tune with nineteenth century concerns about the overly inscribable body of the hysteric – a version of the 'woman sensitive' of considerable cultural circulation at the time.¹⁰⁴ It reveals itself through a range of bodily changes perceived by Fleda – for example, the blood which is frequently 'rushing into her face' (77), and her observation that following his dispute with his mother, Owen, 'was sensibly different for Fleda, if only by the difference of his clear face mottled over and almost disfigured by little points of pain' (91). The other kind of anxiety concerns the loss of the capacity to retain traces. It is demonstrated by Fleda's disdainful classification of the intellectually vacuous Mrs Brigstock based on her outward appearance:

She was really somehow no sort of person at all[...] She had a face of which it was impossible to say anything but that it was pink, and a mind it would be possible to describe only had one been able to mark it in a similar fashion. As nature had made this organ neither green nor blue nor yellow there was nothing to know it by: it strayed and bleated like an unbranded sheep (150).

¹⁰² Anzieu, p. 84.

¹⁰³ Anzieu, p. 82.

¹⁰⁴ See Vrettos.

The novel also allows room for the hypothesis that these impressions – the blushings, blanchings, and cataloguing of images of others’ skin – may be absorbed by the Skin Ego and later recapitulated following sufficiently strong promptings from the memory. Athena Vrettos surveys a widespread tendency in Victorian culture for women to be depicted as being subject to a ‘dangerous permeability between body and mind’, and the above examples suggest that this is also a feature of James’s depiction of Fleda, whose impressions suggest that communication between the two layers of experience is reciprocal.¹⁰⁵ Alice James’s diary is again a useful analogue, as it often suggests that the subtlety of her perceptions was inseparable from her physiological sensitivity, rejoicing at the ‘bliss of finding that I too was a “sensitive”’.¹⁰⁶ There is also evidence from her diary that Alice James used the appearance of others as external evidence of her inward conviction that the body is both text and interpreter. Her evaluation of a volume of George Eliot’s letters and journals accomplishes this vividly, meditating ‘Whether it is that her dank, moaning features haunt and pursue one thro’ the book, or not, but she makes upon me the impression, morally and physically, of mildew, of some morbid growth—a fungus of a pendulous shape, or as of something damp to the touch’, and she specifically takes the author to task for being ‘an abject coward [...] about physical pain’.¹⁰⁷ For Alice James, not only is the body the greatest signifier of inner life, but to fail to render bodily experience to its full potential in prose is to present a curtailed version of human subjectivity. Juxtaposing Alice’s experience with Fleda’s, it is possible to see in the latter’s acute awareness of physiological changes in others a projection of the animated dialectic between mind and body which she

¹⁰⁵ Vrettos, p. 89.

¹⁰⁶ Alice James, *The Diary of Alice James*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁷ Alice James, *The Diary of Alice James*, pp. 109, 241.

herself experiences. Juxtaposing the character of Fleda Vetch with the experiences of Henry James's sister Alice brings into focus how, for the sensitive, the skin's status as a boundary cedes easily into its role as a text, and shows that the concomitant late nineteenth century notions of the woman's body as 'overly inscribable' and possessing of a rapidity of perception which leaves her able 'to read the slightest signs [for] what passes within' are mutually inclusive.¹⁰⁸

In transposing interiority onto the exterior of bodies, *The Spoils of Poynton* takes its place within a literary genealogy of texts which includes the seminal sensation novels of the 1860s, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859–1860), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861–1862), and Mrs Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1861), the heroines of which the critic Laurence Talairach-Vielmas argues 'provide us with powerful images of the construction of femininity, placing particular emphasis on the female body, its shape and meaning'.¹⁰⁹ These texts are, in turn, united by their engagement with late nineteenth century physiognomy; that is, the empirical scientific assessment of a person's character or personality from their outer appearance. Lucy Hartley's monograph *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth Century Culture* traces physiognomy development 'from English publication of [Johann Caspar] Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* (1789) to the publication of Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* (1892)'.¹¹⁰ Such literary and scientific texts provide contemporary analogues for Fleda's acute attention to blemishes (her own and others'), as the character in *The Spoils of Poynton* who is most

¹⁰⁸ Bernard Hollander, *Nervous Disorders of Women* (London: Kegan Paul, 1916).

¹⁰⁹ Laurence Talairach-Vielmas, *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007), p. 4.

¹¹⁰ *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.

concerned with keeping secrets, and therefore situate James's novel within a discourse that cuts across disciplinary boundaries. Moreover, as Tom Gunning notes, physiognomy is 'ultimately derive[d] from magical forms of interpretation and divination such as chiromancy'.¹¹¹ Consultation of the contemporary occult press demonstrates the prolonged cultural resonance of the history of physiognomy: where it is referred to in the *Journal and Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* in the last years of the nineteenth century, it is most frequently as an alternative explanation for apparent instances of telepathy.¹¹² Viewed in this light, a psychically inflected interpretation of Fleda's ability to interpret other people's unspoken thoughts based on bodily cues may be cautiously posited. Sat opposite Owen in her father's drawing room and expertly reading his 'unsounded words' (100) from small changes in his appearance and body posture, Fleda resembles one of the female telepaths whose supernormal perceptive powers were investigated by psychical researchers, demonstrating the wide dispersal of the idea that, as the fin de siècle evolutionists Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson stated, female nervous sensitivity assists 'greater appreciation of subtle details, and consequently what we call more rapid intuition'.¹¹³

II

¹¹¹ Tom Gunning, 'In Your Face: Physiognomy, Photography, and the Gnostic Mission of Early Film', *Modernism/modernity*, 4 (1997), 1–29 (p. 3).

¹¹² 'The Use of Hypnotism', *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 8 (1897), 37–40; F. W. H. Myers, 'The Psychology of Hypnotism', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 14 (1899), 100–108; David Yellowlees, 'The Uses and Dangers of Hypnotism', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 14 (1899), 109.

¹¹³ Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson, *The Evolution of Sex* (London: Walter Scott, 1901), p. 290; Cited in Luckhurst, p. 218.

The Spoils of Poynton thus offers us a window onto a range of subject positions covered by the designation 'sensitive' during the fin de siècle. Fleda and Mrs Gereth find that the site at which the self both receives impressions and finds itself expressed is the skin. These characters can therefore be linked with both Alice James and the figure of the telepath insofar as they also figure forth the idea of the surface of the body as the threshold for subjectivity. However, the novel also offers us scope to further develop our view of the adaptable definition, 'sensitive'. Appealing, in Fleda's presence, to Owen to marry a woman who, like her young friend, has a 'feeling for nice old things', Mrs Gereth says of her precious antiques, 'They're living things to me; they know me, they return the touch of my hand' (53). This statement reminds us of the inherent mutuality of the sense of touch – that to touch is also to be touched oneself. In his influential essay, 'The Intertwining – The Chiasm' (1964), Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes:

My hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part. Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it [...] It is no different for the

vision – except, it is said, that here the exploration and the information it gathers do not belong ‘to the same sense’.¹¹⁴

If we take up the idea that for the sensitive, subjectivity inheres overwhelmingly in the surface of the body, and combine it with the principle of the mutuality of touch as established by Merleau-Ponty, we can imagine physical interaction with the object world as an endless exchange of traces, activated and re-activated by each contact between entities. In *The Spoils of Poynton*, this process is in effect a temporal interweaving, as the pressure of Fleda’s handling of Mrs Gereth’s antiques provokes a response, the objects taking charge and asserting the primacy of their history within the time frame of the present. As I will delineate, James’s novel thus demonstrates its engagement with aspects of nineteenth century psychical phenomena which women were considered to be especially adept at facilitating, namely the practice of ‘psychometry’ during spiritualist séances, whereby mediums would obtain information about an object’s history, or about people or events with which it was associated, purely by touching it or through close proximity to it. This comparison constitutes an important advance in my depiction of Fleda and her mentor Mrs Gereth as ‘sensitives’: their nervous sensitivity connects the excessive fluidity between body and mind which, despite the insight it provides, left Alice James feeling ‘abjectly impotent’,¹¹⁵ with the ability to give voice to the dead through the inanimate, which confers on fin de siècle spiritualist mediums a position of special authority.

¹¹⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, ‘The Intertwining - The Chiasm’, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. by Claude Lefort (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), pp. 130–155 (p. 133).

¹¹⁵ Alice James, *The Diary of Alice James*, p. 149.

To explore the effect of the principle of mutual touch in *The Spoils of Poynton*, it is necessary to first establish what kind of objects with which Poynton is stocked. There are carved objects like ivories and cabinets, hand-decorated china, and hand-woven tapestries. As Thomas Otten argues, because these are all works of the hand, they have a sense of touch built into them, instilled at the moment of creation. Taking his cue from Philip Fisher's argument that 'every instance of imagination or making installs the conditions of the body into material separable from the body and detachable from the self',¹¹⁶ Otten's further contention is that the hand figures prominently in the *Spoils of Poynton* because

the objects at its centre reflect the hand; they anticipate and invite its touch.

They are things with handles, like teacups and cabinets, or with contours that reflect the shape of the whole body, like sofas or chairs, or things that, like vases and figurines, are scaled to be arranged by hand, fondled, toyed with.¹¹⁷

Thus, the spoils allow perceiving human subjects to establish intimate connections with their provenance. Guiding her through the exhibition of objects at Poynton, Mrs Gereth encourages Fleda to discover 'the record of a life' which is 'written in [...] the tongues of other countries and the hands of great artists', and to 'finger fondly the brasses that Louis Quinze might have thumbed, to sit with Venetian Velvets just held in a loving palm' (47-48). In my Introduction, I cited Luckhurst's assessment with

¹¹⁶ Philip Fisher, 'A Humanism of Objects', in *Making and effacing art: modern American art in a culture of museums* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Cited in Otten, p. 40.

¹¹⁷ Otten, p. 41.

regard to the etymology of the word 'telepathy' that 'The Victorian ear would hear distant yet *physical* touch in *tele* + *pathos* [emphasis Luckhurst's]'; *The Spoils of Poynton* demonstrates the tangible support for this logic in the aesthetic appreciation of collections during the period.

The 'distant touch' in James's novel transgresses both spatial and temporal intervals. The place from which the spoils have been captured is often signalled in the labels given to them: 'the Maltese cross' (82); 'Venetian velvets' (48); 'French furniture' (49). The text shows its connectedness with the aesthetic nostalgia of the late nineteenth century Romantic Revival through, as James explains in his preface, its showcasing of 'the upholsterer's and joiner's and brazier's work, the chairs and tables, the cabinets and presses, the material odds and ends, of the more labouring ages'.¹¹⁸ Poynton is also the material holding place for a personal history; Mrs Gereth perceives that 'Everything was in the air – each history of each find, each circumstance of each capture' as the spoils 'threw out a radiance in which the poor woman saw all her old loves and patiences, all her old tricks and triumphs' (71). Due to the range of emotional investments which contact with the spoils has the potential to activate, I believe that the objects correspond to the category of the 'souvenir' as it is elucidated by Susan Stewart. Stewart defines the souvenir as that which:

displays the romance of contraband, for its scandal is its removal from its
 'natural' location [...] the authenticity of the exotic object arises not simply in
 the conditions authored by the primitive/exotic and the origin of the possessor,

¹¹⁸ Henry James, 'Preface to *The Spoils of Poynton*', in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York, NY; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 119–139 (p. 123).

but also in the authentic 'nature' of that radical otherness which is the possessor's own childhood [...] Such objects allow one to be a tourist of one's own life, or allow the tourist to appreciate, consume, and thereby 'tame' the cultural other.¹¹⁹

Attempting to remind Owen of the spiritual element of his family's aesthetic history Mrs Gereth asserts, 'The best things here are the things your father and I collected, things all that we worked for and waited for and suffered for. Yes... there are things in the house that we almost starved for! They were our religion, they were our life, they were *us*! [emphasis James's]' (53). Eric Savoy argues that the progression of independent clauses in this sentence suggests not only that the treasures of Poynton are to be understood as 'signs of grace', but also, as Jean Baudrillard points out, that 'the tense of the mythological object is the perfect: it is that which occurs in the present as having occurred in a former time, hence that which is founded upon itself, that which is "authentic"'.¹²⁰ In this way, the nostalgia of Mrs Gereth's souvenirs exists as the composite image of a variety of historical settings and an idealised version of her youth, which may be experienced by the connoisseur of sufficiently refined sensitivity as if directly lived.

The emotional investments which Mrs Gereth makes may be compared with those of another 'sensitive' of James's social circle, the writer Constance Fenimore Woolson, whose friendship with the author of *The Spoils of Poynton* is detailed in

¹¹⁹ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 135.

¹²⁰ Eric Savoy, 'The Jamesian Thing', *Henry James Review*, 22 (2001), 268–277 (p. 270); see also Jean Baudrillard, *Le Système Des Objets*, trans. by James Benedict (London: Verso, 2005).

Lyndall Gordon's *A Private Life of Henry James: Two Women and his Art*. Like Mrs Gereth, Woolson had a taste for the handcrafted and contraband, and on moving to Venice arrayed 'on every available surface [...] the spoils of her travels'.¹²¹ She 'welcomed in particular [...] a carved Venetian writing-table [...] a piece of alabaster which she had picked up in the Temple of the Sphinx [...] and, not least, a scarab pin from Egypt with ancient, telepathic powers – or so she fancied'.¹²² It is this last item which is most revealing, as it demonstrates how closely the sentimental desire for contact with the past through tangible objects borders with psychical phenomena in the fin de siècle. In Venice, Woolson became absorbed in a recent book, *The Law of Psychic Phenomena* (1892), by Thomson Jay Hudson. It argued that a phantom was nothing but an 'embodied thought', a telepathic communication when feelings have been intense, and that as such a deceased person's effects might be pervaded by the mental atmosphere of the dead. Woolson echoed this idea, stating that, 'houses in which persons have lived, become, after a time, permeated with their thoughts'.¹²³ As I noted in my Introduction, James's response to Woolson's suicide in 1894 was to travel to Venice and occupy her rooms (which had been sealed on her death). Gordon argues that given Woolson's belief in posthumous telepathy, 'for a man alert to the extra-sensory it meant a chance to know [her] through her rooms', and asserts James's notebook proves his venture bore fruit in the form of his idea for 'The Altar of the Dead', about a middle-aged bachelor who 'cherishes for the silent [...] dead, a tenderness in which all his private need [...] finds a sacred, and almost secret

¹²¹ Gordon, p. 236.

¹²² Gordon, p. 236.

¹²³ Gordon, p. 261.

expression'.¹²⁴ Woolson's phenomenological negotiations demonstrate how the sentimental attachment to objects is permeated with the vocabulary and dramaturgy of psychical phenomena in the fin de siècle, and that this was engaged with by James.

The ultimate cultural significance of the belief in the occulted meaning which can be garnered from physical interaction with objects insofar as it relates to the figure of the sensitive is borne out by the parallel between Mrs Gereth and Fleda's acute sense of touch and the occult practice of psychometry during the fin de siècle. Of particular relevance are the SPR's records of the séances performed by Mrs Piper, who was in Martha Banta's words, 'Far and away the most discussed [...] of a long list of female "sensitives"' during the last decades of the nineteenth century.¹²⁵ William James was fascinated by her, and subsequent to his cautious attendance at one of her séances in 1884, he studied her messages for fifteen years in the hope that her 'supernormal' abilities might reveal important information concerning spirit survival and the nature of consciousness and ego. As I have noted, Henry even read one of his brother's papers on the subject of her apparent gifts at a meeting of the SPR in 1890.¹²⁶ A lengthy paper by William James, first published in 1909 and entitled 'Report on Mrs Piper's Hodgson-Control', documents various instances of Mrs Piper's channelling of the discarnate spirit of the psychical researcher, Richard Hodgson. At one sitting with a Miss Theodate Pope's, 'Hodgson' expresses his wish to communicate with reference to the theory of psychometry itself, writing as follows via the hand of Mrs Piper:

¹²⁴ Gordon, pp. 262, 283.

¹²⁵ Banta, p. 48.

¹²⁶ William James, 'Certain Phenomena of Trance, Part III', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 6 (1890), 651–659.

I am Hodgson ... I heard your call – I know you – you are Miss Pope. Piper instrument. I am happy exceedingly difficult to come very [sic]. I understand why Myers came seldom. I must leave. I cannot stay. I cannot remain to-day....

(A tobacco-pouch that had belonged to Hodgson was presently given to the Medium as an 'influence,' when the writing went on:-)

I am in the witness-box, do you remember? – Do you remember my promise to shake you up?

MISS P. I once asked Geo. P[elham] to 'shake me up'.

No, I do not mean that.

MISS P. What do you mean?

I said that if I got over here first I would soon learn how to communicate. – I would not make a botch of it.

MISS P. I remember – indeed you did.

I am certainly R. H. I am sure. I have joined dear old G. Pelham, who did so much for me – more than all the rest put together.

[After a few words in Rector's name [the spirit 'control' whose thoughts Mrs Piper more commonly gives expression to], a brush that had belonged to Hodgson was put into the medium's hand.]

Remember my theory about objects?

MISS P. What was it?

They carried their own light. I was right.¹²⁷

Like the objects in *The Spoils of Poynton*, the objects of Hodgson's possess agency; the Hodgson 'control' revives when they are passed to Mrs Piper, and as their owner's spirit states through the medium, they carry 'their own *light* [emphasis mine]'. Henry James uses the same term to describe the spoils' influence in his preface to the novel, stating that '[t]he "things" are radiant, shedding afar, with a merciless monotony, all their light, exerting their ravage without remorse'.¹²⁸ The objects of Hodgson's are scaled to be manipulated by hand like Mrs Gereth's, and like in James's novel, it is the hands of the sensitive which facilitate the flow of influence, receiving it from the objects and passing it on via the messages from Hodgson which Mrs Piper delivers via automatic writing. William James's conclusion is also evocative of the phenomenological bent of his brother's novel. He states that:

¹²⁷ William James, 'Report on Mrs Piper's Hodgson-Control', p. 260.

¹²⁸ Henry James, 'Preface to *The Spoils of Poynton*', p. 129.

mental and physical life run parallel, all memory processes being [...] co-ordinated with material processes. If an act of yours is to be consciously remembered hereafter, it must leave traces on the material universe such that when the *traced parts of the said universe systematically enter into activity together* the act is consciously recalled [...] the great continuum of material nature can have certain tracts within it thrown into emphasised activity whenever activity begins in any part or parts of a tract in which the potentiality of such systematic activity inheres [emphasis William James's].¹²⁹

The emphasis on the co-ordination of memory and material processes here is in line with Mrs Gereth's attestation that 'Poynton was the record of a life' (47). William James's assertion that the material world possesses a multiplicity of 'tracts' with the potential to be 'thrown into emphasized activity' chimes with the strata of suggestiveness which the antiques inhere to in Henry James's novel, being, as I have noted, embodied with both the experience of creators and past owners possessors. What is most significant, however, is that both for Mrs Piper and Fleda Vetch, the sense of touch is vital for gaining access to psychic truths: Mrs Piper has to hold the items from her sitters in her hands to receive their 'influence', and as already noted, on Fleda's first visit to Poynton, Mrs Gereth encourages her to make physical contact with the past via her collection of antiques. Upon the spoils' subsequent uprooting from Poynton to Ricks, Fleda imagines the latest episode in the spoils' history to be evident to the sense of touch:

¹²⁹ William James, 'Report on Mrs Piper's Hodgson-Control', p. 358.

the very fingers of her glove, resting on the seat of the sofa, had thrilled at the touch of an old velvet brocade, a wondrous texture she would have recognised among a thousand, without dropping her eyes on it [...] She knew [the spoils] by every inch of their surface and every charm of their character – knew them by the personal name their distinctive sign or story had given them. (80)

As Fleda's teacher in this art of divination, Mrs Gereth also explains to her how the sense of touch, acutely developed, can stand in for the other senses. As I have already noted, she professes to be able to identify each of her treasures by briefly touching them, whilst blindfolded. The visual deprivation imagined here replicates that which was ubiquitous with the scene of the darkened drawing rooms in which séances were commonly held,¹³⁰ and the corresponding privileging of the sense of touch which is represented by William James in his sitting with Mrs Piper. Modern accounts of the development of the tactile sense in the blind illustrate how its normative perceptual limits can be exceeded.¹³¹ Fleda's bodily sensitivity is developed in such a way that her abilities correspond not merely to those of the familiar figure of the female nervous invalid in late nineteenth century culture, but to that of the sensitive par excellence in Henry James's intellectual milieu.

However, the objects' eloquence in *The Spoils of Poynton* also depends on Fleda's predilection to allow them to speak through her. Her value to Mrs Gereth as a potential daughter-in-law and guardian of the spoils inheres to this passivity. Mrs

¹³⁰ See Owen.

¹³¹ See, for example, Morton A. Heller and Soledad Ballesteros, *Touch and Blindness: psychology and neuroscience* (Mahwah, NJ; London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006).

Gereth's original arrangement of the spoils is 'an effort *toward* completeness [emphasis mine]' (66), and when Fleda is confronted with it she feels as if 'the beauty of the place throbbed out like music' (50). The language used in these instances is revealing: the collection aspires toward unity, but does not achieve it conclusively, and the metaphor of music suggests that although the artful combination of treasures in this instance creates harmony, a less perfectly orchestrated combination of the same elements could create discord. Mrs Gereth is committed to the preservation of the spoils so that they can continue to body forth her story and personality. As such, the notion of Mona Brigstock's ownership of Poynton is anathema to her. As Stephanie Foote notes, Mrs Gereth imagines 'that Mona can only value the objects as facts, as things that reference only themselves, whereas the objects should, in Mrs Gereth's opinion, be valued as signifiers of a tradition of culturally sanctified ideas'.¹³² On the other hand, as has been delineated, Mrs Gereth's seduction of Fleda is mainly the result of the ease with which she can make Fleda feel the 'true' significance of the furniture at Poynton, to see that it has gravity equal to that of its perceiving subject. In juxtaposition with Mrs Piper's mediumship, I interpret Fleda's receptivity as a subversion of pejorative contemporary constructions of female passivity. As Alex Owen notes, whilst female passivity was commonly used to signify inadequacy in the late nineteenth century, spiritualism privileged it as a powerful and facilitating quality in spirit communication. Robert Laurence Moore's *In Search of White Crows*, a study of spiritualism and American culture which takes William James's study of Mrs Piper as a starting point, notes that successful mediumship grew from the cultivation of specific

¹³² Stephanie Foote, 'Henry James and the Parvenus: Reading Taste in *The Spoils of Poynton*', *Henry James Review*, 27 (2006), 42–60 (p. 50).

traits that in the nineteenth century defined femininity: 'Above all, they were passive. After all, it was queried, what spirit could manifest anything through a medium whose own personality was strongly assertive?'¹³³ This much is attested to in William James's aforementioned article on Mrs Piper. Traces of subjectivity, he asserts, remain in the records of a person's actions which the material world stores up, so that 'the cosmos' is made structurally different by every action that takes place in it. The system of physical traces left behind by Hodgson's acts are 'thrown into gear and made to vibrate all at once' by Piper's handling of certain objects so that 'we should have a Hodgson-system active in the cosmos again and the "conscious aspect" of this vibrating system might be Hodgson's spirit redivivus, and recollecting and willing in a certain momentary way'.¹³⁴ It is only due to Mrs Piper's acute passivity when making her psychometric pronouncements that the formation of an erroneous, presumably less desirable 'Hodgson-Piper' system is eschewed; she acts, as the Hodgson control states, as an 'instrument'. Passivity becomes, in the context of the spiritualist séance as in Fleda's channelling of the histories of the spoils, synonymous with power.

Fleda's poignant contact with the spoils affects the way in which her body is conceived, and this in turn also influences the kind of 'sensitive' with which she can be compared. After Mrs Gereth's removal of 'the best pieces' from Poynton to Ricks, she and Fleda experience the incorporation of the spoils into their body images, but in very different ways. James's narrator states:

¹³³ Robert Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture* (New York, NY; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 106.

¹³⁴ William James, 'Report on Mrs Piper's Hodgson-Control', p. 359.

in the sense of [Mrs Gereth] having passed the threshold of Poynton for the last time, the amputation, as she called it, had been performed. Her leg had come off – she had now begun to stump along with the lovely wooden substitute; she would stump for life, and what her young friend was to come and admire was the beauty of her movement and the noise she made about the house. (79)

Fleda's reaction largely confounds Mrs Gereth's expectations:

In the watches of the night she saw Poynton dishonoured; she had cherished it as a happy whole, she reasoned, and the parts of it now around her seemed to suffer like chopped limbs. To lie there in stillness was partly to listen for some soft low plaint from them. (85)

Fleda subsequently pleads with Mrs Gereth to return the pieces of her collection to their former seat of completeness, and James's narrator recalls her motivation for doing so in the following terms: 'she had bled with the wounds of Poynton' (179). While Mrs Gereth experiences the loss of her home and objects as the fact of the absence of a limb, the same scenario inspires Fleda to empathetically experience the pain of the scattered and dismembered collection as if from within her own sensorium. As Otten has noted, her unique receptiveness is signalled by the poignant symbolic value of her surname: 'a vetch is a plant that takes its form from another plant, adapting its structure to something outside itself'.¹³⁵ Fotios Sarris argues that Fleda's 'objective' regard of Poynton as an autonomous and self-contained whole

¹³⁵ Otten, p. 76.

involves a fetishization not just of Poynton but also of herself, cast as a detached and disinterested 'representative' who, free of personal prejudices, desires, and motives, 'speaks,' as it were, for these artefacts, enabling them to realise through her their authentic being and to transmit their true meaning.¹³⁶ Fleda thus makes a phantom of her own body: protean, transmutable, filling the cracks in the spoils' 'effort toward completeness' (66). As Gail Weiss notes, to say that the body itself may be a phantom, is to suggest that 'the body' is itself a type of projection, a possibility ready to materialise itself in any number of shapes or forms.¹³⁷ The diffuseness of bodily integrity which Fleda's sympathy with objects gives rise to is consistent with what Steven Connor argues was the primary purpose of the nineteenth century séance: 'to enact the hypothesis of a different kind of body in this world'.¹³⁸ Connor's analysis centres on the body of the medium, whose role was to exemplify a bodily condition which was 'extensible, exorbitant, and, to borrow a word employed in the 1820s to advertise the performances of the ventriloquist Monsieur Alexandre, "ubiquitarical"'.¹³⁹ Connor draws on a remarkable séance with the medium Mrs Guppy, as recorded by the spiritualist author and fellow medium, Georgina Houghton in which 'the room [...] was, so to speak, full' of the medium, 'so that there was plenty of her atmosphere to be gathered for their [the spirits'] purposes'¹⁴⁰ to elucidate that

¹³⁶ Fotios Sarris, 'Fetishism in *The Spoils of Poynton*', *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 51 (1996), 53–83.

¹³⁷ Gail Weiss, *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 98.

¹³⁸ Steven Connor, 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice', in *Ghosts*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 203–225 (p. 209).

¹³⁹ Connor, p. 210.

¹⁴⁰ Georgina Houghton, *Evenings at Home in Spiritual Séance: Welded Together By a Species of Autobiography*, 2 (London: Trubner, 1882), p. 14; Quoted in Connor, p. 210.

‘the suffusive body of the séance is characterised by [...] its influx into the interior of the body, and its passage outwards into the world’.¹⁴¹ In Connor’s estimation, the medium’s imaginary body both furnishes and suffuses the space of the séance. It is “utopian” (literally, “of no-place”) precisely because it is exorbitant and superfluous to customary space: rather than existing in space, it is itself a kind of space’.¹⁴² Insofar as Fleda Vetch’s body likewise suffuses Mrs Gereth’s collection of antiques, permeating and merging with its holding environment, it is in tune with the phenomenological investments of the nineteenth century séance medium. Her body is not only hyperaesthetic, but hyperextendable.

III

In positing the sensorial extent of the self beyond the body’s physical boundaries, Fleda’s experience demonstrates how the heightened sense of touch attributed to the figure of the sensitive shades into ‘teleesthesia’, the term used in the field of psychical research ‘implying any direct sensation or perception of objects or conditions independently of the recognised channels of sense’.¹⁴³ In *The Spoils of Poynton*, Fleda develops this gift through haptic vision, that is, through transposing the proximity sense of touch onto the distance sense of sight. I interpret this mode of seeing as directly connected to Fleda’s status as an impressionist painter. I trace the connections between *The Spoils of Poynton* and fin de siècle discourse from the fields of psychical research and art history, and ultimately to show how the figure of the

¹⁴¹ Connor, p. 211.

¹⁴² Connor, p. 211.

¹⁴³ Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, II, p. xv.

sensitive develops in James's novel from being a receptor par excellence to one whose acute receptivity inheres to a special mode of creativity.

James connects Fleda's general perceptual experience with her status as an aspirant artist from the beginning of the second chapter of *The Spoils of Poynton*, at which point we are told that 'she had lately, in Paris, with several other young women, spent a year at a studio, arming herself for the battle of life by a course with an impressionist painter. She was determined to work, but her impressions [...] were as yet her only material' (42). That this experience would foster a historicised mode of seeing which tends towards the haptic can be extrapolated from Henry James's own writing on visual art. In 1913, James had his portrait painted by his friend the American artist John Singer Sargent. In his essay on the artist, James described Sargent's working method as physically intimate: 'perception with him is already by itself a kind of execution; it is as if painting were *pure tact of vision* [emphasis mine]'.¹⁴⁴ Tacit in James's assessment is the knowledge that although painting is categorized as a visual medium, in truth it pertains to an intersensoriality where the most common referent is touch. The process of painting is bound up with tactility in the application of paint to canvas, the texture of the paint, the roughness of the brush's bristles, and even the olfactory in the smell of the paint. Thus, for a painter to delineate a scene as Fleda does Poynton as 'the matchless canvas for a picture' (41) is to invest the visual with the qualities of the tactile.

James's theorisation is in step with other notable contemporary writers on visual art in the Western tradition: Laura Marks identifies nineteenth century art

¹⁴⁴ Henry James, 'John S. Sargent', in *The Painter's Eye: notes and essays on the pictorial arts* (Madison; London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956), pp. 216–228 (p. 217); cited in Otten, p. 109.

historian Alois Riegl's borrowing of the term 'haptic' from physiology (from 'haptein', to fasten) as pivotal in establishing how paintings allow the viewer to connect directly to sense-perception, while bypassing the sensory-motor schema. Soon after, Marks asserts, other art historians, including Bernard Berenson and Wilhelm Worringer drew attention to the tactile quality of vision.¹⁴⁵ In *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (1896), Berenson argued that the quality most essential to painting was 'the power to stimulate the tactile consciousness'.¹⁴⁶ As Otten has noted, Berenson based his account on the interrelation between vision and touch developed by nineteenth century sensation psychology, which hypothesised that our recognition of form, space, and motion not only depends on linking our visual perceptions with our memories of tactile sensations but also somehow activates the tactile nerves.¹⁴⁷ In *The Spoils of Poynton* this effect is pronounced to an exaggerated degree in the perceptual experiences of Fleda. James writes in his preface to the novel that '[t]he "things" are radiant, shedding afar, with a merciless monotony, all their light, exerting their ravage without remorse; and Fleda almost demoniacally both sees and feels, while the others but feel without seeing'.¹⁴⁸ The pertinence of this passage lies in its coalescing of the distance sense of sight with the proximity sense of touch, and via the slightly ambiguous vocabulary used – 'sees' and 'feels' – the ease with which the psychological can be mapped onto the physical. It outlines a manner of perception particular to Fleda which remodels the act of seeing via the model of touch, which is crucially the

¹⁴⁵ Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 162.

¹⁴⁶ Bernard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (New York, NY: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1896); cited in Marks, p. 162.

¹⁴⁷ Otten, p. 101.

¹⁴⁸ Henry James, 'Preface to *The Spoils of Poynton*', p. 129.

sense with the most evident reversible qualities. Her mode of haptic vision is comparable to what the French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty refers to as 'palpation of the eye'.¹⁴⁹ William Cohen describes Merleau-Ponty's concept as that which:

disrupts the usual associations with sight, the sense that allows the greatest distance between subject and object, to the extent that seeing does not conventionally implicate the seer (for one can see without being seen but cannot touch without, at the same time, being touched).¹⁵⁰

Fleda's process of vision therefore becomes invested with the mutuality associated with her sense of touch. At Ricks, Fleda's eyes become 'stuck [...] with dissimulated dread' to an 'old velvet brocade' which reflects her attention so intensely that she cannot 'pretend not to be affected with the very pendants of the lustres tinkling at her' (80). Her visual impressions are imbued with textures.

It is of particular import that Fleda receives her training from an 'impressionist' painter. As Tamar Garb notes, at the end of the nineteenth century, impressionism was equally lauded and denigrated because of its predication on 'the unmediated reflex recordings of sensory impulses'.¹⁵¹ Victoria Coulson notes how

¹⁴⁹ Merleau-Ponty, p. 133.

¹⁵⁰ William A. Cohen, *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 17.

¹⁵¹ Tamar Garb, 'Berthe Morisot and the Feminising of Impressionism', in *Critical readings in Impressionism and post-Impressionism: an anthology*, ed. by Mary Tompkins Lewis (California: University of California Press, 2007), p. 190.

effectively the mode of painting studied by Fleda encapsulates the interplay of surfaces in James's novel, asserting:

If all painting bespeaks an application to the surface of a canvas, an impressionist aesthetic intensifies the skin imagery by its subsumption of the visual into the tactile: the painter exposes herself as a surface to be impressed by her environment and then transfers her impressions to the skin of the canvas.¹⁵²

In this way, Coulson argues that Fleda's experience reprises James's depiction in the preface to the New York Edition of *The Spoils of Poynton* of the artist as a waiting skin, and the arrival of inspiration as 'the prick of some sharp point'.¹⁵³ The frequent recourse to cutaneous imagery in Coulson's commentary recalls Anzieu's 'skin ego', which as I have established, is an effective model for bodily consciousness in James's novel. Having acquired its basic organisation as Skin Ego, Anzieu asserts that another way in which the Ego can acquire a new structure is by 'breaking with the primacy of tactile experience and constituting itself as a space of intersensory inscription':

The skin is a surface containing pockets and cavities where the sense organs, apart from those of touch (which are contained in the epidermis itself), are located. The Skin Ego is a psychical surface which connects up sensations of various sorts and makes them stand out as figures against the original

¹⁵² Coulson, 'Who Cares About Charlotte Wentworth?', p. 24.

¹⁵³ Coulson, 'Who Cares About Charlotte Wentworth?', p. 25.

background formed by the tactile envelope: this is the Skin Ego's function of *intersensoriality*, which leads to the creation of a 'common sense' [...] whose basic reference is always to the sense of touch [emphasis Anzieu's].¹⁵⁴

Given Fleda's training in the touch-orientated visual art of impressionism, her growing desire 'to paint' (133) and to make of things 'a vivid picture' (148) can therefore be interpreted as a plausible consequence of the development of her bodily consciousness and its acute sensitivity to the variety of impressions which assail her.

However, the intersensory impressions which assail Fleda's psyche include those from within as well as from without. Haptic vision merges with insight in the novel, and in this way engages with a further feature of impressionism: in its status as 'an art form of spontaneous expression, as a means of unconsciously finding the self in the expression of a painting'.¹⁵⁵ Having retreated to her father's West Kensington home, Fleda pontificates that 'Concealed in this retreat she might try to paint again' (133), but her flight is notably preceded by the accumulation of inner desire based on relations with the physical world. As mentioned earlier, Victoria Mills has contended that Fleda's relationship with Mrs Gereth moves beyond that of romantic friendship into the realms of same-sex desire, and this is predicated on their responses to objects. Mills notes how Fleda's reactions on her first visit to Poynton, guided by Mrs Gereth, are figured in highly sexualised terms. The language of desire is used to describe the bond between Mrs Gereth and her objects: 'in the dark, with the brush of a finger' (53), she can tell one from another. Here, 'the palpitating girl had the full revelation',

¹⁵⁴ Anzieu, p. 102.

¹⁵⁵ Garb, p. 190.

enjoyed the 'rapture of that first walk through the house' and 'gave herself up to satiety' (47). Mrs Gereth and Fleda then embrace 'with tears over the tightening of their bond' as they gaze upon Poynton's splendour (47). Fleda takes flight at the point when the intensity of her bond with Mrs Gereth, and indeed, with Owen, whom Mrs Gereth insists she is in love with, despite her protestations, reaches its point of highest tension. Fleda's bond with the spoils continues to be active in this relation, as by 'letting herself go' (117), and giving in to her love for Owen, she would, as Mrs Gereth asserts, disarm the threat to the collection which Mona poses, and ensure 'the restoration to the great house not only of its tables and chairs but of its alienated mistress' (100). In his monograph, *Being a Character*, Christopher Bollas provides a framework for object relations which will deepen our understanding of the import of these configurations for Fleda's form of artistic expression, and for her status as a creative, rather than simply receptive 'sensitive'. According to his schema, we unconsciously invest people, places, things, and events with an idiomatic significance pertaining to our own subjectivity, and experience the material world as a field of objects pregnant with meaning that contribute to the 'dense psychic textures' that form self-experience. Moreover, Bollas argues that 'specific modes of representation (e.g. writing, speaking, dancing, painting) are [...] neurologically, cognitively, and psychically distinct, with a profile composed of its unique features'.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, 'Which mode one chooses not only suggests an entirely different type of representation; it also suggests an entirely different experience in self-expression'.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Christopher Bollas, *Being a Character: Psychoanalysis and Self Experience* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 40.

¹⁵⁷ Bollas, p. 47.

Bollas notes how the sculptor Barbara Hepworth credits her forming ability to her sense of the landscape which characterised her childhood:

All my early memories are of forms and shapes and textures. Moving through and over the West Riding landscape with my father in his car, the hills were sculptures; the roads defined the form. Above all, there was the sensation of moving physically over the contours of fullness and concavities, through hollows and over peaks – feeling, touching, seeing, through mind and hand and eye. The sensation has never left me. I, the sculptor, am the landscape.¹⁵⁸

Hepworth links the sculptor's representational medium with her physical movements over the contours of her childhood landscape: certain features of the object world have profoundly evocative effects and have in a way constituted what Bollas calls 'transformative self experiencings',¹⁵⁹ such that by the time of artistic creation, she finds herself presenting the subjective effect of this evocative object. Fleda goes through a similar process: as has been established, she is acutely sensitive to the distinct psychic structures of the physical world in *The Spoils of Poynton* and, moreover, is not only thought out, so to speak, by her environment, but thinks herself out by interacting with the spoils in a creative way that promotes self-development. As Coulson notes, James's novel promotes an understanding of:

¹⁵⁸ Barbara Hepworth, 'Some Statements by Barbara Hepworth (Pamphlet)', Barbara Hepworth Museum, St. Ives; cited in Bollas, p. 39.

¹⁵⁹ Bollas, p. 39.

aesthetic practices as a working of material, a handling of substances, an intervention in the structure of the surface. *Poynton* identifies artistic processes as a reparative practice of *petit-point*, the dots and stitches and pin-pricks and brush-marks and fingerprints that activate and re-activate the skin's relation to itself and to others.¹⁶⁰

Whereas comparison with Alice James and Mrs Piper brought out how Fleda's nervous sensitivity excites her psychic receptivity, the important context of the latter's artistic precocity demonstrates the reflexivity of this relation: the model of her highly developed tactual faculty transposed onto Fleda's visual sense allows her to shape as well as be shaped by the physical world.

Thus, in impressionist painting, Fleda chooses the artistic medium with the greatest potential to capture the latent psychic textures of her desires. She also selects the form pre-eminently culturally available to a young woman at the end of the nineteenth century. As Garb asserts, the apparently seamless fit between impressionism and women's nature attained the level of a commonplace in avant-garde circles in the 1890s. Garb draws particularly on the critic Camille Mauclair's perspective on Berthe Morisot's work to make this point. In 1896, the year of the posthumous retrospective of Morisot's work, Mauclair published an article in *La Nouvelle Revue* that announced impressionism was dead. While denigrating impressionism at large, Mauclair called it a 'feminine art', and proclaimed its relevance for the one artist whom he saw as having been its legitimate protagonist, - a woman, Berthe Morisot. The allegedly 'feminine' characteristics of Morisot's work were its

¹⁶⁰ Coulson, 'Who Cares About Charlotte Wentworth?', p. 26.

sensuality, its exaltation of that sensory experience which is born of the quick perception and recording of ephemeral impressions, and its physicality¹⁶¹ - aspects of experience that also pertain to the figure of the sensitive. Insofar as her facility for haptic vision and insight inheres to these qualities, Fleda's choice of this 'feminised' art as a form of self-expression is apt. Her needlework is also to be considered in this respect. As a wedding present for her sister, Fleda produces 'a wonderful piece of embroidery, suggested, at Poynton, by an old Spanish altar-cloth' (73). Marks notes that Riegl's aforementioned theorisation of haptic visuality takes into account, alongside schools of painting, tactile methods of representation in 'low' traditions normally considered subsidiary to the march of Western art history, incorporating 'weaving, embroidery, decoration, and other domestic and women's arts as a presence of tactile imagery that has long existed at the underside of the great works'.¹⁶² If, as I have argued in this chapter, thinking in *The Spoils of Poynton* is a function of the surface, Fleda's embroidery is emblematic of this, in the weaving movement of her needle encapsulating the endless exchange of endogenous and exogenous stimuli a metaphor for the way in which she is turn processed by the object world.

Because of the character of Fleda's inner promptings I believe that the *Spoils of Poynton* is in step with certain aspects of the concept of 'subliminal consciousness' as devised by Frederic Myers, a friend and correspondent of James's, and, for the final decade of the nineteenth century, the principal theorist of the SPR. As Pamela Thurschwell notes, Myers's postulated subliminal consciousness is similar in part to Freud's unconscious. Myers conceives of human personality 'along the model of an

¹⁶¹ Garb, pp. 190–192.

¹⁶² Marks, p. 162.

iceberg, only a small percentage of which, the supraliminal “everyday” self, extended above the waterline’ with ‘the greater portion of consciousness, the subliminal self [...] submerged, elusive, and shifting’.¹⁶³ In his own words, he writes that:

subliminal consciousness and subliminal memory may embrace a far wider range both of physiological and of psychical activity than is open to our supraliminal consciousness, to our supraliminal memory. The spectrum of consciousness, if I may so call it, is in the subliminal self infinitely extended at both ends.¹⁶⁴

Thurschwell elucidates that ‘In Myers’s theories, as in Freud’s, the human subject, in its combination of psychic and bodily automatisms and symptoms, is a relay for information’; the difference emerges insofar as in Freud’s work this information tends to be inward-looking, reflecting the subject’s personal history, whereas for Myers, the information is more compelling when it is outward-looking, foreseeing the future, the possibility of surviving death, the potential for extra-sensory connections between minds.¹⁶⁵ Myers asserts that the quotidian psyche might be visited by fugitive ‘uprushes’ from the subliminal level; by reading *The Spoils of Poynton* against this context I recast Fleda’s internal pressures as ‘cryptomnesia’ – Myers’s word for ‘submerged or subliminal memory of events forgotten by the supraliminal self’, and

¹⁶³ Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 18.

¹⁶⁴ Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, II, p. 20.

¹⁶⁵ Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*, pp. 18–19.

advance the figure of the sensitive as one which inheres to evolutionary progeneracy.¹⁶⁶

Myers asserts that artists and women are among those most likely to benefit from uprushes from the 'subliminal consciousness'. In his chapter on 'Genius' (one of the key sections of the spectrum of the 'subliminal consciousness' which he sought to taxonomise), he asserts that due to pre-existent but hidden concordances between matter and thought which the plastic arts discover and manifest, it is in the medium of visual art that 'subliminal uprushes' are most likely to manifest themselves. Myers argues:

For each painter, after his several kind [...] there was the same inward process,—the same sense of subliminal uprush;—that extension, in other words, of mental concentration which draws into immediate cognisance some workings or elements of the hidden self.¹⁶⁷

Myers describes women's perceptiveness in similar terms, drawing on William James's theory of the 'feminine-mystical' mind, which was able to access 'certain kinds of deep phenomenal experience' which are inaccessible to its antagonist, the 'scientific-academic' or masculine-critical mind, though it is the latter who 'are by far the best fitted ones to interpret and discuss them'.¹⁶⁸ Like Maisie in *What Maisie Knew* (1897) and young Nanda Brookenham in *The Awkward Age* (1898-1899), Fleda is set apart

¹⁶⁶ Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, II, p. xvi.

¹⁶⁷ Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, II, pp. 100, 75.

¹⁶⁸ William James, 'What Psychological Research Has Accomplished', in *The Works of William James: Essays in Psychological Research* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1892), pp. 89–106 (p. 92).

from her social circle by her capacity to draw on hidden knowledge purely from evidence available to the senses, rather than to reason. In James's preface to *What Maisie Knew*, he writes that 'Small children have many more perceptions than they have terms to translate them.'¹⁶⁹ He asserts that Maisie has 'the wonderful importance of shedding a light far beyond any reach of her comprehension'.¹⁷⁰ As Michael Wood notes, in James's late work it is 'not only *small* children [emphasis mine]' who 'deeply know all kinds of things without knowing the basic facts'.¹⁷¹ In *The Awkward Age*, the focus falls on the coming of age of the sheltered but precocious Nanda, who is quick to remind her nervous, older suitor, Vanderbank that she 'know[s] everything', and that she remembers him telling her, when she was 'a little girl' 'that I must take things in at my pores' (a mode of apperception immediately comparable to Fleda's).¹⁷² In the light of Myers's and William James's work, the combination of these characters' youth and gender allows their special abilities to be interpreted as connoting the emergence of new evolutionary adaptations.

It is on the basis of the extension of the normal capabilities of the senses that Myers forges a link between 'the Genius' and 'the sensitive': one which also suffices to demonstrate the link between Fleda's impressionism and psychical phenomena. With a turn of phrase that seems to anticipate Bollas's expostulations about the psychic textures of experience discussed above, Myers declares 'earthly life' to be 'embodied

¹⁶⁹ Henry James, 'Preface to *What Maisie Knew*', in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York, NY; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 140–158 (p. 145).

¹⁷⁰ Henry James, 'Preface to *What Maisie Knew*', p. 147.

¹⁷¹ Michael Wood, *Literature and the Taste of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 14–15.

¹⁷² Henry James, *The Awkward Age* (London: David Campbell, 1993), p. 231.

[...] in psycho-physically individualised forms'.¹⁷³ It is 'a product of the ethereal or metetherial and not of the gross material world', that is, of 'the spiritual or transcendental world in which the soul exists'.¹⁷⁴ Consciousness of this spiritual environment is therefore 'the degree of revelation which artistic or philosophic genius is capable of conferring':

Subliminal uprushes, in other words, so far as they are intellectual, tend to become telaesthetic. They bring with them indefinite intimations of what I hold to be the great truth that the human spirit is essentially capable of a deeper than sensorial perception, of a direct knowledge of facts of the universe outside the range of any specialised organ or of any planetary view.¹⁷⁵

According to this logic, Fleda's artist's sensibility which accounts for both her gift of haptic vision, and her ability to establish and recover the psychic investments she makes with the tangible world, is of a piece with that which allows her to recognise the presence of 'ghosts' at Ricks (203). At the end of the novel, Fleda discusses with Mrs Gereth the mysterious trace which is perceptible in the atmosphere at the house. After contemplating the place visually, Fleda attempts to give the enigma a name via a series of sensory explanations culminating in the tactile, before acknowledging the dematerialized spirit of Mr Gereth's maiden aunt, their 'disembodied friend': 'It's a kind of fourth dimension. It's a presence, a perfume, a touch. It's a soul, a story, a life' (203). It is important that this list is prefaced by the invocation of a 'fourth

¹⁷³ Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, II, p. 97.

¹⁷⁴ Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, II, p. 97.

¹⁷⁵ Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, II, p. 111.

dimension'. It not only evidences the connection between James's text and psychical research by iterating the association of the spiritual world and fourth dimensional space common to the latter field (as I will explore in further detail in later chapters), but also proves the efficacy of the relay between the tactile and the psyche in the novel, as via the intersensory, Fleda's highly developed tactile sense is made to border with the telaesthetic perception of matter beyond the range of human senses.

The relay between the tactile and the psyche in *The Spoils of Poynton* reveals the discursive sections of nineteenth century culture tacitly connected to James's work, encompassing fin de siècle nerve science, hypnotism, physiognomy, spiritualism, psychometry, telepathy, art history, early psychoanalysis, and the possibility of life in other dimensions. Contrary to H. G. Wells's famous criticism that James's late novels are entirely disassociated from the reality of contemporary culture,¹⁷⁶ I have demonstrated *The Spoils of Poynton*'s engagement with fin de siècle discourse through the figure of the female sensitive which haunts James's novel, elucidating a remarkable impressionability which ultimately inheres to a latent powerfulness and productivity. The emphases on the extension of human sensory capability through intersensory exchange (in this case the applicability of the model of mutual touch to the distance sense of vision) will be furthered in my next chapter, which scrutinises a range of sensory substitutions in *The Ambassadors* which cluster around the visual.

¹⁷⁶ Wells, pp. 105–110.

CHAPTER TWO: EXTRAORDINARY VISION

In a famous passage from Henry James's *The Ambassadors* (1903), Lambert Strether is at a party at the Parisian apartment of Chad Newsome, observing the host's sister, Sarah Pocock, who is listening to the music performed by 'two or three such singers as it was a privilege to hear in private' (348). Sarah has been dispatched to the French capital with the same mission of rescuing Chad from the thrall of a woman of presumably low moral standards, which Strether has so conspicuously neglected. The presence of the singers gives a distinction to Chad's entertainment so at odds with Sarah's impression of Paris as vulgar, that Strether finds 'the interest of calculating their effect on Sarah was actually so sharp as to be almost painful' (348). He can only process his impression by resorting to what, out of context, appears a bizarre perceptual mode: he views her, synaesthetically, as 'dressed in a splendor of crimson which affected [him] as the sound of a fall through a skylight' (348).

Whilst critics have addressed the oddity of Strether's impression as part of wide-ranging discussions of, for example, metonymy and sexuality,¹⁷⁷ little effort has been made in the way of culturally situating this instance of sensory reconfiguration. In what follows, I want to show that Strether's synesthetic impression is in fact contiguous with a series of sensory substitutions relating to the character's visual sense and drawing on his experience of Paris, a city geographically and historically at the heart of debates about intersensory perception. I will demonstrate that the words spoken on the topic in the Paris salons during the fin de siècle also reverberate

¹⁷⁷ See Louise Shabat Bethlehem, 'Simile and Figurative Language', *Poetics Today*, 17 (1996), 203–240; and Eric L. Haralson, *Henry James and Queer Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) respectively.

through the world of *The Ambassadors*. First, I will establish the physiological reality of Lambert Strether's unique visual mode and how it corresponds to contemporary evocations of synaesthesia by the French Symbolist poets. Secondly, I explore how the colours chosen by Strether's uniquely attuned visual sense stand in for emotional states after the manner of the Paris-based impressionist painters. Finally I will delineate how this faculty is in tune with the contemporaneous speculations of the theosophical movement on the evolution of human consciousness which circulated in French and British culture during the fin de siècle. As regards this last point, I will focus here on Maria Gostrey's role in the development of Strether's mode of seeing, and proffer a real-life nineteenth century Parisian analogue for her in the Duchess du Pomar, whose home on the Avenue Wagram became the centre of fashionable French spiritualism and Theosophy.

I

Foundational to this narrative is the history of the concept of 'synaesthesia', the production, from one kind of sense-impression, of a mental image of a sense-impression of a different kind. For seventy years, after the first full description of the phenomenon was published in 1812,¹⁷⁸ discourse on synaesthesia was restricted to the discipline of medicine, where it was considered to be a rare pathology of the visual system. Western culture's wider acquaintance with synaesthesia began in 1883, when

¹⁷⁸ G. T. L. Sachs, *Historiae Naturalis Duorum Leucaetiopum: Auctoris Ipzius Et Sororis Pius* (Solisbaci: Sumptibus Bibliopolii Seideliani, 1812); Cited in Kevin T. Dann, *Bright Colours Falsely Seen: Synaesthesia and the Search for Transcendental Knowledge* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1998).

the Symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud's distillation into sonnet form of French medical literature on subjective visions, 'Voyelles', was published in the Paris literary journal, *Lutèce*. The text of the poem, translated from French into English, is given below:

A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue: vowels,

One day I will tell your latent birth:

A, black hairy corset of shining flies

Which buzz around cruel stench,

Gulfs of darkness; E, whiteness of vapours and tents,

Lances of proud glaciers, white kings, quivering of flowers;

I, purples, spit blood, laughter of beautiful lips

In anger or penitent drunkenness;

U, cycles, divine vibrations of green seas,

Peace of pastures scattered with animals, peace of the wrinkles

Which alchemy prints on heavy studious brows;

O, Supreme Clarion full of strange stridor,

Silences crossed by Worlds and Angels

- O, the omega, violet beam from His Eyes!¹⁷⁹

By the end of the century the visual phantasmagoria of synaesthesia had become a fixture of intellectual discussions, inspiring scientific and literary theses, and, as Kevin T. Dann notes, Paris had become ‘the epicentre of this strange fin de siècle fashion’.¹⁸⁰ Jules Millet’s 1892 monograph, *L’audition Colorée*, which bore Rimbaud’s sonnet on its front cover, noted that whilst none of the pre-‘Voyelles’ scientific writing on synaesthesia had captured the public imagination, since 1883, ‘The seers have surged forth from all parts like mushrooms after an autumn rain’, with a suspicious number of these ‘seers’ perceiving colours identical to Rimbaud’s.¹⁸¹ The psychologist Théodore Flournoy’s 1893 survey of 1,076 people concluded that without the ‘currents in the air’, psychological surveys, and ‘the works of Messieurs Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Verlaine, and their friends’, there would be a great deal fewer people who ‘attained’ colour hearing.¹⁸² The setting of James’s novel is therefore at the geographical and historical heart of these debates, Strether’s sensations culturally specific.

In *The Ambassadors*, Paris, as Richard D. Hathaway notes, is depicted as ‘a world where objects, words, and perceptions vibrate in an elastic web’.¹⁸³ It is ‘thick’,

¹⁷⁹ Arthur Rimbaud, *Rimbaud: Complete Works, Selected Letters : a Bilingual Edition*, ed. by Seth Adam Whidden, trans. by Wallace Fowlie (University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 141.

¹⁸⁰ Dann, p. 43.

¹⁸¹ Jules Millet, *Audition Colorée* (Paris: Octave Doin, 1892), p. x; Cited in Dann, pp. 29–30.

¹⁸² Théodore Flournoy, *Des Phenomena De Synopsie* (Paris: Alcan, 1893), p. 5; Cited in Dann, p. 30.

¹⁸³ Richard D. Hathaway, ‘Ghosts at the Windows: Shadow and Corona in *The Ambassadors*’, *The Henry James Review*, 18 (1997), 81–96 (p. 81).

and 'also ectoplasmic'.¹⁸⁴ The fluid phenomenological conditions confronting Strether on arrival in the French capital are described in the following passage:

It hung before him this morning, the vast bright Babylon, like some huge iridescent object, a jewel brilliant and hard, in which parts were not to be discriminated nor differences comfortably marked. It twinkled and trembled and melted together, and what seemed all surface one moment seemed all depth the next. (43)

As Adrian Poole notes, 'Hard and soft, solid and liquid, surface and depth, this place is an all-round enveloping gift to the senses, appealing not to one but to all, touch, taste, smell, ear, eye'.¹⁸⁵ Strether's adaptation to its existential demands perhaps owe to his previous visit to the city as a newly married man, 'the youth he had long ago missed—a queer concrete presence, full of mystery, yet full of reality, which he could handle, taste, smell, the deep breathing of which he could positively hear' (194). Though Strether laments the aesthetic pleasure he missed by not remaining in Paris as a young man, the experience marks him out as an initiate to the multisensory.

Later, when he attends the artist Gloriani's garden-party, the multisensory yields to an intersensory exchange. Gloriani's 'sequestered' garden is '[f]ar back from streets, and unsuspected by crowds, reached by a long passage and a quiet court', well attended by guests, and enclosed by 'tall bird-haunted trees' and 'high party-walls' so as to make 'the open air [...] in such conditions all a chamber of state' (160–161), so

¹⁸⁴ Hathaway, 'Ghosts at the Windows', p. 81.

¹⁸⁵ Adrian Poole, 'Introduction', in *The Ambassadors* (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), pp. xv–xxxvi (p. xxvi).

we might expect Strether, on turning into it, to experience the auditory impact of the loud hum of conversation. Instead the hubbub of voices is substituted for a visual swarm of phantasms in Strether's imagination, a 'sense of names in the air, of ghosts at the windows, of signs and tokens, a whole range of expression, all about him, too thick for prompt discrimination' (161). Further, James's narrator states that '[t]his assault of images became for a moment, in the address of the distinguished sculptor, almost formidable' (161). Paul Verlaine elucidated in the essay which was printed alongside 'Voyelles' when it was first published in the French literary magazine *Lutèce*, that Rimbaud was a 'voyant', a seer capable of plunging his mind into the unknown. In 'Voyelles' each vowel sound gives rise to a miasma of visceral images, a chain of linked visions which ghost each other, competing for primacy. Because the thronging aerial phenomena perceived by Strether in *The Ambassadors* are also generated by speech, Strether can be viewed as exhibiting similarly historicized visionary capabilities.

However, as Dann notes, Rimbaud linked synaesthesia with mystical visions not out of his own experience or because he was inventing a new poetic language but because he was following his sources in nineteenth century French medical literature.¹⁸⁶ An inveterate reader of encyclopaedias and dictionaries, he searched those texts for suggestions of others' visionary experience, and came upon descriptions of *audition colorée* as one of the conditions, signifying, in C. F. Michéa's words, 'anomalies of the intellectual and emotional functions, not necessarily implying the idea of madness'.¹⁸⁷ Discourse on synaesthesia frequently traversed the boundaries between literature and medicine in this way during the fin de siècle. One

¹⁸⁶ Dann, p. 23.

¹⁸⁷ C. F. Michéa, *Du Délire Des Sensations* (Paris: Labé, 1846), p. 7; Cited in Dann, p. 23.

of the most influential works on the topic from the latter discipline was the British polymath Francis Galton's *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, published in the same year as 'Voyelles'. Galton's work on visualisation throughout the 1880s frequently referred to French discourse on the topic, especially that concerning synaesthesia. In *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, he writes that the French 'appear to possess the visualising faculty in a high degree [...] Their phrase, "figurez-vous," or "picture to yourself," seems to express their dominant mode of perception. Our equivalent of "imagine" is ambiguous'. Galton was familiar with French medical literature of the species which inspired Rimbaud. A report written for *Mind* by William James records how Galton attended the Paris Congress of Physiological Psychology in 1889 where one of the plenary sessions dedicated to 'special subjects' 'dealt with the subject of Abnormal Association of Sensations of one kind with those of another'. William James notes that '[t]he most striking feature of the discussions was, perhaps, their tendency to slope off to some one or other of those shady horizons with which the name of "psychic research" is now associated', and names Galton alongside the French psychologists Gley, Binet, Janet, Bertrand, Espinas, and Bemheim as one of those who took a most active part in these debates.¹⁸⁸

Some of the synaesthetic experiences recorded by participants in his survey in *Inquiries into Human Faculty* replicate the vaporous waves of colour in 'Voyelles'. But, just as each description of a colour-form in 'Voyelles' becomes progressively more complex (e.g. 'U, cycles, divine vibrations of green seas, / Peace of pastures scattered with animals, peace of the wrinkles / Which alchemy prints on heavy studios

¹⁸⁸ William James, 'The Congress of Physiological Psychology at Paris', *Mind*, XIV (1889), 614–616 (pp. 614–615).

brows'),¹⁸⁹ Galton also indicates the potential for synaesthetes to 'easily develop by practice' the ability to produce more detailed and immersive intersensory environments.¹⁹⁰ This corresponds to the experience of Strether, who, left to exercise his perceptive and imaginative faculties away from the intellectual repression of Woollett, becomes capable of visceral instances of synaesthetic perception such as the vision of Sarah Pocock which I began this chapter by drawing attention to. According to Galton, all these forms of synaesthesia, visual or nonvisual, are mental images, and as such, although they are not dependent on the experience of an actual external object, are 'seen' in the mind, projected externally, and accompanied by felt bodily engagement. Thus, through anomalous combinations of the normal human senses, Strether is able to experience a parallel corporeal existence in a virtual world.

One respect in which Galton's conclusions are out of step with the tenor of aesthetic discourse on synaesthesia is in that they place no emphasis on the increased capacity of persons of nervous sensitivity to experience vivid intersensory images.¹⁹¹ Commentators on the Symbolist poets' synaesthetic experiments, on the other hand, placed a high value on naturally occurring and cultivated 'neuropathic' tendencies in this regard, and it is they which may help further explicate the physiological aspect of Strether's experience at this juncture. In one of the first articles to examine the relation between sound and colours after the publication of Rimbaud's poem, critic Félix Fénéon (1886) declared that this relation should be sensible to 'all refined

¹⁸⁹ Rimbaud, p. 121.

¹⁹⁰ Sir Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (London: Macmillan, 1883), p. 43.

¹⁹¹ Galton, p. 11.

nervous systems'.¹⁹² Extant criticism on *The Ambassadors* has explored the possibility that Strether might be possessed of such an acute constitution. Ellen Wayland-Smith asserts that Strether is 'a sensitive instrument capable of picking up signals that go undetected by his less acutely equipped compatriots'.¹⁹³ The relationship which Strether's nervous sensitivity might have to his capacity for synaesthetic perception may be brought out via reference to Guy de Maupassant's reflections on synaesthesia in Rimbaud's 'Voyelles' and Charles Baudelaire's 'Correspondences'.¹⁹⁴ Maupassant writes that smells, colours, and sounds correspond 'not only in nature but in us and are confused sometimes "in a dark and profound unity," as [Baudelaire] says, by the repercussions of one organ upon another'. This assertion is supported by his own reading of the scientific literature, which, he notes:

has proved that, in certain nervous and over-excitabile people, when one sense receives a strong shock, the unsettling of this impression is communicated, like a wave, to its neighbours, which translate it into their own terms. [...] Why can delicate, slightly hysterical individuals not taste all things with their senses at the same time, and why also can Symbolists, incurable and privileged poets, not reveal these delicious sensibilities to others?¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Dann, p. 27.

¹⁹³ Ellen Wayland-Smith, "Conductors and Revealers": Henry James's Electric Messengers in *The Ambassadors*, *Henry James Review*, 32 (2011), 118–139 (p. 127).

¹⁹⁴ As the Symbolist movement began to reflect on its own origins in the 1890s, its critics invariably pointed to Baudelaire as a precursor, interpreting 'Correspondences' in terms of coloured hearing. For further detail see Andrew G. Lehmann, *The Symbolist Aesthetic in France: 1885 - 1895* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968).

¹⁹⁵ Guy de Maupassant, *La Vie Errante* (Paris: Ollendorf, 1890), pp. 18–21; Cited in Dann, p. 39.

This connection between the refinement of the nervous system and the faculty to perceive synaesthetically was also noted by British writers. Frederic Myers averred that synaesthesia could be seen as evidence that 'nervous development is now proceeding more rapidly than ever'.¹⁹⁶ In the light of the schema shared by Myers and Maupassant, a causal relationship can be posited between Strether's nervousness and his experiences of synaesthesia. For example, his experience of the many voices at Gloriani's gathering transforming into an 'assault of images' is, from this perspective, directly anticipated by the antecedent sensation that 'his nerves were on the stretch' (120, 119).

Fin de siècle discourses on nervous sensitivity and synaesthesia also share with *The Ambassadors* a vocabulary based on reverberation which may help to explain the physical reality of Strether's perceptual experience. Jules Millet's 1892 thesis on coloured hearing noted that because both sound and light were vibrations, and light was of a higher vibration, perhaps the resonating bodies that produced sound also produced light, which could be seen only by those with especially refined nervous systems. Millet also believed that in the future humans would begin to see the higher vibrations of the ether that currently escaped human perception. In *The Ambassadors* Strether shows an acute responsiveness to auditory cues, becoming highly attuned 'to sounds and suggestions, vibrations of the air' (246), to hums, clicks and voices by way of a 'roundabout echo' (103). At especially tense moments, Strether observes sonorous vibration turn to light, and vice versa. On first meeting Chad, and asking himself 'if he weren't perhaps really dealing with an irreducible young Pagan', this last word so 'gratifie[s] his mental ear' that it projects a 'quick ray' of 'certain clearness'

¹⁹⁶ Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, I, p. 93.

(132). Waymarsh's contribution to social relations, on the other hand is often characterized as a silent 'sombre glow' (40, 101, 302, 367), which produces a simulacrum of speech (e.g. 'The sombre glow stared at him till it fairly sounded out – "to save you, poor old man, to save you; to save you in spite of yourself"' (302)). This argument also appealed to writers on occult phenomena, the psychical research journal *Light* publishing an article in 1896 which posited form, sound, and colour as levels of vibration (colour being the highest), which together formed the mystical 'Lost Chord' which existed outside the ken of normal human perception.¹⁹⁷ These correlative speculations offer semantic weight to Strether's enigmatic explanation to Sarah Pocock of how his perception of Chad's life in Paris has changed since joining him there: 'an inexorable tide of light seems to have floated us into our perhaps still queerer knowledge' (375).

II

The symbolic qualities of light were also highly valued by the French Impressionist painters of the late nineteenth century. As Arthur Symons writes in 1893, symbolist literature and impressionism are born of the same impulse, each pursuing an experience exceeding the limits of the purely material: 'What both seek is not general truth merely, but *la verite vraie*, the very essence of truth – the truth of appearances to the senses, of the visible world to the eyes that see it; and the truth of spiritual things

¹⁹⁷ 'Music and Painting: Messages Given Automatically Through the Hand of Miss E. Katherine Bates, at Bayreuth and Fontaine-Bleau, in July and August, 1896: III, "Painting and Colour"', *Light*, 20 (1896), 614–615.

to the spiritual vision'.¹⁹⁸ Their work helps elucidate a further valency of the visual in *The Ambassadors* through the systematic linking of the affectual power of colour to that of music.

One of the functions the musical had for impressionism was as a device for codifying the complex and unique flavour of experience. Within James's British intellectual milieu, one of the main points of entry to the complex semiotics of the new artistic movement across the channel was through the work and artistic theory of the painter James Abbott McNeil Whistler. His work shared with the French Impressionists a self-conscious comparison of painterly to musical 'composition'. Whistler titled his works 'symphonies,' 'arrangements,' 'harmonies,' and 'nocturnes' and stated in 1892 that 'As music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sound, and the subject-matter has nothing to do with harmony of sound or of colour'.¹⁹⁹ James's review of the second Grosvenor exhibition in 1878 compared Whistler to the French Impressionists on these grounds, emphasising the painter's aspiration towards equalling the affective power of music: '[L]ike them, he suggests the rejoinder that a picture is not an impression but an expression— just as a poem or a piece of music is'.²⁰⁰ The critical theory underpinning Impressionism has a vocabulary which is inherently musical. The chemist and colour-theorist Michel Eugène Chevreul, explains in *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colours, and Their Applications to the Arts* (1855), that the meaning of the 'tone' of a colour is to be

¹⁹⁸ Arthur Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 1893, 858–67 (p. 859).

¹⁹⁹ James McNeill Whistler, 'The Red Rag', in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (London: Dover Publications, 1967), p. 127.

²⁰⁰ Henry James, 'The Grosvenor Gallery', in *The Painter's Eye: notes and essays on the pictorial arts* (Madison; London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956), pp. 161–166 (p. 165).

exclusively employed to 'designate the different modifications which that colour, taken at its maximum intensity, is capable of receiving from the addition of white, which weakens its *tone*, and black, which deepens it', 'scale', to be applied 'to the collection of tones of the same colour thus modified', and 'harmony' for the result of combinations of tones.²⁰¹ Analysis of the description of Strether's first walk in the French capital shows such laws operating below the surface of the visual image the novel presents us with. James's narrator states:

In the garden of the Tuileries he had lingered, on two or three spots, to look; it was as if the wonderful Paris spring had stayed him as he roamed. The prompt Paris morning struck its cheerful notes – in a soft breeze and a sprinkled smell, in the light flit, over the garden-floor, of bareheaded girls with the buckled strap of oblong boxes, in the type of ancient thrifty persons basking betimes where terrace-walls were warm, in the blue-frocked brass-labelled officialism of humble rakers and scrapers, in the deep references of a straight-pacing priest or the sharp ones of a white-gaitered red-legged soldier. He watched little brisk figures, figures whose movement was as the tick of the great Paris clock, take their smooth diagonal from point to point; the air had a taste as of something mixed with art [...]

In the Luxembourg Gardens he pulled up; here at last he found his nook, and here, on a penny chair from which terraces, alleys, vistas, fountains, little

²⁰¹ Michel Eugène Chevreul, *The Principle of Harmony and Contrast of Colours*, trans. by Charles Martel (London: Longman, 1872), p. 55; For details of Chevreul's influence on impressionism see William Innes Homer, *Seurat and the Science of Painting* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1964).

trees in green tubs, little women in white caps and shrill little girls at play all sunnily 'composed' together, he passed an hour in which the cup of his impressions seemed truly to overflow. (76–77)

Strether's vision captures the manner and matter of one of the social events captured *en plain air* by the Impressionists. The Garden of the Tuileries and the Luxembourg Gardens were themselves the subject of paintings by Claude Monet, Edouard Manet, Camille Pissarro, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir.²⁰² What Strether sees is most clearly evocative of Manet's *Music in the Tuileries* (1862), which depicts a fashionable crowd gathered to listen to a concert and contains many portraits of poets, artists and musicians, including one of the symbolist and synaesthete Charles Baudelaire. The painting's loose brush strokes and quickly executed masses of colour figure visually the intensity of the listeners' experience. Strether's experience which causes 'the cup of his impressions [...] truly to overflow' not only has the 'taste as of something mixed with art', but like the impressionist canvases which depict the same setting, seems to be "'composed" together' musically as much as pictorially. Its 'cheerful notes' are 'blue', 'brass', 'white', and 'red', as well as 'deep' and 'sharp' (two terms which, in any case, have both auditory and visual referents), and their melody is backed by the metronomic 'tick of the great Paris clock'. This deference to the musical helps describe the intricacies of sensory experience to which Strether finds himself exposed.

²⁰² Claude Monet, *The Tuileries Gardens* (1875), *View of the Tuileries Gardens* (1876); Edouard Manet, *Music in the Tuileries* (1862); Camille Pissarro, *The Garden of the Tuileries on a Spring Morning* (1899), *The Garden of the Tuileries on a Winter Afternoon* (1899), *The Garden of the Tuileries in the Rain* (1899); Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *At the Luxembourg Gardens* (1883).

However, the coherence of the colour-music analogy in Impressionist theory is predicated on the comparable facility of the tones or 'notes' of both mediums to stimulate specific emotions. The main purpose of colour, the art critic Charles Blanc stated in an essay on the French Romantic artist Eugene Delacroix which William Innes Homer asserts was 'undoubtedly of particular value to George Seurat', was to express emotion, thought, and moral character.²⁰³ Blanc chastised such painters as Paolo Veronese and Peter Paul Rubens, who, he said, used the same colour harmonies for all of their pictures, even though their subjects were quite different from each other. Delacroix avoided this error; he is to be praised because he 'never fails to tune his lyre to the tone of thought, so that the first aspect of his picture shall be the prelude to his melody, grave or gay, melancholy or triumphant, sweet or tragic'.²⁰⁴ If Strether's visual imagination is as in accord with impressionism in this regard as I have shown it to be in other ways, we would expect to see a further set of sensory substitutions, with colours standing in for feelings via a sort of emotional synaesthesia. His reaction to Sarah Pocock's arrival in Paris appears to be one such instance. The sound which crimson brings to mind for Strether embodies thoughts of personal injury, possibly dramatizing the violence committed against Sarah's sensibility by what she perceives as the vulgarity of Paris, or the damage caused to Strether's standing in Woollett by his dalliance in the French capital.

Seurat's colour theory provides an instructive context for this genre of synaesthesia in *The Ambassadors*. Following his attendance of lectures given by the mathematician Charles Henry at the Sorbonne in the 1880s about the emotional and

²⁰³ Charles Blanc, 'Eugène Delacroix', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 16 (1864), 5–27, 97–129; cited in Homer, p. 36.

²⁰⁴ Homer, p. 106.

symbolic properties of lines and colour, Seurat developed his own theory of harmony. Seurat wrote that '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.'²⁰⁵ The emotion of gaiety was to be achieved by the predominance of luminosity, warm colours, and by the use of upward pointing lines; serenity through the balanced use of light and dark, warm and cold colours, and by horizontal lines; sadness being achieved through the use of dark, cold colours and lines that point downwards.²⁰⁶ These rules of composition can be used to explore the emotional shifts taking place within Strether's consciousness. The overwhelming atmosphere of conviviality which he experiences on arrival at Gloriani's garden party is embodied by the preponderance of light, warm colours and upward glances toward tall trees and high walls. Subsequent visions are rarely as homogenous. For instance, when Strether makes his excursion to the countryside and meditates on his experiences in Europe, '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' (416). Viola Hopkins Winner asserts that the conversion of colours from adjectives into substantives makes this scene especially comparable to an impressionist canvas;²⁰⁷ it is also credible that doing so apportions them increased ontological freight within the structure of James's narrator's statement. According to Seurat's schema, blue and green are 'cool', but white and copper are 'warm', and this creates dissonance, which is

²⁰⁵ Letter, Georges Seurat to Maurice Beaubourg (1890), cited in Homer, p. 186.

²⁰⁶ Homer, p. 187.

²⁰⁷ Viola Hopkins Winner, *Henry James and the Visual Arts* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970).

further contributed to by the ‘crookedness’, and the ‘improbable shade’ of the White Horse. Such complex emotional disturbances seem consistent with the reactions one would expect to experience facing a painting of Seurat’s, if his theory of harmony holds. The painter’s pointillist compositions in particular, composed of a multitude of tiny coloured dots of different hues, coalesce and separate into different tones – and thus different emotions – depending on the observer’s position and strength of vision.

III

The association of colours with emotions was also an elemental part of theosophical thought. The Theosophical Society’s speculations circulated widely throughout Europe, and especially in Paris.²⁰⁸ Because in theosophical thinking, colour theory was imbricated with evolutionary narratives, its impact upon my reading of *The*

²⁰⁸ The Society’s founding member, Helena Blavatsky herself came to France in 1884 to work on the outline of *The Secret Doctrine*. While in Paris, she attended meetings at the home of the Duchess of Pomar (as I mention), coming to know people like the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot and physiologist Charles Richet. In July 1889, Blavatsky stayed at Fontainebleau to work on part of *The Voice of the Silence*.

After a lecture tour by the Countess Wachtmeister in the late 1890s, a number of branches sprang up in the provinces and by 1899 there were enough of them to form the French Section of the Theosophical Society with Théophile Pascal as its first General Secretary. He remained in office until 1908.

The theosophist magazine, *Le Lotus Bleu*, was launched in March 1890 by Arthur Arnould, aided by Blavatsky. The first French theosophical publishing house was started in 1893, issuing Blavatsky’s *La Voix du Silence*, (*The Voice of the Silence*), W. Q. Judge’s *Epitome des Doctrines Théosophiques*, (*An Epitome of Theosophy*) and Amaravella’s *Le Secret de l’Absolu* (*The Secret of the Absolute*). Gradually translations of almost all the theosophical standard texts were published, including Blavatsky’s *Isis Unveiled* in 4 volumes. See Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1988); Jeffrey D. Lavoie, *The Theosophical Society: The History of a Spiritualist Movement* (Boca Raton, FL: Brown Walker, 2012).

Ambassadors is to reframe Strether's mode of vision as an indicator of progeny. Symbolism and Impressionism offer some value to this reading: in *L'audition Colouree*, Millet assures his readers that his own view is that the colour hearing expressed by the Symbolist poets 'marks for us a true progress in the perfection of our senses'; the poet Jules Laforgue puts forward a physiological explanation for the artists' achievements, that 'the Impressionist eye is, in short, the most advanced in human evolution, the one which [...] has grasped and rendered the most complicated combinations of nuances known'.²⁰⁹ However, Theosophy goes further than symbolism and impressionism in suggesting that perception of such synaesthetic visual phenomena indicated a deep awareness of the hidden material structures of reality. In Besant and Leadbeater's 1901 text, *Thought-Forms*, the authors describe the 'radiating vibration[s] and floating form[s]' which are the consequence of all thoughts, cataloguing colours and their respective meanings via accompanying plates (see Figure I). *Thought-Forms* is also in tune with the correspondence between the auditory and the visual that has been shown to be in evidence in both *The Ambassadors* and French aesthetic discourse. The closing chapter of Besant and Leadbeater's text, titled 'Forms Built by Music' includes the statement 'when [...] a musical note is sounded, a flash of colour corresponding to it may be seen by those whose finer senses are already to some extent developed'.²¹⁰ Theosophical doctrine stated that there were seven interpenetrating worlds – from the highest down: divine, monadic, spiritual, intuitional, mental, emotional (or astral), and physical – all of which

²⁰⁹ Jules Millet, *Audition Colorée* (Paris: Octave Doin, 1892), p. 78, cited in Dann, p. 29; Jules Laforgue, 'On Impressionism', in *Mélanges Posthumes, Oeuvres Complètes*, 4th edn (Paris: Mercure), p. 3.

²¹⁰ Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, *Thought Forms* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003), p. 55.

are made of 'universal matter', albeit of different degrees of density which therefore vibrate at different rates. Leadbeater delineates humankind's place in this system:

A man living (as we are all doing) in the physical world sees, hears, feels, by vibrations connected with the physical matter around him. He is equally surrounded by the astral and mental and other worlds which are interpenetrating his own which are interpenetrating his own denser world, but of them he is normally unconscious, because his senses cannot respond to the oscillations of their matter, just as our physical eyes cannot see by the vibrations of ultra-violet light, although scientific experiments show that they exist, and there are other consciousnesses with differently formed organs who can see by them.²¹¹

This undulating web of occult knowledge reminds me of the Paris of *The Ambassadors*, in whose 'thick', 'ectoplasmic' web, a tide of 'objects, words and perceptions vibrate[s]', promising to float Strether off toward 'queerer knowledge' (375).²¹² Leadbeater writes that what is invisible to the unalloyed human vision is perceptible 'to highly developed clairvoyant power'.²¹³ In *A Study in Consciousness* (1904), Annie Besant argued that progenerate sensory capabilities and neurosis were not mutually exclusive:

²¹¹ Besant and Leadbeater, pp. 25–26.

²¹² Hathaway, 'Ghosts at the Windows', p. 81.

²¹³ C. W. Leadbeater, *A Textbook of Theosophy* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1912), p. 9.

When the brain is more highly evolved than the ordinary brain, has become more complicated and more sensitive, astral happenings may be felt constantly. [...] The crest of the evolutionary wave must always consist of abnormal organisms; the steady, normal, safe, average organisms follow on behind; they are more respectable, but perhaps not so interesting as the pioneers, and most certainly not so instructive as regards the future.²¹⁴

In the light of these statements, Strether's visual hyperaesthesia seems to place him at the vanguard of human development.

Theosophy's especial facility to illuminate Strether's situation lies in its focus on the evolution of the individual consciousness (whereas Darwinian theories subsumed the individual in the evolution of the species). In *The Key to Theosophy* (1889) Blavatsky asserted that there existed within each individual a 'Higher Self' which was the divine spirit, or God within the self, in the theosophical sense of the Deity as 'the mysterious power of evolution and involution, the omnipresent, omnipotent, and even omniscient creative potentiality'.²¹⁵ Every Theosophist was entirely and solely responsible for the nurture of that Higher Self. No prayer or ritual could excuse the consequences of the individual's own actions.²¹⁶ Strether too has a 'Higher Self' to care for in that 'double consciousness' which is quite simply his affinity for the 'finer taste' of Europe (22, 81). When first Strether visited Paris as a newly married young man, he returned with

²¹⁴ Annie Besant, *A Study in Consciousness: A Contribution to the Science of Psychology* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1972), p. 236.

²¹⁵ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (London; Bombay: The Theosophical Company, 1889), p. 64; Cited in Oppenheim, *The Other World*, p. 168.

²¹⁶ Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 72; Cited in Oppenheim, *The Other World*, p. 168.

'lemon-coloured volumes in general on the brain as well as with a dozen [...] in his trunk' (81) as pledges to an imagined life of aesthetic enjoyment and sensory freedom. Now that he has returned to Paris, Strether visualizes 'the lemon-coloured covers in confession of the subconsciousness that, all the same, in the great desert of the years, he must have had of them' (82). Theosophical evolutionary theory encourages us to view Strether's engagement with French aesthetic theory as the stimulus required to harness visionary capabilities hitherto immanent in his bodily consciousness.

However, both theosophical theory and French fin de siècle commentaries on aesthetics emphasize that such dramatic developments of subjectivity were best facilitated by the guidance of an adept. W. Michael Ashcraft's monograph on theosophist pedagogy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries expounds at length on the Theosophical Society's central assertion that 'intermediaries stand between the ultimate and humanity', and the role played by both learned human adepts and angelic intermediaries, whose role it was to facilitate the growth of the Higher Selves of others.²¹⁷ It was with the benefit of training that Millet was certain that everyone could become a synaesthete; 'the generalization of synaesthesia will mark a stage in the evolution of the nervous system'.²¹⁸ In *The Ambassadors*, Maria Gostrey fulfils the role of adept for Strether. He intuitively feels that she is a 'priestess of the oracle' (115), with an extended visual sense, and places himself 'at the disposal of her intelligence' (27). Maria delineates her role in the following way: 'I'm a general guide - to "Europe," don't you know? I wait for people - I put them

²¹⁷ W. Michael Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), p. 5.

²¹⁸ Millet, p. 80; Cited in Dann, p. 29.

through. I pick them up - I set them down [...] I never sought it- it has come to me. It has been my fate, and one's fate one accepts' (31).

Described in these terms, Maria appears to fit Luckhurst's model of 'the woman sensitive', as referred to in my first chapter.²¹⁹ Wayland-Smith makes a sustained argument which aligns Maria with the figure of the hypnotist (and Strether with the patient), on the basis of the ocular commerce which passes between them.²²⁰ The first meeting of the pair is foundational to this idea. It occurs when Strether has just had a telegram from Waymarsh announcing the latter's delay, and turns to find himself,

facing a lady [Maria] who met his eyes with an intention suddenly determined, and whose features [...] came back to him as from a recent vision. For a moment they stood confronted; then the moment placed her: he had noticed her the day before, noticed her at his previous inn. [...] Nothing had actually passed between them, and he would as little have been able to say what had been the sign of her face for him on the first occasion as to name the ground of his present recognition. (22-23)

Wayland-Smith bases her assertion as regards Maria's identity on how Strether's gaze is met and intensely held by Maria, and the way in which her features float into his consciousness as if 'back [...] from a recent vision', lending the episode a hypnotic or hallucinatory quality. Whilst I find this argument quite convincing, I would like to posit my own theory of another cultural figure latent within the character of Maria,

²¹⁹ See Luckhurst, pp. 214–215.

²²⁰ Wayland-Smith, pp. 128–130.

which I believe better draws together her talents and the discourse networks evoked by her actions and utterances.

As Luckhurst notes, at the end of the nineteenth century, the connection between concepts of subjectivity that hint at transcendence and progeneracy was commonly made in discussion of the 'very public women figures like Annie Besant and Dr Anna Kingsford [...] associated with Theosophy'.²²¹ These women not only inverted the hegemonic meaning of feminine passivity, but also that of the association of women and spiritualism with the limited private sphere of the home. As Joy Dixon notes in *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England*,

One of the goals [of the theosophist "spiritual community"] was to extend the supposedly natural relationships of the private sphere to the public sphere and do away with conventional distinctions between the public and private. This required a rethinking, not only of the concept of the individual, but also of the concepts of equality and independence embedded in it.²²²

In carrying out these social inversions, the site of the open house was fundamental. By opening their homes to a select number of initiates who wished to receive education on spiritual matters the single, financially independent women of the Theosophical Society experienced what Wendy Gan calls the 'rhythmic oscillation between privacy and a more publicly oriented existence' for as long as they controlled the borders to

²²¹ Luckhurst, p. 222.

²²² Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 125.

this space, making of the conventional privacy of the home a kind of power.²²³

Epistolary evidence suggests that James was aware of women's role as theosophical pedagogues. As I noted in my Introduction, in 1907, he visited Katherine Tingley's theosophical university at Point Loma in Southern California, and wrote to Elizabeth Jordan, the editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, offering for publication his account of the 'extraordinary place' and the 'amazing lady' who was responsible for running it.²²⁴ It is this kind of incarnation of the female sensitive to which I want to compare James's Parisian 'priestess of the oracle' (115).

I would like to draw attention to the figure of Marie, Countess of Caithness and Duchesse de Pomar, as a real life Parisian analogue for Maria Gostrey. She was one of the most tireless séance goers of her time, from the 1860s when she sat with D. D. Home until her death in 1895.²²⁵ An 1891 article from the *Observer*, entitled 'Paris Correspondence', notes that, having been born in England, she was 'well known in London society' before her husband, the Earl of Caithness's death and her subsequent move to Paris in 1883, where her opulent mansion on the Avenue Wagram became the hub of popular occultism and Theosophy.²²⁶ She quickly became a prominent Theosophist on both sides of the Channel. When Madame Blavatsky arrived in Paris in early 1884, the Duchesse de Pomar acted as official hostess and opened her home to everyone of suitable social or intellectual pedigree who wished to meet her famous guest. On the occasion of that visit, Blavatsky gave her approval to the first French

²²³ Wendy Gan, *Women, Privacy and Modernity in Early Twentieth-century British Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 28.

²²⁴ Letter, Henry James to Elizabeth Jordan (5 March 1907), *Henry James: a Life in Letters*, pp. 445-447 (p. 446).

²²⁵ Oppenheim, *The Other World*, p. 171.

²²⁶ 'Paris Correspondence', *The Observer*, 28 January 1891.

Theosophical society, a 'Société theosophique d'Orient et d'Occident,' which the Duchess had already founded, allowing for further social commerce with the Paris intelligentsia.²²⁷

Both Marie and the Duchess de Pomar manipulate the conditions of their home to create a mesmerising visual display. To Strether, a vital facet of Maria's charm is her 'expensive subdued suitability' (25). When he first enters her apartment, he finds:

It was the innermost nook of the shrine - as brown as a pirate's cave. In the brownness were glints of gold; patches of purple were in the gloom; objects all that caught, through the muslin, with their high rarity, the light of low windows. Nothing was clear about them but that they were precious. (105)

The Duchess de Pomar, meanwhile, presided over her salon, full of 'priceless relics' dressed magnificently, 'in priceless lace, falling over head and shoulders, and a beautiful tiara of various coloured jewels arranged over the lace'²²⁸ – or, on statelier occasions, sporting 'diamonds the size of pigeons' eggs'.²²⁹ Katharine Bates, an associate of the SPR, described how, during a visit to Paris in 1894, she saw the Duchess receive guests in her bedroom 'quite after the manner of the French kings in the days of the old monarchy'.²³⁰

²²⁷ Oppenheim, *The Other World*, pp. 171–172.

²²⁸ E. Katharine Bates, *Seen and Unseen* (New York, NY: Dodge Publishing, 1908), p. 146; cited in Oppenheim, *The Other World*, p. 171.

²²⁹ Gertrude Marvin Williams, *Priestess of the Occult: Madame Blavatsky* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 215; cited in Oppenheim, *The Other World*, p. 171.

²³⁰ Bates, p. 150; cited in Oppenheim, *The Other World*, p. 171.

More compelling still is the degree to which the techniques in visualisation which Maria teaches to Strether map themselves onto late nineteenth century theosophist theory, especially as it was understood within contemporary French culture. Strether is persuaded to place himself 'at the disposal of her intelligence':

He really had a sort of sense of what she knew. He had quite the sense that she knew things he didn't, and though this was a concession that in general he found not easy to make to women, he made it now as good humouredly as if it lifted a burden [...] She knew even intimate things about him that he hadn't yet told her and perhaps never would. He wasn't unaware that he had told her rather remarkably many for the time, but these were not the real ones. Some of the real ones, however, precisely, were what she knew. (27)

As Wayland-Smith notes, 'Maria knows, or is able to "see" things, about Strether that he has never told her, and that are—for the moment—invisible even to his own inner eye'.²³¹ 'I'm afraid of you', Strether confesses to Maria when she discerns that he is 'in terror' at the prospect of rendezvousing with Waymarsh. 'Because I've such illuminations?' she asks (32). The illuminations which allow her to read his mind recall the theosophical argument that light was the meeting point of spirit and matter and therefore offered access to occulted meaning for the sensitive observer,²³² as well as the luminous thought-forms which were explored by Besant and Leadbeater, and the semantic importance of light to both the symbolists and impressionists.

²³¹ Wayland-Smith, p. 129.

²³² This thesis is advanced in H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1995).

Maria helps Strether develop his own inchoate capacity for inner vision via a series of correspondences, whereby the transcendental becomes comprehensible to him through visual images. Close to the novel's end, by way of explaining his erstwhile blindness as regards the nature of Chad's relationship with Marie de Vionnet, Strether says to Maria, 'Of course I moved among miracles. It was all phantasmagoric' (452). As the passage quoted earlier showed, his initial impression of the interior of Maria's apartment is of a blurry, continuous whole. Susan Griffin argues that during this episode his vision can be likened to William James's conception of thought as a 'stream of consciousness' in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), a continuous flow, with points for pauses. Griffin writes of what Strether sees, that 'there are stopping places (the glints, the patches, the objects), but they are immersed in their surroundings (in the brownness, the gloom, the light)', and that Maria helps the stream flow toward discriminations.²³³ Strether soon sees that 'after a full look at his hostess he knew none the less what most concerned him. The circle in which they stood together was warm with life, and every question between them would live there as nowhere else' (106). Before visiting Maria, he has been with Chad in his apartment. Now, '[e]verything sent him back' (108), James's narrator notes, to the memory of this recent visit. Maria's presence helps Strether make of the luminous scene an inspiration to confront the puzzlement presented by both Paris and Chad.

The character of these sensory substitutions – from the observation of aerial phenomena to existential truths – mirrors the character of the 'correspondences' in Baudelaire's poem of the same name. This connection is pertinent to the discussion of

²³³ Susan M. Griffin, 'The Selfish Eye: Strether's Principles of Psychology', *American Literature*, 56 (1984), 396–409 (p. 400).

the theosophical in *The Ambassadors*. As A. G. Lehmann notes, 'it will be remembered that Baudelaire, himself one of the most direct formative influences on the symbolists, rested his theory of poetic symbols on an uncompromisingly mystical foundation'.²³⁴ Crucially, 'For Baudelaire, the term "Symbol" is almost entirely – but not quite – bound up with a *theosophical* view of the universe [emphasis mine]'.²³⁵ As Lehmann notes, the symbolic value of phenomena is secured by the poet noting certain cross-references between the different orders of sensation: 'Perfumes, sounds, and colours correspond';²³⁶ the poet is therefore not so much a creator as an explorer of connections which induce the idea that they are evidence of the prevailing order and harmony of all created things.²³⁷ This is elucidated in the final two stanzas of 'Correspondences':

There are perfumes as cool as the flesh of children,
Sweet as oboes, green as meadows
– And others are corrupt, and rich, triumphant,

With power to expand into infinity,
Like amber and incense, musk, benzoin,
That sing the ecstasy of the soul and senses.²³⁸

²³⁴ Lehmann, p. 53.

²³⁵ Lehmann, p. 260.

²³⁶ Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by William Aggeler (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954), p. 46.

²³⁷ Lehmann, p. 261.

²³⁸ Baudelaire, p. 46.

As Lehmann has it, 'Art is a mediation effected by a highly skilled craftsman between the more sluggish members of humanity and this superior reality'.²³⁹ This, I posit, is the role that Maria plays with respect to Strether's heightened visual sensitivity – drawing it out, as she also helps draw out the connections between aesthetic theory and occult thought in the Paris of *The Ambassadors*.






















In this way, we come to view Maria as the still centre of gravity in the text, around which the swirling miasma of discourse forms constellations, drawing together fin de siècle perspectives on the extension of human visuality, the aesthetic and the occult. In his preface to the novel, Henry James writes that 'the business of my tale and the march of my action, not to say the precious moral of everything, is just my demonstration of [Strether's] process of vision'²⁴⁰ – vision, that is, as a metonym for *understanding* – but by attending to what James's protagonist 'literally sees', as Griffin asserts we must,²⁴¹ the field of critical enquiry widens to include as its objects the plethora of sensory and affectual interchanges which are part of Strether's complex visual experience. By historically situating Strether's Parisian adventure, even the character's seemingly most bizarre and anomalous visual impressions can be interpreted as in tune with the latest theoretical advances with regard to the latent capacities of the human sensorium.

²³⁹ Lehmann, p. 260.

²⁴⁰ Henry James, 'Preface to *The Ambassadors*', in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York, NY; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 307–327 (p. 308).

²⁴¹ Griffin, *The Selfish Eye*.

Figure I: 'Meaning of the Colours', Frontispiece, Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, *Thought Forms* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003), p. 55.

1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
1. High Spirituality.	1. Devotion mixed with Affection.	1. Devotion to a Noble Ideal.	1. Pure Religious Feeling.	1. Selfish Religious Feeling.	
2. Religious Feeling, tinged with Fear.	2. Highest Intellect.	2. Strong Intellect.	2. Low type of Intellect.	2. Pride.	
3. Sympathy.	3. Love for Humanity.	3. Unselfish Affection.	3. Selfish Affection.	3. Pure Affection.	
4. Adaptability.	4. Jealousy.	4. Deceit.	4. Fear.	4. Depression.	
5. Selfishness.	5. Avarice.	5. Anger.	5. Sensuality.	5. Malice.	

CHAPTER THREE: HEARING THINGS

The roles of touch in *The Spoils of Poynton* and vision in *The Ambassadors* encourage us to view the relation between self and world in these novels as mediated by a bodily psyche of remarkable sensitivity and mutable orientation. However, to continue my discussion of the bodily consciousness in James's late work it is necessary to attend to a further sense, whose qualities are distinct from those thus far compassed: the auditory. The particular contribution of the auditory in terms of self-formation is delineated by Anzieu in *The Skin Ego*. He writes:

Parallel with the establishment of the boundaries and limits of the Self as a two-dimensional interface dependent upon tactile sensations, there forms, through the introjection of the universe of sound [...] a Self as a pre-individual psychological cavity possessing a rudimentary unity and identity.²⁴²

Responsiveness to auditory impressions is elucidated by his concept of the 'sound envelope', which he describes in the following way:

The psychological sound space – if we can, by resorting to metaphor, give it a visible appearance – is shaped like a cavern. It is hollow space like the breast or the bucco-pharyngeal cavity, a sheltered, but not hermetically sealed, space. It is a volume within which there are rumblings, echoes and resonances. It is no accident that the concept of acoustical resonance in general has given group

²⁴² Anzieu, p. 157.

psychologists and psychoanalysts a model for unconscious communication between persons.²⁴³

Anzieu's emphases here have been taken up in subsequent academic work on the distinctiveness of the auditory impression, such as that carried out by Walter Ong. He depicts the oral-aural individual as inhabiting an acoustic space similar to Anzieu's pre-individual 'cavern', 'a vast interior in the centre of which the listener finds himself together with his interlocutors'.²⁴⁴ Moreover, he examines the auditory impression in terms of its distinctness from those received by the other senses: its transitivity and diffuseness; how it radiates and permeates, rather than travelling in a straight line as does a visual or tactile sensation. In this chapter I argue that in James's late novels the phenomenological relationship of characters to their environment is of the kind which Anzieu and Ong describe: that the privileging of sound leads to the carving out of a shared auditory space, the limits of which are determined by the intersubjective bonds between characters who communicate by all manner of sonorous signals.

I contend that the way in which the novels describe this phenomenon is penetrated through and through with the language of spiritualism. Spiritualism venerated a spirit world which coexisted with the physical world and was evidenced, especially in the séance setting, by certain sonorous phenomena which suggest a protean auditory space analogous to that which I argue exists between characters in James's late novels. My chapter divides the sonorous phenomena which appear in James's work into three categories – sympathetic vibrations, disassociated voices, and

²⁴³ Anzieu, p. 171.

²⁴⁴ Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), p. 142.

mesmeric music – and attends to them in this order, proceeding from simplest to most complex.

I

To attend to the first of these it is necessary to engage with late nineteenth century physics. The phenomenon of sympathetic vibration which was produced in one body by the vibrations of the same frequency in a neighbouring body was demonstrated through a series of public lectures on auditory phenomena given by the physicist John Tyndall at the Royal Institution in the mid-1860s, which were subsequently published as a tutorial book for non-specialists, entitled *Sound* (1867). The concept was also of use to psychical researchers seeking to explain empirically the mystery of thought transference. My analyses will show that the nuances of the vibrating world of James's late novels are historically contingent with this discursive mode of scientific thinking.

The influence of pitch is an issue that is elemental to the concept of sympathetic vibration, and will also form the foundation for much of my explorations of the more complex sounds which circulate through the auditory space of James's novels. It was delineated in Tyndall's sixth lecture on sound, in which he demonstrated to his audience using a Bunsen-burner a variety of flames which were supremely sensitive to auditory stimuli. The two-foot high 'vowel flame' was extremely sensitive to sound, even from distances of up to thirty feet. 'All sounds are not equally effective on the flame', he explained: 'The effectual periods are those which synchronise with the waves produced by the friction of the gas itself against the sides of its orifice'. He

would sing to the flames to demonstrate specific sympathetic pitch, the ‘proper language’ to which they responded. He repeated a passage from Spenser and noted:

The flame selects from the sounds those to which it can respond [...] A loud and sonorous U does not move the flame; on changing the sound to O, the flame quivers; when E is sounded, the flame is strongly affected [...] The sound *Ah!* is still more powerful [emphasis Tyndall’s].

These observations led him to conclude that ‘the flame illustrates the theory of vowel sounds. It is most sensitive to sounds of a higher pitch; hence we should infer that the sound *Ah!* contains higher notes than the sound E; that E contains higher notes than O; and O higher notes than U [emphasis Tyndall’s]’. Having made these demonstrations, he ventured that ‘the flame behaves like a sentient and motor creature – bowing slightly to some tones, and curtseying deeply to others’.²⁴⁵

It is striking how closely the characters in James’s late fiction mimic the responsiveness of Tyndall’s flames to certain notes. In *The Golden Bowl* (1904), for example, sympathy is frequently couched in terms of reaching a certain harmonising ‘pitch’. These resonances may be separate from spoken communication (i.e. audible only by ‘the mind’s ear’) or present as a facet of tonal as opposed to semantic meaning within speech. The analogy between the physical and the psychical is hinted at when at a party at Fawns, the music of ‘a clustered quartet’ is replicated by the ‘harmony’ which is like ‘a mystic golden bridge’ between Amerigo and Charlotte, so that the two characters establish a mode of communion to which the Assinghams are insensible,

²⁴⁵ John Tyndall, *Sound* (London: Longmans, 1867), pp. 260–262.

their isolation sounding as ‘a false note in the concert’.²⁴⁶ The pregnant musicality of speech in the novel is subsequently emphasised when the ‘slightly hard ring’ (257) Charlotte perceives in Amerigo’s impatient admonishment of her suggestion that he should be concerned by Maggie’s concealed doubts and fears, and the ‘effect of the sound of the word itself, [Maggie’s] repeated distinct “know, know”, on [Amerigo’s] nerves’ (436) when confronted with her knowledge of his liaisons with Charlotte. Like Tyndall’s flames, James’s characters demonstrate the influence of pitch and the varying responses which different audible vibrations elicit in physical bodies. In his 1879 essay, ‘Radiation’, Tyndall reflected on his earlier experiments and concluded that the ‘optic, the auditory, and other nerves of the human body’ are like ‘so many strings differently tuned, and responsive to different forms of the universal power’.²⁴⁷ In *The Golden Bowl*, a strikingly similar turn of phrase is used when Fanny Assingham picks up the auditory cues which give away her husband Bob’s state of mind. She reflects that ‘The beauty was that, as under a touch of one of the ivory notes at the left of the keyboard, he sounded out with the short sharpness of the dear fond stupid uneasy man’ (386). The metaphor of the piano furnishes us with the idea of a scale of psychic ‘notes’ to which degrees of responsiveness may be attributed, and the additional correspondence with the linguistic motifs and sensory investments of Tyndall’s enhances our sense of a body of scientific work with which Henry James’s late novelistic output is ‘in tune’ with.

²⁴⁶ Henry James, *The Golden Bowl*, pp. 246, 250. All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations from the text.

²⁴⁷ John Tyndall, ‘Radiation’, in *Fragments of science: a series of detached essays, addresses, and reviews* (London: D. Appleton, 1897), I, 28–73 (p. 73).

However, as Tyndall's references to 'universal power' and hypersensitivity seem to suggest, this mode of thinking was easily co-ordinated with discussions of psychical phenomena, and I believe consideration of this latter discourse calibrates our understanding of the fin de siècle 'reality' of the vibrating world of *The Golden Bowl*. However, doing so means moving beyond Tyndall's body of work to that of William Barrett, his assistant at the Royal Institution between 1862 and 1876. Despite the linguistic tropes of Tyndall's writing which seem to suggest otherwise, Barrett claimed that his work with Tyndall was conducted in an 'atmosphere [...] entirely opposed to any belief in psychical phenomena'.²⁴⁸ Barrett nevertheless became a pioneer in the study of this field. He had the daring to propose a paper on thought transference and spiritualist phenomena for presentation at the Glasgow meeting of the BAAS in September 1876, entitled 'On Some Phenomena Associated with Abnormal Conditions of Mind' and took the initiative in launching the SPR in 1881-2. William Barrett's major criticism of Tyndall's demonstrations with sensitive flames was that they abjured the opportunity to explain *how* the sound was transmitted, and the question of the connection (or lack of one) between producer and receiver proved a driving force for Barrett in his pursuit of an explanation for the apparent telepathic phenomena that proliferated in his experiences with spiritualism and psychical research. For Barrett, 'the possibility of some tangible connection with the flame' was effectively confounded by the flame's response, although less vigorous, to particular vibrations, even when great distances or physical barriers were placed between the source of the sound and the flame, or when the vibrations were 'infinitely small':

²⁴⁸ William Barrett, 'Some Reminiscences of Fifty Years' Psychical Research', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 34 (1924), 275-297 (pp. 281-2).

Nothing material has been translated to the flame. The particles of air, if ever so violently displaced, could not struggle onward, even for a short distance, through the entangled barrier produced by their surrounding neighbours; and could they reach the flame, their impact would be incompetent to produce an effect so strange and sure. It is solely the wave-like, to-and-fro motion of the air, by which sound is propagated from place to place, that has caused this change. It is the product of translated motion, not of translated matter.²⁴⁹

Barrett argued that research on phenomena such as sensitive flames showed the immanence of ‘the laws of a spiritual kingdom’ in the physical universe, discrediting ‘the present despairing, materialistic attitude of mind’ and thus arousing conviction in ‘the dual world of matter and mind in the midst of which we live’.²⁵⁰ As Richard Noakes notes, the degree to which Barrett saw physics and psychical phenomena as homologous is confirmed in his account of a series of experiments in County Westmeath, Ireland, in which a local girl demonstrated a remarkable extension of her sensory powers when passed into a trance state.²⁵¹ Noakes asserts that it is evident from Barrett’s account of the girl’s responses to essentially inaudible vibrations that he saw her as a human analogue to Tyndall’s ‘sensitive flames’:

²⁴⁹ William Barrett, ‘On Sensitive Flames’, *Popular Science Review*, 1867, 154–166 (p. 157).

²⁵⁰ William Barrett, ‘On Some Physical Phenomena, Commonly Called Spiritualistic’, *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 4 (1886), 25–42 (p. 42).

²⁵¹ Richard Noakes, ‘The “Bridge Which Is Between Physical and Psychical Research”: William Fletcher Barrett, Sensitive Flames and Spiritualism’, *History of Science*, 42 (2004), 419–464.

It was impossible for [the operator] to call the girl by her name, however faintly and inaudibly to those around, without at once eliciting a prompt response.

Even when the operator left the house, and at intervals called the girl's name, at the same time indicating the facts by signs to those within, she still responded, more and more faintly, it is true, as the distance became greater.²⁵²

The conclusions from this experiment provided the basis for Barrett's argument in the first volume of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* that given the hypothesis that 'the brain might be regarded as the seat of radiant energy like a glowing or a sounding body':

the reception of the 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.²⁵³

He subsequently concluded that thought-reading had to be a 'transcendental and spiritual mode of communion, wholly distinct from the physical forces in its mode of transmission'.²⁵⁴

²⁵² William Barrett, 'On Some Phenomena Associated with Abnormal Conditions of Mind', *Spiritualist*, 9 (1876), 85–88 (p. 86); Quoted in Noakes, p. 447.

²⁵³ William Barrett, 'Appendix to the Report on Thought-Reading', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 1, (1882-3) 47-64 (p. 62).

²⁵⁴ William Barrett, 'Telepathy and the Spiritual Significance of Nature', *Quest*, 4 (1912), 3–18 (p. 3); cited in Noakes, p. 455.

In *The Golden Bowl* the passage of subliminal sounds between Maggie and Adam Verver brings into question the means of their transmission. In the novel, there is established between father and daughter an 'equilibrium' of consciousness, 'practically precarious, a matter of a hair's breadth for the loss of the balance' which is dictated to by a commerce of vibrations which passes endlessly and ineffably between them (352). Imagining the consequence of confronting Amerigo with regards to the nature of his entanglement with Charlotte, Maggie speculates that

She couldn't so challenge him, because it would have been – and there she was paralysed – the note. It would have translated itself on the spot, for his ear, into jealousy; and, from reverberation to repercussion, would have reached her father's exactly in the form of a cry piercing the stillness of peaceful sleep. [...] they [Charlotte and Adam] moved slowly through large still spaces; they could be silent together, at any time, beautifully, with much more comfort than hurriedly expressive. It appeared indeed to have become true that their common appeal measured itself, for vividness, just by this economy of sound. (351-2)

Like the eponymous protagonist of *What Maisie Knew* (1897), who perceives a 'hum' the intensification of which coincides with her deepening sense of intimacy with the adults around her, Adam and Maggie are simultaneously transmitters and receivers for vibrations which pass through them.²⁵⁵ Like Barrett's young subject from County Westmeath, they respond to vibrations which are practically inaudible; corresponding

²⁵⁵ Henry James, *What Maisie Knew* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1998).

to Barrett's idea of bodily consciousness as an 'unstable equilibrium' which 'a distant mental disturbance might suddenly and profoundly agitate', the mere thought of a note in the mind of one translates to a piercing cry in the mind of the distant other. These vibrations are theirs, and are not: their contribution to the idea of shared auditory space in James is to disturb the boundaries of interior and exterior, whilst also troubling those between James's work, Victorian physics and the study of psychical phenomena.²⁵⁶

Henry James's use of sympathetic vibrations as the basis of intersubjectivity also has its literary antecedents. In George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876), for example, the conceit is even more central and pronounced than in James's work. J. M. Picker contends that due to the 'radical uncertainty' of *Daniel Deronda*'s narrative, 'the illicit need to establish contact across the divide of the self, engage another's sympathetic attention, and converse in confidence' arises, and that to this end 'the motif of acute hearing to suggest the perceptive capacity a truly sympathetic character might possess'.²⁵⁷ Moreover, Picker asserts that Eliot's development of this trope in her work owes a debt to her deliberation in her notebooks and correspondences over sympathetic resonance as an emergent scientific concept as delineated by the German

²⁵⁶ Despite the pronounced psychical sensitivity which I draw on here, much of the dark comedy of *The Golden Bowl* is predicated on those moments when James's sensitive protagonists' capacity for telepathy or clairvoyance misses its mark, the most notable product of which being Charlotte and Amerigo's secret affair. This is not to the detriment to a psychical interpretation of the text; as Steven Connor notes, 'The recent dignification of [Victorian] spiritualism as a subject of serious enquiry by cultural historians risks distorting its subject in so far as it in so far as it allows one to forget, or, as it were, forget to take seriously, the shrieking silliness of the whole business. Seeing spiritualism steadily and seeing it whole means recognising its entanglement with facticity, fraudulence, and farce' (Connor, 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice', pp. 204–205).

²⁵⁷ J. M. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 116.

physicist Hermann von Helmholtz in several books in her library²⁵⁸. As past criticism has noted, James engaged thoroughly with Eliot's work in his early career.²⁵⁹ His review of *Daniel Deronda* for *The Nation* is suggestive of the literary branches of the discursive network his late novels takes part in through their treatment of the auditory. Of the use of acute sense of hearing in Eliot's novel, James wrote:

The 'sense of the universal' is constant, omnipresent. It strikes us sometimes perhaps as rather conscious and over-cultivated; but it gives us the feeling that the threads of the narrative, as we gather them into our hands, are not of the usual commercial measurement, but long electric wires capable of transmitting messages from mysterious regions of the mind as well as the globe that circulate within it.²⁶⁰

As both *Daniel Deronda* and James's review were published in 1876, the year of Alexander Graham Bell's patent of the telephone, it is no great discursive leap to equate James's metaphor of 'long electric wires capable of transmitting messages from mysterious regions of the mind as well as the globe' with this new technology. *Daniel Deronda*, being set in the 1860s, features no telephones, but is, as Picker puts it, 'a

²⁵⁸ Picker details that George Eliot and George Henry Lewes owned six of his works, including 'the first French edition of *Sensations of Tone* (1868), which contains "some pencilled marginal linings," and the third German edition (1870), as well as his three-volume collected popular lectures (1865-1876), which included "The Physiological Causes of Harmony in Music," the 1897 lecture that formed the basis of *The Sensations of Tone*' (p. 87).

²⁵⁹ See Sarah B. Daugherty, 'Henry James and George Eliot: The Price of Mastery', *Henry James Review*, 10 (1989), 153-166.

²⁶⁰ Henry James, "'Daniel Deronda: A Conversation'", *Atlantic Monthly*, 38 (1867), 684-694 (p. 684); cited in Picker, p. 104.

novel that, like Eliot, dreams of the possibilities for “telephonic converse”.²⁶¹ It often pushes the perceptual limits of speech, as characters’ aural intimacy belies their physical separation. When Daniel leaves Gwendolen to follow Mordecai’s voice abroad he remains an absent presence: though she will write him a brief, restrained and unsentimental note before he leaves, ‘the sense of [his going] was like a dreadful whisper in her ear, which dulled all other consciousness’.²⁶² Such a configuration replicates the confusing existential conditions experienced by the first users of the telephone, trumping the facility of the earlier invention of the telegraph to transmit information across great distances via electric signals, by conjuring seemingly disembodied voices from the receiver.²⁶³ It also provides a model of bodily consciousness, available to James, which assimilates a hyperextended sense of bodily presence as well as sensitivity through its use of the auditory.

The disembodied voice is also a feature of James’s late work, altering the constitution of intersubjective auditory space in these texts. Amongst the vibrations circulating within the vast interior of James’s late novels, voices represent a special class. Voices stand for bodily identities. As Connor has it:

What a voice, any voice, always says, no matter what the particular local import may be of the words it emits, is this: this, here, this voice, is not merely *a* voice,

²⁶¹ Picker, p. 104.

²⁶² George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (London: Zodiac Press, 1971), p. 750; cited in Picker, p. 107.

²⁶³ In the late nineteenth century, the telephone was not only associated with the disembodied voice of distant living persons but the dead. This is examined as part of ‘an established conjuncture of electricity, technology and the occult’ in Luckhurst, p. 117.

a particular aggregation of tones and timbres; it is voice, or voicing itself.

Listen, says a voice: some being is being given voice.²⁶⁴

The voice must be produced by vocal apparatus; and is one of the subject's collection of identifying attributes (albeit one which does not merely belong to a person, but is produced). Connor elaborates: 'My voice comes and goes. For you, it comes from me. For me, it goes out from me. Between this coming and going towards lie all the problems and astonishments of the disassociated voice'.²⁶⁵ However, in James's late novels there is a substratum of 'vocal' communications which are perpetually disassociated, insofar as they are not produced by anyone's physical vocal apparatus and pass through the consciousnesses of multiple characters. There is something uncanny about this – as Tom Gunning asserts, 'Voices that speak without a body are the traditional mark of divine inspiration, demonic possession, or madness'.²⁶⁶ In James's late novels, when the unspoken does not mean the unheard, the vast interiors of these texts become synonymous with the darkened drawing rooms within which psychical researchers observed spiritualistic phenomena.

This analysis necessarily builds upon that of Sharon Cameron who, in *Thinking in Henry James*, asserts that consciousness becomes positional in the novels of James's major phase, attaching sometimes to speech as it claims the 'audibility of other's thoughts,' and sometimes to meaning as it claims 'magical access to others' minds,' but revealing finally the 'ventriloquism of thinking' as one mind manipulates another's

²⁶⁴ Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 3.

²⁶⁵ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, pp. 3–4.

²⁶⁶ Tom Gunning, 'Doing for the Eye What the Phonograph Does for the Ear', in *The Sounds of Early Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 13–31 (p. 61).

thoughts to create meaning.²⁶⁷ In her chapter on *The Golden Bowl*, she draws attention to such utterances where ‘inferences enclosed in quotation marks bear all the signs of quotation except that they are never spoken, they have blurred the categorical distinction between thinking and speaking’.²⁶⁸ How thoroughly consciousness is experienced as a phenomenon that is communicative is established in the passage in which Charlotte, leading visitors through the gallery at Fawns to show them Adam Verver’s treasures, is apprehended by the consciousness of the novel’s other characters. As Charlotte is elaborating impersonally on the history of the possessions to spectators, who are absorbed by her words,

Maggie meanwhile at the window knew the strangest thing to be happening: she had turned suddenly to crying, or was at least on the point of it – the lighted square before her all blurred and dim. The high voice went on; its quaver was doubtless for conscious ears only, but there were verily thirty seconds during which it sounded, for our young woman, like the shriek of a soul in pain. Kept up a minute longer it would break and collapse – so that Maggie felt herself the next thing turn with a start to her father. ‘Can’t she be stopped? Hasn’t she done it *enough*?’ – some such question as that she let herself ask him to suppose in her [emphasis James’s]. (512)

Charlotte’s subliminal shriek is heard not only by Maggie but also by Adam Verver and Amerigo, and their subsequent unspoken communications are predicated on this

²⁶⁷ Sharon Cameron, *Thinking in Henry James* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 85.

²⁶⁸ Cameron, p. 83.

initial one, the perception of which is taken for granted. This emphasis on intersubjectivity makes available a simple comparison with the trance phenomena of 'thought reading', as investigated by the SPR: the mode of 'supersensuous perception' whereby 'a vivid impression or a distinct idea in one mind can be communicated to another mind without the intervening help of the recognised organs of sensation'.²⁶⁹

However, the novel's more thorough engagement with spiritualist phenomena is interpretable if we consider more closely what it means for the characters in *The Golden Bowl* to hear each other's unspoken thoughts. Connor's theory of the 'vocalic body', suggests that any form of vocalisation, even unspoken, can produce the hallucination of 'a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice'.²⁷⁰ In fact, Connor writes:

so strong is the embodying power of the voice that this process occurs not only in the case of voices that seem separated from their obvious or natural voices, or patterned vocal inflections, or postures, that have a clearly identifiable source, but seem in various ways excessive to that source. This voice then conjures for itself a different kind of body; an imaginary body which may contradict, compete with, replace, or even reshape the actual, visible body of the speaker.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Barrett, Gurney and Myers, 'First Report of the Committee on Thought-Reading', p. 13.

²⁷⁰ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p. 35.

²⁷¹ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p. 35.

In *The Golden Bowl*, Charlotte's silent shriek sublimates her public 'swagger' with the impression, received by Maggie, of a person 'in pain' and about to 'break and collapse'. Connor asserts that the vocalic body also requisitions a nebulous 'vocalic space' which it 'inhabits and occupies' but also actively procures for itself: 'The voice takes place in space, because the voice *is* space [emphasis Connor's]'.²⁷² The meaning of this space is 'changed drastically when it becomes possible to inhabit and command with one's voice an auditory range far larger than that prescribed the limits of the naturally audible', so that 'one might call such a conception of the body's relationship to its various environments a conception of "implicated space"'.²⁷³ This formulation is consistent with the spatial and temporal diffusion of Charlotte's cry: Amerigo physically retreats from its sound, and even after Charlotte is no longer in her presence Maggie feels her cry is 'in her own ears still' and 'the wonder for her' becomes her husband's 'not feeling the need of wider intervals and thicker walls' (514). It is due to its perpetual movement from interior to exterior that Charlotte's cry allows the other characters to think to each other. As Cameron also notes, the distressed body which produces 'the strange wail of the gallery,' detached from Charlotte, annihilates her person, as Maggie acknowledges at the novel's end when she asks Amerigo, 'How can we not always think of her that way? It's as if her unhappiness had been necessary to us – as if we needed her, at her own cost...' (551)

Because the thought of Charlotte's cry suggests a body which diffuses through space, it evokes what Connor names the primary purpose of the séance in his essay 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology and the "Direct Voice"': 'to enact

²⁷² Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p. 36.

²⁷³ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p. 13.

the hypothesis of a different kind of body in this world'.²⁷⁴ As I noted in Chapter 1, Connor's analysis centres on the body of the medium, whose role was to exemplify a bodily condition which was 'extensible, exorbitant [...] so that there was plenty of her atmosphere to be gathered for their [the spirits'] purposes'²⁷⁵ to elucidate that 'the suffusive body of the séance is characterised by the mobility of sound [the rappings, musical airs, and spirit voices which could not be located at a specific point in space], in its influx into the interior of the body, and its passage outwards into the world'.²⁷⁶ In Connor's estimation, the medium's imaginary body both furnishes and suffuses the space of the séance. It is "“utopian” (literally, “of no-place”) precisely because it is exorbitant and superfluous to customary space: rather than existing in space, it is itself a kind of space'.²⁷⁷ Insofar as the positioning of Charlotte's cry is also somewhat ambiguous, disassociated from her own body, hanging vaguely 'in the air' (513), yet passing through the separate perceptual fields of Maggie, her father, and husband, their experience of it is in tune with the phenomenological investments of séances goes in the presence of 'direct voice mediums'.²⁷⁸

Insofar as it is detachable from the physical body and exists in perpetuity in space, the improbable mobility of Charlotte's disembodied voice in *The Golden Bowl* corresponds to the concept of the 'etheric body' posited by the physicist and psychical

²⁷⁴ Connor, 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice', p. 209.

²⁷⁵ Houghton, p. 14; cited in Connor, 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice', p. 210.

²⁷⁶ Connor, 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice', p. 210.

²⁷⁷ Connor, 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice', p. 211.

²⁷⁸ In the field of spirit communication, the production of the direct voice, which is the focus of Connor's essay, was a process which culminated in spontaneous speech produced quite independently of the medium although at her behest.

researcher Oliver Lodge as an explanation for a range of séance phenomena from the direct voice to full-body materialisations of spirits. Convinced that 'life does not belong to the material world',²⁷⁹ Lodge sought to understand how thoughts find expression in physical speech and activity: the very fugitive leap which I have been investigating with reference to Charlotte's subliminal shriek in *The Golden Bowl*. To Lodge the occulted connection between source and human receiver indicated the presence of a spiritual world in conjunction with the material universe, linked together by a theorised medium, which he refers to as 'ether', the substance more widely posited in nineteenth century science as that which facilitates electromagnetic radiation.²⁸⁰ In 1902, he used his inaugural address as president of the SPR to advance the idea that the trance-utterances of mediums could evidence the intervention of 'some other intelligence or living entity, not ordinarily manifest to our senses, though possibly already in constant touch with our physical universe by reason of possessing what may be called an ethereal body', and 'telepathy from, as well as to, a sub-conscious stratum'.²⁸¹ The basis of this mode of communication was fully elaborated on later in *My Philosophy*, where he noted:

We shall find, I think that we possess, all the time, a body co-existent with this one we know – a body essentially substantial and related to space and time, not

²⁷⁹ Oliver Lodge, p. 209.

²⁸⁰ For a history of the conception of 'ether' see: *Conceptions of Ether: Studies in the History of Ether Theories, 1740-1900*, ed. by Geoffrey N. Cantor and Michael J. S. Hodge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); P. M. Hermann, *Force and Matter: The Conceptual Development of Nineteenth Century Physics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

²⁸¹ Oliver Lodge, 'Address by the President, Dr. Oliver Lodge, F.K.S', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 17 (1901), 38–58 (pp. 47, 50).

really transcendental [...] Intangible and insensible, it may exist; and if it exists it may be detachable and capable of separate existence. It will be the ethereal aspect or counterpart of our present bodies, but more permanent than they. For there is no property in the ether which suggests ageing, or wear and tear [...] No imperfection of any kind has yet been detected, or even suspected, in the ether of space.²⁸²

Not only does the phenomenon of the disembodied voice in *The Golden Bowl* allow for its interlocutors to imagine a different mode of embodiment in tune with the investments of séance goers, but when co-ordinated with Lodge's theory (the cultural currency of which is enhanced by the concomitant notions of the 'astral body' in Theosophy and the 'thought body' in the work of W. T. Stead)²⁸³ it connects the parallel existence of Charlotte's vocalic body with corporeal existence in the spiritual world as it might be directly lived.

Reading Lodge's work on the etheric body in juxtaposition with *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) produces even more startling results. This is because the imagined perpetuity of the etheric body allows us to conceive of the auditory interior of the world of this text as reverberating with the voices of disincarnate spirits. Lodge hypothesised that, after the physical body died, a person's etheric body remained with its mind, to enable the person to retain a firm feeling of identity. He reported that messages 'from the other side' seemed to support this hypothesis because physically

²⁸² Oliver Lodge, pp. 209, 220–222; Quoted in Oppenheim, *The Other World*, pp. 384, 385.

²⁸³ See H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Stead, *Real Ghost Stories: a Revised Reprint of the Christmas and New Year's Numbers*.

deceased communicators, 'though discarnate', felt 'no more disembodied than we do'; they had bodies, he construed, but instead of fleshly, they were etheric bodies matched to the environment in which mind or spirit found itself following death.²⁸⁴ In *The Wings of the Dove*, the discarnate commentator is Milly Theale, whose letter Densher allows Kate to burn in order to periodically think of, rather than to know, the words she has written. James's narrator states:

The thought was all [Densher's] own [...] He kept it back like a favourite pang; left it behind him, so to say, when he went out, but came home again the sooner for the certainty of finding it there. Then he took it out of its sacred corner and its soft wrappings; he undid them one by one, handling them, handling *it*, as a father might handle a maimed child. But so it was before him – in his dread of who else might see it. Then he took to himself at such hours, in other words, that he should never, never know what had been in Milly's letter. The intention announced in it he should but too probably know; only that would have been, but for the depths of his spirit, the least part of it. The part of it missed for ever was the turn she would have given her act. This turn had possibilities that, somehow, by wondering about them, his imagination had extraordinarily filled out and refined. It had made of them a revelation the loss of which was like the sight of a priceless pearl cast before his eyes – his pledge given not to save it – into the fathomless sea, or rather even it was like the sacrifice of something sentient and throbbing, something that, for the spiritual ear, might have been audible as a faint far wail. This was the sound he cherished when alone in the

²⁸⁴ Oliver Lodge, pp. 235–6; cited in Oppenheim, *The Other World*, p. 385.

stillness of his rooms. He sought and guarded the stillness, so that it might prevail there till the inevitable sounds of life, once more, comparatively coarse and harsh, should smother and deaden it—doubtless by the same process with which they would officiously heal the ache in his soul that was somehow one with it. It moreover deepened the sacred hush that he couldn't complain.²⁸⁵

My analysis of *The Golden Bowl* in combination with Lodge's 'etheric body' has drawn out the potential for disassociated voices to represent alternative models of corporeal being in James's novel. Because, in *The Wings of the Dove*, Densher imagines the voice of his departed friend as only being audible to his 'spiritual ear', the phenomenon finds a further historical collocate with the phenomenon of the 'direct voice' in late nineteenth century séances. The latter cultural form is described by the author and spiritualist Florence Marryat not as voice produced independently of vocal apparatus as such, but rather as an instance when 'spirits speak to you with a thorax and gullet of their own, instead of using the organs and speech of a medium'.²⁸⁶ The emphasis on a special kind of (immaterial) vocal apparatus here is particularly apropos to Milly's case as the 'faint far wail' of her thoughts captures something of the bodily frailty with which her wasting illness encumbers her before she dies, like a dove who has finally 'folded her wonderful wings' (473). The idea that Milly possesses an immaterial body which co-exists with and subsequently survives its physical counterpart is supported

²⁸⁵ Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1998), pp. 502-503. All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations from the text.

²⁸⁶ Florence Marryat, *The Spirit World* (London: F. W. White, 1894), p. 34; Cited in Connor, 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice', p. 220.

by the frequent description of her body as physically ethereal, and Milly's frequent externalisation of her unspoken thoughts throughout her life. As Kristin King notes, Milly is 'both thinly described and physically absent from most scenes in the novel', 'mysteriously omnipresent [...] all things to everyone, but lifeless in herself'.²⁸⁷ 'You'll never really know where I am', Milly says, 'except indeed when I'm gone; and then you'll only know where I'm not' (143). In Cameron's analysis, Milly's ritual externalisation of her thoughts culminates in their embattled auditory reception by Densher in the long passage quoted above. The positioning of Milly's disassociated voice and etheric body is numinous. Milly's physical body died in Venice, and Densher has returned to London. Her voice is described as 'faint' and 'far', at the bottom of a 'fathomless' sea, yet it collapses these distances to penetrate his consciousness. The workings of the unspoken voice in *The Golden Bowl* and *The Wings of the Dove* transcend the physical limits of normal speech to create an infinitely extendable yet unquantifiable auditory space which depends for its inclusiveness on the sympathetic capacities of the novels' characters. Fin de siècle psychical research and accounts of séance events allow us to interpret this phenomenon as evidence of a historically specific alternative model of embodiment latent beneath the surface meaning of James's texts.

Disassociated voices, then, take their place with sympathetic vibrations amongst a confederacy of auditory signs which, for those of James's characters who can perceive them, populate the intersubjective 'vast interior in the centre of which

²⁸⁷ 'Ethereal Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove* : The Transparent Heart of James's Opaque Style', *Henry James Review*, 21 (2000), 1–13 (p. 12).

the listener finds himself together with his interlocutors'.²⁸⁸ However, the considerable ontological freight which James's novels thus attribute to these forms tacitly projects the increased efficacy which the more complex auditory form, music, might achieve. As I noted earlier, Fanny Assingham's attestation in *The Golden Bowl* that 'The beauty was that, as under a touch of one of the ivory notes at the left of the keyboard, [her husband] sounded out with the short sharpness of the dear fond stupid uneasy man' evokes the idea of sympathetic pitch as demonstrated by Tyndall's sympathetic flames, but the metaphor of the piano implies a psychic scale of notes from which a skilled player could construct complex melodies and harmonies conveying equally complex messages. Charlotte's 'shriek', and Milly's 'faint far wail' in *The Wings of the Dove*, on the other hand, exceed the temporal and spatial limits of the naturally audible and thus suggest an etheric psychic identity, but it is to be noted that they convey no semantic value, firmly placing meaning in the vicinity of what we might refer to as tone.

These tendencies play upon an intuitive connection between knowledge and the musical, developing a wide ranging late nineteenth century trope. Walter Pater suggests in *The Renaissance* (1873) that 'all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music', for 'in all other works of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form'.²⁸⁹ In his 1870 essay 'Beethoven', Richard Wagner writes, 'Music does not represent the ideas contained in the phenomena of the world; it is itself an idea'.²⁹⁰ These formulations suggest an innate epistemological quality, albeit one which cannot

²⁸⁸ Ong, p. 142.

²⁸⁹ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1912), p. 87.

²⁹⁰ Cited in Jodi Lustig, 'The Piano's Progress', in *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, ed. by Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004), p. 87.

be extrapolated from the experience through which it is conveyed. As William James noted in his section on 'Mysticism and Music' in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, this characteristic of music was interpreted by spiritualist discourse as suggesting the potential to access the ineffable:

Mystical literature [...] prove[s] that not conceptual speech, music rather, is the element through which we are best spoken to by mystical truth. Many mystical scriptures are indeed little more than musical compositions. [...] Music gives us ontological messages which non-musical criticism is unable to contradict [...] There is a verge of the mind which these things haunt; and whispers from there mingle with the operations of our understanding, even as the waters of the infinite ocean send their waves to break among the pebbles that lie upon our shores.²⁹¹

This trope suggests that although the sympathetic vibrations and disassociated voices which radiate throughout the physical world in James's novels are possessed of certain sonorous regularities which announce their eminence to sensitive parties, the nuanced combination of their defining qualities (pitch and implied physical movement respectively) in the form of expressive music would achieve a more sustained dominion over the auditory space which James's characters share via its supreme affective capacity.

²⁹¹ William James, 'Mysticism and Music', in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Longmans, 1902), pp. 420–422 (p. 420).

Perhaps the most striking example of this kind of psychological interpenetration via an actual musical performance in James occurs in *The Sacred Fount* (1901), where the narrator recounts:

[...] in the room where most of us had assembled, an interesting pianist who had given a concert the night before at the near county town and had been brought over during the day to dine and sleep, would scarce have felt in any sensitive fibre that he was not having his way with us. It may just possibly have been an hallucination of my own, but while we sat together after dinner in a dispersed circle I could have worked it out that, as a company, we were considerably conscious of some experience, greater or smaller from one of us to the other, that had prepared us for the player's spell. Felicitously grouped, we might in almost any case have had the air of looking for a message from it – of an imagination to be flattered, nerves to be quieted, sensibilities to be soothed. The whole scene was as composed as if there were scarce one of us but had a secret thirst for the infinite to be quenched. And it was the infinite that, for the hour, the distinguished foreigner poured out to us, causing it to roll out in wonderful waves of sound, almost of colour, over our receptive attitudes and faces. Each of us, I think, now wore the expression – or confessed at least to the suggestion – of some indescribable thought [...]²⁹²

²⁹² Henry James, *The Sacred Fount* (New York, NY: New Directions, 1983), p. 120. All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations from the text.

Depicted as an 'interesting', 'distinguished foreigner' who casts a 'spell' which propagates impressions of the 'infinite' and 'indescribable' in his interlocutors, James's pianist seems to recall the character of Svengali in George Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894). Svengali, a Jewish musician and hypnotist, is described by Du Maurier's narrator as 'about as bad as they make 'em' when 'walking up and down the earth', but when he is playing music (his primary instrument being the piano) he is 'as one of the heavenly host'.²⁹³ Daniel Pick argues that this suggests that his capacity to create transcendental beauty through music connotes a command of the spiritual.²⁹⁴ The idea of an intertextual relationship between *The Sacred Fount* and *Trilby* is buttressed by knowledge of James's close involvement with the development of Du Maurier's novel. As Pick details, Du Maurier's fortuitous idea for the characters in *Trilby* had first been described to James in the late 1880s. James complained of lacking a good plot, whereupon Du Maurier posited an interesting scenario, which James accordingly made a note of. Svengali and Trilby were not mentioned by name, but James began to develop their characters.²⁹⁵ It constituted the adventure of a servant girl with an astonishing voice but no musical talent, who was 'mesmerised and made to sing by a little foreign Jew who has mesmeric power [and] infinite feeling'.²⁹⁶ In James's version, the Jew and the servant girl seemed mutually dependent creatively – which is consistent with the reciprocal depiction of pianist and audience in the passage from *The Sacred Fount*. The girl 'is really all the while only galvanised by her mate'; 'she had

²⁹³ George Du Maurier, *Trilby* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1995), pp. 42, 98.

²⁹⁴ Daniel Pick, *Svengali's Web* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 37-38.

²⁹⁵ Pick, p. 38.

²⁹⁶ Henry James, *The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. by F.O. Matthiesson and K. B. Murdock (New York, NY; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 97; cited in Pick, p. 38.

the glorious voice, but no talent – he had the sacred fire, the rare musical organisation, and had played into her and through her’.²⁹⁷ Pick argues that during the period encompassing the end of the Victorian era and beginning of the Edwardian era, due to the popular success of *Trilby*, the figure of Svengali came to represent a nexus for contemporary ideas about the transcendent quality of music. In *The Sacred Fount* James not only evokes this well-known archetype, but develops it in a way which corresponds to his treatment of less complex auditory impressions such as vibrations and voices as inhering to mutuality and bearing the potential to become the basis for intersubjective penetration between sufficiently sensitive persons, rather than simply unilateral ‘possession’. The pianist’s ability to project ‘the infinite’ is dependent not only on his musical ability, but on the will of the narrator and the other ‘felicitously grouped’ interlocutors to, ‘as a company’, look for a profound message in the performance.

The full historical import of the passage from *The Sacred Fount* goes beyond the transcendental power of music. This is because its setting also strongly evokes the dramaturgy of the late nineteenth century séance, a cultural archetype which can help us further elucidate the way that the auditory works in James’s late novels. An article in the first volume of *Borderland*, ‘Music by Mediums in Trance; or, the Strange Story of Mr Shepard’, collates anecdotal evidence about the person named in its title who ‘it is alleged, in his normal condition can neither sing nor play, yet in the trance state has extraordinary powers of extemporisation of the style and characteristics of the great masters’. The article continues: ‘It is, indeed asserted that he is controlled by the spirits of Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini, Chopin, and many others. His performances are

²⁹⁷ Henry James, *The Notebooks of Henry James*, p. 97; Cited in Pick, p. 38.

all executed in total darkness, the audience forming a circle, with joined hands, round the instrument.'²⁹⁸ The result is given rapturous description by a Mr Bernardin Rahn, Professor of Harmony: 'The tones sometimes soft, sometimes vibrating like a clear chiming crystal, burst out now and then in explosions of power, as if the elements had broken loose.'²⁹⁹ The parallel with the passage from *The Sacred Fount* consists of a causal relationship between two key elements in both texts: firstly the emphasis on a closed community of interlocutors which is commonly associated with spiritualist phenomena,³⁰⁰ 'felicitously grouped' and seated in a circle in a drawing room; and secondly the synaesthetic visual or tactile impressions which the music gives rise to, the 'wonderful waves of sound, almost of colour' which pour out.

The relationship between *The Sacred Fount* and 'Music by Mediums in Trance' illuminates the historical significance of ideas of auditory space. Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter argue in *Spaces Speak: Are You Listening?* that 'since listening with understanding depends on culture, rather than on the biology of hearing, auditory spatial awareness must be considered the province of sensory anthropology'.³⁰¹ They label those adept at manipulating such culturally specific sensory signifiers as 'aural architects', delineating their capabilities in the following way:

With skill and knowledge, an aural architect can create a space that induces such feelings as exhilaration, contemplative tranquillity, heightened arousal, or

²⁹⁸ 'Music by Mediums in Trance; or, the Strange Story of Mr Shepard', *Borderland*, 1 (1893), 343–344 (p. 343).

²⁹⁹ 'Music by Mediums in Trance; or, the Strange Story of Mr Shepard', p. 344.

³⁰⁰ Connor, 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice', p. 210.

³⁰¹ Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?: Experiencing Aural Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), p. 3.

a harmonious and mystical connection to the cosmos. An aural architect can create a space that encourages or discourages social cohesion among its inhabitants. In describing the aural attributes of a space, an aural architect uses a language, sometimes ambiguous, derived from the values, concepts, symbols, and vocabulary of a particular culture.³⁰²

The narrator in *The Sacred Fount* feels that as a member of the pianist's audience 'some experience [...] had prepared us for the player's spell'. Because, as I argue at various points in this thesis, the occult attains the status of commonplace during the fin de siècle – the paper, *Medium and Daybreak*, for example, publishing weekly directions for plebeian spiritualists on 'How to Form a Spirit Circle'³⁰³ – the drawing-room setting in James's novel, replete with its the circle of expectant spectators awaiting the performance of a mysterious stranger who senses their responsiveness in every 'sensitive fibre', constitutes an environment within which the sensory perception of heavenly music and other aerial phenomena could be considered the culturally conditioned response.

My sense that the audience's experience at the piano recital in James's novel echoes what was believed to happen in the fin de siècle séance is buttressed by Steven Connor's analysis of the cultural phenomenology of the setting. Connor not only historicises the mode of perception activated by participation in a spiritualist séance, but connects it to the psychoanalytic theory which I have used to delineate the contribution the auditory makes to self-formation in James's late work, writing that:

³⁰² Blesser and Salter, p. 5.

³⁰³ Luckhurst, p. 132.

the heightened and attentive listening which is so central a part of the experience of the séance renders the participant at once passively exposed to and intimately enclosed within a shared space of audition which can perhaps be interpreted in the light of the infantile experience of the ‘sonorous envelope’ or bath of sound analysed by Didier Anzieu.³⁰⁴

He also highlights ‘the association of spiritualist phenomena with the enclosure of the home – the séance room, the joined circle of hands, the recess, or darkened cabinet into which the medium retires’, and notes that such an environment ‘encouraged liaisons between hearing and the proximity senses, of touch, odour and taste’.³⁰⁵ This process of association mirrors the process of creative apperception by which, according to Anzieu, the ‘sonorous envelope’ allows the infant to organise the otherwise diffusive and disintegrating conditions of aurality itself. Anzieu’s work has more recently been carried forward by Edith Lecourt, who delineates how, because of its formal qualities, music may represent a special category amongst auditory signs, with regard to self-formation; and I therefore argue that the refinements offered by music to the ‘feliculously grouped’ audiences in both James’s *The Sacred Fount* and the article from *Borderland* conceivably surpass all other auditory stimuli available to them. Lecourt asserts that the aural environment is characterised by the absence of boundaries in space: ‘sound reaches us from everywhere, it surrounds us, goes

³⁰⁴ Connor, ‘The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice’, p. 205.

³⁰⁵ Connor, ‘The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice’, p. 208.

through us', and ultimately 'there is no respite for sonorous perception, which is active day and night and only stops with death or total deafness' as well as its troubling deficiency of solidity since 'sound can never be grasped; only its sonorous source can be identified'.³⁰⁶ All these conditions are summed up, says Lecourt, in its quality of 'omnipresent simultaneity'.³⁰⁷ Therefore, as Connor himself notes in *Dumbstruck*, his monograph on the voice, what music distinctly provides us with are 'perceived regularities of rhythm, tone, melody and harmony [which] have the effect of articulating (breaking up and co-ordinating) and thus spatialising in detail what would otherwise be an undifferentiated torrent of noise'.³⁰⁸ In the 'total darkness' of the séance with Shepard, the dramatic undulations of classical melodies provide the basis for the discombobulating of physical form itself ('the elements [...] broken loose'). Likewise, whilst the environment the narrator describes might be considered conducive to the perception of some kind of aerial phenomena, the power of the pianist's music in *The Sacred Fount* may derive from the balancing of form with intensity, which in turn allows the receptive audience to imagine themselves being caressed by series of waves of colour which pertain to 'the infinite'.

The correlation between these phenomena also leads me to question the nature of 'reality' which James's work, in the historicised sense, describes. In the passage from *The Sacred Fount*, James's characters' hypersensitivity to the auditory leads to the perception of sound as matter which can spontaneously reform itself and testifies to a spatial plenitude hitherto beyond their ken. To designate existential conditions of

³⁰⁶ Edith Lecourt, 'The Musical Envelope', in *Psychic Envelopes*, ed. by Didier Anzieu, trans. by Daphne Briggs (London: Karnac Books, 1990), pp. 211–236 (pp. 212, 213).

³⁰⁷ Lecourt, p. 211.

³⁰⁸ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p. 29.

this kind at the turn of the century was to echo the multiple voices speculating over the nature of life in other dimensions, and the passage's similitude to the article from *Borderland* further brings this out as psychical research from the period often collapsed any semantic difference between the 'spirit world' and 'other dimensions'. Mark Blacklock's work consistently highlights such connections. In his paper, "'Throughth": W. T. Stead's Higher Spatial Holiday', for example, he notes how in the *Review of Reviews* for March 1893, the editor and journalist recommended a cluster of books of interest to psychical researchers which supported the supposition that the spiritual world and the world of further dimensions were one. Stead's assessment of one of these texts, Arthur Willink's *The World of the Unseen*, which Blacklock describes as 'the latest contribution to a canon that had dragged the ideas of n-dimensional geometry into occultist discourse', is illustrative of the connections being made.³⁰⁹ Stead writes that 'Mr Willink writes that the unseen world is of four dimensions, and into this space of four dimensions or Higher Space, as he calls it, the dead pass, and from which they can communicate with us.'³¹⁰ Overt references to other dimensions in James's work are few – in *The Spoils of Poynton*, as mentioned in my first chapter Fleda refers to the mysterious trace of the past at Ricks as 'a kind of fourth dimension' (203) – but discourse on the subject can be interpreted as the absent centre of those texts in which intersubjectivity is predicated on the auditory. As stated earlier in this chapter, the spiritual world, which, like the world of James's late novels, was held to resonate with vibrations, voices, and music, was depicted as a fourth dimension by

³⁰⁹ Mark Blacklock, 'W.T. Stead and Throughth', *The Fairyland of Geometry*, 2012 <<http://higherspace.wordpress.com/2012/04/18/w-t-stead-and-throughth/>> [accessed 8 February 2013].

³¹⁰ W. T. Stead, 'Some Books of the Month', *Review of Reviews*, 1893, 324–325 (p. 325); cited in Blacklock.

psychical researchers. The cultural currency of the association of music with other dimensions is explored by the American music James Huneker's short story 'The Disenchanted Symphony' (1902). In this text, a composer and conductor named Pobloff writes a symphony which is called, at different points, 'The Fourth Dimension', and 'The Abysm'. At the tale's denouement, when Pobloff is rehearsing his composition, he suddenly feels 'a scorching whiff of sulphur and violets, a thin spiral scream,' and finds himself prostrate, with his orchestra disappeared into the fourth dimension.³¹¹ The qualities of music which presage this cataclysm are equable to those to the aural characteristics pre-eminent in the James texts in this chapter. Firstly there is the temporal location of sonorous matter. Pobloff wonders:

Was not harmony with its vertical structure and melody's horizontal flow, proof that music itself was but another dimension in Time? In the vast and complicated scores of Richard Strauss, the listener has set in motion two orders of auditions: he hears the music both horizontally and vertically.³¹²

The piano recital in *The Sacred Fount* suggests that music can be synaesthetic; and in the estimation of Pobloff, a 'born colourist', this quality is concomitant with its multiple and simultaneous temporalities: 'You can see pictures, poems, sculpture, and architecture—but music you must hear, see, feel, smell, taste, to apprehend it rightfully: and all at the same time!'³¹³ Moreover, experience of this level of reality is

³¹¹ James Huneker, 'The Disenchanted Symphony', in *Melomaniacs* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), pp. 324–346 (p. 333).

³¹² Huneker, p. 333.

³¹³ Huneker, p. 327.

dependent on an extraordinarily heightened nervous sensitivity, such as my analyses have attributed to James's characters. Pobloff also speculates:

If Man is a being afloat in an ocean of vibrations, as Maurice de Fleury wrote, then any or all vibrations are possible. Why not a synthesis? Why not a transposition of the *neurons*—according to Ramon Y Cajal being little erectile bodies in the cells of the cortex, stirred to reflex motor impulse when a message is sent to them from the sensory nerves?³¹⁴

Treating fin de siècle discourse on further dimensions as paradigmatic with regard to the behaviour of sonorous matter in the Henry James novels under discussion has dramatic consequences, as the space of intersubjectivity, demonstrably vast, must be re-evaluated as protean, even infinite. As I noted in my Introduction, in James's preface to New York Edition of *Roderick Hudson* he states that 'really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily *appear* to do so [emphasis James's]'.³¹⁵ The passage of auditory phenomena between sensitive characters in James's late novels suggests a 'circle' of relations which is mutable, with soundings of its extent merely revealing the theoretical existence of further volume.

In the light of this, we are left to conclude that auditory space in the novels under consideration attests to an irreducible plurality. Each producer of vibration, voice, or music is both performer and part of an audience. In *The Golden Bowl*, the

³¹⁴ Huneker, p. 330.

³¹⁵ Henry James, 'Preface to *Roderick Hudson*', p. 5.

'mute insistences' which Amerigo paradoxically perceives as a 'chink of gold in his ear' are delivered 'without any sort of straight telegraphy' (253), and this description hits the keynote. The trajectories of the auditory signals given out by James's characters are unquantifiable in their totality: we know them only as they resonate with other sympathetic emanations, momentarily making known sections of the vast intersubjective interior within which they reverberate. The theorisation of the relationship between the auditory and the intersubjective in James's late novels is made possible by the juxtaposition with writing from the intersection of contemporaneous physical science and psychical research, which suggests an uncanny ability for texts and writers from disparate discourses to listen to each other across the vast spaces of fin de siècle culture.

CHAPTER FOUR: MATTER AND INTERCORPOREALITY

My previous chapter revealed that in James's late novels, characters' bodies take on strange physical properties: they can be etheric, and translocate to other planes of reality. These variations were shown to be stimulated by James's characters' hyperaesthetic sensitivity to auditory phenomena. The existential conditions in these novels hint at the potential for further bodily reconfigurations: because as Ong asserts, of all the senses, sound in particular situates man 'in the middle of actuality and in simultaneity',³¹⁶ there arises the possibility that in the vast interior of the late novels, the collection of auditory signs which constitute one's personal identity might mingle with those belonging to others, rendering permeable the boundaries of the self. This chapter will use fin de siècle discourse on psychical phenomena to explore how the flexibility of bodily identity is developed into full intercorporeality in James's subsequent works *The Sense of the Past* and 'The Jolly Corner'. The protagonists of these texts, Ralph Pendrel and Spencer Brydon, explore their old ancestral homes, and encounter ghostly alter egos: in the case of *The Sense of the Past*, the painting of a remote ancestor also called Ralph Pendrel which comes to life, and in 'The Jolly Corner' the ghost of the man Spencer Brydon might have been. Somehow they exchange places with their alter egos and experience a different temporality, in Pendrel's case the 1820s, in Brydon's an alternative present. Whilst it is a short story, 'The Jolly Corner' enters my discussion of the psychical in James's novels due to its close compositional relationship to *The Sense of the Past*. James abandoned writing the latter text in 1900, before returning to it in 1914 and it was subsequently

³¹⁶ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, p. 114.

published unfinished in 1917; 'The Jolly Corner', published in 1908, develops similar material but brings it to a successful conclusion. Therefore, I use it in combination with *The Sense of the Past* to further evidence and contextualise James's artistic manipulation of the idea of the reconfigurable body in time during his 'major phase'. I note that the two protagonists concerned are, in the context of James's late fiction as a whole, particularly susceptible to intercorporeality, and that their experiences provide distinct echoes of fin de siècle writing on the physical reality of the spirit world. *The Sense of the Past* and 'The Jolly Corner' provide a range of perspectives from which to explore this hypothesis. First, I focus on Pendrel's subjective experience of time travel as dismemberment. Then I examine how, as observers, Pendrel and Brydon experience time travel objectively as materialisation. Finally, I conclude by reflecting on how this reading of materiality affects our perspective on the late novels as a body of work.

I

In my first chapter, I noted how the antique objects in *The Spoils of Poynton* become complicit in intersubjectivity, putting Fleda Vetch quite literally in touch with 'the tongues of other countries and the hands of great artists' (47). This tendency towards, what we might call, after Bruno Latour, 'interobjectivity' is developed in *The Sense of the Past* and 'The Jolly Corner'.³¹⁷ The corporeal discombobulation which the

³¹⁷ Bruno Latour suggests that because there is nothing especially local, and nothing especially human, in a local intersubjective encounter, 'interobjectivity' might be posited as a way of phrasing the new position of the actor ('On Recalling ANT', in *Actor*

protagonists face when confronted with their alter egos is prepared for by the effects of their interactions with the historic buildings within which the events occur. One of the reasons that the protagonists' receptiveness to interobjectivity is increased is that the buildings' architectural features seem to mirror parts of the body, and gradually, as James's men move through them their sense of their own body as the subjective centre of their environment is problematised. In *The Sense of the Past*, the first of Number Nine Mansfield Square's bodily features which Pendrel encounters is its face-like façade, which James's narrator notes:

had determined clearly, on the apprehension then interchanged, to have as little to say to the future as an animated home, of whatever period, might get off with. 'And yet I am the future', Ralph Pendrel mused, 'and I dream of making it speak'.

Face to face with it then, when he felt that already and quite distinctly it *was* speaking – which happened the first time that ever, key in hand, he was able to enter it unaccompanied [emphasis James's].³¹⁸

Pendrel subsequently observes that 'the dusky front at these times showed its eyes – admirable many-paned windows, at once markedly numerous and markedly interspaced – in a manner [...] responsive to his own' (52). Fin de siècle writing on the physiognomic interpretation of facial features helps us to elucidate the cultural

Network Theory and After, ed. by John Law and John Hassard (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1999), pp. 15–25 (p. 18)).

³¹⁸ Henry James, *The Sense of the Past* (London: W. Collins Sons, 1917), p. 46. All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations from the text.

significance of the above passages from James's novel. The German sociologist, Georg Simmel, for example, of whose work Wendy Graham asserts James was a keen interlocutor,³¹⁹ explores the nature of the face as an index in modern spirituality. In 'The Aesthetic Significance of the Human Face' (1901), Simmel notes:

Bodies differ to the trained eye just as faces do; but unlike faces, bodies do not at the same time *interpret* these differences. A definite spiritual personality is indeed connected with a definite unmistakable body, and can at any time be identified in it. Under no circumstances, however, can the body, in contrast to the face, signify the *kind* of personality [emphases Simmel's].³²⁰

Moreover, for Simmel, of all the parts of the face contributing to this signifying effect, the eye was the most subtle and powerful, because of its mobility and the capacity of the gaze to interpret and structure space itself.³²¹ James was well acquainted with the symbolic force of architecture, skilfully manipulating it, for example, in his image of authorship in the 'house of fiction' with its million eye-like windows, behind each of which 'stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making

³¹⁹ Wendy Graham, 'Signifying in the Ivory Tower', *Henry James Review*, 30 (2008), 68–74.

³²⁰ Georg Simmel, 'The Aesthetic Significance of the Face', in *Georg Simmel, 1858-1918* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1959), pp. 276–281 (p. 278).

³²¹ For my equation of Simmel's work on the face with the façade in architecture, I am indebted to Anthony Vidler's reading of 'The Aesthetic Significance of the Face' in *The Architectural Uncanny* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 88–89.

use of it an impression distinct from every other'.³²² In *The Sense of the Past* this image modulates into that of a house which instead of a being a passive facilitator, figures forth a personality after Simmel's formulation: it is itself 'animated', a bodily consciousness 'responsive' to Pendrel's. Whereas the windows of the house of fiction are ostensibly mere prostheses enabling human vision, here they apparently represent the house's own visual sense, focused on Pendrel. Its eyes are 'markedly numerous', attesting to a superior perceptual ability. Instead of facilitating the creativity of 'the person making use of it', the house itself speaks. When Pendrel crosses the house's threshold the traditional division of bodily consciousness between human subject and object has already been shaken.

Extending the metaphor of the façade as face, we might assert that Pendrel is 'swallowed' when he crosses the threshold to Nine Mansfield Square. The building proves itself to be both tomb and time machine, densely populated with the embodied traces of previous occupants. My references to psychometry in my analysis of *The Spoils of Poynton* have already shown that James's work was alive to the tangibility, the very everydayness of the spiritual, and this emphasis is exploited further here. Once inside, Pendrel notices:

under the charm above all of the queer incomparable London light – unless one frankly loved it rather as London shade – which he had repeatedly noted as so strange as to be at its finest sinister [...] It made the objects about show for the time as in something 'turned on' – something highly successful that he might

³²² Henry James, 'Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*', in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York, NY; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 40–58 (p. 46).

have seen at the theatre. What was one to call the confounding impression but that of some stamp, some deposit again laid bare, of a conscious past, recognizing no less than recognized? (64)

Like Poynton's spoils, these objects are scaled to be manipulated by the human body: 'They were all items of duration and evidence, all smoothed with service and charged with accumulated messages' (64). Like the objects passed to Mrs Piper in the séances recorded by William James, the house and objects retain 'influence', indeed they are animated by it; they bear the impress of a 'stamp' or deposit which makes them show as 'something "turned on"'. There is something uncanny about this, in a Freudian sense. Not only is the house possessed of formal qualities which allow it to be compared to the human body, but these body parts can be animated by 'a conscious past, recognizing no less than recognized', thus evoking the anxiety over non-human agency identified by Freud in the work of Ernst Jentsch, 'whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate'.³²³ In 'The Uncanny', Freud adopts the formula that the uncanny is that which should have been forgotten, but comes back;³²⁴ Pendrel's experience rotates this formulation of temporal flux into spatial terms so it might be read as that which should be 'remote' but comes 'near'. In the *Fortnightly Review* in 1909, W. T. Stead writes:

³²³ Ernst Jentsch, 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny' [1906], *Angelaki*, trans. by Roy Sellers, 2 (1995), 7-16 (p. 8); cited in Freud, p. 347.

³²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, ed. by Hugh Haughton, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 132.

according to the evidence of those who have been there and described what they have seen of life on the Other Side – after all it is not another side or another world – but it is in very truth a world existing in and alongside of the actual world of things which we *see, hear, taste, smell and handle* [emphasis mine].³²⁵

The Sense of the Past submits to this logic, but adds further emphasis to the metaphysical importance of sensations: the ‘conscious past’ requires a sensitive observer for it to be ‘turned on’, as James’s narrator puts it; to exist as influence in the textures of the possessions activated by the contact of others is to live intermittently in a corporeal sense.

The latent presence in domestic space of the disassociated ‘influences’ of previous tenants caused fin de siècle commentators on psychical matters to posit a plurality of spatial locations for the spirit world and for the bodies of those brave adventurers who entered it. For W. T. Stead, as explored in chapter three, the spirit world was analogous with the fourth dimension. In an 1893 article for the *Review of Reviews*, he argued that telepathy, automatic writing, psychometry, and spirit communication were all ‘so many rifts in the limits of our three dimensional space through which the light of four dimensional space is pouring in upon us’.³²⁶ In front of the portrait of his ancestor which subsequently becomes animated, Pendrel captures the tenor of such speculations:

³²⁵ W. T. Stead, ‘The Exploration of the Other World’, *Fortnightly Review*, 85 (1909), 850–861 (pp. 853–854).

³²⁶ W. T. Stead, ‘Throughth; or, on the Eve of the Fourth Dimension’, *Review of Reviews*, 1893, 426–432 (p. 427).

It was positively as if, with the cup so held to his lips, the taste of 1710 might prove too stiff a dose. He would judge, as it were, when he came back, as who should say also, from everywhere else. He could go of course everywhere else; intellectually now he could so well afford to. This would make all the general initiation that, as a preliminary, was indispensable: the series of scattered dashes and superficial dips. Strange his divination, or whatever one might call it, that from such a plunge at Number Nine as would thoroughly penetrate he might possibly not emerge undamaged or even, it was actually to be figured, not emerge at all. He might remain there below; remain in the quintessential depth that stood so ready for a real resident. (89)

He conceives of becoming physically present in 1710 as moving in different, perpendicular directions - not only moving 'back' in time, but down ('dips', 'a plunge', 'below', 'in the quintessential depth'), and also as being somehow omnipresent ('everywhere'). Pendrel avers that the co-existence of times within the house incorporates the future too - 'everything still to come was then latent in that plot of space' (82), but this co-presence of times requires a revised idea of bodily presence, as dismembered ('the series of scattered dashes', the possibility he might 'not emerge undamaged') and even entombed ('He might remain there below; remain in the quintessential depth that stood so ready for a real resident'). By positing this concatenation of potential locations for the body, Pendrel's speculation echoes discussions of the questionable spatial proximity of the spirit world to the real world within late nineteenth century discourse on haunting. As Connor notes, the

‘supernatural’ was no alternative or other world, but rather an ‘image, annex or extension’ of the imposing, ceaselessly volatile real world of the nineteenth century, and this is suggested by the plethora of prepositions that Spiritualists and occultists generated, with which to suggest the place of the other world relative to this:

The ‘other world’ was envisaged as above, beneath, beside, alongside and even within this world. The *Illustrated London News* [...] warned that it could be ‘a bottomless deep’. It was on the other side, or the ‘night-side of nature’, beyond the veil, the beyond the vale, across the boundary. It was supernatural, preternatural. There were gateways, doors, paths, veils, curtains.³²⁷

The orientational and occult terms used here correspond closely to the indeterminacy which characterises Pendrel’s disturbed sense of bodily centre. Thus, if he comes to fear exchanging places with his apparitional ‘alter-ego’, this is at least in part because he experiences the feeling of incarceration in the ‘house of time’ with its ubiquitous fluctuating existential conditions, which is axiomatic to the subject position of the ghost in nineteenth century culture.

II

James’s critical writing suggests that he was greatly concerned with the achievement of optimal perspective, that is, via a spatial elision quite in step with the metaphysics

³²⁷ Steven Connor, ‘Afterword’, in *The Victorian Supernatural* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 258–277 (pp. 258–259).

of *The Sense of the Past*, the combining of the perspective of first and third person, subject and observer.³²⁸ *The Sense of the Past* does, in theory, provide us with an objective counterpart to the subjective experience of time travel in the transformation of Pendrel's erstwhile namesake from painted image to animated and three-dimensional body. However, the physical change here is not described; for a more extended elucidation of this process of accretion, and therefore one more revealing in terms of the nature of matter in James's late work, we have recourse to examine 'The Jolly Corner'. In the latter text, Spencer Brydon spends a night prowling the New York house in which he grew up, in pursuit of his 'alter ego'. He is especially concerned with the atmosphere, in the physical sense, of his old family house. He mediates on the 'microscopic motes' which are 'afloat in the air' and stand for 'seventy years of the past [...] the annals of nearly three generations, counting his grandfather's, the one that had ended there, and the impalpable ashes of his long-extinct youth'.³²⁹ Questing after the secrets promised by these 'motes' he finds that 'putting down his dim luminary he could still wander on without it, pass into other rooms and, only

³²⁸ See, for example, Henry James, 'Preface to "The American"', in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York, NY; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 20–39 (p. 37). James writes: 'For the interest of everything is all that it is his vision, his conception, his interpretation: at the window of his wide, quite sufficiently wide consciousness we are seated, from that admirable position we "assist". He therefore supremely matters; all the rest matters only as he feels it, treats it, meets it. A beautiful infatuation this, always, I think, the intensity of the creative effort to get into the skin of the creature; the act of personal possession of one being by another at its completest – and with the high enhancement, ever, that it is, by the same stroke, the effort of the artist to preserve for his subject that unity, and for his use of it (in other words for the interest he desires to excite) that effect of a centre, which most economise its value.'

³²⁹ Henry James, 'The Jolly Corner', in *Eight Tales from the Major Phase*, ed. by Morton Dauwen Zabel (New York, NY; London: W. W. Norton, 1969), pp. 314–351 (p. 321). All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations from the text.

knowing it was there behind him in case of need, see his way about, visually project for his purpose a comparative clearness' (330). Subsequently, in his mind's eye, he sees the 'elements dimly gathering' (330), giving voice to his attentiveness to the self-creative power of infinitesimal matter. Ultimately, the body of his alter ego materialises, preceded by an instance of strange aerial phenomena. James's narrator observes: 'a semi-circular margin, a cold silvery nimbus that seemed to play a little as he looked – to shift and expand and contract' (342). Whereas Pendrel's journey into the past is experienced as dismemberment, the incursion of an alternative present on Brydon's world is rendered as materialisation.

The process of materialisation in 'The Jolly Corner' is suggestive of an array of fin de siècle scientific concerns whose nexus was the behaviour of matter invisible to the naked eye. In the 1890s, the French polymath Paul Valéry identified:

a singular crisis of the sciences, which now seem to despair of conserving their old ideal of unification, of explication of the universe. The universe is decomposing, losing all hope of a single image. The world of the infinitely small seems strangely different from the one it engenders on a large scale. Even the identity of bodies is getting lost here, and I won't speak... of the crisis of determinism, that is, of causality.³³⁰

The exploration of the 'world of the infinitely small' and the changes it engendered would require new modes and instruments of vision, and would draw together

³³⁰ Paul Valéry, *Oeuvres Complètes*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), I, p. 1037; cited in Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 16.

discursive fields of study pertinent to James's cultural milieu. As Marina Warner notes, 'New instruments were devised to detect and inventory the components of air; their findings continually interplayed with metaphysics, and were brought to bear on *psychic* as well as *physical* forces [emphasis mine].'³³¹ The microphysics experiments of J. J. Thomson and Francis William Aston at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge are especially useful in terms of drawing these threads together. Thomson and Aston, like Brydon in 'The Jolly Corner', attended to the behaviour of elements on the border between the seen and the unseen, using a machine called the 'positive ray spectrograph' to identify gases by their atoms characteristic parabolas.³³² Self-evidently, these parabolas are formally analogous to the 'semi-circular' nimbus which expands and contracts in the presence of Brydon, his psychical sensitivity mirroring the work accomplished by the physicists' technology in revealing the aerial phenomenon. Scientific research on the nature of matter invisible to the naked eye came into view of the general reading public during the fin de siècle, who were entertained by a number of articles in the popular press, including W. T. Stead's *Review of Reviews*. For example, one article in that publication, entitled 'The Genius of This Electric Age' describes Thomas Edison holding forth with the demeanour of a seer, speaking out suddenly 'as if out of a deep reverie', declaring the intelligence that could be extrapolated from the 'beautiful or interesting shapes and colours formed by atoms', and that '[t]he existence of [...] God can, to my mind, almost be proved from

³³¹ Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 253.

³³² Jeff Hughes, 'Occultism and the Atom: The Curious Story of Isotopes', *Physics World*, 2003, 31–36 (p. 32).

chemistry'.³³³ The spiritual emphases here can be substantiated via Aston's connections with occult discourse. These connections first surfaced through his analysis of neon. Using the positive-ray spectrograph, Aston observed not only the parabola corresponding to an atomic mass of 20 which he expected, but another 'shadow' parabola with an atomic mass of 22. He thought he had discovered a new rare gas closely related to neon, and named it 'metaneon'. He announced his discovery in a paper given at the annual meeting of the British Association in Birmingham in 1913. In a footnote to this paper he referred to a 1908 publication by Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater called *Occult Chemistry: A Series of Clairvoyant Observations on the Chemical Elements*. The footnote states:

By theosophic methods entirely unintelligible to the mere student of physics, [...] [the authors] claimed to have determined the atomic weights of all the elements known, and several unknown at the time. Among the latter occurs one to which they ascribe an atomic weight of 22.33 (H=1) and which they call 'Meta Neon'. As this name seems to suit as well as any other, what little we know of the properties of the new gas, I have used it in this paper.³³⁴

Leadbeater had first published his description of the inner architecture of atoms in the theosophical magazine *Lucifer* in November 1895 under the title 'Occult Chemistry'. In this article, Leadbeater described how he used a form of clairvoyance that he called

³³³ George Parsons Lathrop, 'The Genius of This Electric Age', *Review of Reviews*, 1 (1890), 120.

³³⁴ See Hughes, pp. 32–33.

‘astral vision’ to ‘see’ inside the atoms of various elements.³³⁵ This use of hyperaesthesia matches Brydon’s capacity to visualise the ‘elements dimly gathering’ in the darkened rooms of his family home without the aid of his ‘luminary’. Moreover, the theosophists’ description of the atom’s behaviour and import maps onto the passage from James. Leadbeater describes various atomic structures in different grades of reduction across ‘etheric sub-planes’ down to the ‘ultimate physical atom’ – a heart-shaped current of the theosophical ‘life force’ from which all matter was held to be constituted.³³⁶ Besant and Leadbeater’s book *Occult Chemistry* builds on their earlier research. They describe the behaviour of atoms in the following way:

[each atom] describes a small circle with its axis [...] it has a regular pulsation, a contraction and expansion, like the pulsation of the heart [...] If it be made to vibrate, as a whole, at the rate which gives any one of the seven colours, the whorl belonging to that colour glows out brilliantly.³³⁷

The shape formed by the atoms movement, its pulsation, and its glow echo the behaviour of the ‘nimbus’ in ‘The Jolly Corner’, which also seems to evidence an unseen, parallel plane of existence. Jeff Hughes notes that ‘[i]t is telling that Aston was familiar with Besant and Leadbeater’s book, and even more so that he chose to adopt their name “meta-neon” for his new gas. After all, naming is important in science, in

³³⁵ Hughes, p. 33.

³³⁶ C. W. Leadbeater, ‘Occult Chemistry’, *Lucifer*, 1895, 142.

³³⁷ Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, *Occult Chemistry* (Pomeroy, WA: Health Research Books, 1998), pp. 16–17.

reflecting credit attribution and intellectual networks'.³³⁸ The linguistic choices James makes in his description of the ethereal mist from which Brydon's double emerges reflects the pervasiveness of the nascent technical vocabulary used to describe the smallest units of matter, and its ready inflection with the occult and spiritual.

During the *fin de siècle*, materialisations themselves were subject to investigation by figures whose work crossed over boundaries between psychical research and physical science. For example, in 1894, the polymath Oliver Lodge used electricity as a practical and theoretical tool in his investigation, on behalf of the SPR, of the medium, Eusapia Palladino, who was famous for producing phantom bodies and hands during séances.³³⁹ Such investigations were foundational to the theorisation of 'ectoplasm', which is defined by the *OED* as 'the substance from which spirits make themselves visible forms [...] cold to the touch, slightly luminous', and able to 'develop into a human form or face'. Warner notes that the term entered the discourse of Spiritualism in Germany and France in the 1880s as a 'postulated *prima materia*',³⁴⁰ and ectoplasmic manifestations were still being assiduously investigated by the SPR by the time James was writing 'The Jolly Corner'. Reading the materialisation scene in James's tale in juxtaposition with both spiritualist writing and psychical research on the topic and emphasising the correspondences between these fields offers a new way in which to historicise the author's late style. In 'The Jolly Corner', James's narrator states that, searching for his alter ego:

³³⁸ Hughes, p. 33.

³³⁹ Oliver Lodge, 'Experience of Unusual Phenomena Occurring in the Presence of an Entranced Person (Eusapia Palladino): Report to the President and Council of the S.P.R.', *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 6 (1894), 314–315.

³⁴⁰ Warner, p. 290.

[...] the moments he [Spencer Brydon] liked best were those of gathering dusk, of the short autumn twilight; this was the time of which, again and again, he found himself hoping most. Then he could, as seemed to him, most intimately wander and wait, linger and listen, feel his fine attention, never in his life before so fine, on the pulse of the great vague place: he preferred the lampless hour and only wished he might have prolonged each day the deep crepuscular spell. (327)

When finally confronted with the 'cold silvery nimbus', he sees 'in its great grey glimmering margin, the central vagueness diminish, and he felt it to be taking the very form toward which, for so many days, the passion of his curiosity had yearned' (342). James's narrator states:

It gloomed, it loomed, it was something, it was somebody, the prodigy of a personal presence [...] Wasn't the proof in the splendid covering hands, strong and completely spread? – so spread and so intentional that, in spite of a special verity that surpassed every other, the fact that one of these hands had lost two fingers, which were reduced to stumps, as if accidentally shot away, the face was effectually guarded and saved. (343)

If we compare the episode with Myers's description of ectoplasmic materialisation in the setting of a séance in *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, similarities emerge. Myers states:

All the energy that he [the spirit] exerts, then, is vital energy; it is drawn from the organisms of the persons present, even when the effect achieved (as the production of a cold wind) is unlike the effects to which living organisms commonly give rise. But, for the most part, the effects which he produces do resemble the organism's natural action [...] Quasi-organic detached ectoplasms [...] are especially hands, sometimes with wrists or arms attached, but now with no mere shadowy or duplicated drapery, but a drapery which is their own, and for the time being is as tangible as themselves. Such hands are reported in the cases of [mediums] D. D. Home and Mr Moses. These ectoplasms, moreover, when developed, may be *recognisable*, they may serve as indications of identity. With D. D. Home this seems frequently to have been the case; and the special shape and character of hands seen formed one of the most generally impressive points in his phenomena. In Mr Moses' case the hands (except once in a photograph) were not claimed as belonging to personal friends ; but the lean brown hand and wrist which usually appeared (Mr Moses' own hand being thick, plump, and white) seemed appropriate to the Arabian philosopher to whom it was asserted to belong [emphasis Myers's].³⁴¹

Like the account of this séance manifestation, Spencer Brydon's experience highlights the necessity of darkness for ectoplasmic matter to become visible, the substance's evolution over time, its freedom of movement, and its ability to draw on the 'vital energy' of the sensitive person and figure forth an apparently distinct bodily presence. Viewing space as ectoplasmic provides a useful adjunct to the theorisation of 'etheric

³⁴¹ Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, II, pp. 547–549.

bodies' in James's major phase fiction, after Oliver Lodge's formulation, as articulated in my third chapter. Not only are bodies in the author's late work figured in ways which echo the theorisation of corporeal existence on the spiritual plane by contemporaneous writers on the occult, James follows this school of thought in positing that all the spaces between things are pregnant with the potent materialisation of such entities. James's imbrication with occult theory on the ectoplasmic can be embraced as a feature of his modernity. As Gillian Beer notes, 'Realism is stretched further when its topic is the unseen, the unheard, the unregistered: that which lies beyond the reach of our unaided senses. It is also then released from some of the constraints of mimesis.'³⁴²

However, it should also be noted that two classes of phenomena were conflated under the single idea of ectoplasm by psychical researchers at the turn of the century. Insofar as the ghostly manifestation in 'The Jolly Corner' can be treated as ectoplasmic, this adds a layer of complexity to our reading of matter and bodily consciousness in the tale. As Marina Warner notes, Myers and others in the SPR posited ectoplasm as being, on the one hand, spirit controls that were 'projections of the double' – namely, the spirit of a person – and, on the other, 'precipitations of the akas' – the non-personal, universal energy that flows through and unites creation.³⁴³ The British spiritualist medium, Elizabeth d'Esperance, vividly reflects the sense of disorientation that a medium in trance experienced as she channelled a spirit, 'Anna':

³⁴² Gillian Beer, *Open Fields* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 296.

³⁴³ Warner, p. 304.

Am I the white figure or am I the one in the chair? [...] It is a horrible feeling, this losing one's identity. I long to put out one of these hands that are lying so helplessly, and touch someone just to know if I am myself or only a dream – if 'Anna' be I, and I am lost as it were, in her identity [...] I wonder in an agony of suspense and bewilderment, how long will there be two of us?³⁴⁴

Brydon experiences a similar disorientation, at turns averring and then denying that the ghost 'was him' in his conversation with his friend Alice Staverton at the end of the tale. Shalyn Claggett's reading of 'The Jolly Corner' distils what is at stake for James's protagonist. She claims that the text is a rewriting of the Narcissus myth: 'while Narcissus *comprehends* his image and dies, Brydon *denies* his image and survives [emphases Claggett's]'.³⁴⁵

Having cornered his other self behind a door the catastrophic effects of such a meeting manifest to him. Brydon realizes that if he were to open the door 'it would all too abjectly be the end of him,' and so, 'with all his resolution, or more exactly with all his dread, he did stop short—he hung back from really seeing' (340). If Brydon were to see, to have 'assurance' that the apparition is him, he would have to accept the fact that he is physically present in two locations simultaneously. Such knowledge would belie his belief that he exists in the world as a unified self-image. Brydon retreats from the door in an attempt to preserve his unity but is unable to avoid the spectre that confronts him at the bottom of the staircase. He denies that the spectre is him, and

³⁴⁴ Elisabeth D'Espérance, *Shadow Land, Or Light from the Other Side* (London: Redway, 1894), pp. 346–347; cited in Warner, p. 305.

³⁴⁵ Shalyn Claggett, 'Narcissism and the Conditions of Self-knowledge in James's "The Jolly Corner"', *Henry James Review*, 26 (2005), 189–200 (p. 190).

consequently survives. Claggett argues that the reader nonetheless knows that the spectre *is* Brydon in some form. James writes, 'The face, *that* face, Spencer Brydon's? He searched it still, but look[ed] away from it in dismay and denial [emphasis James's]' (344). As Claggett observes, 'denial' suggests that the face is Brydon's, or at least that Brydon recognizes it as such and promptly disavows that recognition. Brydon accedes fleetingly to the occupation of plural bodily identities associated with the subject position of the spirit medium in contemporary culture before excising his latent other and restoring a familiar identity.

The depiction of materialised bodily matter in 'The Jolly Corner', thus captures both the physics and the psychology of the séance. The fin de siècle séance's posited physiological phenomena are also incorporated in this tale and *The Sense of the Past*. In a tantalising caveat at the end of her essay on *The Sense of the Past*, Stephanie L. Hawkins asks whether Pendrel does not become like 'the medium who seizes upon spirits, a heterogeneous collection of passive beings, stray bits of whose memory he adopts for his own purposes'.³⁴⁶ This process is enacted as embodiment in James's time-travel texts. Ralph Pendrel's identification with his ancestral self involves biological transport through 'a strain of blood' (48), and the surfacing from '[with]in himself, deep down somewhere' (178) of memories regarding the personal history of the ancestor with whom he has exchanged places. James's narrator asserts, 'If [Ralph Pendrel's] idea in fine was to recover the lost moment, to feel the stopped pulse, it was to do so as experience, in order to be again consciously the creature that had been, to breathe and feel the pressure that he had felt' (40). In 'The Jolly Corner', though

³⁴⁶ Stephanie L. Hawkins, 'Stalking the Biracial Hidden Self in Henry James's *The Sense of the Past* and "The Jolly Corner"', *Henry James Review*, 25 (2004), 276–284 (p. 284).

Brydon calls the ghost's presence 'none of *me*, even as I *might* have been [emphases James's]' (347) when retelling his experience to Alice Staverton, his wince at the story's end 'whether for his proved identity or for his lost fingers' (351) suggests an empathetic response to the physical pain inflicted on the poor right hand of his other self. Peter Rawlings hints at intercorporeality in his reading of the tale, arguing that Brydon's encounter with the ghost allows, transiently, an experience of both the past and present states as an organic whole.³⁴⁷ Fin de siècle writing on psychical matter theorised that such experiences of physical empathy would be activated in trance states. William James asserted that each individual possessed a hidden self with the 'will to personate', which might be manifested at the scene of the séance. In his 'Confidences of a Psychical Researcher' (1909), he judged, with regard to the medium, Mrs Piper's trance-utterances that 'a "will to personate" is a factor [...] I fully believe, and I believe with unshakeable firmness that this will is able to draw on supernormal sources of information [...] be it the will of R.H's spirit, of lower supernatural intelligences, or of Mrs Piper's subliminal'.³⁴⁸ The degree to which this sympathy could be considered physiological can be extracted by reference to Frederic Myers's work, on the '*subliminal self*' [emphasis mine], a connection which is encouraged by the very language William James uses. Myers contends that as evolution progressed and more complicated operations of consciousness were established, the memory of earlier developments became deeper submerged and subliminal, and could not be recalled voluntarily to the supraliminal state of being. However, 'in the hypnotic state the soul is in part drawn aside from the life of relation, while at the same time it

³⁴⁷ Peter Rawlings, 'Grammars of Time in Late James', *Modern Language Review*, 98 (2003), 273–284 (p. 279).

³⁴⁸ William James, 'Report on Mrs Piper's Hodgson-Control', p. 355.

preserves its activity and power' and the subject can call forth the physical sensations of their ancestors.³⁴⁹ What is being described in James's texts is a particular kind of possession, a bodily one, and one theoretically recognisable to the massed ranks of plebeian Spiritualism who learnt about séance phenomena in widely circulating periodicals such as *Borderland*, *Light*, and *Medium and Daybreak*.

The surety with which this can be suggested is buttressed by James's demonstrable engagement with contemporary discourse on the topic of ancestral or 'organic memory'. The concept also provides the basis to speculate further on the multiplicity of human and non-human corporeal identities identifiable with James's protagonists. The concept was introduced by Henry Maudsley in 1867 with his observation that memory exists in every part of the body, even in 'the nervous cells which lie scattered in the heart and in the intestinal walls', and this was reformulated in 1870 in a lecture to the Viennese Imperial Academy of Science by the German psychologist Ewald Hering, which concluded that every living cell contains the memory of the experience of the entire series of its parent cells and even those of former generations.³⁵⁰ Hering's brief text, Laura Otis records, became the most cited work on the subject, respected by scientists into the twentieth century, including Freud.³⁵¹ Myers engages with discourse on the topic by stating that the physiological changes activated by trance states may also depend upon a revival of memories which have long lapsed from supraliminal consciousness; upon a recurrence to 'primitive

³⁴⁹ Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, I, p. 141.

³⁵⁰ See Henry Maudsley, *The Physiology of Mind* (New York, NY: Appleton, 1878); Ewald Hering, 'Theory of the Functions of Living Matter', *Brain*, trans. by F. A. Welby, 20 (1897).

³⁵¹ Laura Otis, *Organic Memory: History and the Body in the Late Nineteenth & Early Twentieth Centuries* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

powers', a category within which he counts those which 'existed in our lowly ancestors, and may now exist among the inferior animals'.³⁵² This is an exhortation to conceive of ancestral memory not merely in terms of what one might inherit from one's known human relatives but all postulated phylogenetic antecedents. In 'The Jolly Corner', Brydon's 'power to penetrate the dusk of distances and the darkness of corners' makes him feel 'like some monstrous stealthy cat; he wondered if he would have glared at these moments with large shining yellow eyes, and what it mightn't verily be, for the poor hard-pressed *alter ego*, to be confronted with such a type' (327). This together with the assertion that his 'strange *alter ego* [is] deep down somewhere within me, as the full-blown flower is in the small tight bud' (320) suggests the immanence of a more primitive organic identity which can be vitalised by physiological processes. The ghostly alter ego is also characterised as bestial, but its signifying power does not end here. As Hawkins notes, the doubles in both 'The Jolly Corner' and *The Sense of the Past* are represented through a bodily semiotics whose signifiers are of 'blackened' visage (348) and 'brown skin' (194) respectively.³⁵³ As Otis notes, 'In the late nineteenth century, Africans came to represent an intermediate between Europeans and their animal ancestors for those who made use of this system [of organic memory]', so Spencer Brydon's and Ralph Pendrel's uneasy bodily identification with these 'black strangers' may also be recognized as instances of recapitulation.³⁵⁴ Cross-racial intersubjectivity remained transgressive, but was not outside the ken of those acquainted with occult matters during the fin de siècle. For example, the ethnologist, Mary Kingsley, entertained in the *Cornhill Magazine* with

³⁵² Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, I, p. 113.

³⁵³ Hawkins, p. 277.

³⁵⁴ Otis, p. 17.

stories of 'black ghosts' from 'the West African coast where real ghosts fairly swarm', and proclaimed the ability to 'think in black', an assertion which was, as Roger Luckhurst notes, a 'remarkable statement of cross-racial empathy against a background of official colonial policy in Africa in the 1890s'.³⁵⁵ James's protagonists emulate these cultural precedents, exhibiting psychical sensitivity so acute that their bodily identity is rendered as fixed as the shimmering light forms from which their alter egos emerge, that 'play a little' as they are looked at, 'shift and expand and contract'.

Henry James's engagement with ancestral memory opens a connection with a vast field in turn-of-the-century discourse. This is drawn out by juxtaposition with Forbes Philips's 1906 article for the *Nineteenth Century and After*. Phillips asks:

Is there not such a thing as ancestral memory? [...] That these flashes of reminiscence are the sudden awakening, the calling into action of something we have in our blood [...]

Whether we believe in apparitions or not or not, this world is a haunted one. Our thought-world is full of deep undertones that roll in upon us from the past. As we lay our ear to the din of the present, we find its accompaniment to be the immeasurable murmur of the ages, as the voices of many waters. The commonplace expressions, the ordinary words we use, are blocks of mind-stuff,

³⁵⁵ Mary Kingsley, 'Black Ghosts', *Cornhill Magazine*, 1 (1896), 79–92 (p. 81); Mary Kingsley, 'West Africa, from an Ethnologist's Point of View', in *Transactions of the Liverpool Geographical Society*, 1897, pp. 58–73 (p. 65); Cited in Luckhurst, pp. 168–169.

wrought into their present state by the ponderous mace of time, and cast and recast in many brains.³⁵⁶

As the psychical dimensions of James's late novels exceed those of his ghost stories, Phillips's article co-ordinates physiological responses with the spiritual via an acknowledgement of 'haunting' which goes beyond the belief in ghosts. The concept of 'mind-stuff' is especially in tune with the world of *The Sense of the Past* and 'The Jolly Corner' where time travel is figured as embodied thought (we are reminded in particular of Pendrel's fantasy before the painting of his ancestor, analysed earlier in this chapter), not to mention the 'etheric bodies' which express from a distance the thoughts of Charlotte Stant in *The Golden Bowl* and the departed Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*. The language of waves in the passage from Philips is also complementary to James's time-travel texts. The ghostly manifestations in James's texts correspond to the contemporaneous accomplishments by psychical research and physical science in discovering and theorising the hitherto unknown properties of air. As Beer notes, the latter fields depended in their endeavour upon hypothetically filling the zones of space with 'a transgressive medium, lumeniferous ether, using an old term, aether, in a new guise'.³⁵⁷ The connectedness of matter, thus accepted, 'seemed to indicate that our senses are contracted and that we are battered by continuous events beyond their registration: sound waves, air waves, the irreversible transformations of thermodynamic energy'. In the Jamesian universe, voices 'roll in', as chapter 3 of this thesis also establishes, and elements traverse great distances of

³⁵⁶ Forbes Phillips, 'Ancestral Memory: A Suggestion', *Nineteenth Century*, 59 (1906), 977-83 (pp. 977-8).

³⁵⁷ Beer, p. 296.

time and space to gather before the author's sensitive protagonists. As the *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* records, the *Nineteenth Century and After*, in which Philips's article was published, was '[o]ne of the most important and distinguished monthlies of serious thought in the last quarter of the nineteenth century', promoting 'engaged, energetic, dialogic, symposium-style discourse', and counting among its signed contributors most of the major public intellectuals and opinion-makers of the day.³⁵⁸ That it should publish a description of ancestral memory correlative on so many levels with the strange intersubjective occurrences in James's work suggests that the intersection between the late novels and psychical research is larger than the small body of extant criticism on the topic suggests, and that, moreover, the apparent materialisation phenomena in the late novels would have been considered as verisimilitudinous by James's intellectual milieu.

III

But what is it about the spaces in late Henry James, and these two time-travel texts in particular, which makes matter so protean? *The Sense of the Past* and 'The Jolly Corner' are set in outwardly unremarkable townhouses in London and New York respectively, the former being 'the reverse of extraordinary, a London house of the elder, larger, finer type, of an age long anterior to the age of jerry-building, but still after all a mere grey section of a street' (51); the latter a 'mere number in its long row'

³⁵⁸ 'Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review (1877-1901)', *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (Gent: Academia Press, 2009), p. 456.

(316). They draw on the identification of the supernatural with the domestic which was widely accepted during the fin de siècle. As Steven Connor notes, in the late nineteenth century, the supernatural came up close: 'The yawning vaults, pits and turrets, the cavernous castles and catacombs and cataracts of the Gothic novel became progressively more pent, urban, petit bourgeois'. Connor highlights Charles Maurice Davies's *Mystic London* (1875), a record of 'occult experiences in the dubious drawing rooms of the capital', as an indicator of the association of the occult with domestic space, and 'the occult powers of city space as such'.³⁵⁹ The activity of the SPR also did much to scientize domestic space, subjecting the séances held in drawing rooms to their empirical analysis, and this was in step with a more discursive colonising trend in fin de siècle science, which Simon Schaffer describes as the 'novel social formation', of the country house as academic physics laboratory in later nineteenth century Britain.³⁶⁰ Schaffer notes how 'the spiritual mood' marked some of the topics of country house science. In the mid-1870s, the English physicist Lord Rayleigh collaborated with the aristocratic leader of the Tory party and distinguished private experimenter, Lord Salisbury at his home laboratory at Terling Place in Chelmsford in psychical research. 'In my laboratory', Rayleigh explained to his brother-in-law, Henry Sidgwick (later the founder and first president of the SPR) in summer 1874, 'I could invent better tests and help the manifestation by using only red light etc. better than anywhere else.'³⁶¹ Karin Knorr Cetina writes laboratory space can attain such importance in experiments that it becomes the 'principal agent that defines the

³⁵⁹ Connor, 'Afterword', p. 259.

³⁶⁰ Simon Schaffer, 'Physics Laboratories and the Victorian Country House', in *Making Space for Science*, ed. by Crosbie Smith and Jon Agar (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 149–180 (p. 150).

³⁶¹ Schaffer, p. 177.

situation'.³⁶² Historically speaking, there should be no environment more likely to manifest the reconfigurations of matter witnessed by Pendrel and Brydon than the domestic enclosure of the home, lately proven to be so creative a space.

In the light of this knowledge, we might conceive of the 'assemblage at a single site of widely distributed technical, material and human resources' to form a 'symbolic universe'³⁶³ as work which is accomplished not only by fin de siècle physicists, but by Henry James in his novels written during the same period. Cetina defines the laboratory as 'an enhanced environment which improves upon the natural order in relation to the social order'.³⁶⁴ She describes the conditions which make it so:

How does this improvement come about? Laboratory studies suggest that it rests upon the *malleability* of natural objects. Laboratories use the phenomenon that objects are not fixed entities which have to be taken as they are or left to themselves. In fact laboratories rarely work with objects as they occur in nature. Rather they work with object images or with their visual, auditory, electrical, etc., traces, with their components, their extractions, their purified versions. There are at least three features of natural objects which a laboratory science does not need to accommodate: First, it does not need to put up with the object *as it is*; it can substitute all of its less literal or partial versions, as illustrated above. Second, it does not need to accommodate the natural object *where it is*, anchored in a natural environment; laboratory

³⁶² Karin Knorr Cetina, 'The Couch, the Cathedral, and the Laboratory: On the Relationship Between Experiment and Laboratory in Science', in *Science as Practice and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 113–138 (p. 114).

³⁶³ Schaffer, p. 150.

³⁶⁴ Cetina, p. 116.

sciences bring objects *home* and manipulate them on their own terms in the laboratory. Third, a laboratory science does not need to accommodate an event *when it happens*; it does not need to put up with natural cycles of occurrence but can try to make them happen frequently enough for continuous study [emphases Cetina's].³⁶⁵

The late Henry James novel is also an enhanced environment: the features which Cetina adumbrates in the laboratory can also be traced in the fictional environment of *The Sense of the Past*. Of the entitvity of the object contents of the house, Pendrel observes

[t]here wasn't a chimney-piece, an arched recess, a glazed and columned cupboard, that hadn't for our young man the note of structural style, not a cornice nor a moulding that his eye didn't softly brush, not a sunk glass, above a shelf, unevenly bevelled and however tarnished, in which shadows didn't condense themselves into shapes[...] (66)

That the objects are 'brought home' is beyond doubt; it is the concatenation of features in the house which produces the physical and psychological effects experienced by James's protagonist. The texts' blending of multiple temporalities dispenses with adherence to 'natural cycles of occurrence' in the strictest sense. *The Sense of the Past* thus constitutes an elaborate exploration of the outer limits of James's theory of realism as articulated in 'The Art of Fiction' (1884). As James E. Miller Jr. has noted,

³⁶⁵ Cetina, pp. 116–117.

James's critical work places high value on the ability to escape the conventional notions of realism of his time.³⁶⁶ James calls into question what Walter Besant proclaimed as one of the general laws of fiction, that 'characters must be real and such as might be met with in actual life', arguing to the contrary that '[t]he reality of Don Quixote or of Mr Micawber is a very delicate shade [...] Humanity is immense, and reality has a myriad forms'.³⁶⁷ James expands upon this idea by positing an idea of fictional space contrary to Besant's, stating:

Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative - much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius - it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations.³⁶⁸

As Miller notes, James performs 'a sleight of hand, moving from Besant's concept of *exterior* experience to his own notion of *interior* experience [emphases Miller's]'.³⁶⁹

James eschews the external world for a subjective interior, a 'chamber' within the 'atmosphere' of which, 'particles' are suspended and 'revelations' materialise from 'the

³⁶⁶ James E. Miller, 'Henry James in Reality', *Critical Inquiry*, 2 (1976), 585–604.

³⁶⁷ Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction', in *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*, ed. by James E. Miller (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), pp. 27–44 (p. 34); Cited in Miller, 'Henry James in Reality' p. 591.

³⁶⁸ Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction', p. 34; cited in James E. Miller, 'Henry James in Reality', p. 592.

³⁶⁹ James E. Miller, 'Henry James in Reality', p. 592.

faintest hints of life'. The narrative of *The Sense of the Past* comes closer than any other text in James's canon to literalising this assemblage of properties.

Indeed, there is a case to be made to the effect that the environment in *The Sense of the Past* is especially enhanced, relative to the remainder of James's long, late fiction. As Beverley Haviland notes, it has 'genre trouble'.³⁷⁰ Certainly as a time-travel narrative, it stretches the bounds of realism, further than his extant corpus of novels (as opposed to short stories) had been inclined to do. Its more extravagant rendering of James's theory of realism arguably widens the frame of reference to interpret as a body of work the author's other novels written over the period of its sixteen year inception. James writes to himself in his Notebook, on 21 December 1896, 'I realise – none too soon – that the *scenic* method is my absolute, my imperative, my *only* salvation [emphases James's]'.³⁷¹ As Peter Brooks notes, the theatricality of James's late work is based in a manipulation of the properties of interiors, especially drawing rooms. *The Spoils of Poynton* 'stands as the inception of the line of James's most theatrical fiction, and its climactic scenes convey a sense of drawing room melodrama at its best'.³⁷² The object contents of Poynton are, 'in the manner of offstage properties, signs *for* signs: they are hyperbolic conventional signs, magnified in order to release scrutiny "more than meets the eye" [emphasis Brooks's]'.³⁷³ In *The Awkward Age* (1898-1899), the story and situation of which presented itself to James 'on absolutely scenic lines, and [...] abides without a moment's deflexion by the

³⁷⁰ Beverly Haviland, *Henry James's Last Romance: Making Sense of the Past and the American Scene* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 27.

³⁷¹ Henry James, *The Notebooks of Henry James*, p. 263; Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 160.

³⁷² Brooks, p. 162.

³⁷³ Brooks, p. 163.

principle of the stage-play',³⁷⁴ the hostess Mrs Brookenham laments how in the rooms in which she receives guests, she is haunted by 'the ghosts of dead thoughts' – so much so that she tells her young friend, Vanderbank, that 'Edward and Nanda and Harold and I seated together are fairly a case for that – what do you call it? – investigating Society'³⁷⁵ – as explicit a reference to the work of the SPR as is found in the late fiction. Of a more abstract significance is the prominent role of the 'abyss' in James's late work. Brooks writes that "'Abyss" is a word that recurs with insistent frequency in James's writing and holds a particularly significant place [...] in *The Wings of the Dove*'; 'Abysses' in this late work are 'evacuated centres of meaning in his fiction that nonetheless animate lives, determine quests for meaning'.³⁷⁶ Milly Theale's vision of her future comes to her sitting on 'a slab of rock at the end of a short promontory or excrescence that merely pointed off to the right at *gulfs of air* [emphasis mine]' (123); subsequently her reaction to the indirection of motive and action available to her in Venice is to articulate her yearning for the pregnant voids' enormous potential power, declaring to Mrs Stringham that 'I want abysses' (186). The abysses work as portable chambers of consciousness, intermittently providing the fecund atmosphere we recognise as ensured by the more permanent enclosure of the houses in *The Sense of the Past* and 'The Jolly Corner'. Cetina emphasises the 'virtual' properties of the laboratory space, and her comments offer value to our reading of matter in late James. She asserts:

³⁷⁴ Henry James, 'Preface to *The Awkward Age*', in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York, NY; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 98–118 (p. 115).

³⁷⁵ Henry James, *The Awkward Age*, p. 191.

³⁷⁶ Brooks, p. 173.

[...] even when a separate laboratory space exists, it tends to become activated only when an experiment is conducted, which, given the short duration and special 'entitvity' of such experiments, happens only rarely. The laboratory is a virtual space and in most respects coextensive with the experiment. Like a stage on which plays are performed from time to time, the laboratory is a storage room for the stage props that are needed when social life is instantiated through experiments. The objects which are featured on the stage are players of the social form.³⁷⁷

By emphasising the theatricality of the laboratory space, Cetina provides a theoretical framework to sustain the connection between James's 'scenic method', of which *The Sense of the Past* represents the final and climactic act, and psychical phenomena. Henry James's late work supports the idea of the virtuality of fictional space; the lives of the object actants within this space, including human bodies, extend theoretically outside the boundaries of the narrative, but within this enclosure they remain subject to all manner of transformations which defy the conventions of 'actual life'.

The Sense of the Past and its sister-text, 'The Jolly Corner', then, present reconfigurations of bodily consciousness so daring that they offer us a deeper understanding of the life of matter, especially bodily matter in James's late work as a whole. Bodies are reduced to mere traces of embodiment, and materialise from unseen 'elements'. They convince us of the entitvity of 'empty' spaces. In this way, James presents us with a version of physical reality and a way of living in it which, especially when co-ordinated with the hyperaesthesia of his other sensitive

³⁷⁷ Cetina, p. 125.

protagonists in his late fiction, persuades me of the discursive connections between his work and accounts of psychical phenomena from his time.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BODY OF WORK

This chapter seeks to demonstrate that the accumulation of extraordinary corporeal capabilities by characters in Henry James's late fiction develops, in the author's so called 'second major phase',³⁷⁸ into a versatile metaphor for the interaction of his corpus with the field of literary history following his death. I focus on work by James which deals directly with the concept of a literary afterlife – the New York Edition including its prefaces (1907-1909), the essay 'Is There a Life after Death?' (1910), and the 'Deathbed Dictations' (1915), in conjunction with other sources which evidence how the Jamesian corpus has been, and continues to be consumed. These include Theodora Bosanquet's *Henry James at Work* (1924), the biographical novels *Author*, *Author* (2004) by David Lodge and *The Master* (2004) by Colm Tóibín, and the Henry James e-text resource website *The Ladder*.

Whilst significant work has been done on the corporeal in this final phase of James's career,³⁷⁹ I hope that by viewing James's body of work as akin to the bodies of his later protagonists (etheric, transmutable, trans-dimensional, hyperaesthetic, etc.), it will be proven demonstrable that his theory of fiction is live and mutable rather than, as other critics have suggested, inert and ready for dissection. Consistent with my approach through chapters 1-4, I will attend to both the physicality of James's

³⁷⁸ Name given to period of James's writing between 1905 and his death in 1916, devoted to autobiography, cultural criticism and aesthetic concerns. See Ross Posnock, 'Affirming the Alien: The Pragmatist Pluralism of The American Scene', in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, ed. by Jonathan Freedman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 224–46 (pp. 23–4); Haviland, p. xv.

³⁷⁹ See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Andrew Cutting, *Death in Henry James* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

corpus as a collection of objects, and the theoretical extensions of this presence, insofar as they are suggested by the material and consistent with fin de siècle understanding of psychical phenomena. I assert that the material medium of the text contributes integrally to its meaning, and that therefore each new embodiment, like James's New York Edition, alters and extends its meaning. I wish, however, to bring this notion into accord with another, articulated by Sukanta Chaudhuri in *The Metaphysics of Text*:

that the represented text has a conceptual, abstract being, separate from its material vehicle yet defining itself in material, even sensory terms: implicit locations, spaces, time-planes, relationships between the parties in the discourse (reader, purveyor, author, et al.) – most basically, the assumption of something spoken/heard or written/seen integral to any verbal exercise even in its most dematerialised and conceptual state.³⁸⁰

Chaudhuri asserts that this 'material metaphor' can be used to 'bring out the interplay between the multi-layered material and conceptual identities of the text'.³⁸¹ I hope that by showing the compatibility of James's theory of literary reception to contemporary theories of the text such as that articulated by Chaudhuri, the significance of the figure of the reconfigurable body for Henry James studies will be crystallized: not only does it provide a way of negotiating consistently with the

³⁸⁰ Sukanta Chaudhuri, *The Metaphysics of Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 7.

³⁸¹ Chaudhuri, p. 8.

discourse of psychical phenomena during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but with the present and future of critical theory.

To achieve this goal, my chapter is structured to trace a projected trajectory for James's work, 'carrying the field of consciousness further and further', as 'Is There a Life After Death?' has it.³⁸² I begin by elucidating the relationship between the body and the body of work by considering the material features of the New York Edition and its interaction with its physical environment in the years following its publication in 1907-1909. I then use 'Is There a Life After Death?' to explore the first principles of the text's adventures once liberated from the constraints of physical form through discourse. Subsequently, I examine how of the body of work's engagement with the world by 'possessing' the bodies of 'ideal readers' for its use, such as James's amanuensis, Theodora Bosanquet's. Next, I consider the body of work's continuing mutability as effected by interactions with contemporary Jamesian biofiction, and finally with the digital environment as a collection of electronic texts.

As a prefatory statement of my own, I would like to briefly advance the case that the figure of the afterlife of the body of work in James's late non-fiction texts is anticipated by changes in the author's manner of depicting the dead body over the course of his literary career, culminating in the period in James's literary career that the first four chapters in this thesis focus on. Andrew Cutting notes that '[r]eaders of James's novels and tales get to see very few corpses and only rarely witness a moment of death'.³⁸³ Dead bodies in James's early fiction, moreover, have a particular

³⁸² Henry James, 'Is There a Life After Death?', in *The James Family*, ed. by F.O. Matthiesson (New York, NY: Knopf, 1961), pp. 602-614 (p. 611). All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations from the text.

³⁸³ Cutting, *Death in Henry James*, p. 49.

character: they constitute an obliteration of human personality. This is a hermeneutic turn in tune with the line of questioning in my first chapter, where I explored the idea that the surface of James's character's bodies acted like a threshold for subjectivity, a palimpsest for both endogenous and exogenous excitations. Does it follow that after death the body as 'text' ceases to be readable? Cutting draws attention to scenes from *Roderick Hudson* (1875) and *The Princess Casamassima* (1885-1886) which are of particular interest in this regard. In the former, the search for the missing Roderick ends with the discovery of the eponymous protagonist dead, at the bottom of a gorge, a 'thing', a 'vague white mass'³⁸⁴ beyond his discoverers' power to comprehend. When Schinkel and the Princess break down Hyacinth's door in *The Princess Casamassima*, and find themselves confronted with Hyacinth's corpse, the spectacle is of 'something black, something ambiguous [...] a horrible thing'.³⁸⁵ Cutting avers that, using some of Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject, following death Hyacinth's body becomes 'something no longer human [...] a radically unacceptable otherness, virtually an excrement that defiles'.³⁸⁶ However, I would draw attention to the altogether different aspect which the dead body takes on in James's late fiction. The dead body is not encountered here as a hermeneutic blank or abject, but as a work of art which invites interpretation, however hard won. In *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), Milly realises that the young woman in the Bronzino painting is 'dead, dead, dead', but also that the work of art has more to communicate to her than the image of 'slightly Michaelangelesque squareness' within its frame: 'Milly recognized her exactly in words which had nothing

³⁸⁴ Henry James, *Roderick Hudson* (London: Macmillan, 1921), p. 460.

³⁸⁵ Henry James, *The Princess Casamassima* (London: David Campbell, 1991), pp. 554–555.

³⁸⁶ Cutting, *Death in Henry James*, p. 61.

to do with her. "I shall never be better than this" (157). In *The Sense of the Past* (1916), the narrator claims that 'It was when life was framed in death that the picture was really hung up' (48). As Cameron notes, this is not 'a static metaphor', for when Ralph Pendrel enters the London house which he has inherited and looks at a portrait alive in 1820, he finds the man returning his stare, and then stepping down from the portrait so that the two can swap identities.³⁸⁷ In *The Sacred Fount* (1901), three characters and the narrator find themselves before a portrait which the narrator states is 'the picture, of all pictures, that most needs an interpreter' (50). He describes it in the following way:

The figure represented is a young man in black – a quaint, tight black dress, fashioned in years long past; with a pale, lean, livid face and a stare, from eyes without eyebrows, like that of some whitened old-world clown. In his hands he holds an object that strikes the spectator at first as some obscure, some ambiguous work of art, but that on a second view becomes a representation of a human face, modelled and coloured, in wax, in enamelled metal, in some substance not human. The object thus appears a complete mask, such as might have been fantastically fitted and worn' (50)

One of the spectators calls the picture 'The Mask of Death', but the narrator argues that the face of the man in black is more dead than the mask, and suggests the title 'The Mask of Life' (51). What is consistently advanced by the images of the dead body from James's late work is the tension of the immanence of human personality straining

³⁸⁷ Cameron, p. 152.

against the bondage of material form. I find this figuration developed in both James's postulations on his literary afterlife, and the subsequent interactions of his body of work with successive literary environments.

I

Henry James's novels often confront their readers with the relationship between pieces of writing and the bodies of those who lay claim to them. In *The Wings of the Dove*, as discussed in my third chapter, Milly Theale's letter to Densher allows him to think of her ethereal bodily presence. The eponymous article of *The Aspern Papers* (1888) effectively stands in for the absent body of its deceased author throughout;³⁸⁸ in *The Awkward Age* even ownership of textual material causes personal identity to be brought into question, as Mrs Brookenham decries the 'charming literary remains' that she hears have been found by executors amongst the 'old relics' of the dead and banters with her visitor, Mitchy, about the books he leaves behind at her home, saying she 'might burn them up in the dead of night' for fear that they might be assumed to be hers.³⁸⁹ As Joseph Elkanah Rosenberg notes, James professed himself a 'prodigious letter burner', writing, for example, to an editor chasing after the remains of his correspondence with Sarah Orne Jewett:

³⁸⁸ For an exploration of this aspect of James's novella, see Joseph Elkanah Rosenberg, 'Tangible Objects: Grasping "The Aspern Papers"', *Henry James Review*, 27 (2006), 256–263.

³⁸⁹ Henry James, *The Awkward Age*, p. 55.

I find our admirable friend's occasional communications have submitted to the law that I have myself made tolerably absolute these last years [...] the law of not leaving personal and private documents at the mercy of any accidents, or even of my executors! I kept almost all letters for years—till my receptacle would no longer hold them; then I made a gigantic bonfire and have been easier in minds [*sic*] since—save as to a certain residuum which *had* to survive [emphasis James's].³⁹⁰

Richard Salmon notes that James considered the publication of private texts to be a violation of the author himself:

The literary text, and its physical containers, retains the capacity to exude the 'personality' of the artist, even after death. It is this organic relationship between author and text which is specified by the term 'literary remains': the textual corpus is conceived as a residual extension of the authorial body.³⁹¹

The idea that an author's person and body of work are interchangeable is acutely borne out in James's New York Edition. A 24-volume collection of the author's novels, novellas, and short stories, published between 1907 and 1909, the Edition constitutes a literally monumental contribution to the idea of his literary afterlife. It has been interpreted as an exercise in control, with James seeking to wrest ultimate authority to

³⁹⁰ Letter, Henry James to Mrs J. T. Fields (2 Jan. 1910), *Henry James Letters: 1895-1916*, ed. by Leon Edel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), iv, pp. 541-542 (p. 541); cited in Rosenberg, p. 257.

³⁹¹ Richard Salmon, *Henry James and the Culture of Publicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 84.

shape the image of his body of work which will be durable enough to survive its author's bodily death.³⁹² However, the authorial body, while persistently present in the edition, is demonstrably more spectral than solid. For example, as James records in his notebook, the initial limited edition of 156 copies ostentatiously drew attention to the touch of the author's hand in the creation through the 'circled monogram device in gilt on front cover' and the 'watermark monogram H. J. appear[ing] on each text leaf',³⁹³ a trace of the body, pallid and half-transparent, like the 'ghosts' discernible in spirit photographs. Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen advances the idea that '[t]he face of the author and *ekphrastic* architecture [in the Prefaces] function as interpretive thresholds to the texts forming the New York Edition'.³⁹⁴ Both emphases add to our impression of the latent corporeality of the material experience of the Edition. James was meticulous in supervising the taking of photographs for the frontispieces, so as to ensure an 'absolutely supreme impeccability'³⁹⁵ for the enterprise, and the inclusion of photographs of himself to illustrate some volumes is interpreted by Stougaard-Nielsen as involving an existential reconfiguration of the type articulated by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*: 'The photograph represents the very subtle moment when [...] I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death (or parenthesis): I am truly becoming a

³⁹² See Martha Banta, 'The Excluded Seven: Practice of Omission, Aesthetics of Refusal', in *Henry James's New York Edition: The Construction of Authorship*, ed. by David McWhirter (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 240–262.

³⁹³ Leon Edel and Dan H. Laurence, *A Bibliography of Henry James* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), pp. 135–138.

³⁹⁴ Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, 'Frontispieces and Other Ruins: Portraits of the Author in Henry James's New York Edition', *Henry James Review*, 28 (2007), 140–158 (p. 146).

³⁹⁵ Philip Horne, 'Henry James at Work: The Question of Our Texts', in *The Cambridge companion to Henry James*, ed. by Jonathan Freedman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 65.

spectre'.³⁹⁶ This is supported by reference to the ghostliness inherent in the photographic medium generally, according to James, and in Victorian culture more widely. On the other hand, Stougaard-Nielsen argues, the artist's person can also be spotted standing behind any of 'number of possible windows' of James's 'house of fiction' in the New York Edition Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*,³⁹⁷ with his visual prostheses, eyes and field glasses, or indeed, transformed into the house itself through the blurring of conceptual borders between the face and the façade, the front of the house standing in metonymically for the mask worn by the artist, and the windows for his eyes.³⁹⁸ Like the ethereal tenants of the buildings which the SPR investigated, or indeed the ghost which haunts the house in 'The Jolly Corner' as discussed in my fourth chapter, the presence of James's body is sensed everywhere within the physical confines of the New York Edition, yet contrives to resist capture or even full materialisation.

However, the unity of the New York Edition's 'body' was threatened from the very first by the material conditions of its reception in the literary marketplace, via the work of other hands. As Michael Anesko notes, because of their unusual size and cost, 'de luxe editions' like James's occupied an ambiguous place in the increasingly commodified world of consumer culture: while these books were usually manufactured with the most up-to-date kinds of machine technology, their physical characteristics (and occasionally limited production numbers) seemed to defy the debasing tendencies of mechanical reproduction; traces or evidence of manual labour

³⁹⁶ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 14.

³⁹⁷ Henry James, 'Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*', p. 46.

³⁹⁸ Stougaard-Nielsen, pp. 145–148.

often figured in their design.³⁹⁹ Ever mindful of the market, James's publishers, Scribner's, followed these protocols in producing the New York Edition. As I noted earlier, the firm used paper watermarked with James's monogram for the first press run of sheets; subscribers could also purchase the trade issue in plum-coloured cloth (\$2 per volume) or half levant (\$4 per volume); and a genuinely limited issue of 156 hand-numbered copies, though struck from the same plates as the ordinary issue, was printed on Ruisdael handmade paper (\$8 per volume).⁴⁰⁰ Between the touch of the author's hand and the discerning reader, traces of other bodies, those of the labouring-classes, intervene. These details are important: recent work on the material interests of Victorian fiction has noted how the physical properties of books impact on the corporeality of the exchange which readers enter into when interacting with them. As Jerome McGann writes:

Human beings are not angels. Part of what it means to be human is to have a body, to occupy physical space, and to move in real time. In the same way, the products of literature, which are in all cases human products, are not disembodied processes [...] [They are] concrete forms.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ Michael Anesko, 'Collected Editions and the Consolidation of Cultural Authority: The Case of Henry James', *Book History*, 12 (2009), 186–208.

⁴⁰⁰ Anesko, p. 198.

⁴⁰¹ Jerome McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), pp. 95–96; Cited in Andrew Stauffer, 'Ruins of Paper: Dickens and the Necropolitan Library', *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 47 (2007) <<http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/016700ar>> [accessed 21 November 2011] (para. 4 of 28).

The potential for intercorporeal exchange involving the New York Edition can be extrapolated from a review in *The Bookman*, contemporary to the Edition's publication, which states that

The aspect of these twenty-four volumes is such as to command the approval even of so exacting a connoisseur as Mr James may be conceived as being: large, serious-looking volumes in their dignified binding of dull red, with their specially made, water-marked paper, their admirably novel and so distinguished illustrations consisting of photogravures made from photographs by Mr Alvin Langdon Coburn. Everything is in keeping. Mr James is no author for 'pocket' editions.⁴⁰²

It is specifically the physical characteristics of the edition which allow the connoisseur access to 'Mr James'. However, like Mrs Gereth's collection of handmade artefacts in *The Spoils of Poynton* which allow her and Fleda Vetch intercorporeal contact with 'the tongues of other countries and the hands of great artists', the New York Edition allows its readers to trace the lingering bodily presence of not only of the producer of the work of art (a title which James must share with his co-producers who include, but are not limited to Coburn, James's literary agent James Brand Pinker, and his correspondents at Scribner's), but its previous owners and borrowers.⁴⁰³

We also recall, however, that Mrs Gereth's precious objects relation to their owner is complicated by their relation to each other; they are encountered not only as

⁴⁰² Edward Clark Marsh, 'Henry James: Auto-Critic', *Bookman*, 30 (1909), 138; Cited in Anesko, p. 198.

⁴⁰³ Henry James, *The Spoils of Poynton*, p. 24.

individual bodies, but as constituent parts of a larger body: 'Poynton'. The *Bookman's* reviewer states that James is 'no author for "pocket" editions'. In what physical environments did his New York Edition find itself in, then, and what effect did these habitations have on the corporeal integrity of his 'definitive' body of work? The New York Edition was a commercial failure: On 15 August 1915, James wrote to his friend, the poet and critic, Edmund Gosse, that 'the Edition has been, from the point of view of profit either to the publishers or to myself, practically a complete failure; vaguely speaking, it doesn't sell. [...] I remain at my age, and after my long career, utterly, insurmountably, unsalable'. James complains in the same letter that his annual profit was about twenty-five pounds in England and 'very little more in America'.⁴⁰⁴ Instead of being welcomed into the homes of connoisseurs as *The Bookman* envisaged, the Edition languished unsold, or sequestered in a few library vaults. In fact, it was rumoured (although the veracity is questioned) that of the sheets sent to England, only a fraction were bound – the rest were used forty years later as package wrapping during World War Two.⁴⁰⁵ As Anesko has noted, in 1919, 'A Disappointed Reader' wrote to the *Times Literary Supplement*, complaining that James's works at that moment were, practically speaking, out of print in Great Britain. 'I do not think it can be regarded as a very creditable fact,' this disappointed reader began,

that four years after Henry James's death his best and ripest works are only obtainable in England at practically prohibitive prices, and some of them, even

⁴⁰⁴ Henry James, *Letters: 1895-1916*, IV, p. 777.

⁴⁰⁵ Eric Leuschner, "'Utterly, Insurmountably, Unsalable": Collected Editions, Prefaces, and the "Failure" of Henry James's New York Edition', *Henry James Review*, 22 (2001), 24–40.

at these prices, are not to be had. Apparently the old 6s. edition has been suffered to run out of print, and the *edition de luxe* costs 10s. 6d. per volume, or 21s. for the longer books [...] [T]he only chance at present of making oneself acquainted with some of Henry James's best books is to see them at the British Museum.⁴⁰⁶

Two prescient points relating to continuing formation of James's body of work emerge from analysis of this passage. The first pertains to the scant availability of the Edition, and is understood fully in the context of book history and paper production at the beginning of the twentieth century. Dard Hunter notes that by the turn of the century, paper machines were producing approximately 650,000 tons per year, testifying to paper's accelerating progress toward total pervasiveness in English culture.⁴⁰⁷ Patrick Brantlinger asserts that archival space becomes a key site for bibliographical excess during the fin de siècle period, and cites a passage from George Gissing's *New Grub Street* as emblematic of this. In this, the heroine, finding herself in the Reading-room of the British Library, laments, 'all those people about her, what aim had they save to make new books out of those already existing, that yet newer books might in turn be made out of theirs? This huge library, growing into unwieldiness, threatening to become a trackless desert of print – how intolerably it weighed upon the spirit!'⁴⁰⁸ As bound volumes rested unread on library shelves and unbound sheets in publishers'

⁴⁰⁶ 'A Disappointed Reader', *Times Literary Supplement*, 1919, p. 113 (p. 113); Cited in Anesko, p. 195.

⁴⁰⁷ Dard Hunter, *Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft* (New York, NY: Dover, 1974), pp. 526–527; Cited in Stauffer, p. 12.

⁴⁰⁸ Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth Century British Fiction* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1998), p. 89; cited in Stauffer (para. 11 of 28).

storage spaces, the integrity of the body of the New York Edition was threatened with erasure by the excess of literature of all kinds with which it competed for physical space. Also raised by the letter to the *TLS* is the relation of the New York Edition as a body of work to James's other publications up to this point. Before their inclusion (and in a number of cases, significant revision) James's novels were published in book form and in a variety of journals of British and American journals. *The Spoils of Poynton*, for example, was serialised in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1896, under the title of *The Old Things*, before first appearing under its later title as a book published by Heinemann in 1897, and then in its revised form in the New York Edition in 1908. The difference in chapter order between the journal, first book editions, and New York Edition versions of *The Ambassadors* and the issue of which ordering should be considered definitive has been the source of debate amongst scholars⁴⁰⁹. The textual variations between editions problematise the notion of a complete and orderly body of work. Anesko notes how, in a bid to dispose of the unsold sheets languishing in their warehouses, in the same year as the Disappointed Reader's letter cited above, at least three of James's American publishers collaborated to allow readers to assemble their own James 'edition' from a motley assemblage of volumes, some printed from plates as James had revised them for the New York Edition, but others not.⁴¹⁰ These hybrid

⁴⁰⁹ See Robert E. Young, 'An Error in *The Ambassadors*', *American Literature*, 22 (1950), 245–253; Jerome McGann, 'Revision, Rewriting, Rereading; or, "An Error [not] in *The Ambassadors*"', *American Literature*, 64 (1992), 95–110.

⁴¹⁰ The series made available (in the order listed): *What Maisie Knew*, *The Finer Grain*, *The Wings of the Dove* (2 vols.), *The Outcry*, *The Better Sort*, *The Ivory Tower*, *The Golden Bowl* (2 vols.), *The Sense of the Past*, *The Sacred Fount* (published by Charles Scribner's Sons), *The Portrait of a Lady* (2 vols.), *The American*, *Roderick Hudson*, *The Europeans*, *A Passionate Pilgrim*, *The Siege of London*, *Other Tales* (presumably those first collected in *Tales of Three Cities* and *The Author of Beltraffio*), *The Spoils of Poynton*, *The Tragic Muse* (2 vols.; published by Houghton Mifflin), *The Awkward Age*,

editions were bound in dark blue cloth with James's facsimile signature in gilt on the front cover to give an outward impression of uniformity.⁴¹¹ Anesko suggests the title of 'The Desperation Edition' for this 'peculiar ersatz series'.⁴¹² These textual and material variations raise the possibility of not only damage to the definitive body of James's work by a physically overcrowded marketplace, but the possibility of multiple, mutant bodies of work forming, as an uncanny magnetism is effected between the texts which made up the author-approved New York Edition and those which were excluded.

II

James's later writing indicated that not only could the meticulous composition of his body of work be subjected to physical alteration, but that it might escape the limitations of its bindings entirely to engage in interactions with a different kind of materiality. The year after the last volume of the New York Edition was published, James contributed at the invitation of Elizabeth Garver Jordan, editor of *Harper's Bazar* from 1900 to 1912, to a 'symposium' on immortality which ran in the *Bazar* for eleven months, April 1909 to February 1910. James's essay, entitled 'Is There a Life after Death?', appeared in two instalments in the January and February issues of 1910. Part I consists of a 'speculative reckoning' (602), the broad overview of arguments for

Daisy Miller, The Ambassadors, An International Episode, and Washington Square (published by Harper and Brothers). See David J. Supino, *Henry James: A Bibliographical Catalogue* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp. 85, 158; cited in Anesko, p. 203.

⁴¹¹ Supino, p. 85; Cited in Anesko, p. 203.

⁴¹² Anesko, p. 203.

and against an afterlife. James bemoans the ‘spectacle, all about us, of personal decay’.

This, he writes:

reinforce[s] the verdict of the dismal laboratories and the confident analysts as to the interconvertability of our genius, as it comparatively is at the worst, and our brain – the poor palpable, ponderable, probeable, laboratory-brain that we ourselves see in certain inevitable conditions – become as naught. (606)

In opposition to this materialistic perspective he posits the following viewpoint:

But what of those lights that were out in a single gust and those life passions that were nipped in their flower and their promise [...] The mere acquired momentum of intelligence, of perception, of vibration, of experience in a word, would have carried them on, we argue, to *something*, the something that never takes place for us, if the laboratory-brain were *not* really all [emphases James’s]. (611)

This is further explored in Part II, where the promise of ‘new worlds to come’ is held out to works of art which can carry ‘the field of consciousness further and further’ (611). James specifically alludes to the reception he imagines for his own work years after his death.

We can imagine these divergent planes of existence, insofar as they are applicable to James’s corpus, to correspond to the fields of ‘work’ and ‘text’ as delineated by Roland Barthes: ‘the work can be held in hand, the text is held in

language, only exists in the movement of a discourse'.⁴¹³ Viewing the textual corpus as process rather than finished article constitutes a significant revision of the established critical position on the theory of fiction James posited during his 'second major phase'. As Dorothy J. Hale writes, 'The tradition most self-consciously derived from James effectively understood novel theory as a modern day *anatomy*; the aim was to identify and classify what would eventually be called the "elements" of fiction'.⁴¹⁴ R. P. Blackmur's introduction to *The Art of the Novel*, in which all of the critical prefaces from the New York Edition are collected, has been particularly influential in this regard. To analyse James's work is, Blackmur asserts:

to make an *ex post facto* dissection, not that we may embalm the itemised mortal remains, but that we may intellectually understand the movements of parts and the relation between them in the living body we appreciate. Such dissection is imaginative, an act of the eye and mind alone, and but articulates our knowledge without once scratching the flesh of its object.⁴¹⁵

He then goes on to adumbrate the major themes which 'inhabit all the Prefaces' and are 'constantly arrived at, either parenthetically or as the definite terminus of the most diverse discussions', as well as the recurring more 'minor notes'.⁴¹⁶ Whilst he usefully

⁴¹³ Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Image/Music/Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 155–164 (pp. 156–157).

⁴¹⁴ Dorothy J. Hale, 'Henry James and the Invention of Novel Theory', in *The Cambridge companion to Henry James*, ed. by Jonathan Freedman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 97.

⁴¹⁵ 'Introduction', in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York, NY; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. vii–xxxix (pp. xiii–xiv).

⁴¹⁶ Blackmur, pp. xiv–xv.

describes James's work as a living and mobile body rather than a dead and inert one, his indexing of its parts gives the impression of a finite form and he unequivocally disavows the potential for the Jamesian body of work to be effectively modified by any external agency. However, attention to 'Is There a Life after Death?' suggests that this position should be challenged. In his essay, James states:

a process takes place which I can only describe as the accumulation of the very treasure of consciousness: I won't say that 'the world', as we commonly refer to it, grows more attaching, but will say that the universe increasingly does, and that this makes us present at the enormous multiplication of our possible relations with it. (610)

This process, begun in life, continues after bodily death. James confesses to 'taking kindly' to:

that admirable philosophic view which makes of matter the mere encasement or sheath, thicker, thinner, coarser, finer, more transparent or more obstructive, of a spirit it has no more concern in producing than the baby frame has in producing the intelligence of the baby – much as that intelligence may be so promoted. (610)

It is stimulated by negotiation with a plethora of other artistic statements, figured as vocal articulations by James. Their quantity is initially frightening – James writes that 'the universe, or all of it that I could make out, kept proclaiming in a myriad voices that

I and my poor form of consciousness were a quantity it could at any moment perfectly do without' (609) – but negotiation with them is a condition of the 'future life': 'the artist's surrender to invasive floods is accordingly nine-tenths of the matter that makes his consciousness, that makes mine, so persuasively interesting' (610). This emphasis on art as being part of a process involving the interrelation of different 'voices' helps further differentiate James's theory of literature from that posited by Blackmur. Indeed, the sociolinguistic theory which developed following the recent translation of the works of the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin in the 1980s, and ostensibly provided Anglo-American critics with an alternative to the Jamesian tradition, is closer to James's theory of literature than is widely reported. Hale sums up the apparent difference between the two approaches by stating that '[f]or James, technique is diverse and form unified; for Bakhtin, any single novel is defined by its multiplicitous and heterogeneous social "voices"'.⁴¹⁷ The description of the innate polyvocality of art in 'Is There a Life After Death?' leads us to question even this. When considering the complex metaphysics of the Jamesian corpus's adventures via the Barthesian 'movement of [...] discourse', it is perhaps better to effect a change of terminology in line with the literary theory expounded by the latter writer – to refer to the relatively free 'textual body' instead of the physically delimited 'body of work'.

The material characteristics of James's 'textual body' may be elucidated through Steven Connor's concept of the 'vocalic body'. As Connor elucidates in *Dumbstruck*, voices stand for bodily identities; even vocalisations which are disassociated from their source can produce the hallucination of a surrogate or secondary body. In the light of this idea, James's theory of art as a process involving

⁴¹⁷ Hale, p. 81.

the interpenetration of voices points towards the conception of the textual body as not only protean but intercorporeal. As delineated in my third chapter, Connor's concept of the 'vocalic body' corresponds neatly with Oliver Lodge's 'etheric body', especially where posthumous voicings are concerned. Lodge advanced the idea of the 'etheric body' precisely as an explanation for those voices not attributable to a source existing at a point in conventional space, such as the voices channelled by the direct voice medium during séances; Connor asserts that such disassociated voices yet retain the power to 'mutate into bodily form'.⁴¹⁸ Lodge argued that the etheric body was 'detachable and capable of separate existence'⁴¹⁹ - potentially, as he wrote to William Crookes, in the fourth dimension⁴²⁰ - and therefore capable of material reconfigurations not possible in its earthly form. As the etheric body is analogous to the multi-dimensional persistence of Milly Densher's vocal presence following her death in *The Wings of the Dove*, so will it stand for the new spatial possibilities opened up for the textual body once liberated from the constraints of the body of work. James writes in 'Is There a Life after Death?':

it is in a word the artistic consciousness and privilege in itself that thus shines as from immersion in the fountain of being. Into that fountain, to depths immeasurable, our spirit dips- to the effect of feeling itself qua imagination and aspiration, all scented with universal sources. What is that but an adventure of our personality, and how can we after it hold complete disconnection likely?

(613)

⁴¹⁸ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p. 11.

⁴¹⁹ Oliver Lodge, p. 222; Cited in Oppenheim, *The Other World*, p. 385.

⁴²⁰ Oppenheim, *The Other World*, p. 351.

There is something tangibly ghostly about the way in which James envisages discourse as working – the mingling of his artistic voice with others' following bodily death is in tune with the kind of somatic reconfigurations fin de siècle psychical research holds as feasible in the altered materiality of the future life.

Because of its subtle evocation of the work of discourse in terms of space, James's vision of literary immortality, especially as seen in the context of his antecedent acts of artistic monumentalizing, anticipates modern textual scholarship. The conditions of the environment in which James's consciousness survives posthumously are similar to those of what Chaudhuri refers to as 'textual space'. Chaudhuri sees any narrative or discourse as tracing several paths as it defines itself, within severally ordered textual spaces. He writes:

The first is the alignment inherent in the material embodiment of the text: whether, for instance, in manuscript, in print or on-screen, and in which specific version of any of these. The same work might have many material (hence textual) embodiments, many editions or versions: they provide so many external indicators of the total structure of the work, its governing generic identity (which may not always correspond to a recognised genre). That identity determines the path of the second level of textual process, the broad division or disposition of the subject-matter. The third, retracing yet deflecting from the first two, is the path traced by the listener, reader or user as he engages with the text. There can be countless such paths, pursued at different times even by the same reader. [...] This packed, multiplex, multi-directional

alignment I would call *the trajectory of internal progression* [emphasis Chaudhuri's].⁴²¹

Chaudhuri then searches for a spatial simile to describe this trajectory. Is the trajectory of internal progression like 'the structure of algorithms underlying a software package, or (better) the convolutions of grey matter contained within the skull'?⁴²² These comparisons are ultimately rejected because Chaudhuri judges that the material latent in the text cannot be limited in this way. Instead, the text is 'like a coiled spring packed in a box of vastly smaller dimensions'.⁴²³ The internal trajectory of a text, animated in particular by the 'third path', running through the compacted enfoldments of its constituent units, exceeds the dimensions of its formal or material medium, finally leading us outward beyond its confines, all texts being located in a continuity of discourse. The carefully realized construction of James's body of work in the New York Edition, with its assiduously chosen physical accoutrements and division into 23 volumes as analysed earlier in this chapter stand for the first and second levels of textual process as defined by Chaudhuri. I have postulated in my analysis of 'Is There a Life After Death?' a free interaction between texts, and this maps onto the crucial third. This last aspect is expounded on with considerable frequency in the non-fiction writing of James's 'second major phase'.

III

⁴²¹ Chaudhuri, p. 120.

⁴²² Chaudhuri, p. 120.

⁴²³ Chaudhuri, p. 120.

Indeed, scattered through his writings on his place in literary history during this period are suggestions that the dimensions of the textual body may not only be sustained, but extended by such readerly interventions. The innate corporeality of James's delineation of his body of work is crucial here, as James's texts loose themselves from the person of the author to occupy the bodies of his readers and interlocutors. These scattered references coalesce into a cogent narrative when considered in context with James's working relationship with his secretary, Theodora Bosanquet, who was not only his first interlocutor/reader, but became his closest collaborator.

As James's amanuensis, Bosanquet satisfied the need for a vessel for her employer's externalized textual body which he expressed in his late writings, including his deathbed dictations of 1915. The deathbed dictations lament the pointlessness of having new ideas 'within one's carcass', and preoccupies himself with 'woundedness', both literal and in the context of artistic achievement.⁴²⁴ On the morning of 12 December, he compares the progress of artistic achievement to 'squeez[ing] together into some motorcar or other' and talking, and in the afternoon of the same day, apparently inhabiting the persona of Napoleon, draws attention to 'plans and designs for the decoration' of certain palaces 'addressed in detail to artists and workmen who are to take them in hand'.⁴²⁵ His last, undated dictation states that 'These final and faded remarks all have some interest and some character [...] some such, whom I don't presume to name, will furnish such last offices. In fact I do without names not wish to

⁴²⁴ Henry James, *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, p. 583.

⁴²⁵ Henry James, *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, pp. 583, 584.

exaggerate the defect of their absence'.⁴²⁶ According to Edel and Powers's footnote in *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, this final dictation, quoted above, was unusually taken down longhand by the author's niece Peggy in Bosanquet's place.⁴²⁷ By noting the phenomenology of James and Bosanquet's working interactions as both parties recorded them in the preceding years, it can be posited that the absent vessel in question is none other than the secretary and her technological prosthesis, the typewriter. In her memoir, *Henry James at Work*, Bosanquet records how from her first meeting with James his speech affects her as a kind of matter in which she becomes immersed: 'Instead of critical angles and disconcerting silences, there were only benign curves and ample reassurances [...] once I was seated opposite him, the strong, slow stream of speech played over me without ceasing.'⁴²⁸ Bosanquet asserted that James wanted his typists to be 'without a mind', and her predecessor Mary Weld stated that 'when working I was just part of the machinery'.⁴²⁹ James insisted that dictation 'soon enough becomes *intellectually*, absolutely identical with the act of writing – or has become so, after five years now, with me; so that the difference is only material and illusory – only the difference that I walk up and down [emphasis James's]'.⁴³⁰ As Mark Seltzer notes, this replicates the psychophysics of automatic writing⁴³¹ – a phenomenon which Bosanquet was fascinated by and

⁴²⁶ Henry James, *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, p. 585.

⁴²⁷ Henry James, *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, p. 585.

⁴²⁸ Theodora Bosanquet, *Henry James at Work*, ed. by Lyall H. Powers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), p. 32.

⁴²⁹ Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Master 1901-1916* (London: Hart-Davis, 1972), p. 367; cited in Mark Seltzer, 'The Graphic Unconscious: A Response', *New Literary History*, 26 (1995), 21–28 (p. 25).

⁴³⁰ Letter, Henry James to Mrs Cadwalader Jones (23 Oct. 1902), iv, p. 247; cited in Seltzer, p. 25.

⁴³¹ Seltzer, p. 25.

discussed with Henry's brother, William - produced involuntarily while the subject's attention is ostensibly directed elsewhere and generally attributed in the nineteenth century to external or supernatural forces.

However, one of psychical research's main discoveries relating to automatic writing around the turn of the century, following the development of theories of depth psychology, was that its inspiration could be internal as well as external.⁴³² There is a similar ambivalence in James's postulated reception of his fiction in his critical work, which echoes the dynamics of his working relationship with Bosanquet. The reader's complicity in the creative process is tacitly suggested in the New York Edition preface to *The Golden Bowl*. To produce the edited version of the novel, James must, by an act of possession, 'consentingly become' one of his readers.⁴³³ This leads him to the conclusion that 'To revise is to see, or to look over, again - which means in the case of a written thing neither more nor less than to re-read it'.⁴³⁴ James's delineation of the revision of his works for the New York Edition as an act inchoate in that of re-reading is a step away from defining his texts as 'writerly' in the manner of Roland Barthes, with the aim 'to make the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text'.⁴³⁵ James's sentiment is ventriloquized in Bosanquet's description of the revisionary

⁴³² See Pamela Thurschwell, 'Supple Minds and Automatic Hands: Secretarial Agency in Early Twentieth-Century Literature', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 37 (2001), 155-68.

⁴³³ Henry James, 'Preface to *The Golden Bowl*', in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York, NY; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 327-348 (p. 336).

⁴³⁴ Henry James, 'Preface to *The Golden Bowl*', pp. 338-339.

⁴³⁵ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1974), p. 4.

process in *Henry James at Work*,⁴³⁶ and she grasps the more radical Barthesian implication of the reader-writer comparison as applicable to her profession too. First, there is the potential for unconscious modifications of James's textual body to be effected at typographical level. Bosanquet writes:

The business of acting as a medium between the spoken and the typewritten word was at first as alarming as it was fascinating. The most handsome and expensive typewriters exercise as vicious an influence as any others over the spelling of the operator, and the new pattern of a Remington machine which I found installed offered a few additional problems. [...] [James] watched me helplessly, for he was one of the few men without the smallest pretension to the understanding of a machine.⁴³⁷

Bosanquet also had an increasingly intimate role in the production of James's texts as the author's susceptibility to illness deepened in his last years. She recalls, with specific reference to the posthumously published *The Sense of the Past* and *The Ivory Tower*, the role 'talking out' played in the transition from James's notes to completed text:

⁴³⁶ 'On every page the act of re-reading became automatically one with the act of re-writing, and the revised parts are just "those rigid conditions of re-perusal, registered; so many close notes, as who should say, on the particular vision of the matter itself that experience had at last made the only possible one"' (Bosanquet, *Henry James at Work*, p. 42.)

⁴³⁷ Bosanquet, *Henry James at Work*, p. 34.

At the beginning [of the novel-writing process] he had no questions of compression to attend to, and he 'broke ground,' as he said, talking to himself day by day about the characters and their construction until the persons and their actions were vividly present to his inward eye. This soliloquy was of course recorded on the typewriter. [...] These scenes he worked out until he felt himself so thoroughly possessed of the action that he could begin on the dictation of the book itself – a process which has been incorrectly described by one critic as re-dictation from a rough draft. It was nothing of the kind. [...] [The notes] are the framework set up for imagination to clothe with the spun web of life. But they are not bare framework.⁴³⁸

Lyndall H. Powers also emphasizes Bosanquet's first-hand role, after James's 1915 stroke, in establishing the final draft of his preface to Rupert Brooke's *Letters from America*.⁴³⁹ After the author was incapacitated by his first stroke, she was obliged to complete the proof-reading, and after certain remarks in the text about Brooke's treatment at the hands of the *Westminster Gazette* (which had already published the first thirteen of the letters) provoked the threat of a libel suit, Bosanquet satisfactorily revised the offending passage and facilitated publication in early 1916. Alice Gibbens James, William's widow, praised Bosanquet's work, stating that 'Henry would never know he hadn't written it himself' – though this was despite relations between the secretary and Henry James's family being strained by this point (finding Bosanquet's

⁴³⁸ Bosanquet, *Henry James at Work*, p. 36.

⁴³⁹ Bosanquet, *Henry James at Work*, p. 18.

continued secretarial work in James's domicile 'intrusive', Alice, her daughter Peggy, and son Harry, largely took it over).⁴⁴⁰

Their anxieties tapped into a widespread fear of typists' violation of authorial integrity during the fin de siècle period. As Thurschwell has it, '[w]hen the textual body is typewritten and controlled finally by an extra set of hands, it can be easily reconstituted, forged, or stolen'.⁴⁴¹ These fantasies have been given full expression in Cynthia Ozick's novel, *Dictation*, in which Bosanquet and Joseph Conrad's secretary, Lilian Hallowes, conspire to graft a piece of text from their respective employers into a story by the other's. The result of the experiment is rendered in vocabulary which emphasizes its intercorporeality:

In Henry James's London rooms a small dazzling fragment of 'The Secret Sharer' flows, as if ordained, into the unsuspecting veins of 'The Jolly Corner' and in Joseph Conrad's study in a cottage in Kent the hot fluids of 'The Jolly Corner' run, uninhibited, into a sutured crevice in 'The Secret Sharer.' There is no visible seam, no hair's-breadth fissure; below the surface – submicroscopically, so to speak – the chemical amalgam causes no disturbance, molecule melds into molecule all serenely.... What has Theodora won? Exactly the thing she so resplendently envisioned: two amanuenses, two negligible footnotes overlooked by the most diligent scholarship, unsung by all the future,

⁴⁴⁰ Lyall H. Powers, 'The Handprinted Hogarth Essay', in *Henry James at Work* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), pp. 11–28 (p. 18).

⁴⁴¹ Pamela Thurschwell, 'The Typist's Remains: Theodora Bosanquet in Recent Fiction', *Henry James Review*, 32 (2011), 1–11 (p. 7).

leaving behind an immutable mark—an everlasting sign that they lived, they felt, they acted!⁴⁴²

James's making over of author's privileges to his first interlocutor in Bosanquet tacitly accedes to the diffusion of the bodily agency attributed to the text. The figurative 'footnotes' threaten the notion of the distinct identity of the textual body.

The consequences of such attentive readerly-writerly interactions with his work therefore inhere to the vast potential of Walter Benjamin's theory of the 'afterlife' of the work of art in 'The Task of the Translator' (1923) as it is developed by Chaudhuri in *The Metaphysics of Text*. Chaudhuri writes that '[f]or Benjamin, the "afterlife" constitutes of the materials of reception: commentary, translation, adaptation, percolation. These materials necessarily draw on other discourses. Thus an entire history flows out of, and back into, the formal parameters of a single work'.⁴⁴³ I have demonstrated in other chapters of this thesis (particularly my fourth chapter) that the self in James's late novels is often theorized as not necessarily pertaining to a single, stable bodily identity; and this mode of corporeal fluidity can also be employed as a metaphor for the author's malleable textual body. This is pertinently illustrated by the apparent return of James's departed soul to dictate further literary works to Theodora Bosanquet via a spirit medium in 1933. The spirit-control identified as Henry James addresses her as follows:

⁴⁴² Cynthia Ozick, *Dictation* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), pp. 49–50; Cited in Thurschwell, 'The Typist's Remains', p. 7.

⁴⁴³ Chaudhuri, p. 129.

If I may be permitted to thank the friends who are making such a valiant effort to help me to speak I shall put it this way. There is the intention enabled by kindness and a desire to return to relations that existed in a distant past between me and the lady who kindly acted as my secretary. I will draw her attention to a similarity between the past and the present. In the past she acted to a great extent as a mouthpiece for me, recorder perhaps might define the relationship better now, although we have not entered into what might be described as fluent cooperation her efforts suggest the past relationship. A lending of the mind to follow mine, or should I say a willing perception of my work and intention... (What is the plan?) Just to produce an instrument and when that instrument is as efficient as my secretary's typewriter to proceed with either a short tale or an essay whichever pleases her best.⁴⁴⁴

The ambiguous dynamics of the creative relationship between James and Bosanquet proposed here echo those delineated in the secretary's memoir. If Bosanquet is merely a 'recorder' or 'instrument', she also has the responsibility to possess the agency to perceive James's work and intention, and suggest the form which his future writing might take. Given the discourse networks on the occult which this thesis has shown James's fictional texts to be connected to, is there a sense in which either these utterances or the postulated tale or essay might be analysed as a texts authored, or co-authored by James? As Pamela Thurschwell notes:

⁴⁴⁴ Theodora Bosanquet, 'Automatic Writing Through Mrs Dowden. Evening of March 13th, 1933', Bosanquet Files, Box 2, The Society for Psychical Research Archive, University Library, Cambridge; cited in Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*, p. 102.

the line between the intersubjective séance – in which an out-of-body, post-death James really does speak – and an intrasubjective one – in which Bosanquet voices her own repressed desires for what she always hoped James would say – is not a line that James's own accounts of consciousness necessarily allow one to draw.⁴⁴⁵

I have observed earlier in this chapter that consciousness is increasingly identified as a function of signification in James's last works, and we must therefore consider the possibility that James's textual body demands to be read as theoretically mutable and permeable. The engagement of these texts with James's extant textual body might be best compared with the ghostly work accomplished by sequels, as described by Chaudhuri in *Metaphysics of Text*. Here, Chaudhuri writes:

[...] we witness the spectral extension of a narrative beyond its confines, a form beyond form. In terms of physical and generic structure, there can be only one form; but its constituent units – narrative or discursive lexiae – cross, deflect and overlap with each other in many trajectories of varying length, often extending beyond the formal confines of the work.⁴⁴⁶

Bosanquet's continued imbrication with the Jamesian writing process after her employer's death allows discursive links between the instances where James claims

⁴⁴⁵ Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*, p. 107.

⁴⁴⁶ Chaudhuri, p. 122.

possession of other bodies for writerly purposes – whether the desire for a ‘vessel’ expressed in the deathbed dictations, the need for the author to become part-reader in the preface to *The Golden Bowl*, or his use of the amanuensis as collaborator - and both psychical research and modern textual scholarship to be established. It also allows for the vast expansion of the texts we can conceive of as being part of James’s textual body.

IV

This is exemplified by the corporeal reconfigurations carried out by the biographical novel. The latter is a hybrid form characterized by David Lodge as ‘the novel which takes a real person and their real history as the subject matter for imaginative exploration, using the novel’s techniques for representing subjectivity rather than the objective, evidence-based discourse of biography’.⁴⁴⁷ Biographical novels featuring Henry James have been published in particularly large numbers in the early twenty-first century. Lodge writes:

Henry James was unkindly portrayed, thinly disguised as ‘Jervase Marion’, by Vernon Lee in her story ‘Lady Tal’ in 1893, and there may have been other fictionalised portraits in his own lifetime, or after his death in 1916, but as far

⁴⁴⁷ David Lodge, *The Year of Henry James: The Story of a Novel* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 8.

as I am aware he never appeared as a character in a novel under his own name prior to Emma Tennant's novel in 2002 [*Felony*].⁴⁴⁸

In 2004, Peter Kemp was moved to observe in the *Sunday Times* that 'If anyone deserves to win this year's Man Booker Prize, it's Henry James. [...] he has been the originator of no fewer than three outstanding novels'.⁴⁴⁹ The three novels in question were David Lodge's *Author, Author* (which Kemp was reviewing), along with Colm Tóibín's *The Master* and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*, winner and runner up for the aforementioned prize respectively. As Kemp's statement tacitly acknowledges, these novels can be conceived of as extensions of James's textual body. In what follows, I will explore how the boundaries of the textual body are manipulated in Colm Tóibín's *The Master*, and David Lodge's *Author, Author*, novels which both 'attempt to represent known facts of his life from inside [James's] consciousness',⁴⁵⁰ and whose method of composition has been extrapolated at length by their respective authors. This analysis will be supported by references to later experimentations in the genre by Richard Liebmann-Smith and Paula Marantz Cohen. I will subsequently posit a reason for the recent proliferation of Jamesian biographical fiction which avers the pertinence of Henry James's meditations on the literary afterlife to the present cultural moment.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁸ David Lodge, *The Year of Henry James*, p. 4.

⁴⁴⁹ Peter Kemp, 'Author, Author by David Lodge', *Sunday Times*, 29 August 2004, section Book Reviews.

⁴⁵⁰ David Lodge, *The Year of Henry James*, p. 13.

⁴⁵¹ For a comprehensive survey of James's presence in the fiction of other writers as both a figure and an author of a body of work, up to a few years before the recent proliferation of Jamesian biofiction, see Adeline R. Tintner, *Henry James's Legacy: The*

The model of consciousness posited by both Lodge and Tóibín is ostensibly a bodily consciousness. In an extension of the role of the ghostly portraits of James on the frontispieces of the New York Edition, these modern novels offer versions of James whose bodily presence provides a synecdoche for his mode of expression. In *The Master*, Tóibín is guided by contemporary Queer Theory in presenting James as a closeted and celibate homosexual whose prose style reveals the concealments and absences inherent in the epistemology of the closet.⁴⁵² Following a scene laden with sexual tension where James speaks with an attractive former soldier turned manservant named Hammond, Tóibín elucidates the play of Henry's mind via free indirect discourse:

Henry appreciated that if anyone could see them now, if others were to stand in the doorway as he had done earlier, or manage to see in through the window, they would presume that something momentous had occurred between them, that their silence had merely arisen because so much had been said.⁴⁵³

As Max Saunders notes, Tóibín's prose style gestures towards 'the abstractness and elaboration of Jamesian syntax' (but holds back from mere imitation), and is at his best when capturing James's fascination with such 'enigmatic absences', whilst Lodge is less successful.⁴⁵⁴ In *Author, Author*, Lodge also suggestively withholds details about

Afterlife of His Figure and Fiction (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1998).

⁴⁵² See, for example, Ohi.

⁴⁵³ Colm Tóibín, *The Master* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2008), p. 36.

⁴⁵⁴ Max Saunders, 'Master Narratives', *Cambridge Quarterly*, 37 (2008), 121–131 (p. 129).

James's sexuality. In addition, a further emphasis on the corporeal is added by revealing bodily functions such as James's eructing, flatulence, and toilet habits, but this level of detail is occasionally at odds with his attempt to convincingly write 'from within' James's consciousness. In his portrayal of James taking a bath, for example, Lodge writes, 'He lay back luxuriously in the hot water, his belly protruding from the surface like a small pink island'.⁴⁵⁵ Saunders concludes that this is unsatisfactory: 'It isn't only that there are no words like 'belly' in James's corpus. The metaphor of the island is so un-Jamesian as to preclude free indirect style'.⁴⁵⁶ In terms of the extension of the Jamesian body of work, the stress on the corporeal in Lodge and Tóibín's novels is highly suggestive. There are limitations to this approach, however, which are suggested by biographical fiction which puts Henry James's body in scenarios entirely uncorroborated by historical record. In Liebmann-Smith's *The James Boys* (2008), inspired by Otis Pease's assertion that nineteenth century American history could be summed up by referring to two sets of James brothers, 'William and Henry in the East, Frank and Jesse in the West',⁴⁵⁷ Henry's literary style is influenced by his collaboration in a series of violent crimes as part of a gang of bandits led by his brothers Garth Wilkinson and Robertson James, these two having reinvented themselves as Frank and Jesse. This problematizes Lodge and Tóibín's methodology; indeed, it leads Bethany Layne to write in her paper, '*The James Boys*: Richard Liebmann-Smith, Parody, and Biofiction', that Liebmann-Smith 'highlights the flaws in [Jamesian biofiction writers']

⁴⁵⁵ David Lodge, *Author, Author* (London: Viking, 2004), p. 215.

⁴⁵⁶ Saunders, p. 129.

⁴⁵⁷ Richard Liebmann-Smith, *The James Boys: A Novel Account of Four Desperate Brothers* (New York, NY: Random House, 2008), p. i.

approach: in the attempt to recapture the “real Henry James”, the channels of his body lead only to a dead end’.⁴⁵⁸

More complex reconfigurations of the textual body are achieved by the appropriation, acknowledged and unacknowledged, of passages from Henry James in *Author, Author* and *The Master*. Lodge quotes Henry James directly, using italics to mark the distinction between his own prose and James's, tacitly illustrating Barthes's analogy between text and textiles, that a ‘text is a tissue [or fabric] of quotations,’ drawn from ‘innumerable centres of culture,’⁴⁵⁹ rather than from one, individual experience. Might James's textual body be just such a composite entity? *The Master*, on the other hand, engages in more complex textual configurations. In the novel's ‘Acknowledgements’, Tóibín notes that ‘I have peppered the text with phrases and sentences from the writings of Henry James and his family’.⁴⁶⁰ In his essay, ‘Henry James for Venice’, Tóibín recalls rereading Sheldon M. Novick's book *Henry James: The Young Master* when he came across an astonishing sentence at the very end of its third chapter about the Jameses' sojourn at Boulogne sur Mer which describes Henry James and his father observing a young fisherwoman emerging from the sea. The passage is from a letter Henry James Senior wrote to Anne Ward on 2 November, 1857. Tóibín notes his recognition of the image's reappearance in *What Maisie Knew* and his own shameless appropriation of it in *The Master*: ‘I knew, as I worked on the opening of chapter 5, which was going to deal with sexual desire in all its almostness, with Grey and Holmes and Minny Temple, with Holmes and Henry James, I knew what I could do

⁴⁵⁸ Bethany Layne, ‘The James Boys: Richard Liebmann-Smith, Parody, and Biofiction’ (presented at Transforming Henry James, John Cabot University, Rome, 2011).

⁴⁵⁹ Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142–148 (p. 146).

⁴⁶⁰ Tóibín, p. 341.

with that one sentence'.⁴⁶¹ This was, he notes 'a way of anchoring my images and phrases in those of James, by riffing on them, referring to them, stealing them'.⁴⁶² In *The Master*, Henry James's textual body isn't merely intertwined with others'; it *is* others' – at least Henry James Senior's and Colm Tóibín's. Like Spencer Brydon in 'The Jolly Corner', it has cause to question the boundaries of selfhood. Indeed, the intercorporeality of James's textual body is inestimable – as Tóibín writes, 'We will never be able to know which of his images were from memory and which from imagination'.⁴⁶³ The case for the problematisation of textual ownership is further evidenced by Tóibín's 'offering' up to James some of the images he will need in the novels to be written after the period in his life covered by *The Master*. Tóibín writes:

The antique dealer in my book, whom the fictional James sees in 1897, will soon be his antique dealer in *The Golden Bowl*. The whiff of sexual secrecy and intrigue in the antique shop in my book will soon be part of the strange web that catches images and moments and prepares them to become part of a pattern, a more elaborate web, being spun in the imagination with care and precision and cunning but also being made by forces hidden from the artist, helped by the great complexity and perhaps the great white blankness of the

⁴⁶¹ Colm Tóibín, 'Henry James for Venice', *Henry James Review*, 27 (2006), 192–201 (p. 198). The passage is used in the scenes set in Boulogne in *What Maisie Knew*. In chapter 22, Sir Claude 'with a kind of absent gaze [...] followed the fine stride and shining limbs of a young fishwife who had just waded out of the sea with her basketful of shrimps. His thought came back to her [Maisie] sooner than his eyes' (Henry James, *What Maisie Knew*, p. 166).

⁴⁶² Tóibín, 'Henry James for Venice', p. 200.

⁴⁶³ Tóibín, 'Henry James for Venice', p. 200.

unconscious mind, the secret self where memories are stored and where what matters looms large.⁴⁶⁴

The elaborate pattern of the web (which is itself an intertextual allusion to the image of the 'chamber of consciousness' in James's 'The Art of Fiction'), is further attested to by Paula Morantz Cohen's novel, *What Alice Knew* (2010), in which Henry, along with his siblings William and Alice attempt to discover the identity of Jack the Ripper. In this, Cohen presents us with the primal scene of James writing a new story drawing on his imbrication with the series of murders:

Had Philip Wilkinson – Henry crossed out "Wilkinson." *Something more Dickensian*, he thought.

Had Philip Wiltingham not been sent to Algate Market (check spelling) by his wife... No, not his wife. That would suck the life out of the character before the story got started.

Had Philip Wiltingham not been sent to Algate Market (check sp) by his sister to buy the lamb chops for her dinner that night, and had he not ducked into the building when he saw Joseph Donner (Donning? better), an insufferable bore to whom he had lost fifty pounds at cards... too much information there, about the losing at cards.

Had Philip Wilitingham not been sent to Algate Market (check sp) by his sister to buy the lamb chops for her dinner party that night and had he not ducked into the building when he saw Joseph Donning, an insufferable bore to

⁴⁶⁴ Tóibín, 'Henry James for Venice', p. 201.

whom he owed fifty pounds, approaching in the other direction, he would never have found the body [italics Cohen's].⁴⁶⁵

These passages are not found in James's corpus, and even Cohen's fictional version of the author discards them ('he could not write about murder').⁴⁶⁶ We are picking over the virtual parts of the Jamesian textual body here. As Chaudhuri writes, 'a text is also filled with the suppressed presence of texts never written, possibilities never taken up but never quite obliterated: the Derridean deleted presence on the page which current word-processing software includes among its inscriptional resources'.⁴⁶⁷

I argue that by advancing such a vast web of possible relations between art and life, the writers of biographical novels are responding to something in James's theorising over the value of his corpus in his New York Prefaces. As Lodge writes in his essay on biographical fiction, 'The Year of Henry James':

No one wrote or spoke more eloquently about the connections and discontinuities between life and art, but of his many remarks on the subject the one that seemed most relevant to my task in his Preface to *Roderick Hudson*:

⁴⁶⁵ Paula Marantz Cohen, *What Alice Knew: a Most Curious Tale of Henry James & Jack the Ripper* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks Landmark, 2010), p. 41.

⁴⁶⁶ Paula Marantz Cohen, p. 46.

⁴⁶⁷ Chaudhuri, p. 124.

Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so.⁴⁶⁸

It can also be asserted that this sentiment is especially resonant with early twenty-first century culture. Lodge posits some reasons for the recent proliferation of Jamesian biographical novels:

It could be taken as a symptom of a declining faith or loss of confidence in the power of purely fictional narrative, in a culture where we are bombarded from every direction with factual content in the form of 'news'. It could be regarded as a characteristic move of postmodernism – incorporating the art of the past in its own processes through reinterpretation and stylistic pastiche. It could be seen as a sign of decadence and exhaustion in coping with the 'anxiety of influence'.⁴⁶⁹

I would like to suggest another: that the tendency for James's relations to 'stop nowhere' is in tune with the modern proliferation of technological prostheses for human intelligence. This much is hinted at in the biographical novels themselves, and their authors' subsequent theorizing. Just as Henry James's method of composition was revolutionized by the typewriter, so the computer's functionality allows Lodge to inhabit the consciousness of another. Lodge writes:

⁴⁶⁸ David Lodge, *The Year of Henry James*, pp. 28–29.

⁴⁶⁹ David Lodge, *The Year of Henry James*, pp. 9–10.

Although it was my customary practice to make notes on reading and other research in handwritten form, I realised fairly early in working on this fact-based novel the advantage of having them instantly accessible by using the computer's Search facility. Partly for that reason, *Author, Author* was the first novel I wrote entirely on my computer.⁴⁷⁰

Lodge also notes that *Author, Author* had an antecedent in his 2001 novel, *Thinks...* This novel focusses on a dialogue between two views of consciousness: the scientific (and technologically inflected), and the spiritual.⁴⁷¹ These views are represented respectively by the hero, Ralph Messenger, a cognitive scientist specialising in Artificial Intelligence, and the heroine, Helen Reed, a novelist seeking distraction from the recent death of her husband by teaching creative writing for a semester at Ralph's university. Helen is an admirer of Henry James, very familiar with his work from having once begun (but not completed) a DPhil thesis on it at Oxford. There are several allusions to and quotations from James in *Thinks...*, and whilst Ralph and Helen's views on consciousness contrast throughout the novel, by the conclusion there is room for the concession that intellectual collaboration could be productive. In the light of this, Jamesian biofiction's evocation of the extension of the textual body appears to open the field to other virtual habitations to be included in the Jamesian artistic consciousness's exploration of 'new worlds to come'.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ David Lodge, *The Year of Henry James*, p. 35.

⁴⁷¹ See David Lodge, *The Year of Henry James*, p. 22.

⁴⁷² Henry James, 'Is There a Life After Death?', p. 611.

V

As Andrew Cutting notes, 'James studies *has* responded to the digitisation of Western culture [emphasis Cutting's]': almost all of his fiction is available online, and the contents list of Richard Hathaway's *The Henry James Scholar's Guide to Websites* is comprehensive, and growing.⁴⁷³ One of the resources listed here is Adrian Dover's website, *The Ladder*, a collection of e-text versions of tales and novels by James annotated with relevant critical apparatus and other scholarly reference tools.⁴⁷⁴ Dover has made extensive notes on his editorial principles available on the website which help me explore issues relating to the material status of James's textual body on the web, the effect of readerly intervention upon it, and the posthuman. I have also conducted my own interview with Dover, which includes pertinent comments on these issues that are detailed in what follows.

Part of this conversation was occupied with trying to ascertain what Dover considered *The Ladder* to be 'made of' in a material sense. He explained that his aim as the editor had been to make each chosen Henry James text available in a form suitable for online reading, whilst retaining as much of the appearance of the books from which they are derived as possible. The process of creating the electronic text begins by either manually typing up the words from James's fiction or scanning the original documents and using Optical Character Recognition software to translate them to machine-encoded text. There is a section (or 'rung') on *The Ladder* dedicated to

⁴⁷³ Andrew Cutting, 'A Virtual Henry James', *Henry James E-Journal*, 6 (2003), 1–16 (p. 1); Richard D. Hathaway, *The Henry James Scholar's Guide to Web Sites* <<http://www2.newpaltz.edu/~hathaway/>> [accessed 10 February 2013].

⁴⁷⁴ Adrian Dover, *The Ladder: a Henry James website* <www.henryjames.org.uk> [accessed 9 January 2012].

clarification of Dover's editorial methods, which explains that for editions published before 2008, after being checked for mistakes, the raw text is marked up and then converted to the required HTML by Dover's own programming script. The resulting HTML version is then 'carefully proof-read and corrected against the source text, which, except in the case of the playscripts, is an original book publication, overseen by Henry James'.⁴⁷⁵ The decision to ensure that even line length matches that of the original source constitutes a further gesture towards authenticity, seemingly in step with other online archives, such as Cornell University's *Making of America Collection*, which, as *The Henry James Scholar's Guide to Websites* proclaims, features 'Thousands of books and 19th-century periodicals [...] reproduced in their entirety as page-by-page images' including '*The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Galaxy*, and other periodicals in which James's stories and novels first appeared'.⁴⁷⁶ However, Dover's e-texts still exist at a material remove from the printed versions of James's texts from which they are produced. The online presence of e-texts is facilitated, as Jay David Bolter puts it, by 'a technology that records information by collecting for fractions of a second evanescent electrons at tiny junctures of silicon and metal'.⁴⁷⁷ This is not to say that they are inherently unstable in comparison to printed books; as Matthew Kirschenbaum asserts, we should keep in mind Johanna Drucker's corrective argument, that:

⁴⁷⁵ Adrian Dover, 'Editorial Method Used for Henry James XHTML Texts', *The Ladder: a Henry James website* <<http://www.henryjames.org.uk/editorH.htm>> [accessed 25 March 2013] (para. 1 of 13).

⁴⁷⁶ Hathaway, *The Henry James Scholar's Guide to Web Sites*; 'Making of America', *Cornell University Library Making of America Collection* <<http://moa.library.cornell.edu/>> [accessed 10 February 2013].

⁴⁷⁷ Jay David Bolter, *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991), p. 31.

'Code' always contains a stored electronic sequence that includes the address of any particular piece of information - thus the binary sequence, the ultimate 'difference' which constitutes the identity of any data in code storage, is also always topographic, place specific, sited, and thus a location within the mapped territory of the machine's circuit/real estate.⁴⁷⁸

This dispersed presence is pertinent to the portion of James's corpus which is represented on *The Ladder*. As Dover noted in our interview, the tales featured on *The Ladder* are integrated into a spreadsheet on his home computer which creates the suite of pages which can then be viewed publicly online. This dispersal of the textual body, albeit with its deference to the original book publication, recalls the competing impulses expressed with relation to the artistic consciousness in 'Is There a Life After Death?': James's desire for the posthumous preservation of his artistic consciousness through his works, and the realization that this may involve them being translated into another form.

In *Hypertext 3.0*, George Landow asserts that with the advent of the web, 'text has ceased to inhabit a single world [emphasis Landow's]':

The kind of text that permits one to write, however incorrectly, of insides and outsides belongs to print, whereas we are here considering a form of electronic

⁴⁷⁸ Johanna Drucker, 'The Ontology of the Digital Image', in *Reimagining Textuality: Textual Studies in the Late Age of Print*, ed. by Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux and Neil Fraistat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); Cited in Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, 'Materiality and Matter and Stuff: What Electronic Texts Are Made Of', *Electronic Book Review*, 12 <<http://www.altx.com/ebr/riposte/rip12/rip12kir.htm>> (para. 10 of 13).

virtual textuality for which these already suspect terms have become even more problematic and misleading.⁴⁷⁹

This change of status is co-opted by readerly intervention:

Additional problems arise when one considers that hypertext involves a more active reader, one who not only chooses her reading paths but also has the opportunity (in true read-write systems) of reading as someone who creates text; that is, at any time the person reading can assume an authorial role and either attach links or add text to the text being read. Therefore, a term like *reader*, such as some computer systems employ for their electronic mailboxes or message spaces, does not seem appropriate either [emphasis Landow's].⁴⁸⁰

This theorization of reading as a kind of writing reprises the rhetorical turn in James's Preface to *The Golden Bowl* which I analysed earlier in this chapter, and the similarity is instructive in terms of assessing how the presentation of James's texts online may facilitate further adaptations of his textual body. Each edition of a tale or novel on *The Ladder* includes, as well as the text, a textual note on the source and the amendments made to it by Dover, a synopsis of the plot, an introduction, list of chapters, annotations explaining references to real persons, places, texts, foreign phrases, etc., a bibliography with details of relevant publications from James's lifetime, reprints and critical writings, and, if available, extracts from Henry James's notebooks and a link out

⁴⁷⁹ George P. Landow, *Hypertext 3.0 : Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization* (Baltimore, MD; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 83.

⁴⁸⁰ Landow, p. 82.

to the text of his preface to the corresponding volume of the New York Edition in which the particular text appeared. Whereas in a printed edition these elements are presented sequentially, on *The Ladder* they are interrelated by hypertext links.⁴⁸¹ For this reason each text is displayed on *The Ladder* via three frames, delineated by Dover, left to right, as:

- a menu frame, with the main elements listed for instant access and with links 'out' to other features of the whole site.
- a central text frame, of a suitable width for the text itself and also displaying the introduction, textual note, author's notebook extracts, synopsis and bibliography, as desired.
- a note frame, in which links in the text or other central page 'pop up' so that you can read the note in conjunction with the text to which it refers.⁴⁸²

The hyperlinks allow the reader to jump backwards and forwards through the narrative, and between material 'inside' and 'outside' the text. In addition, readers may negotiate James's textual body in a non-linear manner by using *The Ladder's* internal concordance, carrying out computerized analysis on the downloadable ASCII version of the final XHTML text (Dover suggests concordance construction, and KWIC

⁴⁸¹ These elements of Dover's e-texts are listed on the webpage, 'Using Editions on "the Ladder : a Henry James Website"', *The Ladder: a Henry James website* <<http://www.henryjames.org.uk/using.htm>> [accessed 10 February 2013] (paras. 1-2 of 75).

⁴⁸² Dover, 'Using Editions on "the Ladder : a Henry James Website"' (para. 2 of 75).

indexing),⁴⁸³ and add to it their own annotations via a 'textlabel' tool.⁴⁸⁴ Such incursions on the higher, ultimate authority of the author, remind us of Landow's assertion that Bakhtin takes an approach to quoting other authors more characteristic of hypertext or postbook technology than that of the book. According to his editor and translator, Emerson, when Bakhtin quotes others, 'he does so at length, and lets each voice sound fully. [...] Bakhtin's footnotes rarely serve to narrow down debate by discrediting totally, or (on the other hand) by conferring exclusive authority. They might identify, expand, illustrate, but they do not pull rank on the body of the text'.⁴⁸⁵ Earlier in this chapter, I equated James's theory of literary afterlife with Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia, due to its figuration as a mingling of many voices. Because of the way Dover's e-texts of James's fiction are prepared for the 'more active readers' of the electronic, virtual text, *The Ladder* effectively builds on the appeal to intertextuality in 'Is There a Life after Death?' by making of the imagined 'fountain' in which 'to depths immeasurable, our spirit dips – to the effect of feeling itself qua imagination and aspiration, all scented with universal sources', a protean digital environment where all manner of interventions on and reconfigurations of the text, freed from its limited printed form, are possible.

⁴⁸³ See Dover, 'Editorial Method Used for Henry James XHTML Texts'. ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) is a character-encoding scheme originally based on the English alphabet, and developed from telegraphic codes. ASCII codes represent text in computers, and other digital communication devices that use text. XHTML (Extensible Hypertext Markup Language) is a family of markup languages that reflect or outspread HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), the extensively employed language in which web pages are written. KWIC (Key Word In Context) is the most commonly used format for concordance lines.

⁴⁸⁴ See Dover, 'Using Editions on "the Ladder : a Henry James Website"' (paras. 26-33 of 75).

⁴⁸⁵ Landow, p. 122.

Perhaps the most radical consequence of the assimilation of Henry James's textual body to online media archives such as *The Ladder* is that we are encouraged to view it as posthuman. In 'A Virtual Henry James', Andrew Cutting explores, amongst other related issues, how James might be reread for a digital age. He notes that whilst the virtual has become especially associated with digital media, it also functions 'beyond the narrow association with computers, by providing another name for age-old debates about appearance and reality, fact and fiction, mind and body, idealism and materialism', and draws on computer culture for specific instances of these debates.⁴⁸⁶ He gives the example of the work of artificial intelligence researcher Marvin Minsky, who, in essays such as 'Will Robots Inherit the Earth?' (1994), claims that 'we'll eventually be able to replicate our brains using nanotechnology and thus transcend the mortality of the body; and others in his field fantasise about downloading their consciousness into a transferable computer program'.⁴⁸⁷ Cutting views these ideas as in step with those in James's criticism and fiction, especially 'The Art of Fiction' (which as I explored in my fourth chapter, makes a commitment to realism while rejecting narrow definitions of reality), and the haunted visions of the late novels which are so markedly removed from the more fully externalised world that James's earlier work represents and addresses.⁴⁸⁸ I believe that potential for James's work to be interpreted in terms of the posthuman is also present in his writing on the literary afterlife. In 'Is There a Life after Death?' James's interrogation of the topic leads him to question the usefulness of the signifier, 'I'. The postmodern critic, N. Katherine Hayles, views the posthuman condition in literature as being predicated on

⁴⁸⁶ Cutting, 'A Virtual Henry James', p. 10.

⁴⁸⁷ Cutting, 'A Virtual Henry James', p. 10.

⁴⁸⁸ Cutting, 'A Virtual Henry James', p. 11.

the dispersal of embodied agency, 'an "I" transformed into the "we" of autonomous agents operating together to make a self'. The juxtaposition of these complementary arguments suggests a theoretical framework for the division of agency inherent in interaction with James's textual body in its digital form. When a reader uses a text on *The Ladder*, James's body of work is the subject of composition and decomposition, and the agents involved trouble the power hierarchies of human and non-human, dead and alive: Henry James, Adrian Dover, the reader, computer software, hardware, and words themselves.

It may therefore be concluded that using the reconfigurable body as a metaphor for the afterlife of Henry James's body of work allows us to connect his textual output with the frontiers of postmodern theories of agency. The dispersal of bodily agency is anticipated by the interaction of the James corpus with other entities earlier in its existence: the texts it shared the nineteenth century marketplace with, variants of James's own texts, with Theodora Bosanquet and her typewriter, and the writers of biographical fiction.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has challenged the influential critical viewpoints that Henry James's late novels are populated by characters who are not truly alive in a bodily sense, and that the supernatural is an aberrational aspect of the Jamesian aesthetic, confined in its operation to the author's ghost stories, and especially to his 'pot-boiler', 'The Turn of the Screw'.⁴⁸⁹ I have contended that the psychical in James's late novels compels us to develop alternative arguments. I have argued that James's characters' bodies are unconventionally constituted: hyperaesthetic like the SPR's 'sensitives', or materially reconfigurable like the 'etheric bodies' of the dead hypothesised about by Oliver Lodge, and thus perfectly adapted for life in the 'phantasmagoric' world of the major-phase and beyond. Against the backdrop of recent scholarly work on the material world of James's novels by Thomas Otten, Victoria Coulson and others, and theories of embodiment such as those of Didier Anzieu, I have asserted the importance of fin de siècle psychical research narratives of the hyperextension of human bodily capabilities and their historical collocates in art, literature, and occult philosophy to fully excavate the cultural work with which Henry James's late novels are involved.

I began this exhumation in my first chapter by exploring how, in *The Spoils of Poynton*, the extraordinarily well-developed tactile sense in Fleda Vetch and Mrs Gereth allows access to a body of knowledge foreclosed to less highly attuned individuals. I used their tactile receptiveness to demonstrate the text's engagement with late nineteenth century discourse on the psychical 'sensitive', building

⁴⁸⁹ See the author's description of the tale in Letter, Henry James to H. G. Wells (9 Dec. 1898), *Henry James Letters: 1895-1916*, iv, pp. 85-87 (p. 86).

connections between Fleda and Mrs Gereth and three main archetypes: the nervous invalid, the medium, and the female impressionist painter. This shows, in the earliest of the James texts which I focus on, the discursiveness of the psychical as a field to be engaged with, and the foundation of a figure (the 'sensitive') through which psychical tropes can be manipulated.

One of Fleda's psychical capabilities which marks her out as a 'sensitive' is her capacity to see haptically. I found that the idea that the basic configuration of the senses is alterable is further developed in *The Ambassadors*, and this became the focus of my second chapter. Using Lambert Strether's synaesthetic image of Sarah Pocock as my starting point, I elucidated the cultural resonances of James's protagonist's extraordinary mode of vision in *The Ambassadors*. The novel's Parisian setting was utilised as a means of examining its relation to the interconnected fields of literary Symbolism, Impressionist painting, and Theosophy, in French and British intellectual life. Ultimately, I noted that the development of Strether's extraordinary vision owes much to the guidance of Maria Gostrey, who acts like a theosophical adept – with an especially striking resemblance to the famous Duchess du Pomar, whose home on the Avenue Wagram in Paris became the centre of fashionable French spiritualism during the fin de siècle.

In my second chapter the slippage between physical science and psychical research was attended to: the proper context for synaesthesia in both *The Ambassadors* and French Symbolist poetry being the discussion of the concept in medicine, but as William James notes, these discussions tending to err towards

‘psychical’ conclusions.⁴⁹⁰ My third chapter, on vibrations, disassociated voices, and music in James’s late novels, explored the more outer limits of this intersection.

Beginning with a discussion of the apparently unintended psychical inflections of John Tyndall’s lecture on ‘sensitive flames’, I argued that the privileging of sound in *The Sacred Fount*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl* leads to the carving out of a shared auditory space, the limits of which are determined by the intersubjective bonds between sensitive characters who communicate by all manner of sonorous signals at great distances from each other, and that in doing so James’s texts show their thorough imbrication with the work of physical scientists such as William Barrett and Oliver Lodge, whose interest in the psychical was unconcealed.

One of the major consequences of viewing the auditory as a means of intersubjective communication, especially in the case of the passage of disassociated voices in the world of James’s texts, is that they require a revised idea of bodily presence. I emphasised the historic nature of this belief via the work of the psychical researchers named above, especially Lodge’s work on the ‘etheric body’. I argued that we come to view James’s characters as possessing bodies which are reconfigurable and exist on another plane of reality, in addition to their hyperaesthetic physical frames. In my fourth chapter I explored how this emphasis develops into full intercorporeality in James’s subsequent time-travel narratives, *The Sense of the Past* (1917) and ‘The Jolly Corner’ (1908). The protagonists of these texts find themselves occupying the protean physical forms of ghostly alter egos; this exchange is figured in *The Sense of the Past* as dismemberment, and in ‘The Jolly Corner’ as materialisation, therefore reflecting the characteristics of life in the spiritual ‘other world’ identified by

⁴⁹⁰ William James, ‘The Congress of Physiological Psychology at Paris’, p. 615.

W. T. Stead and others. Because the existential conditions within the houses in these texts render matter, especially bodily matter, as motile and vitalised, I argued that they represent the most extreme rendering in James's fiction of the alchemical 'chamber of consciousness', and the culmination of the 'very delicate shade[s]' of reality elucidated by his late novels as a series of works.

My final chapter explored the figural importance of the hyperaesthetic, reconfigurable Jamesian body insofar as it pertains to the literary afterlife of the author's 'body of work'. I first delineated the potential for the Jamesian corpus to both mutate and generate intercorporeal textual connections to other textual bodies, as suggested by James's writing on literary reception during his second major phase. I then argued that James's place in the modern literary environment tacitly responds to these cues by attending to the place of the Jamesian corpus in the proliferation of biographical fiction of which he is the subject, and in new, digital holdings. His textual output can therefore be connected with the posthuman conception of distributed selfhood.

James's late work thus furnishes us with an idea of bodily consciousness which is produced via human characters' physical interactions with a concatenation of human and non-human entities – other bodies, antiques, aerial phenomena, musical instruments, buildings, books, electronic components – but within environments where physical reality itself is protean. Or, perhaps we should more advisedly say that bodily consciousness is formed by relation with 'things', to use Bill Brown's terminology. As Brown notes:

the word 'things' in the Jamesian lexicon names a potent source of attraction, conflict, and anxiety; it does not necessarily name a group of physical objects. This is why James can be aligned so convincingly with Heidegger and Derrida who posit a 'thing' that is obscured by mere objects. Which is really to say that the novelist explores the salient slippage between the word's physical and metaphysical referents.⁴⁹¹

It is this 'slippage' which allows us to conceive of the bodies of James's characters communicating via the spiritual plane, which his contemporaries figured as an 'image, annex, or extension' of the object world in which they lived.⁴⁹²

In their predication on the slippage between the categories of physical and metaphysical, interactions in James are suggestive of Actor Network Theory. In some aspects, we can view Actor-Network Theory as a mature version of the communicative systems in late James. As Bruno Latour writes in *Reassembling the Social*, '[t]here exists no relation whatsoever between "the material" and "the social world", because it is this very division which is a complete artefact'.⁴⁹³ This corresponds to the fin de siècle delineation of the spatial relationship between the physical and spirit world, which in my fourth chapter especially, I find to be the model for psychical connections in James's late novels. We have only to recall W. T. Stead's assertion in 'The Exploration of the Other World' that the spiritual realm 'is not another side or another world – but it is very truth a world existing in and alongside of the actual world of

⁴⁹¹ Brown, p. 223.

⁴⁹² Connor, 'Afterword', p. 258.

⁴⁹³ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-network-theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 75.

things which we see, hear, taste, smell and handle', ⁴⁹⁴ and its pertinence for our reading of *The Sense of the Past*, in which Ralph Pendrel's fantasy of a journey into the spiritual realm to exchange places with his dead ancestor is figured as movement in different, perpendicular directions within the numinous space of Number Nine Mansfield Square - not only moving 'back' in time to 1710, but down, and also as being somehow omnipresent. This fantasy of co-presence of times also requires a revised idea of bodily existence, as dismembered and even entombed. The 'spiritual' in late James corresponds to Actor-Network Theory's conception of the 'social' because it is 'the name of a type of momentary association which is characterised by the way it gathers together into new shapes'.⁴⁹⁵

In James's late work, this means adherence to a version of materiality which is, according to fin de siècle occult discourse, 'ectoplasmic', that is, pertaining formally to that mutable substance materialising in séances and held to stand simultaneously for the spirit of a person and the non-personal, universal energy flowing through and uniting all things.⁴⁹⁶ In my thesis, I find this tendency to be especially pronounced in the materialisation of Spencer Brydon's alter ego in 'The Jolly Corner' as a shifting, iridescent aerial projection. This conception of existence is especially resonant with the work of those Actor-Network Theory theorists who term the social a 'fluid', which as Latour writes, allows them to 'insist better than if they used the word network on the circulation and on the nature of what is being transported'.⁴⁹⁷ Just as Brydon's

⁴⁹⁴ Stead, 'The Exploration of the Other World', pp. 853–854.

⁴⁹⁵ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, p. 65.

⁴⁹⁶ Warner, p. 304.

⁴⁹⁷ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, p. 65.

alter ego disassembles and reassembles its relation to him as he observes it, the social fluid, as Latour writes:

does not offer to the analyst a continuous and substantial existence, but rather puts up only a provisional appearance much like a shower of physical particles in the brief instant it's forced into existence. You begin with assemblages that look vaguely familiar and you end up with completely foreign ones. It is true that this oscillation makes the tracing of social connections especially tricky once you begin to add non-humans to the list of *bona fide* social ties.⁴⁹⁸

The sociologist John Law builds on this by asserting that 'we may imagine actor-network theory as a machine for waging war on Euclideanism', showing that what appears to be topographically natural in the world, is in fact produced by a series of connections 'which perform a quite different kind of spatiality'.⁴⁹⁹ The phenomenological experience of James's characters also pertains to a theoretical spatial relation. As I have noted in my analysis of *The Spoils of Poynton*, for example, the diffusion of bodily integrity which Fleda's sympathy with objects gives rise to is consistent with what Steven Connor argues was the primary purpose of the nineteenth century séance: 'to enact the hypothesis of a different kind of body in this world'.⁵⁰⁰ As Connor notes, the excited sensory intensification of the séance 'centred on the body of

⁴⁹⁸ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, p. 77.

⁴⁹⁹ John Law, 'After ANT: Complexity, Naming and Topology', in *Actor Network Theory and After*, ed. by John Law and John Hassard (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1999), pp. 1–14 (pp. 7, 8).

⁵⁰⁰ Connor, 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice', p. 209.

the medium, whose role was not so much to provide a channel for other entities, as to exemplify a bodily condition of fluidity and transmissibility as such'.⁵⁰¹ Read against the work of Latour and Law, the psychological phenomena of James's late novels reveals the latent spectrality of the mysterious agency of the 'social' in Actor-Network Theory.

James's work therefore prefigures Actor-Network Theory's 'ruthless application of semiotics' which Law asserts means that 'entities take their form and acquire their attributes as a result of their relations with other entities [and] essentialist divisions [including activity and passivity] are thrown on the bonfire of the dualisms'.⁵⁰² Bruno Latour suggests that because there is nothing especially local, and nothing especially human, in a local intersubjective encounter, 'interobjectivity' might be posited as a way of phrasing the new position of the actor.⁵⁰³ Interobjectivity already seems to be latent in James's late novels, as noted in my fourth chapter. Moreover, as Brown writes of the *Spoils of Poynton*, 'the idiosyncrasy [...] is the way in which human relationships become the medium for expressing things, for apprehending the intensity of [things'] *being*' [emphasis Brown's].⁵⁰⁴ Ultimately, such interobjective negotiations lead us to the conclusion that bodily consciousness in late James is processural. In my analysis of *The Spoils of Poynton*, I noted the pertinence of William James's delineation of psychometry for Henry James's sensitives. William James theorises that the physical traces of a person's acts left in the material world after death can be 'thrown into gear' by a medium's touching certain objects of

⁵⁰¹ Connor, 'The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the Direct Voice', p. 209.

⁵⁰² Law, p. 3.

⁵⁰³ Bruno Latour, 'On Recalling ANT', in *Actor Network Theory and After*, ed. by John Law and John Hassard (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1999), pp. 15–25 (p. 18).

⁵⁰⁴ Brown, p. 231.

importance to that person, so that a 'vibrating system' of the interlinked traces is activated, of which the spirit of the deceased is the 'conscious aspect'.⁵⁰⁵ Likewise, Mrs Gereth's antiques have the potential to bespeak not only the widow's past but of 'the tongues of other countries and the hands of great artists' (24). This emphasis on the processural can be traced through to my final chapter, in which the digitisation of James's corpus is presented as just the latest and most extensive scattering of bodily traces – albeit which can be reanimated by an unseen force which emulates the wildest fin de siècle fantasies as to the potential power of telepathy. The emphasis on process can be framed theoretically via reference to Latour, who writes that the social 'doesn't designate [...] some particular item, but rather is the name of a movement, a displacement, a transformation, a translation, an enrolment'.⁵⁰⁶ In manipulating the language of spiritualism, whether consciously or unconsciously, to describe the complex social configurations in his late work, Henry James makes use of a discourse which my research has shown to be remarkably close at hand for his intellectual milieu. For Actor-Network Theory, on the other hand, the presence of the trope suggests that the terms 'haunting' and 'spectrality' continue to enjoy considerable philosophic and linguistic value, even if belief in ghosts is no longer credible. As Peter Buse and Andrew Stott argue, 'the most sustained engagements this century with the figure of the ghost do not revolve around thinkers attending séances, but rather in the texts of what has come to be called "theory"'.⁵⁰⁷ Actor-Network Theory projects the most infinitesimal social connections between subjects and objects, the material and

⁵⁰⁵ William James, 'Report on Mrs Piper's Hodgson-Control', p. 358.

⁵⁰⁶ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, p. 64.

⁵⁰⁷ Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, 'Introduction: a Future for Haunting', in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 1–20 (p. 5).

the semiotic, and the vocabulary used to do so comes from the history of the spectral as a cultural phenomenon forged in the nineteenth century and explored in literature such as Henry James's (as Buse and Stott state, 'Literature has always been a more accommodating place for ghosts, perhaps because fiction itself shares their simulacral qualities').⁵⁰⁸

However, because the processural nature of existence in late James so frequently results in the diffusion of bodily identity – between Fleda Vetch and the spoils, Milly Theale and her 'etheric' body, Spencer Brydon and his alter ego – a move beyond the work of Actor-Network Theorists is possible. The psychoanalytical implications of such a mode of existence as James's protagonists experience is delineated by Christopher Bollas in *Being a Character*. He argues that millions of sequential self-states arise from the dialectical meetings between the self and the object world, and that therefore,

To be a character is to enjoy the risk of being processed by the object – indeed, to seek objects, in part, in order to be metamorphosed, as one 'goes through' change by going through the processional moment provided by any object's integrity. Each entry into an experience of an object is rather like being born again, as subjectivity is newly informed by the encounter, its history altered by a radically effective present that will change its structure.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁸ Buse and Stott, p. 8.

⁵⁰⁹ Bollas, p. 59.

In language which has a special resonance for the protagonists of Henry James's late work, attuned as they are to the super-subtle sensory phenomena which pass through their vibrating world, Bollas writes,

Maybe we have a special ear for it, as we may have for music. If so, then we are capable of a kind of spiritual communication, when we are receptive to the intelligent breeze of the other who moves through us, to affect us, shaping within us the ghost of that spirit when it is long gone.⁵¹⁰

James's late novels offer us a mode of embodiment which modern day psychoanalysis is just getting to grips with.

However, if it is the case that the Jamesian model of corporeality has a particular relevance for modern models of bodily consciousness, then we might pause to consider what further research my thesis might form the basis for. I would like to argue that the connection between late Henry James and the posthuman which I encompass in my final chapter might be extended via the concept of the reconfigurable body. N. Katherine Hayles defines the posthuman condition as a decentred, distributed notion of the embodied self, not identified with the conscious mind but as something existing in a continual state of becoming, the product of 'autonomous agents' acting together.⁵¹¹ She writes that 'If "human essence is freedom from the will of others," the posthuman is "post" not because it is necessarily unfree but because there is no a priori way to identify a self-will that can be clearly distinguished from an

⁵¹⁰ Bollas, p. 63.

⁵¹¹ Hayles, p. 6.

other-will'.⁵¹² However, although Hayles's examples foreground the cybernetic aspect of the posthuman, she emphasises:

it is important to recognise that the construction of the posthuman does not require the subject to be a literal cyborg. Whether or not interventions have been made on the body, new models of subjectivity emerging from such fields as cognitive science and artificial life imply that even a biologically unaltered *Homo sapiens* counts as posthuman. The defining characteristics involve the construction of subjectivity, not the presence of nonbiological components.⁵¹³

There is, therefore, an opening for critics to delineate how antecedent, less technologised social configurations anticipate the posthuman. The critical act of reading James's texts in relation to the context of fin de siècle discourse on psychical phenomena encourages us to view agency in James's texts as distributed between human and non-human agents, in worlds which transcend material reality. The spiritual world of James's work might therefore be argued to anticipate the conditions of the virtual, computer-generated worlds on which Hayles reflects, thus emphasising the 'contemporary' spectrality of the latter, where information exists as an omniscient absence-presence waiting to be activated by the intervention of a human body.

Doing so would involve situating James's work in relation to the literary genealogies posited by theorists of the posthuman. In *How we Became Posthuman*, Hayles identifies three major chronological stages leading towards posthumanism.

⁵¹² Hayles, p. 9.

⁵¹³ Hayles, p. 4.

The first stage covers the period from 1945 to 1960, the foundational era of cybernetics, where information 'loses its body'. The second stage (1960-1980), in which the cyborg becomes an icon, is one of reflexivity. Whereas in the first wave of cybernetics, humans and machines are perceived as analogous, thus discarding embodiment, the second wave emphasises it. The last stage, which we find ourselves in now, is that of virtuality. It is characterised by developments in the field of artificial life. At each stage, Hayles emphasises the central role played by literary texts, 'for they display the passageways that enabled stories coming out of narrowly focused scientific theories to circulate more widely through the body politic'. She also notes that literature 'actively shape[s] what the technologies mean and what the scientific theories signify in cultural contexts'.⁵¹⁴ The research I propose would excavate an earlier, undocumented stage of the development of the posthuman, and foreground the importance of James's reconfigurable bodies to it. It would attend to the intersection between the approach to James's late work articulated in my present thesis and existing studies of the cultural significance of James's literary treatment of the range of new technologies and media emerging during the late nineteenth century, including the growing number of scholarly articles which focus on 'In the Cage' (1898), James's romantic short story about an anonymous young telegraphist. In comments which represent the latest developments in the latter field, Cutting writes that "'In the Cage" makes accessible parallels between the nineteenth century telegraph and late twentieth-century communications technologies, such as the World Wide Web' and 'shows the blurring [...] of boundaries between human and machine that Donna

⁵¹⁴ Hayles, p. 9.

Haraway describes in her famous "Cyborg Manifesto" (1991).⁵¹⁵ In *Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*, Thurschwell draws on 'In the Cage', as well as texts by George du Maurier and Oscar Wilde to examine the intersection between literature, the occult and new technologies at the fin de siècle. The work of these critics could be built upon by showing how, even in James's ostensibly non-machine oriented texts, consciousness inheres to dispersed embodiment in the multifarious and seemingly protean object world.

Such a study could focus sequentially on the collection, media, and finally the technological, as they occur in late James. My survey of Jamesian collectors would take in Adam Verver in *The Golden Bowl* and his antecedent, Gilbert Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady*, but would focus most sharply on Mrs Gereth in *The Spoils of Poynton*, whose relation to her collection of objects affects her bodily identity. As I have explored in my first chapter, Mrs Gereth and Fleda both identify themselves and the spoils as being part of a single acting body, but credit each object with independent agency. My future research would bring the collectors in James's late work into relation with those others in other fin de siècle works of literature, who also curate assemblages of unexpectedly active objects, such as the tales of Richard Marsh and Vernon Lee.⁵¹⁶ Such research would heed Jessica Allsop's prescient comment that Marsh and Lee's narratives in particular 'problematise dominant critical paradigms such as Tony Bennett's "Exhibitionary Complex" and Thomas Richards's "Commodity Culture"', paradigms which 'foreground, in different ways, active [...] subjects, often occluding

⁵¹⁵ Cutting, 'A Virtual Henry James', p. 3.

⁵¹⁶ See, for example, Marsh's *Curios* (1898) and Lee's 'The Doll' (1900).

the objects themselves in their readings'.⁵¹⁷ I would argue instead that James's late work on collectors and collections emphasises, along with the other fin de siècle literature named above, a cultural tendency anticipating that which, in the 'canon' of posthuman literature, such as has been established by Hayles and others, ensures that 'the presumption that there is an agency, desire, or will, belonging to the self and clearly distinguished from the "wills of others" is undercut [...] for the posthuman's collective heterogeneous quality implies a distributed cognition located in disparate parts that may be in only tenuous communication with one another'.⁵¹⁸

In James's late work, words themselves also take on a kind of agency which is perceived at a somatic level by sensitive individuals. This is linked to the explosion of mass print culture in the late nineteenth century, and especially to how it was enacted and theorised by W. T. Stead. As I elucidated in my Introduction, the unexpected concord on the topic of thought transference between James and Stead, whose authorial identities are so distinct from one another, illuminates the pervasiveness of psychical discourse during the fin de siècle: it is as central to the work of the novelist chiefly appreciated by an intellectual elite as to that of the pioneering journalist and editor which garnered immense popular appeal. Further comparison of the pair's work reveals that despite the difference in the size and composition of their readerships, Stead and James delineate the relationship between texts and readers in

⁵¹⁷ Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *New Formations*, 4 (1988), 73–102; Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); Jessica Allsop, 'Costly Curios and Compromised Collectors: Fin De Siècle Literary Engagements With Cultures of Collecting' (presented at Unexpected Agents: Considering agency and subjectivity beyond the boundaries of the human (1800 to the Present), University of Birmingham, 2011).

⁵¹⁸ Hayles, pp. 3–4.

analogous terms – indeed, in terms which correspond to their descriptions of the *physical* reality of thought transference. Sympathetic vibration operates for both writers as a metaphor for the reception of literature. In James’s critical work, popular literature is figured as producing a ‘vibration’ to which a significant number of readers are attuned. For example, as I noted in my Introduction, in his review of the work of Edmond Rostand, reprinted in the *Review of Reviews*, James describes the ‘pitch of reverberation’⁵¹⁹ constituted by the widespread appreciation of the French poet. James also uses the metaphor of vibration to describe the affective power of the press, especially the mode of investigative journalism practised by Stead. (Indeed, in the review from which the above quotation is taken from, he is explicit about Rostand’s stylistic debt to the latter mode of writing.) The trope is long-standing in James’s work. The publication which gives its name to James’s 1888 novel, *The Reverberator*, is an American scandal sheet which spreads gossip about a Parisian family. The choice of name is apt; as Richard Salmon notes, according to the OED, the word ‘reverberation’ is primarily used to denote the transmission of sound through multiple refractions, as in an echo chamber, although it can also signify the repeated iteration and circulation of a story or rumour.⁵²⁰ Furthermore, Salmon argues that ‘[i]t is no coincidence [...] that *The Reverberator* was conceived in the same year that Matthew Arnold noted the appearance of a ‘new journalism’ [with his remarks aimed specifically at W. T. Stead’s editorship of the *Pall-Mall Gazette*], and thus coined a phrase which gained wide currency in subsequent debates upon the changing form of

⁵¹⁹ Cited in Stead, ‘The Poet of the “Cosmic Boom”’, p. 506.

⁵²⁰ Salmon, p. 129.

the popular press'.⁵²¹ The existing connection between vibrations and telepathy in fin de siècle culture, encouraged by the popular writing on phenomena such as sympathetic flames referred to in my third chapter, meant that for James's readers, the affectual power of James's fictional newspaper would be interpreted as its psychical concord with its readers. My research would analyse, in addition to the James works already named, how, in their different ways, the absent-presence of Milly's letter exerting its power over Densher in *The Wings of the Dove*, and the traces of the occult oracles of Stead's writing in the constructions of reading in James's 'The Papers' (1903),⁵²² attest to the pervasive power of the written word characteristic to the period. Stead's theory of journalism supports the idea of a connection between writing and thought transference: just as his theorisations of telepathy were upheld on nervous sensitivity, as noted in my Introduction, so were his journals figured as the 'centralisation of the nervous-system', and the journalist compelled to 'touch life at as many points as you can, always touch so as to receive and retain its best impressions'.⁵²³ A further intercorporeal emphasis is shared between James's connecting of the author's body and the social body in his posthumously published book of propagandistic wartime essays *Within the Rim*,⁵²⁴ and Stead's vision of his *Daily Paper* as 'a living link between its subscribers, constantly suggesting to them that they are all members one of another, and that great advantages are within their grasp

⁵²¹ Salmon, p. 117.

⁵²² See Campbell.

⁵²³ W. T. Stead, 'To Our Readers', *Link*, (2 Feb. 1891), pp. 1-2 (p. 2); W. T. Stead, 'How to Become a Journalist', in *A Journalist on Journalism: Being a Series of Articles by W. T. Stead* (London: Haddon, 1892), pp. 22-23; Cited in Luckhurst, pp. 133-134.

⁵²⁴ See Pamela Thurschwell, 'Henry James's Lives During Wartime', in *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth Century Literature and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 65-85.

if they would but realise the enormous possibilities of association'.⁵²⁵ Extant criticism has already set out the connections between Stead's journalistic enterprises and the enhanced entitvity of digital news platforms;⁵²⁶ my research would build on this by showing that far from withdrawing entirely from the encroachments of mass culture,⁵²⁷ James's work engages with developments in print culture and emergent ideas of the agency of the written word. In the light of Lev Manovich's prescient comment on the topic of digital textuality that 'Dynamic, real-time and interactive, a screen is still a screen [...] Interactivity, simulation, and telepresence: like centuries ago, we are still looking at a flat rectangular surface, existing in the space of our body and acting as a window into another space',⁵²⁸ my research would consider the pertinence of the existential conditions encountered in James's works to the central posthuman concepts of artificial life, whereby "'intelligence" becomes a property of the formal manipulation of symbols rather than enaction in the human life-world', and virtuality, which involves enacting a feedback loop 'between the material body that exists on one side of a screen and the computer simulacra that seem to create a space inside the screen'.⁵²⁹

As the third chapter of my thesis in particular demonstrates, it is not only the written word which assumes mysterious agency in James's late novels. A plethora of disassociated voices and other auditory phenomena circulate in these texts, giving rise

⁵²⁵ W. T. Stead, 'Our Aims', *Daily Paper*, 1894, 6 (p. 6).

⁵²⁶ See Ken Goldstein, 'From Stead's Daily Paper to Murdoch's Daily App: The Rise and Fall of Mass Media' (presented at the W. T. Stead: Centenary Conference for a Newspaper Revolutionary, British Library, 2012).

⁵²⁷ See Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

⁵²⁸ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 115.

⁵²⁹ Hayles, pp. ix, 20.

to alternative models of embodiment owing to a relation to corporeal existence in the spiritual world as it was imagined by psychical researchers and spiritualists. Criticism has already established connections between communication via vibrations in James and fin de siècle 'techno-physiology', Wayland-Smith, for example, arguing that in *The Ambassadors* Lambert Strether 'resemble[s] a human telegraph';⁵³⁰ my research would go beyond this by showing how James's work maintains the nascent historical connections between, for example, W. T. Stead's concept of the 'thought body' (also linked to the disassociated voice in my third chapter), and the new possibilities for communication at a distance offered by the telegraph. In *Real Ghost Stories*, Stead speculates that 'It does not require very vivid imagination to see that if you can come and go to the uttermost parts of the world in your thought shape, such Thought Bodies will be indispensable henceforth on every enterprising newspaper. It would be a great saving on telegraphy'.⁵³¹ In 'In the Cage', James's unnamed telegraphist gains access to her customers' unspoken thoughts by decoding the messages hidden in their telegrams: visualising the future movements of Captain Everard across London one evening, she contemplates that 'she had such things all on her fingers' ends'.⁵³² The making of her telegraphic equipment a prosthesis is of a piece with her capacity for auditory clairvoyance: 'The "anything, anything" she had uttered in the Park went to and fro between them and under the poked-out chins that interposed'; 'She could almost hear him, through the tick of the sounder, scatter with his stick, in his

⁵³⁰ Wayland-Smith, p. 124.

⁵³¹ Stead, *Real Ghost Stories: a Revised Reprint of the Christmas and New Year's Numbers*, p. 27.

⁵³² Henry James, 'In the Cage', in *Eight Tales from the Major Phase* (New York, NY; London: W. W. Norton, 1969), pp. 174–266 (p. 209).

impatience, the fallen leaves of October.’⁵³³ Like Stead’s thought body, James’s protagonist’s bodily consciousness is able to transcend ‘the laws of time and space’ to perceive teleaesthetically (to the extent that she is even able to pick up background noise). Presented alongside the examples from the author’s wider body of work, I would unpack how technology in James frames, but does not coin, the corporeal reconfigurations associated with the disassociated voice. Moreover, I would elucidate how these characteristics point toward the posthuman conception of embodiment as predicated on the continuous flow of information, and even Ong’s imagined electronic, ‘secondary orality’,⁵³⁴ which critics associate with the ‘fluid, shifting, open-ended, evanescent communication’ which hypertext returns us to, delivering us from ‘the frozenness of the printed word’.⁵³⁵

Thus, by elucidating the resonances between the post-human and the complex reconfigurations of the bodily consciousness accomplished by Henry James’s late works, the conclusions of my current thesis might be extended, as the relationship between fin de siècle psychical research, the bodily, and the late novels of James are reimagined as part of a larger web of confederate theoretical discourses. Viewing the artefacts, texts, and technologies in his work, and the unexpected agency which throws them into synchronous vibration, through the prism of the post-human may allow us to discover a version of James more compellingly situated within the culture of his own age, as well as to better understand the cultural investments which modern

⁵³³ Henry James, ‘In the Cage’, pp. 236, 237.

⁵³⁴ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London; New York, NY: Methuen, 1982), pp. 31–32.

⁵³⁵ Robert M. Fowler, ‘How the Secondary Orality of the Electronic Age Can Awaken Us to the Primary Orality of Antiquity, or What Hypertext Can Teach Us About the Bible’, *Interpersonal Computing and Technology: An Electronic Journal for the 21st Century*, 2 (1994), 12–46 (p. 23).

readers now bring to his writings. We may even discover that the relevance of Henry James, popularly viewed as the most archly 'literary' of writers, is reinvigorated by his peregrination to a post-literary context.

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