

Glancing Visions: American Literature Beyond the Gaze

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Abstract

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This dissertation challenges the longstanding assumption that visuality in American literature of the nineteenth century through early modernism was inherently imperialistic, possessive, and theological. I acknowledge the critical force of readings that impose unified narratives of the “American eye” as an epistemological tool for clearing the wilderness, generating a representative national subject, and ushering in a Puritanical millennium by “fore-seeing” the completion of Western civilization and culture in America. But I show that critiques of the possessive “gaze” were already developing in the literature of the period by writers (Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emily Dickinson, Henry James) exposed to contemporaneous developments in visual art and technology. Each chapter traces a tension in these writers’ works between imperial gazes and subtle glances, specifically as they adapt their writing practices over time to account for new visual subjectivities—embodied, relational, and open to change—generated by early photography and motion picture studies, experiments in Impressionism, new techniques in the art of portraiture, and the dawn of cinema.

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Introduction: The Glance and Material Practice

“Precisely the least, the softest, the lightest, a lizard’s rustling, a breath, a breeze, a moment’s glance—it is little that makes the best happiness.” – Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

I

In the very same year Thomas Cole completed his grand allegorical series, *The Course of Empire* (1836), the great English-born American landscape painter produced his justly famous *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm*, more simply co-titled *The Oxbow*. This painting, like the proximately finished five part sequence depicting the sweeping rise and decline of civilization, contains a temporal developmental logic, though here contained within the frame of a single picture. From left to right, barely off horizontal in diagonal recession, one finds three formations: a stormy, craggy foreground with blasted trees and uncultivated vegetation, an abyssal middle hidden by the drop of the cliff top *repoussoir*, and a tranquil, pastoral distance in which the Connecticut River Oxbow meanders along picturesquely cultivated and sunlit farmland.

Nearly lost at the top of Cole’s sublime overlook is the artist’s figure, either gazing or glancing backward (one cannot tell which in a single isolated image) toward the imaginary picture plane. If there is a narrative embedded in the picture, Cole is perched there, no doubt, to paint the pastoral, not his immediate surroundings. But the painting Cole actually produced, the one we look at, needs the juxtaposition in elements arranged diagonally: like in many Hudson School landscapes, we are privy here to an embedded meta-aesthetic process with social ramifications, the cultivation of an optative mood alongside the cultivation of the wild landscape, achieved not only by industry but by the eye of one positioned to take it all in from a sweeping vantage. And the vantage of the observer and the real artist—not the figural one in the frame—is

ideal, because we see the progress of American society in all its stages, including the void in the middle where the mystery of transformation somehow occurs. We feel, or many have felt, that whether Cole's self-representation is glancing or gazing, Cole himself was gazing along with us, able to take it all in at once, the whole story fit perfectly into a single frame.

In *The Oxbow* Cole tropes upon the conceptual "origin of the American picturesque," Dennis Berthold's term for the aesthetic cultivated in tourism guidebooks as much as in landscape painting and novelistic description, and which puts viewers and readers of American art in the position of gaping tourists along the path toward millennium (62). Jennifer Baker relates the Hudson River School's characteristically strategic gaze, "aimed to alleviate Americans' fears of a dangerous and savage frontier by positing touristic viewing as a means by which the eye could subdue the landscape and attain safe and pleasurable perspectives on alien, chaotic scenes in the forests and mountains," to the idiom of James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking novels and William Cullen Bryant's nature poetry (424). Distinct from an English picturesque which was fundamentally nostalgic for pre-industrial scenes, so the critical narrative goes, American vision was forward-looking, reaching out for something in the national future, seeing through the landscapes and scenes actually offered to the eye into a noumenal domain as yet disclosed by the artist's, tourist's, and reader-viewer's lifeworlds.¹

¹ Representative critical accounts of the proleptics of the American picturesque and Manifest Destiny politics include Kris Fresonke, *West of Emerson: The Design of Manifest Destiny* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Kendall Johnson, "'Rising from the stain on a painter's palette': George Catlin's Picturesque and the Legibility of Seminole Removal," *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 29.2 (2002): 69-93; Rochelle L. Johnson, *Passions for Nature: Nineteenth-Century America's Aesthetics of Alienation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009); and the subsequently referenced Angela Miller, *Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1823-1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

Influential art historians from Angela Miller to Albert Boime have argued more generally that the ascendant tradition of nineteenth-century American landscape painting constructed repeatable visual associations that served to “discipline the random motions of the eye in conformity with a culturally meaningful sequence,” so that periods of national crisis were naturalized in landscape paintings—solidified by the First New York School but continually adapted through the time of sectional conflict—where the heavens bore evidence of God’s witness (Miller 84). Boime has argued mid-century American landscapes were “almost invariably” organized like *The Oxbow*, where the imagined viewer was positioned on an elevated patch of wild land and looked out over a partially domesticated middleground to a background containing evidence of industry, proposing a ubiquitous “magisterial gaze” characteristic of the most important American paintings (Boime 1). Of course, alternative accounts of American iconography proliferate, for instance in David Miller’s *Dark Eden*, which examines the rise of representations of swamps, marshes, and uninhabited beaches around 1850. But while Miller takes these scenes of dank and disorderly materiality to be symptomatic of the hidden layers of American consciousness, a dark return of the repressed in an increasingly urban and technological society, his project nonetheless—true to critical form—posits another (if often overlooked) primal visual scene that supposedly contains the truth of American culture.

By establishing such primal visual scenes, Americanists have been free to construct elegant historicist arguments that comprehensively draw comparative arts into wide synchronic orbits. Various American strains of painting, photography, and eventually film are shown to operate ideologically in concert with the written romance to reproduce the Puritanical rhetoric of compact and settlement. Regimes of seeing are then reified as much in our critical narratives as they were in the cultural narratives we work to demystify. The recent critical tradition of

American Studies, and the dominant historical understanding of American literature we inherit from it, pays far more attention to the gaze of the American “I/eye” than the more supple and receptive glance, and commonly claims that the very operation of seeing itself—no less than in the landscape tradition running through the Hudson River School—is inherently imperialistic.² Dominant critical paradigms focusing on vision and nation-building hold that the eye of the central American literary form—the romance—is a consumer, reducing the alterity of wide swaths of the American continent (and its inhabitants) into usable forms as an operation of the organ’s Manifest Destiny. Elisa New has referred to a dominant “idea of a polity compacted by vision alone, of nation secured in the self’s incarnation, of Being achieved in immaculate seeing” (2), and the critical practice that remains stuck with methods “symbiotically bound”—in their “will to comprehensive explanation” and “totalistic romantic rhetoric”—to “the endemic self-enlargements of the literary objects” deemed most representative (7).

Literary critics from Myra Jehlen to Donald Pease have argued that “the decisive factor shaping the founding conceptions of ‘America’ and of ‘the American’” in literature was “the physical fact of the continent” (Jehlen 3), its dimensions calling for a sweeping vantage. Or that American Renaissance writers promoted “visionary compacts” through which Americans could restore or realize a principled, caring cultural community writ large. Sacvan Bercovitch defines

² Representative literary accounts of the possessive American eye (some of which are considered below) include Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1975) and *American Jeremiad* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1978); Christopher Collins, *The Uses of Observation* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971); Michael T. Gilmore, *Surface and Depth* (New York: Oxford UP, 2006); Myra Jehlen, *American Incarnation* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986); Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1984); Perry Miller, *Nature’s Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967); Carolyn Porter, *Seeing and Being* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1981); Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1973); and Hyatt H. Waggoner, *American Visionary Poetry* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1982).

the American rhetorical difference as a historically unprecedented merging of national and spiritual aspirations. This union “yokes together the internal and external Kingdom of God by asserting the simultaneity of a geographic locale, America, and a mode of vision” (Bercovitch, “Image of America” 158): for the Puritan, New England events were types of actions that had occurred already in scripture (or, more appropriately, “antitypes” to scriptural “types”). But as such they were also seen as fulfillments of scriptural promises that would lead in turn to the ultimate fulfillment of the millennium. Further, Puritan typology did not only include major historical crises: the Puritan must “ratify his every experience, all his thoughts and feelings, by the infallible standard of holy scripture” (Bercovitch, *Puritan Origins* 28). Thus Bercovitch claims that typology was not an intellectually abstruse system to the Puritan, but came to be his way of seeing and his attitude, automatically so in the lay settler and self-reflectively in the American writer.

Many contemporary critics who reject Bercovitch’s assumptions about America’s Puritan selfhood, whether by developing a transatlantic theory of literary provincialism (following Susan Manning), by attempting to think of Puritanisms in the plural, or by critiquing the very notion of the nation form in an encounter with post-colonial theory, maintain his obsession with large-scale formulations of subjective economies. Because they take the history of Western thought and culture to have been largely ocularcentric—even while recognizing that there is surely no one optical-intellectual regime or theory that has held sway among the majority of philosophers, artists, and writers for very long—this unwieldy subjective economy of the colonist is constantly theorized as a “way of seeing,” even if not primarily organized according to a conceptual system of scriptural antitypes. The work of the critic becomes identifying sight’s natural geometry—the particular disciplinary organization of the eye into a culturally meaningful gaze, as a colonizing

organ at a time where making colonization palatable was the ideological enterprise of dominant American culture—and then de-naturalizing that geometry.

But even Ralph Waldo Emerson, the central figure through which many literary critics (including Bercovitch, Sherman Paul, and Carolyn Porter) read the development of an ecstatic, mastering, and disembodied seeing in secular form, presented a number of modes of poetic vision that differed according to mood and activity. My claim is that within the work of such a “representative [American] man” as Emerson are competing didacticisms of vision that could lead a literary tradition along alternative paths. Of course, when Emerson says, in *Nature*, that the eye “is the best of artists” (9), he means that the eye takes a central role in the process of man’s “making,” which involves the dissolution of nature’s brute facts. The eye’s circle has a larger circumference than other bodily instruments, and its operation is wholly free to pick up things and drop them, join them or separate them, love them or hate them. Emerson’s claim, in a deeply Viconian moment, that “[w]hat we are, that only we can see” (39), when coupled with the notion that “the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind” (17), suggests that the function of the eye is not even to perceive in the traditional sense of providing privileged access to the object, the “Not Me,” but to become an eye turned inward. Such is at least one direction in which Emerson leans in the spasmodic gait of his writing. Since natural facts signify spiritual facts, we can use nature’s sign system to transcend nature itself, arriving at those higher laws that nature signifies.

But those “higher laws” are—at least when Emerson favors one leg over the other—the laws of mind, and the phenomena that the eye discloses are things to see through, to re-collect into an interiorized landscape. In *Nature*, Emerson’s interiorization of vision, his “seeing” only the self in the final instance, is not a corollary to an ontological position but an existential one:

“Whether nature enjoy a substantial existence without, or is only in the apocalypse of the mind, it is alike useful and alike venerable to me” (Emerson 24). Porter puts it quite succinctly: the Emersonian “Not Me” “acquires its meaning from its relationship to me, a relationship defined by the use which me makes of ‘Not Me’” (97).

When Emerson famously says that, as a “transparent eyeball,” “I am nothing; I see all” (6), he attempts to resolve two different deadlocks: one is the incompleteness of man and his alienation from himself and the world, and the other is his inability to disappear from that world, to negate himself as a material thing in order to attain a God-like view of it. “By detaching one’s self as an eye,” Porter writes of this supposedly common strategy in classical American literature, “one assumes a perspective from which it becomes clear that nothing is permanent” (106). The transparent eyeball projects as image the “active relation between seer and seen” that *Nature* aims to describe. But this airborne eye ultimately “results from a beheading” (Porter 106): “Standing on the bare ground – my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space, all mean egotism vanishes” (Emerson 6). Though man suffers alienation as a result of his fixed position within a reified objectivity, Emerson constructs a theory in which alienation also resurfaces as a split between the “me” who sees nature and the “me” who inhabits it (Kant, in his critique of Hume, would have called these two the transcendental and empirical I’s). He entrusts Spirit or the Oversoul with the course to be taken; his theory fosters the act of building one’s own world while limiting the means with which to construct it to the imaginative, unencumbered potential implied by vision. The process of using the objectively given, alien world as a sign system “constitutes an activity through which man is reunited with that world in a dynamic relationship adumbrated in the process of use” (Porter 116). But practically, this subject’s point of view is the vantage occupied by the speculator in the most vulgar of senses, of a man playing

the stock market in a transformation Georg Lukács described as the active craftsman or laborer turned “into a receptive organ ready to pounce on opportunities created by the system of laws,” his activity narrowed down “to the adoption of a vantage point from which these laws function in his best interest” (*History and Class* 130). Emerson wants to make the alien world usable—as a sign, and particularly as a visible sign—but in so doing reinforces the reification of man’s initial position to the level of the capitalist or manager.

What literary critics gain from Emerson’s celebration of the mind and eye of natural man—a secular break from the Puritanical-Edwardsean distinction between regenerate and unregenerate soul—is paid for through the loss of any rigorous understanding of the body, and specifically of the embodied aspects of vision that cannot be so reified on a higher level of abstraction. We lose the ability to comprehend the full implications of Emerson’s line, found in the very same text, that “[t]he ruin or the blank that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye. The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opaque” (38). Perhaps the closest thing to a truth in the entirety of *Nature*, it is conceived within the text as a problem of vision to be dissolved rather than understood.

The theory of vision that inheres in Emerson’s “Experience,” by contrast, seems to follow Goethe’s sober, early-century acceptance of opacity as a crucial and productive component of vision: whereas discourses on visuality once repressed and concealed whatever threatened the transparency of an optical system, Goethe reverses and instead poses the opacity of the observer as a necessary condition for the appearance of phenomena (“[p]erception occurs within the realm of what Goethe called *das Trübe*—the turbid, cloudy, or gloomy,” and “[p]ure light and pure transparency are now beyond the limits of human visibility” [Crary 71]). For Emerson now, the complexity of man’s coming to self-consciousness—a Romantic theme hardly unique to the

American Renaissance—involves the fall of our vision: “distorting lenses” that we are, we are reminded that “*once* we lived in what we saw” (Emerson 322, emphasis mine). The wisdom of this essay is not in the notion that, by giving ourselves over to Spirit we can repair the “blank” in our eye, but rather in an aphorism that supports a recognition of the centrality of the embodied glance: “We live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them” (Emerson 314). Where *Nature* “promised American breadths of possession commensurate with their scope of imagination, ‘Experience’ shrinks the eye’s empire to a swimming mote” (New 2). Here, as in the lyrical line that Elisa New argues runs through Dickinson, Crane, Stevens, Frost, and Moore, fallenness is “more usable, more responsive, to Being than the pre-lapsarian innocence” the Emerson of *Nature* thought poetry’s “enabling condition” (New 3). Though the slipperiness of living amid and on surfaces is a negation of one’s desire to see and thus master the world in a flash, it is a loss that is also a gain, for it “bestows a certain salutary friction...that wakens perception to itself,” to its produced phenomenological structures. In “The Poet,” also of Emerson’s second series of essays, the “very high sort of seeing” he associates with the imagination accompanies the poet’s resignation from the tasks of encompassing mastery or transparent natural representation in favor of “*sharing* the path or circuit of things through forms, and so making them translucent to others” (298, emphasis added).

Even beyond the lyric poem (the purview of New’s analysis), nineteenth-century American writers traded “embattled, self-conscious visual figures like ‘miles of stare’”—the title of Michelle Kohler’s book on vision and transcendentalism, borrowed from a Dickinson poem that addresses the emptiness of metaphysical vision on the American landscape—which were “repeatedly tied to the task of ‘signal[izing]’ the seeing of literary language” (3). Kohler argues, accurately to my mind, that the transcendentalist eye (traced back from Emerson’s *Nature* to

Sampson Reed's 1826 *Observations on the Growth of the Mind*) is not in fact an eye(ball) at all. It is hollow to the core. What's more, the transparent eye sees only itself: "Transcendentalist vision emerges, too, in a nation more broadly invested in mythologizing itself as a self-evident truth and a manifest destiny—a nation that had long justified itself by looking at itself, or that claimed it *could* justify itself by looking at itself" (Kohler 12-3). But as I've already suggested by positing two Emersons, I follow Kohler and New in my conviction that vision in American literature is in no way limited to the naïve, uncritical, puritanical, or metaphysical-spiritual. Kohler specifically inspires me in her further commitment to a "heterogeneity among ways of seeing" in American literature that "suggests a national identity driven less by consensus or a shared exceptionalist ideology and more by shared questions whose answers are significantly disputatious and provisional" (10). Certainly, if we have "long been suspicious of the political and imaginative power of the transparent American eye," it is high time we did something about its still-dominant role in American literary history (Kohler 17). We must see beyond its horizon, see *through* the transparent eye to glimpse something (or some things) else. In this I follow these two critics who've already begun the long process of charting such richly heterogeneous territory.

Nevertheless, I cannot help but note that both New and Kohler still remain within the terminological boundaries of the gaze. Perhaps, to paraphrase Kwame Anthony Appiah, that will be the last of the shibboleths we must learn to live without. And it won't be simple or easy. In our contemporary period, a more extensive trans-national discourse on the gaze as such can be encountered in all corners of the humanities: from art history to film studies, from literary theory to post-colonialism, from feminist theory to readings of the history of philosophy, people are gazing back and forth at one another, with a sado-masochistic complex of power relations

inevitably attached. There are several seminal twentieth-century texts where specific theoretical concerns motivated attention to this master trope of seeing, including but not limited to Alois Riegl's readings of Dutch group portraits in *The Group Portraiture of Holland* (1902), Jean-Paul Sartre's subject-object dramas of *le regard* in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Jacques Lacan's developmental scenario of "The Mirror Stage" (1949), Michel Foucault's analysis of the institutional power-relations of the medical clinic's and the disciplinary state's gazes in *Birth of the Clinic* and *Discipline and Punish* (1963 and 1975), John Berger's Benjaminian art history in *Ways of Seeing* (1972), Laura Mulvey's psychoanalytic account of "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1973), Michael Fried's theory of the "painter-beholder" in *Absorption and Theatricality* (1980), and Svetlana Alpers's distinction between the perspective structures of Italian and Northern Renaissance painting in *The Art of Describing* (1983). There is an array of (often contradictory) theories rather than any single authoritative account, but that has not stopped scholars in various fields from haphazardly substituting the gaze for seeing *tout court*, without much critical examination about whether the concept has been stretched too far in the process.

As Goethe wrote in the preface to his *Farbenlehre*, "in every attentive look on nature we already theorise," which implies that not every attentive look amounts to the same thing, or to the same sort of theorizing (xx). And there is a significant operation of the eye—one I have already named—that has not been given the extensive theoretical treatment of the hegemonic gaze (a hegemony that many critics and theorists persist in bolstering by making it their obsession). Phenomenologist Edward Casey, playing at times with the vocabularies of critics like Norman Bryson and Jean Starobinski, has called "the glance" the look that moves fast and touches lightly, that "caresses" the surface of things—indeed having "a genius for surfaces" (Casey

139)—and which suffices far more fully in the disclosure of phenomena than is typically recognized. A deeply adaptive form of vision, glancing contributes to an active and bodily subjectivity: it is the mode of vision we are forced to use when running, walking, or working, where the posture of the body is used in a constructive, subtle way. The glance is particularly adept at picking out the peripheries and edges of objects, scenes, places, and landscapes, for there is an affinity between the edge and the glance insofar as the latter is highly sensitive to the terminative edge of things. Indeed, the glance tends to go to the edge more than to the neutral and empty middle; it has a fascination with finding out how far a given stretch of space extends (not metrically, but in terms of its sensuous, qualitative presentation). The glance glides along a surface until that surface reaches a turning point, an edge, where the glance breaks off and pursues another surface. In this way, the subject of the glance learns what the environing world is like as a congeries of things, rather than as a single object: one learns what kind of complexity this world proffers, what the outlines and in-lines (the internal edges) of this world are like, and where the brute fracture lines exist in reality, the joints that can then be manipulated and re-constructed through forms of labor and artistry.³

Casey explores the glance by tracking and recording his own visual experiences as his body turns, moves, and orients itself in place. As a starting point, embodied phenomenology is a version or extension of the Nietzschean ideal of philosophical practice, summarized by Elizabeth Grosz: “Philosophy itself was to be written walking—or, preferably, dancing” (128).

³ Just as the eye uses edges to orient itself as a worldly organ, computational models implementing operations like face recognition detect the edges of digital images at internal boundaries where changes in image brightness are organized into curved line segments. The non-trivial nature of these tasks in complex scenes (where the number of possible edges quickly expands, especially in viewpoint-dependant geometrical situations) mirrors the task of learning to detect stable object boundaries in human subjects.

Phenomenological attention to the distinction between the glance and the gaze, as well as the ubiquity of the former and its capabilities within a subject's encounter with a worldly environment, can also disclose the affordances the glance offers for imaginative constructions at the intersection of literary and artistic practice. In particular, there is a strain of thought in American literature and letters that engages with the glance rather than the ecstatically transparent eyeball, with the fundamental dynamics of vision beneath the natural geometries of reified cultural concepts. Here, proto-conceptual capacities of vision are in play in world-disclosing experiences, so that cognition and sensation are not separate abilities of the seeing subject, the former never entirely colonizing the latter. Rather, cognition only occurs through sensation, and sensation is always accompanied by cognition. The operation of the glance is a sort of reflection-that-senses, which accounts for its two-step operation, an ingress and egress or looping movement—out and back—that allows one to dissolve the subject-object distinction in an act of engagement with the relevant brute joints of the world's layout. The question, from a visual perspective, is the following: what is the perspective or point of view that would give me a maximum grip on something, that would most reveal the worldly object as it really is in the domain of my concern or *techne*? Each concern is motivated by a desire to grip things and materials irreducible to their positions and profiles in a visual field of representation, and thus by a productive blindness that engages the body in its proto-conceptual attunement with the world.

While Emerson, in many places, proves himself a thinker of the glance, he does not always associate—indeed, he most often explicitly avoids associating—the glance with the eye of the artist. In “Art,” he describes the eye capable of tracking the ephemeral events of life in the city, “the eternal picture which nature paints in the street with moving men and children, beggars, and fine ladies, draped in red, and green, and blue, and gray; long-haired, grizzled,

white-faced, black-faced, wrinkled, giant, dwarf, expanded, elfish—capped and based by heaven, earth, and sea” (277). Even reading that sentence requires a nimble eye, one that Emerson believes is faster than that of the producer and consumer of a painting or sculpture: through the use of “coloring” or the “anatomy of form,” the artist fixes “the momentary eminency of an object,” slowing the motion of the eye until it turns into a gaze, so that even when the eye does move “we pass to some other object, which rounds itself into a whole, as did the first” (276). The eye of the practitioner has been trained, so that the practice of painting and sculpture “are gymnastics of the eye, its training to the niceties and curiosities of its function” (277) opposed to the natural, untrained glance that Branka Arsić has linked to several other “natural” movements in Emerson’s oeuvre: “It is able to see through a thing in the moment of its transformation; it is so fast that it escapes the control of the will, and so cannot be considered trained...Glance sees the transition itself” (Arsić 71).

But actual attention to the way the eye works in the practice of the artist seems to suggest, rather, that the eye must still be trained to be *more* responsive to ordinary life than it otherwise would have been, that the success of a glance must be learned through sensory-motor activity just as the penetrating gaze—in an alternative way—must be trained to “extract the enduring form from fleeting process” (Bryson 93).⁴ While we all glance in the street, the practitioner can

⁴ Alva Noë’s “enactive account” of seeing (developed in his 2004 *Action in Perception*) attempts to explain how we develop intuitive visual attunements to the shifting “sensorimotor profiles” of the world, how our physiological systems learn to cope with a world that is always shifting from our own moving perspectives: “When you move with respect to a plate, its profile changes...Our appreciation of its actual shape consists in our perception of its profile and our understanding of the way the profile, or apparent shape, depends on movement. We may say, in a case such as this, that we are able to experience the shape of the plate, to see it, because we grasp, implicitly, the sensorimotor profile of the plate. Our grasp of the plate’s sensorimotor profile makes its shape available in experience” (78). Developing such an *implicit* and automatic understanding of the sensorimotor profiles of concrete objects involves learning how to hone one’s glance, the

and must work on his glance, just as a professional reader must be trained to undo the traditional Western hierarchy of gaze and glance—reinforced by critical practice that nominally casts its lot against the tradition—and thus to perform through reading “an ethics of the gentle and nonappropriative” (Arsić 73). At certain moments, Emerson himself recognizes that the possibilities of the glance deserve our careful attention, as in “The American Scholar,” where he raises the investigation of “the ultimate reason” of “the glance of the eye” (as well as “the form and gait of the body” [57]) as the most urgent contemporary intellectual—because the most urgent practical—problem, one that gets to the very heart of the contemporary subject’s ability to glean information from and perform manual labor in an increasingly hectic, mechanized, and urban lifeworld.

This dissertation will attempt to demonstrate the significance of the glance in the work of three canonical American writers, with readings of their work guided by the ways they evade the claims of three influential theorists of the gaze. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emily Dickinson, and Henry James will be shown in what follows to provide literary rejoinders to Michael Fried, Laura Mulvey, and Jean-Paul Sartre, and allow us to see companion artifacts of the visual arts anew. As a whole, this project will suggest that critical commonplaces about American vision—about the role of typological seeing in the development of an American master imaginary and about the links between American imperialism and assumptions about the work of the eye that already privilege the gaze—should be revised in order to account for more supple, energetic, exploratory, and dynamic operations. I will attempt to demonstrate how renewed attention to the concerns of writers and artists themselves regarding their own practices allows one to better understand the

ability to consistently track objects as the body and eye moves and (in doing so) repeatedly alters one’s visual field.

impact of trans-national developments in visual culture and optical theory as well as the material (and physiological) constraints working for and against the production of dynamic visual events.

II

When Boileau excavated *On the Sublime*, attributed to Longinus, the sublime became, as Jacques Rancière has put it, “the secret of the superiority of the old masters and the keystone of the representative system” (11). The sublime, on Rancière’s reading, was an art historical supplement that served to sanctify “the supreme principle of representative logic: harmony, at the heart of one and the same nature, between the abilities implemented in the production of the arts and the affects for those for whom they were destined,” which was ultimately a harmony between *poiesis* (making) and *aisthesis* (perceiving, and in particular, seeing). One of the breakthroughs of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, where beauty no longer served under a pre-given concept, was to shatter this correspondence: “the *sensorium* belonging to the appreciation of the beautiful is no longer calibrated following any rules to the *sensorium* of making art” (Rancière 11). However, the downside to Kant’s critical move (and its effectiveness) can be seen in the way the Romantic and post-Romantic sublime was formulated to bridge this gulf: most fashionably by way of the genius as nature’s supplement that inexplicably—since no pre-given concept can be appealed to as master of the artistic production—pulls the craft of *poiesis*, in a Herculean effort of mind, back together with *aisthesis* and expressive affect.⁵

⁵ Probably the most famous instance of this fashion was Wordsworth’s insistence, in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, that “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (79). But even Wordsworth provides a further instance of the inevitable deconstruction of spontaneous affect, as his much quoted formula of an original possession “of much organic sensibility” is shortly followed by a technical claim that the right habits of mind for poetic production are produced “by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits,” as if the spontaneous overflow must be channeled through an unfeeling physiological and prosthetic

In his trenchant essay on “The Origin of the Work of Art in Material Practice,” Henry Staten critiques familiar Romantic notions about art’s superiority to craft—reaching a sort of apotheosis in Heidegger’s “The Origin of the Work of Art” with its notion of *physis* as the creative spontaneity of nature independent of human agency—by “clarifying the primitive form of *techne*” (46). What critics like Staten contribute to my method here is a de-mystificatory drive that attempts to account for

the way in which, in every moment of every action of every *techne*, the intrinsic powers of physical nature are both submitted to, and brought into line with, human purposes of an intensely practical sort, while yet the will and consciousness of the subject are subordinated to transindividual—but not transcendent—forces, forces that are as much social and historical as they are natural. (46)

Neither privileging the genius of the individual interiorized subject nor dissolving the activity of the human subject entirely, a rigorous “*techne* theory” would seek to understand the objective (but not trans-historical) principles and forms that afford productive bodily engagement with the material world.⁶

This inquiry must occur on both descriptive and ontological registers, for any labor process—whether in the domain of fine arts or not—“must correctly come to grips with its object,” as Lukács has argued: “Each individual movement in the process of sharpening,

machine for the poet to be able to translate anything of lasting and communicative value. This is how *techne* works its way into even the most representative of Romantic affective commitments.⁶ From a visual-phenomenological perspective, the world of affordances—what J.J. Gibson calls the “layout” of the visual environment—is “the persisting arrangement of surfaces relative to one another” (Gibson 307). Surface arrangements solicit certain motor-intentional acts and suppress others, their “affordances to act” surface characteristics of the environment itself which the engaged perceiver-actor responds to in “immediate and unreflective” ways (more or less successfully as she attempts to shape the environment for her own use, limited as she is by the characteristics of the arrangement rather than simply her will).

grinding, etc. must be considered correctly (i.e., must be based on a correct reflection of reality), be correctly oriented to the posited goal, correctly carried out by hand, etc.” (*Ontology* 13, 33). And Staten has added, along Lukácsian lines, that through these (bodily) movements “human purposes are slowly woven into the structure of natural being in such a way as to satisfy human needs, at the price of painstaking submission to the patterns of natural causality. Thus the realm of natural causality is intertwined with that of human purposes, giving rise to the distinctive ontological status of social being” (53). At this level of engaged activity, geared into material through the process of manipulation, there is no distinction between the world and the human subject (mediated as this intellectual distinction is by prosthetics and gestures encoded by an intimate local body knowledge of the world’s affordances, its material joints).

From the standpoint of vision in particular, the operation of the glance is indispensable for understanding how an embodied subject can get geared into the world through concrete labor practices. Just as “the tool writes the toolmaker as much as the toolmaker writes the tool,” as Whitney Davis puts it (116), the glance constructs the subject as much as the subject operates the glance. Of the many ways we have, in theory, linked the constitution of the subject to its iterative material practices—including evolutionary psychology, archaeology in the wake of André Leroi-Gourhan’s *Speech and Gesture*, Derridean deconstruction—most indispensable to my theory of the glance is Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s embodied phenomenology. Some general background can suffice for now: when Merleau-Ponty critiqued Descartes’ optics, he admitted that the latter was correct to reject the medieval notion of “intentional species” flying through the air from object to eye, and in so doing rejecting a direct resemblance theory of vision, since such medieval optics could not account for different perspectival profiles of the object. But for Merleau-Ponty, Descartes was nevertheless beholden to a realist paradigm that turned vision into

a view *on* the world rather than a view *in* the world. Like proponents of the primacy of the gaze, Descartes gave too constructive a role to the *cogito* encased in the *camera obscura* of the mind and left as a mystery the way a “natural geometry” is projected onto the world through the work of the soul. In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty systematically criticized both “empiricist” and “intellectualist” approaches to vision—the assumption of the former camp that sensations were produced by the impingement of stimuli entirely from without on the passive receptive apparatus of the sensorium, and the assumption of the latter on an absolute subjectivity that constituted the world it perceived entirely out of the subject's own interiority—for bracketing the actual phenomenon of perception itself, either by turning the subject into an object in the world like all others or by turning perception into a mere effect of judgment.

Both empiricists and intellectualists fail to register the primary layer of intersensory experience in the body anterior to the differentiation of the senses and their re-synthesis on the level of reflective thought. The upside to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach involves the recognition that the “senses translate each other without any need of an interpreter, and are mutually comprehensible without the intervention of any idea” (*Phenomenology* 273). Contrary to the alternative phenomenology of Sartre, the “inhuman gaze” of mutual objectification—which Sartre so extensively catalogued as the basis of social existence in *Being and Nothingness*—exists only on the level of thought, not on the level of interactive presence. For all his talk of situating consciousness in bodily experience, Sartre had missed the existence of the intersubjective, intercorporeal dimension that always subtends the seemingly self-contained subject. A Cartesian in spite of himself, Sartre failed to acknowledge “the dialectical interplay of bodily intentionalities prior to the duel of wounding gazes” (Jay 167). What Merleau-Ponty shares with Martin Heidegger, as a particular advance over Edmund Husserl's founding

phenomenology which (at least according to Heidegger) still remained too Cartesian despite its best efforts, is the attention paid to skillful, unreflective coping activities and the sorts of embodied dispositions—including visual dispositions—that dissolve the subject-object distinction in favor of world-disclosing engagement.

Unreflective motor activities, like picking up a paint brush, chisel, or pen to work with, require an immediate bodily understanding of the gear's qualitative features, an understanding achieved not through a general concept or category but through the body's skill, through its ability to form a good grip. This sort of action is directed toward and responsive to the specific qualitative features of the object, and so is not the action of a merely internal circuit of reflexes. The activity is thus intentional and directed, but unlike in the Husserlian sense of intentionality, it involves a bodily understanding of those features and can be had without any determinate, wholly distanced visual experience of them at all. To be ready to encounter an object and do things with it requires more than purely cognitive concepts and internalized, bodily reflexes. Understanding one's ability to perform simple tasks like grasping, lifting, and stroking a paint brush involves attending to more than the object's one-sided perspectives, more than acquiring a determinate visual experience of its features (for one can take an object to have a feature on its hidden side and comport oneself accordingly, forming a particularly effective grip upon this assumption).⁷ In addition, for Merleau-Ponty, the eye operates in ways structurally similar to the hand in its surprisingly effective and repeatable act of gripping: one's glance is constantly lead to

⁷ Husserlian phenomenology presumes that perceptual objects are encountered primarily in a series of one-sided perspectives. Heidegger's initial major break with his teacher was over this point: for Heidegger, our primary mode of access in/to the world is engagement with objects (*Zuhand*) rather than a distanced intentional presentation of the object's one-sided perspectives (*Vorhand*). Despite having making just as significant departures from Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology follows the former's break from the Husserlian transcendental reduction.

certain features of objects, the eye having an inclination to look at a thing in a particular way pre-reflectively and immediately tied to the visual context.⁸ The eye and the hand are both directed toward and responsive to what my body takes to be the features of the object-world.

Though he does not thematize the glance as such, in Gilbert Simondon's philosophy of technology prosthesis is an extension of both the eye and the hand, and against simpler unidirectional projection theories of technology, he describes the feedback mechanisms linking body and tool in a rhythm that accords with the active glance: "Knowing how to use a tool does not just mean having acquired the necessary gestures; it also means that one is able, by means of the signals that come through the tool to the human being, to recognize the implicit form of matter, exactly at the point where the tool is applied" (53, qtd. in translation by Schmidgen 24-5). The eye leads the hand to this point, to the joint or cleavage in material reality that concentrates signals traveling from the body outward into the world and from the world back to the body by means of the trained hand and eye. Along with Simondon, theorizing the glance also means rejecting long-standing hylomorphic models that separate form and matter into a unidirectional imprint of the former onto the latter. Hylomorphism, in the visual register, goes along with theories of the gaze, of the imposition of a formal vision onto an empty object that receives the action of the subject with no resistance (if it is to be a successful act). The glance instead occupies a fluid interspace between matter and form, material and formal cause, "in which forms

⁸ Several of Merleau-Ponty's examples on this point suggest normative (rather than simply descriptive) affects of indeterminate visual backgrounds on embodied perceivers. For instance, he argues that as atmospheric lighting conditions affect the perceived color of objects in our visual field, we see *how* the lighting context must change and/or how we must change our position toward an object in order for us to see the color "better" (or more clearly against its background). "Lighting and reflection, then, play their part only if they remain in the background as discreet intermediaries, and *lead* our gaze instead of arresting it" (*Phenomenology* 361). Indeterminate (but not wholly absent) elements of a visual field direct our bodily comportment within an environment and its network of affordances.

are materialized and, simultaneously, matter is rendered formable” (Schmidgen 24). Because the world is not made up of a homogenous substance, but is rather a “mixed and multiple materiality” filled with fractures, knots, and resistances, its “implicit forms” (55, qtd. in translation by Schmidgen 24) are multiple and require feedback circuits between different bodies to transform one material into another. The artist or laborer proceeds along a winding path suspended in the time of the body, developing an improvisational comportment responsive to feedback from eye to world and back again rather than a linear progression of functional, cognitive steps.⁹ This winding path is the working curve of distributed subjectivity, and it is my contention that the visual organ of purposive distribution is the glance, not the gaze (which works in the other direction, toward the appropriation of an exterior image back to an evanescent, concentrated interior point).

For those who might accept, in theory, the relationship between the glance and technical comportment outlined above but cannot quite visualize it in practice, an example may be in order. In 1915, Claude Monet was filmed painting his water lilies *en plein air*. Anyone reading

⁹ Hannah Arendt’s distinction between labor and work—a distinction I will not continue to make in those terms, but which gets at the heart of the difference between the improvisational glance and the possessive gaze—likewise depends upon a distinction between circular and rectilinear temporal process. Closer to my own investigation, Bernard Stiegler’s three volume *Technics and Time*—which corrals Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida, Simondon, and Leroi-Gourhan’s evolutionary analysis of hominid technologies—argues that Husserlian structures of protention and retention, constitutive of time-consciousness, are in turn constituted not only in and by consciousness as such but through worldly engagement with technical prosthetics. This puts Stiegler closer to Heidegger in *Being and Time*, whose *Dasein* projects itself temporally according to its worldly tasks. Temporal experience is constituted by technics, by our prosthetic extensions into and through the world. Derrida, Simondon, and Leroi-Gourhan come in as Stiegler begins to radicalize *Dasein*’s exteriorized posture, scattering itself irreparably through its projects, deferring and spacing the subject’s concern according to the deconstructive logic of the supplement. He argues: “tools do not derive from a creation or from a consciousness present to itself, master of matter, but pursue a process engaged long before the rupture yet nevertheless constitute a rupture—a new organization of difference, a difference of difference” (Stiegler 178).

this can find a clip on YouTube. What you will see is an old, fat, grey-bearded artist making up for his inevitable decline in painterly dexterity with the quickness of his glance. His easel set perpendicularly to the live scene, Monet turns his eyes from the lilies to his canvas as quickly as he can in order to keep them in view. Even though there are moments of soft gazing at the pond, clearly this is not enough to retain what he needs in order to re-present the lilies, light, and luminous reflections. If it were, he would not have to move quickly at all; his gaze would take the scene in at its depth and keep it there for as long as he needs. The painter's lithe glance does not serve memory but operates through a more ubiquitous, immediate, and routine form of Husserlian retention, carrying into the present what was perceived directly prior to the instant where his visual field shifts. The lilies are not shelved in some storehouse in the brain only to be pulled out again when needed, but rather dance along through the sort of retinal play his impressionism has been known to foreground.

In "Eye and Mind," Merleau-Ponty considers the case of the painter's inaugural gesture, which is not a cloistered, mysterious rite but a prosthetic extension (through the painterly materials) of the ordinary body-eye's worldly activity. Painting begins with the setting of a blank surface or canvas which separates the painter's gaze from the scene or landscape that he aspires to re-present, creating a break between the two visible dimensions. This break turns that gaze into a glance that must thenceforth traverse the minimal in-visible gap between the saturated world and the blank space that will progressively be filled by the movements of the artist's body. Painterly action then takes on the same two-beat character of any glance, which constructs "the diagram" of life in the body, "its pulp and carnal obverse" that bridges the minimal gap between the "manifest visibility" of the world around and a "secret visibility" (*Eye* 164-5) in our body that immediately (or with minimal delay) schematizes the former, preparing the body's

movements in unison with the affordances of the world. This is the way that the painter can be taken up both by his perception of a landscape and the gestural action of painting, “the mental and gestural elaboration of this other, becoming landscape” (Angelino 269).

When the painter’s brush begins its work—when it makes contact with the canvas and charts its colored trace, breaching forever the blankness of its surface—the encoding of a transitional space between the body and world begins where what appeared initially to be a firm binary separation between the two dissolves into a chiasmic intertwining. The lineaments of the forming picture look back at the artist as his glance bridges the movements and comportment of his body and his surrounding lifeworld. Merleau-Ponty quotes Paul Klee as saying, with regard to this experience, “A certain fire pretends to be alive; it awakens. Working its way along the hand as conductor, it reaches the support and engulfs it; then a leaping spark closes the circle it was to trace, coming back to the eye, and beyond” (*Eye* 188). Klee describes a practical corollary to the state German Idealists sought only in theory, the fusion of self-awareness and object-awareness. The embodied glance is like a “leaping spark,” a darting probe that guides the hand through a quickened circuit between limb and eye.

Jacques Derrida’s *Memoirs of the Blind* leaps out of Merleau-Ponty’s painterly approach to define the *trait*—one of his many re-formulations of the trace, of the supplement, of *différance*—as the mark, line, or stroke that “joins and adjoins only in separating,” defining the way art thinks in its construction (54). As an addendum to Merleau-Ponty’s theory of the necessary power of the invisible, he says that drawing is blind, that in the interval where the artist’s glance moves from the surrounding world to the canvas—whether it is indeed a stretched canvas, a wall, a piece of paper, or the viewfinder of a camera would not necessarily change the logic of the operation—there is a productive blindness, a shooting of a gap where the eye and

body construct a schematic picture together despite interrupting, through a saccadic jump, the harmonious visual field supposedly constructed by a deep gaze. The artist must turn from the object to the surface of his creation and work from memory, though the quickening of the glance and its consonance with the practiced movement of the arm, for instance, works asymptotically toward an elimination (though never complete) of the role of memory (or, more appropriately, Husserlian retention). But where Derrida calls this productive blindness “transcendental,” Merleau-Ponty more helpfully grounds this operation in the kinesthesia of the body, immersed *in* and *with* the world on view, inter-mingled with/in it, revealing a self not through “transparence, like thought, which only thinks its object by assimilating it”—this would be the operation of the gaze which was already interrupted—but “through inherence of the one who sees in that which he sees” (*Eye* 162-3).

From an art historical perspective, the turn to the embodied glance was well underway before European painting reached the heights of French Impressionism and before French and German phenomenology reconsidered the eidetic structures of visual experience. Whereas receptive instantaneity was a presupposition of classical optics, conceptualized materially through the simultaneity of the *camera obscura* representation with its exterior corrolary, as visual observation was increasingly tied to physiology, temporality and vision became conceptually inseparable (Crary 98). Early photographers like Daguerre, Niépce, and Fox Talbot dispensed with the *camera obscura* in practice and theory, recognizing it to be an unnecessarily intermediate modeling construction. In America, as Wendy Bellion shows in her study of early republican Philadelphia, a diversity of viewing instruments and a broad range of public and private spaces in which they were exhibited created a “visual culture in which no single modality of vision prevailed,” and in which *trompe-l'œil* illusions and spectacles like Charles Willson

Peale's *Staircase Group* and Samuel Lewis's "Imitations" and "Illusions" challenged both optical and political models of passive reception (59). The Cartesian ideal of an observer completely focused through the gaze on an object—its mind or soul connected to the world through a natural geometry that transforms and negates the errors in vision inserted by the mediation of the physical body—was replaced by empirically validated accounts of vision structured by the time of the body.¹⁰ Nineteenth-century speculative philosophy from at least Hegel to Nietzsche also paralleled empirical investigations into perception as a temporal process dependent upon an amalgamation of the body's past and present purview. Even in that often-bodiless tract, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*—which accounts for world history through a dialectic that tends toward the immaterial—visual perception is conceived as an interaction of forces and relations rather than an orderly concatenation of discrete sensations compared by an inner eye (something that linked early modern Rationalists and Empiricists, Descartes and Locke). Goethe's *Theory of Colours* combined nascent physiological insights into subjective phenomena like afterimages even as it participated in *Hochromantik* dialectical argumentation:

The eye cannot for a moment remain in a particular state determined by the object it looks upon. On the contrary, it is forced to a sort of opposition, which, in contrasting extreme with extreme, intermediate degree with intermediate degree, at the same time combines these opposite impressions, and thus ever tends to be whole, whether the impressions are successive or simultaneous and confined to one image. (13)

¹⁰ Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* traces a genealogy of optical science that extends from Augustin-Jean Fresnel to Johannes Müller, Gustav Fechner, and Hermann von Helmholtz in order to claim that physiological and temporal models of vision allowed for the production (in the spheres of labor) of techniques of control and domination even as such studies also provided emancipatory accounts of the seeing subject taken up by the arts. I will come back to nineteenth-century optics in the following chapter.

As this passage suggests, German speculative thought was already on a path toward Husserlian time consciousness just as visual culture more generally was on a path toward the dominance of retinal art, wherein an image is not so much grasped and possessed by the eye as subject to temporary revelation and temporal transformation.¹¹

But the relationship between art that presents the innocence of the retinal image prior to its organization by the brain and the embodied practice of the glance in one's lifeworld is hardly straightforward. Merleau-Ponty would conceive this as Husserl's problem, namely that since the only information projected onto the retina is information in (roughly) two dimensions—as is the Impressionist painting as it is given to the viewer—the fact that there is a difference between experiencing something as having only two dimensions (a façade) and experiencing it as having three (an object) is a puzzle. Even while Husserl admits that the features of perceptual experience are not limited to those of the sense data occasioned by the object's front, he nonetheless claims the indeterminate features of the object are hypothesized but visually absent (so-called “improperly appearing moments of the object are in no way presented” [Husserl 48]). Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, includes such features as functional elements in our visual operations. These ghostly not-quite-presences are irreducible to a linear perspectival view of the subject's visual field. Including hidden presences in a field of action produces a notion of a visual unconscious

¹¹ As following chapters demonstrate, however, this path in the visual arts is a winding and not quite linear one. Beyond (but not entirely separate from) developments in painting and photography were the inventions of early motion picture devices that, perhaps more than any other popular technology, effected and demonstrated the poverty of stable subject-object distinctions. Devices like the thaumatrope, zoetrope, and phenakistiscope manipulated operations of retinal retention to produce moving images that were neither simply in the mind nor in the world, but rather existed solely at their interface.

that does not require a psychoanalytic theory of traumatic subject-formation.¹²

In our critical landscape, theorizing the unconscious of the work of art is still beholden to the endlessly repeatable gestures of conceiving the ideological distance of the work from the wider socio-economic world of its time, and the antagonisms it conceals or dissolves in its final form. The Lukácsian-Jamesonian critical tradition has led to many compelling Marxist readings but also, following Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," often ends up occluding the material practice and labor of the artists themselves (a result any good Marxist, at least in the traditional sense, should struggle to avoid). I will not proceed in the following pages to identify what I think the "true" unconscious of anything is. It is a peculiar idea in the first place, as if every subject or text or cultural product could have just one. Beginning from the position that the unconsciousness revealed through the glance is a mode of connection with the world—in the case of Monet, it is what connects the lilies to the canvas as his look quickly traverses the gap in between—my critical goal is not to lay bare the text's unconscious and try to contest its power over us as readers but to accept it as a matter of course and to take it on board as a guide for our own practice (whatever in the world it may be). Without arguing that the authors and artists I will treat occupied the same worldly coordinates and lives of labor as we do (of course they did not), and without necessarily suggesting that they saw as we see (a more defensible claim, but not one I am inclined to make), I do at least want to

¹² In considering the activities of manual craft and what it says about vision in the engaged attitude—including in the glancing activity of a painter like Monet who proceeds in two-step time without gazing deeply into the scene in order to capture everything that is there—Leo Bersani's post-Lacanian theory of the unconscious as the agent of one's surprisingly successful correspondence with the world (instead of a reservoir hidden from the world or a primordial depth from which the subject forms object attachments by amputating itself) becomes helpful in conceiving the conceptual locus of chiasmus where the world is in the subject and the subject is in the world, corresponding "in ways that don't necessitate or imply the world's suppression" (Bersani 174).

suggest that certain key intellectual problems in their (and our) post-Kantian world have not gone away, particularly problems that relate directly to ways of seeing and ways of making that structure our (embodied) unconscious.

Nineteenth-century novelists and poets and the visual artists they engaged with lived in a time of budding “phenomenophilia,” which Rei Terada identifies not simply in technological, socio-economic, or aesthetic terms but in cognitive and ethical terms as well. As an intellectual problem, Terada traces phenomenophilia, or the attraction and cultivation of “particularly ephemeral perceptual experiences” (3), to Kant’s normalizing of appearance as such, the way thought after Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* no longer could easily separate false (visual) appearance from true underlying reality (which Kant makes unavailable to us as *Ding an sich*). Thus, appearance itself was no longer considered ephemeral, but rather it was all that there is for us, forcing thinkers and artists who were suffocated by this idea—and who wished to express their dissatisfaction with the world “as is”—to retreat not into the now-closed transcendental realm but into the hyper-ephemeral, into what Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* would call “charms” too private to be considered aesthetic.¹³

Kant himself was well aware of this tendency, and even used the glance as a way of freshly approaching the at-times depressing situation of finitude: “[I]t will be well to begin by *casting a glance* upon the map of the land which we are about to leave, and to enquire, first, whether we cannot in any case be satisfied with what it contains—are not, indeed, under compulsion to be satisfied, inasmuch as there may be no other territory upon which we can settle...” (my italics, 257 [A236/B295]). The glance, for Kant, was already a way to re-conceive the necessity of

¹³ Terada’s reading of Coleridge, for instance, heavily influenced as he was by Kant, foregrounds the private retreats into hallucinatory and illusive visions one finds in his journal notes.

dwelling in appearance—a necessity that Nietzsche would later wrestle with intensely—and a visual tool through which we can make our home in it by making the smallest of perspectival adjustments toward it.

I am setting out to consider, through the examples of specific writers and some of the cultural activities and technologies related to their work, how we actually go about making things of lasting (though not eternal) value in a phenomenophilic world. I know that it is not enough to simply say: “the glance, that’s how.”¹⁴ The objection I am anticipating is precisely the sort of questionable glancing attunement Edward Casey admittedly left out of his otherwise comprehensive book: the hyper-glancing of contemporary life required by the technology of video screens and the rapidly changing images they make possible, exacerbating the difficulties of attention. Critics of neoliberal affect and labor might justifiably question the glance’s distracted passivity in the face of rapid image turnover. A basic litmus test for the constructive aspects of the glance—those aspects of which I am primarily interested—might be whether the body is put into or out of action through the look, whether the look probes for and serves an engaged condition where “all perceptions are implicated in my actual ‘I can,’” for the affordances offered within a body’s concrete environment (*Visible* 241).

¹⁴ In an American literary context in particular, one finds both gazes and glances (as well as many other looks) everywhere, and my point is not to say one or the other is more prevalent within the content of the novel or lyric poem. I do not care to count the instances in any given text. And it is certainly true that in some central and highly canonical cases, the possible corruption of the glance is considered critically. In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, for instance, Harriet Beecher Stowe describes a slave trader’s appraisal of Eliza: “a delicately formed hand and a trim foot and ankle were items of appearance that did not escape the quick eye of the trader, well used to run up *at a glance* the points of a fine female article” (10, italics mine). This line follows directly upon a distinction between glance and gaze, with the latter standing in for more sentimental and “undisguised admiration” of the young black woman. For Stowe, the trained glance is often associated with slaveholding capital, racial hierarchy, and socialized misogyny, while a softened gaze stands in for the oppositional work of the female novelist.

Even the camera, a mechanical structure that has given rise to many theories of a new optical unconscious divorced from the human sensorium since its invention and popularization—including, famously, Benjamin's—can be an agent of the glance rather than the gaze, and a tool that engages and amplifies the circuit of embodied time. Historians have often considered the “history of seeing” in art as an irreversible development from tactile to visual intuitions, from knowing to seeing, from sculpture to photography as alpha and omega.¹⁵ And often the debate over the art historical significance of photography is restricted to the question of whether the camera produced an immediately mechanized system of Renaissance perspective and its corresponding scientific gaze (as Ernst Gombrich would have it) or whether it is an ideological-metaphysical instrument that grounded and centered the bourgeois humanist subject (Marcelin Pleyne's position).¹⁶ At its most reductive, the camera appears in several intellectual histories as the material instantiation of Arthur Schopenhauer's ideal of the will-less aesthetic eye that momentarily casts aside the limits of the human body, fulfilling a proto-modernist desire to see with an innocent (though still mechanical) eye. For better or worse, the idea doggedly remains that the invention of the camera was a fulfillment of a longstanding desire to attain a state of pure perception, to lose oneself in perception, to remove aesthetic or scientific vision from the service of the devouring Schopenhauerian will, “to leave entirely out of sight our own interest, our

¹⁵ Heinrich Wölfflin contributed to the birth of modern art history with his historical account of linear (draughtsmanly or plastic) and painterly modes, and with his narrative in which the “tactile picture has become the visual picture—the most decisive revolution which art history knows” (21).

¹⁶ Contrast these historical-hermeneutical options with William Ivins's claim that photography “represents one of the most amazing discoveries that man has ever made – a cheap and easy means of symbolic communication without syntax” (129). Neither Gombrich nor Pleyne focus on photography as a mechanical-chemical process, one that elides the visual artist's conventional devices used to produce perspective, shadow, and depth (as syntactic systems without ground in nature).

willing, and our aims, and consequently to discard entirely our own personality for a time, in order to remain *pure knowing subject*, the clear eye of the world” (Schopenhauer 186 [I]).

However, the procedure of the logical construction of linear perspective—a proto-photographic technique associated with the Renaissance desire to replace the body with an abstract monocular, “will-less” eye—largely gave way in the nineteenth century to the strategy of selective and opaque description, which Peter Galassi argues as a development in the visual arts prior to and beyond photography, in the compositional practices of painters like Degas (often a result not simply of the influence of photography itself but in the expansion of the pictorial world beyond the control of the studio artist who previously unhinged the visual pyramid from the body and wielded it at large in pursuit of his subject). The photographer found—often frustratingly—that he could not simply follow the first procedure of linear perspective, establishing the pyramid of vision as an abstract container: the camera may be (initially) a tool of perfect perspective, but the photographer is powerless to compose his picture (he can only “take” it, at what Cartier-Bresson termed the “decisive moment”). Even in the studio the photographer begins not with the comfortable plane of his picture but with the intractable three-dimensional stuff of the world. What we might still call photographic composition is thus not the composition of space but the composition of time: “the art of photography is an art of the time-form more than of the disposition of figures in space” (Rancière 219).

Rancière, in his celebration of Alfred Stieglitz’s photography, complicates the Cartier-Bressonian “decisive moment” by defining the photographic act as the coordination of three times: “there is the waiting time that delimits the frame for a possible emergence, and a time when this emergence becomes the singular expression of a figure in the light; but there is also the time of the world and the people that this figure crystallizes” (219). One could say that as the

practice of sculpting time—in Andrei Tarkovsky’s beautiful phrase—photography involves the coordination of competing temporalities, including the time of the gaze (the waiting), the time of the machine (the taking, the crystallization), and the time of the glance (the movement of the eye in coordination with the movement of the world). The art of photography thus provides a careful lesson for me and for those whose work I am explicitly or implicitly critiquing: there is not one particular visual or temporal register in the human body or in the art of making, so we must be careful to understand the place of each in each and not get carried away with the specific experience we choose to privilege. The glance carries us only where the glance goes.

III

Graham Harman, a leader in the contemporary object-oriented ontology movement, has helpfully labeled two major strategies employed by philosophers and theorists who seek to reject the category of the object: while “undermining” involves reducing the object “downward into its physical subcomponents, so that what we call a ‘table’ is just a set of subatomic particles or an underlying mathematical structure,” “overmining” dissolves the object “upward into its effects on human consciousness, so that what we call a ‘table’ is nothing in its own right, but only a functional table-effect for someone or a table-event for other entities” (199). Harman links this distinction to Charles Altieri’s diagnosis of the current materialist trends in literary theory: “At one pole the text dissolves into its readings and the applications people make of those readings. At the other pole the text dissolves into its cultural elements—the practices, the active ideologies, and the webs of interest that are largely responsible for the author’s sense of the possible significance of what he or she writes” (Altieri 75). Whether one goes under or over the literary object, into the mind of the Romantic genius or the average reader or out into the world of socio-economic forces, one always misses the technological, phenomenological, and practical interface

that spans literary subject and literary object. This is not to deny that acts of critical under- and overmining provide useful information surrounding the text. Rather, it is simply to point out that criticism is prone to forget that the text is a made thing (an insight shared by Marxist critics of the commodity form and historicists of the expanded archive, for instance, but often subsequently abandoned in favor of analysis of larger social assemblages wherein the made-ness of the object loses its sensuous contours once again).

Altieri's recent call to recover the "sensuousness of the literary experience"—an attempt that fits within the affective turn's recovery of a phenomenological impulse so often excoriated throughout the period of high deconstruction—does not insist upon reducing our critical attention to one primary dimension of the text's ontological character. In fact, he defines this "sensuousness" as "the work of art's ability to make an audience imaginatively engaged in aspects of the concrete world focalized through it—both on the level of the writing and on the level of what the writing makes available as represented experience" (Altieri 72). My method of reading is compatible with this definition, because my interest in specific American literary works and the regimes of sight they offer the world (and those that they critique) is geared toward an understanding of how they focalize the visual world both in terms of represented content and in the way we readers might bring a renewed form of seeing back to our everyday. When dealing with nineteenth-century literature, we may come to know some things about how exactly a work of fiction or poetry was made on the level of technique, perhaps what forms were supposedly brought to bear on an idea or series of ideas by an author, but this knowledge is typically gained through more writing of some sort, and thus more accomplished technique. We can nevertheless be attentive to the way techniques of seeing, for instance, are represented

through writing and we can re-construct the socio-historical networks within which writers both offered and received those techniques in various forms and media.

If a theory of literature is to have any explanatory value, it “has to produce some account of how literary texts are created” (Altieri 86). And while appeals to a model of “authorship”—of which there are nonetheless many types—still invite uniform mockery and disdain, we should be very careful in extending that mockery to readings that care about “making,” lest we take part in the same sort of abstract mechanization of labor (in this case, leaving the entire task of textual production to the expression of impersonal economic forces) that draws the ire of many a critic of the neoliberal order. This has no doubt been a contradiction in Marxist aesthetic theory, from at least Benjamin to Jameson, insofar as the immense explanatory power of art and literature’s periodized political unconscious often causes the labor at the heart of material production to fall out of the panoramic picture. Perhaps those concerned, because of larger post-Barthesian concerns about authorship, about retrieving the site of material-textual production are unwittingly symptomatic agents of the late capitalist age they think they are resisting, as efficacious as it is in devaluing any interest in the workshops and taskscapes of the laborer. If one truly took the death of the author/artist seriously, one would not bristle so much at the words “author” or “artist,” for he has never been as sturdy, self-possessed, or interiorized as such critics seem to think in light of their worries. Maybe it is true that the most embarrassing thing a literary critic could do is to mystify the creation of a text, but there are a seemingly infinite number of ways to do so. Indeed, the ubiquity of such accusations—or corresponding feelings of guilt at experiences of such embarrassment at the hands of colleagues and readers—has contributed to the ascendancy of a post-suspicious landscape, led by Rita Felski, that calls for a re-enchantment of literary study. But these too are typically associated with reading practices completely at odds

with an understanding of *techne* or “making,” which requires a glancing attunement to both the text and the concrete writerly situation of its arrival in final form (even if that situation must be supplemented with hypothesis).

Felski, to her credit, understands how styles of “looking” contribute to the attunement of reader and text when she elaborates on Stephen Greenblatt’s definition of “enchanted looking,” which involves “the act of attention draw[ing] a circle around itself from which everything but the object is excluded.” “Wrapped up in the details of a novel, a film, a painting,” Felski writes, “you feel yourself enclosed in a bubble of absorbed attention that is utterly distinct from the hit-and-miss qualities of everyday perception” (55). Clearly, even those who have charted paths beyond the theoretical milieu that solidified the significance of the gaze for criticism have not necessarily charted paths beyond the sway of the gaze itself. The “hit-and-miss qualities of everyday perception,” in the visual register, describe the quotidian operations of the glance. The glance hits and it misses in order to hit more truly the next time, testing the world for its most fruitful offerings¹⁷ rather than staying immersed in a supposedly “self-enclosed and self-sustaining” experiential cell, “demarcated by a distinct boundary” outside of which “the everyday world feels unwelcome, even intrusive” (Felski 55). While enraptured enchantment certainly has its place in the story of reading publics and affective involvements with literature (and the arts more generally), those experiences do not necessarily get us any closer to the

¹⁷ Richard Sennett refers to “the celebrated cook Ting,” in the early Taoist text *Chuang-tzu*, famous for his ability to use his cleaver to “find ‘the gaps in the joints,’ a fine dissection that will ensure that human teeth can get to all the edible meat in an animal” (166). Following such examples of skilled craftsmen in action, Sennett borrows Michael Polanyi’s concept of “focal awareness” to describe the temporal rhythm extended by the craftsman to both “the hand and the eye,” the “stress on a beat and tempo, the speed of an action” coordinated by the moving glance (175).

phenomenological stage of material artistic production—one that, I maintain, relies heavily upon the glance—than do dissolutions of the scenes of making in broader socio-economic forces.

If I must cast my methodological lot somewhere it's with what Mark Seltzer has termed “the new incrementalism,” a turn in criticism characterized by renewed attention to “the minor and the scaled-down” (727). For example, “with respect to the novel, there is a turn to the study of minor characters; with respect to affect, minor feelings; with respect to political forms, little resistances, infantile subjects, minute, therapeutic adjustments; *with respect to perception, the decelerated gaze and a prolonged attentiveness*; and so on” (727, italics mine).¹⁸ Focusing on perception and the visual register, I prefer to distinguish between maximalist gaze and the incrementalist glance, rather than “decelerating” the gaze. It is the latter term that is in dire need of re-clarification and opposition. But beyond each local manifestation of incrementalist reading is a general critical path away from the excesses of both reparative idealisms and suspicious, paranoid materialisms. Both approaches take their readings too far in either the subjective or objective direction. My goal is, instead, to attempt the equipoise in reading that characterizes the scale and production of the work itself, privileging neither the founding idea (accessed through ecstatic, feverish readings) nor the physical or socio-infrastructure materials out of which the work was formed. In material production, whether aesthetic or not, form is given through an interface between subject and object and a procedure that advances in increments as idea and material commingle. The materialist and idealist, the paranoiac and the mystic, both say too little

¹⁸ Though Seltzer diagnoses the state of criticism rather than subscribes to it, he acknowledges that “the opening to small moments of unaccountability [...] is, for one thing, more attuned to the institutional situation of literary and cultural forms and their way of acting in the world than the maximalist claims of transnational and transchronological turns, which seem at times to assume the literalism of a direct political, or emancipatory, impact on the world or even past worlds” (728).

and too much. In Aristotelian terms, neither material nor formal causes alone explain the conditions of the creation of the thing: we need to consider as well the interface between final and efficient causes, the domain where the artist struggles productively through acts of finding, as Wallace Stevens says, what will suffice.

The “new incrementalism” is an emergent rather than a dominant critical paradigm, in Raymond Williams’s terms. But family resemblances crop up in the work of various scholars across nominally opposed disciplinary lines: it is as if the desire to read in a minor key is the conceptual neighborhood milkman linking the genealogies of various households who would otherwise have nothing to do with one another. In the following chapters I will leave such terminology behind, moving on from the endlessly proliferating manifestos on how we ought to read in order to, well, *read*. But in haste I must add that my methodological approach shares a family resemblance, in temperament if not always in specific political commitment, with a variety of readers and scholars whose work falls in other sub-disciplinary categories, periods, and ethnic-national archives.

Of course, with Elisa New’s aforementioned critique in *The Line’s Eye* of the recurrence of possessiveness as a guiding light of American literary studies I share a concern to reconsider the American canon, against the continual domination of theories of visionary compacts that extend through the transatlantic turn by continued attachment to theories of the gaze. But there is also a growing body of incrementalist scholarship that inspires the shift in attention I aim to model despite significant differences in the content of the critical objects.¹⁹ What most inspires

¹⁹ Some of the most well known examples include Anne-Lise Francois’ beautiful account of self-quieting and recessive action (*Open Secrets* [Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008]); Heather Love’s current scholarly project on micro-politics (“Small Change,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 77.3 [2016]); Dana Luciano’s excavation of “counter-monumental” cultural and literary acts produced

me about this work, what I think subsists beneath its growing variety, is its resolutely dialectical nature. There is more to incrementalist reading than “going small,” for at its best it must reckon with its own assumptions about why such a project would be meaningful in the first place. I do not think there is an *a priori* value to the scale of inquiry, as if the span of the *longue durée* or the mode of anticipating micro-aggressions in society should apply to every situation and archive. And these are not our only choices. If all this meta-discourse on ways of reading does is put into question the terms of the most polarizing contemporary debates in literary theory—reparative vs. suspicious reading, enchanted vs. paranoid dispositions—and suggest that such oppositions are not the only operative oppositions guiding our praxis, I will have done enough to justify why the following arguments should be of interest to non-Americanists and non-specialists in the phenomenology of the visual.

IV

While this dissertation is historically and nationally situated, it adopts a far wider range of philosophical, literary, and artistic reference that hopefully recasts literatures, periods, and schools beyond my scope in a new light. Neither paranoid critique nor post-critique, its aim is to contribute to a body of knowledge Alexander Baumgarten calls “sensuous” (*cognitio sensitiva*) or examine what Rancière calls particular “distributions of the sensible” that open up to

within the bodily times of nineteenth-century grief and mourning (*Arranging Grief* [New York: NYU Press, 2007]); Anahid Nersessian’s pruning of Romanticism’s assumed excesses in favor of what she calls “low adjustment utopias” (*Utopia, Limited* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2015]); Sianne Ngai’s exploration of neglected “minor” affects (*Ugly Feelings* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2005]); Rei Terada’s previously cited queer history of “phenomenophilia” (*Looking Away* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009]); and Alex Woloch’s seminal study of minor characters (*The One vs. the Many* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003]).

underappreciated visual worlds. Each chapter should be taken neither as the definitive word on a single author nor as an encompassing statement on a micro-period or intellectual-aesthetic movement but as a “scene” or “a little optical machine that shows us thought weaving together perceptions, affects, names and ideas, constituting the sensible community that these links create, and the intellectual community that makes such weaving thinkable” (Rancière xi). If there is a historiographical method at work in this sort of scenography, it’s to trace a field of resonance (rather than any totalizing explanation of the social determination of art) in which aesthetic events expose or reveal underlying concepts and the development of “sensuous knowledge.” There is no proposed inevitability to the examples this study engages with, and different inclusions (and exclusions) would produce a different story, though I maintain that the study’s canonicity is no accident or at least not only an overdetermination of my own socialized biases. For the force of my argument, as multivalent as it is beneath the organizing concept of “the glance,” comes from canonicity, from the fact that even as we’ve come to take down the inevitability of the Western canon as it’s been historically shaped we have not yet gotten out from under some of its major organizing principles.

Each chapter of this dissertation considers the glance in the context of labor and artistry, focusing on specific American authors as well as contemporaneous developments in the visual arts that informed comparative thinking on the limits and opportunities embodied vision provides in scenes of material practice. The point of the inter-media comparisons is not to establish straight lines of influence or hierarchies of aesthetic subordination but to reveal the infrastructures of intellectual and experiential activity that affect, beneath the differences in mode and form, art as their often unarticulated preconditions. The next chapter traces Nathaniel Hawthorne’s theory of the imagination from its initial analogical reliance, in “The Custom-

House,” upon the *camera obscura*—a technology associated since the eighteenth century with an atemporal and wholly interior model of vision—to a theory of embodied visual mediation developed in *The House of Seven Gables* and *The Marble Faun*. There, the daguerreotype and early motion picture devices provide a model for the artist’s glancing attunement to environments undergoing constant change. Laying bare painting’s historical ascent to the status of *the* purely visual art form—achieved by the early modern concealment of the painting’s material support, its “body,” by the invention of the rabbet frame—Hawthorne’s return to the site of artistry in his late novels also marks a return to a form of tactile vision, to the glance as the artist’s primary tool of re-visioning a fallen world. I argue that the drama between daguerreotypist Holgrave and the domestic Phoebe in *Seven Gables* is not simply the bourgeois version of the old battle of aristocratic female and underclass male gazes critics have often taken it to be, but rather a story of the photographer’s learned ability to forego attempted mastery of a sitter’s interior essence or personality in favor of recovering those surface details lost to the limitations of the human eye. And I show how *Faun* further develops a theory of the artist’s impersonal subjectivity by integrating the significance of the glance through a narrative that moves according to its rhythm (thus bridging the technical differences of the writer and the visual artist).

Chapter 3 considers Emily Dickinson’s material practice from her early poems stitched into fascicles to her late scraps and fragments, charting an alternative to the common assumption that her poetry adopts a “veil” behind which she conceals herself from the (masculine) gaze of the literary critic. Instead, I argue that her development as a poet involved an act of *lowering* her veil, revealing how her glance constructs lyrics in a way that anticipates the photographic motion studies of Thomas Eakins and Eadweard Muybridge. Beginning with an outline of Laura

Mulvey's influence, in her articulation of the gendered gaze, on contemporary Dickinson scholarship, I show how careful attention to changes in the latter's material practice—instead of simply fetishizing the fascicles as representative—reveals the poet's meta-poetic agon with visual sequence. Whereas her early poetics thematize the (material and visual) stitch as the ungrounded life's only defense against the abyss of non-being, her passage to “sets” and scraps, parallel with her renewed attention to animal life, should be read as an attempt to found a more adequate environmental lyric. Thus I read her late practice as “animalian,” founded upon a theory of animal sight only later articulated by Jakob von Uexküll and Merleau-Ponty, and which points past the earliest animal motion studies to pictorial modernism.

Chapter 4 contextualizes Henry James's theory of the novel within a technological environment increasingly given over to portability and an aesthetic era increasingly committed to the “impression.” I focus on the troubled role of portraiture in his fiction and the risks of the glance that arise for James in a culture of portability. Through an extended reading of *The Portrait of a Lady*, I argue that the “flattening” of Isabel Archer as figure and as seer through her catastrophic marriage to Osmond arises through and is contested by glances circumscribed by bourgeois social habits. Despite James's general dislike of French Impressionism, the novel produces a dialectic of visual restraint and creativity being developed at the same time by Édouard Manet and colleagues. There, Victorian restrictions on desire and decorum are temporarily—even if *only* temporarily—overcome by articulating subjectivity within an energetic visual field constructed through the glance. Finally I examine James's late career working relationship with photographer A.L. Coburn to show how the author's late style accommodated the turn-of-the-century portability craze (standardized in the Kodak camera), experimenting in

his *New York Edition* with image-texts that, by removing the human figure and thereby negating his favored mode of portraiture, articulate the twentieth-century subject as anonymous, mobile, and wholly exterior.

I end at the threshold of cinematic modernism and the role of the cut in the development of the twentieth century avant-garde. My coda is really nothing more than a few glances: Louis Lumière's short films, Ezra Pound's Imagism, *Un chien andalou*, William Carlos Williams' fractured verse, Robert Frank's *The Americans*. The glance can sum things up, but it gives no pretense of absolute unity. I hope my readers embrace that, and that this dissertation helps them dart off happily to encounter other scenes.

Chapter 1. Nathaniel Hawthorne: Eclipsing the *Camera Obscura*

In “Foot-prints on the Sea-shore,” Hawthorne’s 1838 story of improvisational wandering along the ocean’s shore, the narrator notes “a wet margin” along the water’s edge “which glistens brightly in the sun-shine, and reflects objects like a mirror” (1974, 452). This margin is a liminal boundary neither wholly sand nor water wherein one’s footstep “grows moist again as we lift our feet.” The particular sort of marks this seaside wanderer leaves in the sand are compatible with the walker’s moving glance, a structure of looking that fits with the ephemeral quality of the boundary: when we look down and back at our footprints filling with water “we track our own nature in its wayward course, and steal a glance upon it, when it never dreams of being so observed. Such glances always make us wiser” (1974, 454). Although Andy Smith accurately notes that many of Hawthorne’s tales “exhibit a desire to stabilize phenomena in order to record human behavior accurately” (46), including “Fancy’s Show-Box” (1837) and “The Birth-mark” (1843)—though one should also no doubt include the troubled epistemological situations in stories like “Wakefield” (1835), “Young Goodman Brown” (1835), “Sights from a Steeple” (1837), and “My Kinsman, Major Molineaux” (1852) as additional symptoms of that nearly omnipresent desire—just as central to the author’s aesthetic, as another foci in his *oeuvre*’s ellipse, is the singular brilliance of the ephemeral image as an indispensable joint or lever in the collection of glances that make up an artist’s visual reservoir.²⁰

²⁰ John Dolis is an exemplary case of a critic who negates his informed readings of Hawthorne’s visual technique by constantly referring to “the gaze.” It even leads to phenomenological contradictions in sentences like the following: “Perceptually speaking, [Hawthorne’s] gaze always seeks to inform the partial contours of an obscure design” (277-8). The following exemplary forms of seeing through “partial contour” are best uncovered through the nimble glance rather than the heavy gaze: “There was formerly, I believe, a complete arch of marble, forming a natural bridge over the top of the cave; but this is no longer so” (1962 VIII, 100); “We climbed to the top of the arch, in which the traces of water having eddied are very perceptible”

In order to understand why this seemingly uncontroversial claim about Hawthorne's split intuitions about the image is historically significant, I begin this investigation into his longer meta-aesthetic writings with a few relevant art historical events that leave the American romancer—in tune as he certainly was with contemporary visual practice—with a theoretical knot to entangle through his own praxis. While Hawthorne is often read as a belated and ambivalent New England Puritan exorcising the ghosts of his Massachusetts Bay ancestors with his pen—or, only a bit less provincially, as a cartographer of his nation's fantasies and socio-political unconscious, as Lauren Berlant has argued—any acquaintance whatsoever with his *French and Italian Note-Books* forces a recognition that his attunement to the status of the visual arts in his time (he was particularly taken with and disturbed by the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, for instance) cannot be so easily reduced to the jerry-rigged mechanisms of the national imaginary. In part this is because of the lightness of Hawthorne's look and the delicacy of the tapestry it weaves: Henry James, in reviewing the notebooks for *Nation* in 1872, called his countryman “one of the gentlest, lightest and most leisurely of observers, strolling at his ease among foreign sights...weaving his chance impressions into a tissue as smooth as fireside gossip” (Edel 121).

(133); “Sometimes the image of a tree might be almost traced; then nothing but this sweep of broken rainbow” (158); “The foundation of a spacious porch may be traced on either side of the central portion; some of the stones still remain; but even where they are gone, the line of the porch is still traceable by the greener verdure” (160).

I

Because notable critics from John Dolis to Shawn Michelle Smith have already imported the art historical concept of the gaze into their readings of subject formation in Hawthorne's fiction, it is worth understanding how it has been applied to art history *tout court*. Norman Bryson has made the most comprehensive historical argument about the triumph of "the Logic of the Gaze" over the "illogic of the glance" in Western painting from Zeuxis through Mondrian: the history of Western painting, according to Bryson, is a continual effort on the part of practitioners to hide the traces of their labor. The Byzantine image was dramatically embodied, with the liturgical dimension of mosaic and glass distributed throughout an architectural space "where the body is enclosed on all sides and addressed in all dimensions... a theatre of religious ceremonial," the spectator constructed not as a wholly individuated eye but as a "physical, ambient witness to the Sacred Word" (Bryson 96). The cathedral spectator is an "embodied presence in motion," moving through architectural space according to an ecclesiastical temporality, enfolded in a sequence of visual-sacramental events (Bryson 98). A key shift occurs, for Bryson, when the plasticity of mural space is broken up into individuated, anti-architectural (virtual) non-spaces. At the same time, compositional advances like the Renaissance perfection of linear perspective served to eliminate remainders of the painter's bodily gestures from the finished work and to present a frozen moment of sheer contemplation within an isolated window-frame:

Suppression of deixis in the West operates by abstracting from the physical process of painting and [from] viewing a valorized moment when the eye contemplates the world alone, in severance from the material body of labour... In the Founding Perception, the gaze of the painter arrests the flux of phenomena, contemplates the visual field from a

vantage-point outside the mobility of duration, in an eternal moment of disclosed presence...[such] vision as it is presented to the viewer is that of the Gaze victorious over the Glance, vision disembodied, vision decarnalized. (Bryson 94-5)

“Against the Gaze,” Bryson writes, “the Glance proposes desire, proposes the body, in the *duree* of its practical activity” (122), but on his account the embodied glance is only reintegrated into the presentation of Western painting in the twentieth century by the likes of Cezanne, Van Gogh, de Kooning, and Pollock, who in different ways foregrounded traces of the material body on the picture plane.

While Bryson at times suggests that the gaze progressively wins out over the glance both in terms of the way painting was viewed and in the way it was produced, he gives us reason to believe (or at least entertain) only the former claim, where “vision *as it is presented to the viewer* is that of the Gaze victorious over the Glance” (my emphasis). The removal of both the painter’s and viewers’ bodies from the optical event of the *received* painting would indeed be an elimination “of the diachronic movement of deixis” in a “synchronic instant of viewing that will eclipse the body, and the glance, in an infinitely extended Gaze of the image as pure idea: the image of *eidolon*” (94). But it does not necessarily follow that the “image as pure idea” would or could ever be enough material and efficient cause to produce the work in the first place. Michael Fried’s theory of the “painter-beholder,” articulated in his highly influential 1985 work *Courbet’s Realism* (published just two years after Bryson’s book), completes the conflation of the explanatory relevance of the gaze between the ocular function of artist and observer. Fried argues that Gustave Courbet, Hawthorne’s contemporary, accomplished a long-standing painterly desire to “somehow...be merged in a single quasi-corporeal identity” (131) with his paintings, and the two terms of “painter-beholder” respectively name the dual functions of this

activity. More than a mere corporeal spectator, the “beholder” is an ideal observer who is enraptured by or wholly “taken into” the work in the same way the artist supposedly was, drawn in across a threshold that divides him from the scene of his own creation. The painter-beholder is a gazer, both taking in and getting the depth of a scene, aspiring not just to apprehension but complete internalization. He is the “*first* beholder” of many, “not just chronologically but ontologically” (Fried 68). Fried gives as textual evidence of this painterly disposition, most thoroughly in his analysis of Courbet’s *Burial at Ornans*, a certain pressure of figures “toward the picture surface,” and a “permeability” of the lower border of the picture suggesting that the “painter-beholder” might slip into the picture, or that the painted figure might continue outward.²¹

Fried’s understanding of achieved effect of rapture, it should be noted, assumes a baseline state of spatial separation between the painter-beholder and the produced scene, which is then overcome through a technique of “permeability” that allows the viewer to be im-placed within that scene. But how, one might ask, did we get to the point where we assume in the first place that the material work of art is a “scene” which an observer finds oneself either inside or outside of (rather than a made, plastic object one’s body is in front of, next to, or between)? Erwin Panofsky reformulation, in *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, of Albrecht Dürer’s definition of perspective is helpful here: “We shall speak of a fully ‘perspectival’ view of space...when the entire picture has been transformed – to cite another Renaissance theoretician – into a ‘window,’

²¹ Fried lists several specific reasons in support of his belief that, in *Burial*, “a place has been prepared for the beholder this side of the picture surface,” including the “unmistakably skewed orientation of the open grave” which “implies a point of view not directly in front of the grave but distinctly to the left,” a crucifix-bearing figure who “gazes intently out of the painting as if at someone, an onlooker, standing before it,” and (perhaps most important from a formal standpoint) the existence “between the cure and the draped coffin,” of a “deep and narrow spatial cleft or fold into which our gaze, already attracted to the area, inevitably strays” (134-5).

and when we are meant to believe we are looking through this window into space” (27). This is, of course, a common definition more or less recycled continuously since Alberti’s *De Pictura*, but even more interesting is where Panofsky goes from there: “For us, perspective is quite precisely the capacity to represent a number of objects together with a part of the space around them in such a way that the conception of the material picture support is completely supplanted by the conception of a transparent plane through which we believe we are looking into an imaginary space” (77n5). That is, for perspective to really work, for the Albertian pyramid to achieve the proper syntactic arrangement that produces the illusion of a window onto an alternate reality, an artist must present “a systematic abstraction from the structure of psycho-physiological space” by removing certain material aspects of the work’s construction from view (Panofsky 31).

One sense in which the modern picture plane was formed materially rather than simply in the realm of the idea—or in what Bryson would call the “Founding Perception” or the enraptured gaze of the “painter-beholder”—occurred through the stretching of linen over a wooden frame: as Gregory Schufreider points out, the painter, “no longer working on the more sculptural wooden panel but, instead, on the flat surface of a lightweight material,” was then able to produce portable paintings that were “free to move from one wall to another” (28). The structure of linear perspective was indeed enhanced by the rectangular frame, but moreover the three-dimensionality of the painting was “kept out of the picture” by the picture frame, a second frame (itself material) designed to conceal the edge of the material apparatus of the stretcher.²² The

²² The double frame was a basic precursor to those “phantasmagoric” apparatuses Adorno defined in terms of “the occultation of production by means of the outward appearance of the product” (90). The master case in the nineteenth century was Wagner’s occlusion of the

operation of a double frame, in which the edge of the plastic apparatus that creates the picture plane is concealed by the edge of the rabbet frame, creates a “virtual plane” upon which painting could claim its right as a non-plastic visual art. By doing so, painting is free to create a limit that appears to be “set by vision itself, not imposed from the outside” as a fine-edged boundary (Schufreider 30). Strictly “visual” images gain existence on the picture plane while the painting presents itself as a figure without a concrete shape. One almost feels a Hegelian cunning of idealistic Reason here: the historical introduction of a new material device served to conceal the concrete materiality of the figure. This conversion works only when the character of the rectangle acquires the status of a neutral form, a standard visual format that, in its standardization, (dis)appears.²³ The modern painting thus aspires to a “formless figure, described by the two-dimensional surface of a flat plane that conceals its real three-dimensionality behind a rabbet frame” (Schufreider 29). Representational space becomes entirely virtual, virtually three-dimensional as an alternative to the appearance of a plastic object with a concrete shape, existing in real space-time.²⁴

orchestra from sight at Bayreuth, in a pit concealed by a convex cover, generating the illusion that the music was coming from nowhere in particular, out of a “mystic abyss.”

²³ Hubert Damisch has observed a telling congruence in the Italian language, where “the same word *quadro* can designate, when used as a noun, a ‘painting,’ and, as an adjective, a rectangle with four right angles and four sides of equal length...[which] points to secret complicity between the two notions” (Damisch 101).

²⁴ In the twentieth century, Mondrian and Frank Stella developed strategies for de-virtualizing the painting by altering the conventional appearance of the rectangular canvas. Mondrian maintained the rectangle but, late in his career, rotated it 45 degrees on the wall, literally *turning* it into a diamond. The simple rotation foregrounded (by altering) the conventional relationship between the rectangle and its wall support—turning the painting forces a recognition of what cannot turn—which appeared once again after centuries concealed as neutral ground. Stella took Mondrian a step further: he developed new irregular geometrical shapes for his canvases, revealing the plasticity of the support as a three-dimensional construction of its own, subsisting as a hung object in real space and time.

In Kantian terms, this turn to virtuality conflates *Schein* (illusion) and *Erscheinung* (appearance), the material frame operating like the self-reflexive “frame” of second-order perception that Rei Terada distinguishes as “I am seeing this” instead of the more common first-order “(I am seeing) this” (20). This effect, however, can only be convincingly accomplished if the eye is both bracketed out from the other senses and separated from the body *omnino*, thereby leaving one’s body behind in the realm of *Erscheinung* while projecting oneself into the virtual realm of pure *Schein*. The separation of eye from body is the ground of painting’s ascension to the throne of strictly visual aesthetic experiences, which Bryson articulates as the price of Renaissance perspective. With the elimination of *deixis* from the visual scene, a result not just of linear perspective but of the modern framing mechanism that conceals the plasticity of the painting, also comes the concealing of what Charles Sanders Peirce called “indexicality,” signs that register the physical conditions of reality that produced them, in this case of certain arm and body movements that produce particular brushstrokes, or more generally of the care the artist took with the relevant materials, the kinesthetic concern and *techne* more tied to an economy of the glance—of the eye and body in concerted motion—rather than a supposedly disembodied, enraptured gaze.

When Hawthorne first walked through the Uffizi Gallery in June of 1858, he called it “the most perfect collection, in a chronological series, that I have seen, comprehending specimens of all the masters since painting began to be an art” (2009, 217). What he surely noticed too in this chronology—perceptive, albeit inexperienced, seer as he was—was the transition in painting’s material form onto canvas and into the *pro forma* shape of the rectangle (which lost its abstractness with repetition). Had he made his way to the Brancacci Chapel, however, he would have seen something that could not have possibly made its way into the

Uffizi: there, Masaccio's fifteenth-century fresco *St. Peter Healing the Sick with his Shadow*, exploits natural light (streaming in during the daytime from a window to its right) that, "obstructed by the 'solidity' of the bodies and painted forms of his picture, generates the enormous cast shadows" within the Biblical scene (Stoichita 59). Victor Stoichita notes that this spatial structure, impossible to create with a framed picture, allows for the natural light of the space of exhibition—which is also the inhabited concrete space of the artist's labor, which in this case followed Cennini's famous technical axiom, to draw shadow "according to the arrangement of windows which you find in these places" (58)—to "penetrate deep into the image, giving it a double structure that belongs to two worlds at the same time: that of fiction and that of reality."

It is a shame that Hawthorne may not have visited Masaccio's fresco (it does not show up in his notebooks²⁵), for it would have confirmed for him something about his own writerly praxis as he was developing it in remarks about the romance he had made eight years earlier in his "Custom-House" introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*. While on the one hand this preface makes familiar Romantic distinctions between the real and the imaginary, matter and spirit, the quotidian and the ideal, and contains a theory of the imagination that unites these realms in art, there is also a sense in which Hawthorne is working out of and beginning to challenge latent period assumptions—inherited from rationalist and empiricist philosophies alike—about the seeing subject, which would come to a head and be roundly challenged in the heated debates about the ontological status of photographic pictures. Hawthorne establishes an essentially philosophical scenario, familiar to readers of Descartes, where sitting at the fireside he (at least appears to be) firmly ensconced in a *camera obscura*. His description of the moonlight entering

²⁵ Hawthorne's notebooks evince rare excitement for the Italian masters, going as far as to write that "there is something forced, if not feigned, in our tastes for pictures of old Italian schools" (1980, 115).

through his casement, “falling so white upon the carpet, and showing all its figures so distinctly,—making every object so minutely visible, yet so unlike a morning or noontide visibility” (1962 I, 35), initially seems to fulfill both competing sixteenth-century reactions to the *camera obscura*, where projected objects seem either part of a realm of magic (where one mingles with the vibrant projection in an ecstatic continuity unavailable to adjacent-but-separate objects outside the box, as Giambattista della Porta thought) or as scientifically useful images made objective to a disciplined gaze that has blocked out the noise of the external world.²⁶

Hawthorne’s description of his room, with “magic moonshine” streaming in, seems initially to attain the status of some metaphysical third realm, “somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other” (36).

Hawthorne thus insists he is not writing a (realist) novel, and so the intrigue of the set-up tends more toward della Porta’s description of transport than the common eighteenth-century fascination with the *camera obscura* as the perfect copyist device. It is perhaps worth understanding the philosophical appeal of the latter: on a superficial level, the confluence of the moonlight streaming through an aperture and the “dim coal-fire” internal to Hawthorne’s writing space—which undergoes a process of abstraction and internalization—sounds much like John Locke’s epistemological analogy of the “dark room” in *An Essay Concerning Human*

²⁶ Robert Montgomery Bird preceded Hawthorne among American writers interested in apparitional images and the artist’s ability to distinguish between genuine and false appearances. In one of his ostensibly naturalistic medical lectures, Bird claims that “there have been many apparitions *of the most genuine character*, which were proved, to the satisfaction of those most interested—the *seers of them*—to have arisen *from causes within themselves*,—the progeny of their own *false sensations*” (20). Optical illusions, to which everyone is subject, can be raised by the painter and poet “to the dignity of a *faculty*, (which in the case of the visual organ, may be called the *Poetic*, or *Inner, Sight*)” (Bird 23-4).

Understanding, where he compares the understanding to “a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible resemblances, or ideas of things without” (*Essay I*, 211). Richard Rorty refers to Locke’s theory of the subject as “the conception of the human mind as an inner space in which both pains and clear and distinct ideas passed in review before an Inner Eye” (49). The analogue of such a conception is a single, unbroken, and flat inner space in which sensations are processed as “objects of quasi-observation” (50). Rorty attributes this basic epistemological schema to Locke and his empiricist followers in addition to Rationalists like Descartes, arguing that even the *tabula rasa* is “perpetually under the gaze of the unblinking Eye of the Mind,” so that the bodily eye’s concrete imprint is of less interest than its second-order observation: “all the knowing gets done, so to speak, by the Eye which observes the imprinted tablet, rather than by the tablet itself” (143-4). From one angle, Hawthorne’s preface dramatizes the inner eye of the artist as it, removed for a brief but intense time from the actual world, provides like the dim fire within the room the “heart and sensibilities of human tenderness to the forms which fancy,” here represented by the play of moonlight on the room’s objects, “summons up” (1962 I, 36). The Custom House would thus operate as the primal site of “that obsessive dark room which is always behind the focus of his vision,” built throughout his twelve years of Salem solitude as his “mind itself became a *camera obscura*, a dark room which sensitively registered the infiltration of light from outside” and which heightened his sensitivity to chiaroscuro plays of light and dark (Levin 1958, 63, 36).

And certainly, the writer is depicted *sitting* in the parlor as a respite from his “sea-shore walks and rambles into the country.” Taking a break from those embodied activities “which used to give [him] such freshness and activity of thought,” he retires to an internal theater where bodily gear like “the chairs, with each its separate individuality” and “the centre-table, sustaining

a work-basket,” are “so spiritualized by the unusual light, that they seem to lose their actual substance, and become *things of intellect*” (1962 I, 35; my emphasis). But one would be remiss to ignore Hawthorne’s insistence that “[n]othing is too small or too trifling to undergo this change, and acquire dignity thereby.” What prevents men like Hawthorne from achieving a vision in which the real and the imaginary “imbue” one another is not failure to access a carefully curated interior scene but the sort of deadened, habitual experience attached to Custom-House work, wherein “moonlight and sunshine, and the glow of firelight, were just alike in my regard; and neither of them was of one whit more avail than the twinkle of a tallow-candle” (1962 I, 36). What Hawthorne claims to need is a “different order of composition” in which his “faculties would not have been found so pointless and inefficacious” as they’d come to be in daily life (1962 I, 37). He comes to reject as “folly” any insistence on “creating the semblance of a world out of airy matter,” for one’s imaginative vision must sustain its rude contact with the real. “The page of life that was spread out before me seemed dull and commonplace,” he writes, “only because I had not fathomed its deeper import.” Whereas the fancy of the *camera obscura* depended upon a prior decision about its representational or magical function, Hawthorne instead seeks a compositional principle by which any material can be re-implaced in the artwork without losing its worldly character. And so the Enlightenment’s primal visual scene meets a more capacious artistic toolkit, just as realism meets the romance; such is the lesson of our promised look back to Masaccio.

The aforementioned fresco dramatizes a passage from the Acts of the Apostles where “the shadow of Peter, as he passed by, might fall upon [the sick in the streets], and so they would be healed of their infirmities” (Stoichita 54). Peter’s shadow, in the scene, proceeds from a light source outside of the frame (on the picture’s upper right), which is prefigured by the daylight

streaming in from the chapel's casement to the fresco's—and not just the diegetic scene's—upper right. Having the shadow fall from right to left like this contradicts Cennini's technical advice in *Libro dell' Arte* to “arrange to have the light diffused when you are drawing; and have the sun fall on your left side” (5), so as to keep one's right-handed painterly gestures from interfering with the shape of the drawn shadow. But Masaccio, who had learned much from Cennini's treatise on the *techne* of painting, had to comport his body, and not just his intellect, toward the affordances the real concrete space had to offer: Stoichita notes that the Brancacci Chapel “only had one window that opened onto the apse,” so that it would have been “out of the question to *envision* another source to the left of the image” (58). Standing in front of Masaccio's fresco one can literally *see* how real lighting, which can be controlled in greater or lesser ways depending on the artist's spatial ecology, “becomes part of the creation of the form.”

But Masaccio's contemporary, Filippo Brunelleschi, bequeathed to practitioners his own far more influential optical experiment that helped to inaugurate the wholly illusionistic era of monocular linear perspective that went hand in hand with the practice of concealing the material support of canvas and stretcher through the rabbit frame. His ingenious use of a mirror on the steps of the Florence Baptistery served as something like the Renaissance's early mirror stage²⁷, inaugurating an optics of illusionistic alienation that turned concrete, embodied activity into a distanced and irreducibly framed experience. Standing on the steps of Santa Maria de Fiore,

²⁷ I refer to Jacques Lacan's “mirror stage,” immensely popular out of context with an entire generation of French film theorists (including Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry, and Jean-Louis Comolli). Whereas Lacan referred, in his 1949 “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function,” to a moment of imaginary ego-identification by the infant who comes to recognize its own reflection in the mirror, apparatus theorists used the scenario to argue that the film screen presents a similar illusion of completeness and mastery to the (adult) viewing subject. As Brunelleschi's example shows, mirrors have always played a literal (as well as metaphoric) role in major historical re-conceptions of the visual arts, not just for spectators but for practitioners as well.

facing the Baptistery, Brunelleschi's mechanical contraption—which involves a mirror and a painting of the very same cathedral in linear perspective with a hole drilled through it (not unlike the single monocular pinhole in the *camera obscura*)—had the viewer peer through the painting's hole from the backside of the picture plane and gaze into the mirror opposite the painting, so that when she lowered the apparatus from her eye she could compare without moving her body the real edifice to the painted one. In this apparatus, the eye is isolated from the viewer's other eye, from her other senses, and from the rest of her body which is “literally backstage, as it is upstaged by a virtual displacement: not just placed behind the scene but, as such, displaced from the space in which the painted image is taking place” (Schufreider 30n13).

By the time linear perspective was more or less perfected in painting and the *camera obscura* was being regularly used by practitioners—again, not wholly unlike Brunelleschi's apparatus—in the service of painting on canvas, the spectator if not the “painter-beholder” himself was being theorized as what Jonathan Crary calls a “free-floating inhabitant of the darkness, a marginal supplementary presence independent of the machinery of representation,” for the *camera obscura* marginalizes the body *a priori* “into a phantom in order to establish a space of reason” (41). Crary considers Vermeer's *Geographer* and *Astronomer*, who like Hawthorne's Romancer and Fried's absorptive beholder have their eyes “averted from the aperture that opens onto the outside” of their interior spaces, as a paradigm of the artist's interpretation of *camera obscura* style subjectivity (46). Like Cartesian subjects their techne touches the external world through the operation of a “natural geometry” and an intellectual triangulation (an operation that always retains a sense of mystery in Descartes' *Dioptrics*, akin to the magnificent workings of the pineal gland), analogous to the eighteenth century's favored example of a blind man's ability to “see” through two sticks held in front of him and some quick

geometrical calculations that account for their lengths and angles. Oswald Spengler's art historical system, too intricate and esoteric to be of much general use here, nevertheless recognizes the confluence of Baroque painting more generally with contemporaneous epistemological assumptions, describing the period's interiors with their tonal gradations in which "contours melt into chiaroscuro" as a formal effort to bring sublimity indoors, exchanging Renaissance aerial perspective for an enclosed topography of shadowy, psychological depths (250).

According to Descartes, we are programmed to be correct in our perception of distance, size, and shape because of a working correspondence between our "unconscious and innate geometrical sense and the geometrical reality of the world of extended matter" (Jay 78). We are certainly wrong about these things often enough, Descartes recognizes, but this is because of the mediation of brain and body between the mind and the external world (and the impediment of the natural body can be at least partially overcome by devices that improve our vision, just like the blind man's sticks extend his sense of touch). Likewise, in Vermeer's paintings, the exterior world is known not by direct sensory examination but through a mental survey of its "clear and distinct" representation within the room (on the celestial globe or the nautical map): the "somber isolation of these meditative scholars within their walled interiors is not in the least an obstacle to apprehending the world outside, for the division between interiorized subject and exterior world is a pre-given condition of knowledge about the latter" (Crary 46).

These paintings likewise demonstrate the reconciling function of the *camera obscura*, its interior like the interface between Descartes' *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, between observer and world, where the camera or room is the "site within which an orderly projection of the world, of extended substance, is made available for inspection by the mind" (Crary 46). The operation of

the camera is “always a projection onto a two-dimensional surface” like Vermeer’s charts or maps. Hawthorne’s own dark room, where moonlight rather than sunlight streams in through the single casement and casts bewitching shadows over ordinary objects, is like a locked box busted open, or a base from which the writer can identify and pursue a new form of compositional seeing, eventually leaving the *camera obscura* behind for good. In the following year he would write a novel where the daguerreotype functions as a key narrative apparatus, and he would continue to complicate the relationship between his intellectual practice and the visual arts. In so doing, he would complicate the seeing subject’s stubborn cultural-aesthetic inheritance.

II

According to Shawn Michelle Smith in *American Archives*, *The House of Seven Gables* is a story about how Matthew Maule’s “evil eye” is inherited by Holgrave in his photography. According to the logic of the romance, Holgrave must utilize his gaze not only to disrupt class hierarchies—like Maule did with his evil eye that penetrated the hardened exterior of Colonel Pyncheon generations earlier—but also to reconstitute them in gendered middle-class forms, as a way of building American middle-class homes. Maule originally challenged the upper class privilege of “beholding” the beautiful Alice Pyncheon by asserting his own masculine gaze, and thus represents the forerunner of a new social discourse that defies aristocratic entitlement in the name of gender, except for the fact that (again, in the logic of the romance) his destructive masculinity must be replaced by the transformative femininity of middle-class claims to social ascendance. The real trial of the Pyncheon family, on this reading, is in the transformation of masculine penetration and domination into masculine reverence for the protection of a peculiarly feminine middle-class essence.

Smith's elegant reading of Hawthorne's romance serves a larger historical project: the development of a cumulative photographic archive, "a catalogue of 'essential' facial types" (portraits) (3), that over the course of the second half of the nineteenth-century changed from images of middle-class gender to representations of white middle-class racial superiority.²⁸ Middle-class portraiture, whose initial claim to capture "interiority" was compromised by its wide dissemination and promiscuous display, prompted new criminological and eugenicist archives to police the borders of representation. Smith argues that this visual regulation of identity was thwarted by "subversive self-portraits" (8) made by white women at the turn of the century, unearthed in an archive of a mere handful of images of women donning masks and wearing photo-encrusted dresses (which supposedly deflect the masculine gaze and express new modes of visual self-reception and self-production). To understand the practices of visual culture that led to these experiments, Smith historicizes Hawthorne's novel alongside contemporaneous curiosities like "The Magnetic Daguerreotypes," a story published anonymously in the *Photographic Art-Journal* of June 1852, which plays directly on misgivings associated with uncanny daguerreotype portraits and demonstrates the specifically gendered nature of those anxieties.

In the story, the narrator seeks a portrait of himself and his fiancé Elora, and appeals to a mad professor whose pictures provide the viewer a permanent window onto the subject's life. The professor, Dunkelheim, is a figure seemingly out of Hawthorne's own stories—like

²⁸ Sources range from Matthew Brady's "Gallery of Illustrious Americans," Francis Galton's composite eugenics catalogues, the 1900 Paris Exposition's "American Negro" exhibit, and a variety of family albums. Examining similarities between the promotion of family photographs in women's magazines and Galton's eugenics manuals and albums, for instance, Smith charts how the sentimentalized ritual of the baby picture, the focal point of the family album, became a "racially-inflected act" promulgating and confirming white supremacy.

Chillingworth, Rappaccini, Aylmer, or even Westervelt—the artist-scientist that embodies the author’s “haunting fear” (according to F.O. Matthiessen) that he had made an “irrevocable choice” of evil fate in choosing the career and practice of art. These masculine figures possess a heart susceptible to any temptation promising power over mankind and the gods, and desire only the magnification of the self—its power and dominion—without fear of a parallel dilation of its metaphysical, spiritual, and ethical blind spots. The successful daguerreotypist must be both a scientist and an artist (a chemist and a composer), and in the case of Dunkelheim he is one that appears to embody (or dis-embody) what Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison have identified as the nineteenth century’s criterion for scientific reliability, a “mechanical objectivity” that requires an attitude of asceticism toward the object(s) of inquiry.

Whereas the criterion for accurate image-making in the eighteenth-century involved the willful intervention of the scientist, Daston and Galison argue that accurate representation came to be judged on the basis of the removal of the scientist’s judgment in the recording of an image, a form of objectivity that went hand in hand with an increased reliance on recording instruments which, like the camera, promised (and overstated) the possibility of eliminating human agency altogether. As the daguerreotypist conjures an exposure through the preparation of equipment rather than actively drawing it, he becomes the empty subject of a passive but all-consuming gaze. Dunkelheim’s copies of Elora’s portrait produce an “irresistible fascination” that “withheld” his look as he “continued to gaze and gaze with an intense and burning ardor that threatened to disorder [his] intelligence” (“Magnetic” 355). His photographs serve as the means for a lecherous, adulterous trespass through the “objective” gaze.

Smith’s attention is drawn toward the way this story generates anxiety about women’s sexual vulnerability in order to establish the desire for a protective private sphere in which one

man's social prerogative can be claimed through public display. The narrator pursues the professor to Paris and kills him, only then returning to fully 'claim' Elora, who exclaims: "Henceforward we are at least our own masters, and not puppets, acting for the amusement of a detestable old necromancer!" (359). But the problem, according to Smith, was Elora's disempowered position as the object in a jealousy play, or the way her body circulated throughout a binocular scopic economy in which her purity is sullied not by adulterous intercourse (she is never physically touched by any other man) but by a dispersed public gaze. At the story's end, she is still an object of the male gaze, but happily of a single man's, her husband's, whose claim on her body is justified.

Hawthorne is not the author of "The Magnetic Daguerreotypes," but for Smith he might as well be. Hence her reading that, in *Seven Gables*, feminine interiority is literally envisioned as new visual technologies and discourses of domestic interiority merge through mesmerizing eyes. A story of middle class ascendance, according to Smith, it poses the sacrosanct feminine interiority that anchors a middle class "private" sphere through a violating masculine gaze that supernaturally *sees* that essence. As Holgrave muses upon the penetrating power of the daguerrotype, he suggests that he'd like to test the "wonderful insight in heaven's broad and simple sunshine" on a "perfectly amiable face" (328): Phoebe Pyncheon's. The gendered dynamic of this desire is repeated across generations in the text, as prying masculine eyes generate feminine interiorities in need of private protective (domestic) spheres. Violation produces feminine interiorities that require protection, and thus the penetrating masculine gaze that engenders female interiority must be transformed, finally, into a middle class masculine gaze that will preserve feminine privacy. Feminine interiority is thus positioned as the site of class conflict: the romance legitimizes middle class cultural dominance by posing virtuous middle

class essences against aristocratic decay and artisanal destruction. Technologies of representation provide a metaphor for the cultural power of classes, and the daguerreotype makes visible the economic and social heirs of a new cultural dominance. Its highly polished, reflective metallic surface is associated with mesmerism, the magical production and capturing of one's image in the frame. Wholly singular direct-positive objects, daguerreotypes were irreproducible; their highly sensitive images, as a result of shifts in viewing angle, switch from positive to negative in what Marcy Dinius calls an "untranslatable multisensory experience" (6). The photographer appears to be the descendant of wizards who controlled magic mirrors and who exercised "magnetic attraction" and mesmeric power over "good ladies."

Matthew Maule and Alice Pyncheon engage in a battle of the classes, waged as a war of the sexes, through the eyes. Alice's womanhood, her very soul, is penetrated by Maule, and the "threat" and "penetration" of his evil eye produce an interiority that corresponds to Alice's aristocratic body. "Her spirit passed from beneath her own control, and bowed itself to Maule" (429); her conscious will is overtaken by Maule's mind, leaving her a puppet to his desires. She is saved only if she adopts the signs of the nineteenth-century model of middle class femininity, as she becomes pious, pure, and submissive ("true"), but since there is no place for *this* Alice in the world of the aristocracy, in her class, and in her time, she wastes away. Generations later in the narrative present, Holgrave's "reverence for another's individuality" prevents him from wielding the power over Phoebe that Matthew did after he puts her in a trance: he chooses to *guard* the feminine spirit-essence rather than possess it. This, supposedly, is Holgrave's superiority over both the ambitious aristocratic patriarch and the artisanal, working class man: in the logic of the romance, he becomes a true middle-class man, and thus saves Phoebe from her family's decay. Phoebe's humility—letting her eyes drop, she bows to Holgrave's gaze and says

“You know I love you” (513)—compensates for the historic sin of Alice’s haughty counter-look, the symbol of her class pride. Holgrave’s protection and gentle pursuit of Phoebe’s soul repairs Maule’s demonic transgression of Alice’s spirit; their love is performed through a willing submission and a gentle domination according to gender roles proscribed by middle class domesticity. Alice’s sin of wrongfully asserting her class privilege by claiming an objectifying counter-gaze over the male body is absolved in the creation of the true middle class family. On Smith’s reading, then (so exemplary as it is of the critical 1990s in which it was written), the gender and class economy of the romance turns on what sort of gaze is proper to—and thus what sort of subject requires protection within—the domestic scene.

Associating the practice of daguerreotypy with the role of middle-class domesticity—the small-scale production and collection of family portraits that find their place in the album rather than the marketplace—means associating Hawthorne’s literary practice with the valorization of the *camera obscura* his “Custom-House” introduction was uneasily wriggling its way out of, thereby suggesting that there is a precious interiority that marks the site of imaginative (romantic) vision-production as well as bourgeois vision-reception. The preface to *Seven Gables* also makes a central analogy to photographic practice: the romancer “may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture” (1965 II, 1). But the “Author” also warns against readings that expose “the Romance to an inflexible and exceedingly dangerous species of criticism, by bringing [the author's] fancy-pictures almost into positive contact with the realities of the moment” (3). “Positive contact,” a printing technique associated with new non-daguerrotypic paper photography like the calotype, is literally contrasted with what Alan Trachtenberg has designated as

another mode of fidelity to “Present,” to “realities of the moment”—that is, the mode of

“Romance,” which defines itself not by an absolute difference from
 “Novel,” not by a rejection of mimesis but by the positing of another kind of mimesis,
 atmospheric, shadowed, faithful to that which flits away: a kind of mimesis that the
 narrative will apprehend with the help of its ambiguous and problematic daguerreotypes.
 (461)

To read a story and embark on criticism as a form of contact printing would be to eliminate the
 gap between (literary) production and reception, to attempt a perfect critical translation that
 ignores (or dissolves) the specific *techne* that encoded the work in the first place and that
 operates temporally even if the product appears to give a frozen, time-sliced record of entirely
 synchronic relationships. It means applying a rabbit frame to the work, trapping it in a diegetic
 logic that appears to describe the artwork’s outside but which skips over the joints and jambs of
 its production, the actual process of translating social facts into an object that can be received
 and comprehended. “Because of the daguerreotype’s peculiar construction, built up, as one recent
 expert explains, through accumulated surface granules rather than suspended in an emulsion (as
 in paper prints),” Trachtenberg continues, “what is required for the image to seem legible—or, as
 they said at the time, to ‘come to life’—is a specific triangulation of viewer, image, and light”
 (462), a comportment that re-constructs the practitioner’s concrete and embodied angle of vision
 on the subject, an angle that might operate in the service of ideology but that is not wholly
 reducible to its propositional content.

There are five portraits presented in the course of the romance: a painted miniature of
 Clifford Pyncheon, two daguerreotypes of the Judge, the keystone portrait of the Colonel that
 hangs on the wall, and a third photograph of Uncle Venner. If Holgrave is in position to have
 special insight into the signs contained therein, it is not necessarily (or solely) because of his

class position and aspirations but also because he embodies aspects of the *techne* that produced them. He provides a model for reading and visual awareness that is not possessive, that does not seize and reify what is directly in front of the eyes but plays with parallax angles through a practitioner's glance that is "diffused, spacious, open, alive with awareness and receptive to the presencing of the field as a whole" (Levin 1988, 65). On the one hand, as Smith argues, Holgrave's way of looking can be associated with the rising middle-class protective male lover, but one has as much reason to say that in Holgrave a far more primary or primordial mode of seeing meets a budding science which redeems the former in turn. Daguerrean seeing thus takes on the character not of framing but un-framing, a temporal sequencing that is not so neatly resolved by Hawthorne as either a model for the bourgeois domestic Romance or as its competitor in the marketplace.

Harriet Beecher Stowe called *Seven Gables* "a succession of Rembrandt pictures, done in words instead of oils" (qtd Williams 221). This succession is fashioned not simply between the four pictures already mentioned, but in the life of each that refuses to be still, in the proliferation of images that flit by in the minds of Clifford and Hepzibah, and in the kaleidoscopic phantasmagoria thrown up by Maule's Well. The Colonel's portrait, which hangs in the room in which he died, both prolongs the scene of death and gives the dead man a continuing presence. According to the practitioner Holgrave, the very image of "the original perpetrator and father of this mischief," the Colonel, "appears to have perpetuated himself, and still walks the street" in the form of Jaffrey, who "would have made a good and massive portrait" (1965 II, 185, 57). In Hawthorne's literary praxis, a figure like the Judge becomes an image, a copy (portrait) of his ancestor whose typological representation—he holds a Bible in one hand and an "iron sword-hilt" in the other, with the latter more prominently and "successfully depicted" (33)—produces

its own copies for those able to triangulate between the two persons who share visible features. This is a form of haunting, but there is nothing particularly occult about it; Hawthorne shows how this occurs in a glance. The photos of the Judge appear to be copies of the Colonel's portrait rather than of Jaffrey himself, Hepzibah spends less time looking at the miniature portrait of Clifford than she does at an "air-drawn picture" of her own that perfects the original (59), and Clifford's encounter with Phoebe produces an antagonism that plays out where his eye feeds images to his chaotic and broken Humean mind (which struggles to gather sensual particulars into concepts). When he meets her he has been a man "whose *images* of women had more and more lost their warmth and substance, and been frozen, like the *pictures* of secluded artists, into the chilliest ideality," but Phoebe, a "little *figure* of the cheeriest household-life," is just what he needs "to bring him back into the breathing world" (140, my emphasis).

Clifford, whose peculiar way of seeing is mostly elided from accounts of the romance's logic that focus on the semiotic rectangle [Maule-Alice-Holgrave-Phoebe], is central to one's understanding of Hawthorne's re-construction of the subject through competing modes of vision. Clifford is depicted both as a kaleidoscopic receptacle for pure undifferentiated sensations and as the ephemeral, ghostlike flicker on a daguerreotype's mirrored surface:

[He] faded away out of his place; or, in other words, his mind and consciousness took their departure, leaving his wasted, gray, and melancholy figure—a substantial emptiness, a material ghost—to occupy his seat at table. Again, after a blank moment, there would be a flickering taper-gleam in his eyeballs. It betokened that his spiritual part had returned, and was doing its best to kindle the house-hold fire, and light up intellectual lamps in the dark and ruinous mansion, where it was doomed to be a forlorn inhabitant. (1965 II, 105)

Clifford's "dark and ruinous mansion" is both the gothic family home and the dark blankness of his interior life given over to an unfixing retinal flux, the receptacle for a pure present deconstructed at every moment in the "flickering taper-gleam" of the world of unprocessed sensations. His is a material but not a unified lived body, and his visual experience is not conceived in terms analogous to a sense of touch; there is no operative extra-visual relation between a consolidated and cooperative sensorium and a bounded or "delimited space of order on which on which positions could be known and compared" (Crary 60). It is as if Clifford has regressed to a *reductio ad absurdum* of Emerson's transparent eyeball, or in physiological terms a 'transparent retina' with a faulty optic nerve, "a sublime surge of universal spirit...which comes dangerously close to annihilating identity altogether" (Kelly 242).

Characters in the novel, in their concern for and horror at Clifford's nightmarish condition, want to experience reality from a distance, as a picture understood as something there before them, *Gegenständlich*, about which they are informed and for which they are adequately prepared.²⁹ This is one possible reaction to Clifford's ecstatic, absorptive, suicidal reaction to the scene of a parade as viewed through the house's arched window(frame): "With a shivering repugnance at the idea of personal contact with the world, a powerful impulse still seized on Clifford, whenever the rush and roar of the human tide grew strongly audible to him...[he] would hardly be restrained from plunging into the surging stream of human sympathies" (165). But, as I have suggested, pictures never stay safely within their frames. Certainly, several critics have read

²⁹ In this sense, perhaps, they are fully historical subjects of Martin Heidegger's "Age of the World-Picture," where the "picture" is not just an image of the world but the world itself, understood as something there before us, about which we are informed and for which we are prepared (where whatever *is* is something "placed before us" (*vorgestellt*) as objective, as something whose being lies in standing over against us as an object present to us in all its clarity (*Gegenstand*)).

Seven Gables as a recapitulation or reformulation of G.E. Lessing's famous literary-visual distinction: Susan Williams argues, for instance, that Hawthorne "asserts the superiority of literature [over the visual arts] in part to protect it from the destabilizing proliferation of images that the market encourages" (224-5), from the *mise en abyme* that characterizes Clifford's fragmented consciousness and Hepzibah's experience in her store as she views a "panorama, representing the great thoroughfare of a city, all astir with customers," a view that overwhelms her because the town's shops have within them mirrors that endlessly expand her view of the wares (48). But there is much evidence to recommend Hawthorne's *de*-policing of the borders between genres and forms as a way not of submitting to Clifford's inability to conceptualize and make distinctions but rather to dissolve a long-standing (Puritanical) fear of imagery by re-instilling a sense of the picture's dynamism, to open the visual field of the consumer to the visual world of the practitioner and the lived body.

Lessing's *Laocoön* provided one of the most influential challenges to the long-standing "Sister Arts" theory that held an expressive equivalence between painting and literature in the history of Western art criticism. The balance of his argument is that while painting is instantaneously apprehended, in poetry meaning develops over time: "It remains true that succession of time is the province of the poet just as space is that of the painter" (91). The most common Romantic corrections to Lessing stress mental process, rather than the object of perception, as the locus of the temporal-spatial interchange. If the much-vaunted simultaneity of the painting or sculpture exists in the material artifact but not in its perception, then the latter is a matter of temporal processing, much like reading, with the difference that the ordering of this perceptual sequence is not predetermined by the object itself. At the height of this critique, one posits an inner time-consciousness that relies upon what would come to be Husserlian

phenomenological operations that extend (or *impregnate*) the subject's experience of simultaneity in the immediate act of perception itself: through acts of retention one gathers into the present what was perceived directly prior to the particular intentional act, and through protention one anticipates what will be perceived directly posterior to the act. Husserl's example of how we unify a table when we walk around it is in principle no different than the way we unify a sculpture or a painting: the latter is in reality three-dimensional and plastic even if the material apparatus is concealed by a picture frame, and even if it weren't, the physiological limits of the human eye, which require us to foveate and thus re-focus distinct phenomena that we don't have to turn our heads or move our bodies to see, further require the retina to be capable of retention and the saccadic jerks of the eye to be primed to anticipate the formal conjunction or disjunction of spatial phenomena.

There is no doubt that Lessing's distinction between bodies and actions is an oversimplification, that the *Augenblick* of the visual arts has proven in modern painting to be a site of great experimentation, deconstruction, and critique (by de-emphasizing historical painting and battle scenes, Lessing's rhetorical strategy was to bring out the sharpest possible contrast between the visual and the textual, a contrast that is certainly not so sharp, as the cubists and the surrealists among many others recognized). But to read Lessing fully requires that we also deal with the *techne* of the artist, not merely the level of reception, and at times Lessing sounds a lot like the photographer Cartier-Bresson as he meditates on view-finding a decisive moment to release the camera's shutter: the artist's works "are made not simply to be looked at, but to be contemplated long and often; evidently the most fruitful moment and the most fruitful aspect of that moment must be chosen. Now that only is fruitful which allows free play to the imagination.

The more we see, the more we must be able to imagine; and the more we imagine, the more we must think we see” (Lessing 16–7).

Of course, the art object is spatial but is nonetheless *in* time, just like the literary object is temporal but is nonetheless *in* space, and in both cases one can push against the limits of these arrangements. More difficult to deal with is Lessing’s argument about the production of art rather than its reception. The sculptor of the Laocoon group had to make a choice and give one type of information, either the style of his cloak or the pain of his bare body. Virgil did not have to choose between the two: “In poetry a robe is no robe. It conceals nothing. Our imagination sees through it in every part. Whether Virgil’s Laocoon be clothed or not, the agony in every fiber of his body is equally visible” (40). He can create the illusions of both visibility and invisibility, of presence and absence. The sense in which the viewer is imprisoned by his looking, and thus becomes “as solid as the material world observed...as though the visual arts functioned like the face of the Medusa” doesn’t merely have to do with the structure of our perception, but also results from the assumption (which I believe Hawthorne challenges in *Seven Gables*) that the art object is singular, defined by the outline of the marble or a frame and thus closed off from all other attempts to render a given representation.

Coleridge’s discussion of *Paradise Lost* and “poetic painting” is helpful background here. That “the Poet should paint to the imagination, not to the fancy” is a judgment Lessing would agree with, but Coleridge continues: “Master-pieces of the former mode of poetic painting abound in the writings of Milton,” whose work “is creation rather than painting, *or if painting*, yet such, and with such co-presence of the whole picture flash’d at once upon the eye, as the sun paints in a camera obscura” (528-29). Here the camera is a consummate form of poetic

imagination because of its power to capture the whole picture in a flash. Yet he continues further:

the poet must likewise understand and command what Bacon calls the *vestigia communia* of the senses, the latency of all in each, and more especially as a magical *penna duplex*, the excitement of vision by sound and the exponents of sound. Thus, [certain passages in Milton] may be almost said to reverse the fable in the tradition of the head of Memnon, in the Egyptian statue. Such may be deservedly entitled the creative words in the world of imagination” (529).

While the *camera obscura* can activate only a single sense, it is not visuality itself that’s the object of Coleridge’s criticism but rather a rigid and mechanistic way of seeing, describing, and fixing images that stems from the apparatus itself. One is inside the *camera obscura*, blocked on all sides by its walls, and thus the image is “fixed” not by the eye of the observer but by the camera’s single pinhole; by contrast, the “dignity of poetic Imagination” is in its “fusing power, that fixing unfixes & while it melts & bedims the Image, still leaves in the Soul” (and one might add, in the embodied eye as well) “its living meaning” (Coburn 419).

The significance of Milton—for Coleridge, for Hawthorne, for nineteenth-century theories of the image—should not be passed over: *Paradise Lost* serves as a watershed in various histories of picture-writing because of its revision of long-standing Scholastic assumptions about the “likeness” of an image, which “can be understood as a series of predicates listing similarities and differences,” more an intellectual model, definition, form, or schema than a sensual picture (Mitchell 34). W.J.T. Mitchell argues that Milton’s images, like Adam and Eve presented as *imago dei* in the poem’s fourth book, deliberately confuse “the visual, pictorial sense of the image with an invisible, spiritual, and verbal understanding of it,” producing “radiance rather

than reflection” by combining sensual appearances with un-describable predicates (35-6). Rather than casting his lot on one side of the dialectic between inner and outer images, of iconoclasm or iconophilia, Milton treated these relations—embodied in the masculine Adam whose “inner, spiritual image” accords with verbal and intellectual being, and the feminine Eve whose silent, “narcissistic idolatry” is nevertheless always wrapped up in the human attraction to the divine image—as contraries, as irreducible to a single principle or static master Image. For Milton poetry is “the scene of a struggle between iconoclastic distrust of the outward image and iconophilic fascination with its power, a struggle which manifests itself in his *practice of proliferating visual images* in order to prevent readers from focusing on any particular picture or scene” (36, my emphasis).

Hawthorne, whose fictions are populated by Miltonic Satans, Adams, and Eves, was stuck on the necessity of “proliferating visual images” at a time when visual images were literally (or materially) proliferating in the marketplace. His intuitions toward iconoclastic and iconophilic energies that were exploding in the post-Daguerre world were hardly less complex than Milton’s, as much as it has been the fashion among critics to reduce those complications. Certainly, that Hawthorne’s fiction enables him to create such animated portraits seems to testify to the superiority of the word over the image. Though his word “can make portraits ‘speak,’ it can also make them silent. By the end of the novel the portrait of Colonel Pyncheon is again static and mute, lying face down on the floor; its living copy, Judge Pyncheon, is dead; and the real Clifford—as opposed to his real and imaginary portrait—has returned to live with Hepzibah and the newly married Phoebe and Holgrave in a ghost-free country house” (Williams 232). Williams stresses the importance of Phoebe as one who “controls the proliferation of images,” and as one of the rare characters who has no available image of her past self. As the domestic

literary heroine, her “presence made a home about her” (141) even before Holgrave ‘mesmerizes’ her (with a story rather than a gaze, for she is repelled rather than captured by pictures). If, as I have suggested, portraits in the novel frequently become unframed and escape their prescribed spatial bounds, Phoebe builds them new frames: “the surrounding ‘presence’ of the home that offers perpetual order and restabilizes the haunting presences,” or more appropriately, the *absences*, “of the Gothic portraits” (Williams 233). Through Phoebe—the author’s romantic proxy as much as Holgrave is his imagistic competitor—Hawthorne reveals the “supporting ‘frame’ of domestic ideology” and the way it “can contain visual images” (Williams 233).

But as the figure of bourgeois female domesticity that re-frames living images and turns them into facile interior decorations, Phoebe’s presence comes with a price: she conventionalizes every scene she enters. She is said to be perpetually “fresh,” but she is “only so as a literary *type*, from the ‘bloom’ in her cheeks to her ‘snowy stockings’” (Williams 233). Had she stayed in the house too long, we are told, “we should soon have beheld [her] grow thin, and put on a bleached, unwholesome aspect, and assume strange, shy ways, prophetic of old-maidenhood and a cheerless future” (1965 II, 175), a dark ending averted by the marriage and pastoral retreat—which is also a retreat from the house as the artist’s or photographer’s studio—that unites the Maules and Pyncheons and ends Maule’s curse. This ending makes for a picturesque, “dusky landscape” (or *landskip*, as it would make a nice decorative panel in the right room) but one that we have reason to read as self-consciously produced by Hawthorne *as* conventional (Williams 234). An alternative product is found in the percolations of Maule’s Well, which produces images that break the boundaries of the traditional romance’s narrative closure. The novel’s final image offers the return of the unframed sequence as the Well “throw[s] up a succession of

kaleidoscopic pictures” that prophesy the Pyncheon family’s future, while Uncle Venner imagines Alice floating heavenward from the house (1965 II, 319). Not just free of Matthew Maule’s violent gaze and the curse it brought down, Alice is also free of Holgrave’s narrative of the family curse, as well as her portrait at Chatsworth; her assumption presents “a final case of an unframed portrait.” Thus Hawthorne challenges both the notion of portraits as “silent images of fixed time” while also revealing the “static nature of literary narrative” (Williams 243).

It is perhaps the *undoing* of the easy triumph of the word over the image that’s revealed when one pays attention to the surface of the narrative, the way pictures take place in space and time and as not simply, as Lessing would have it, restricted to the domain of the latter. Indeed, as Mitchell trenchantly argues, a “practical consequence of abolishing the notion of spatial and temporal genres would be that we could stop saying many things about the arts that make little or no sense” (103), including the tired notion that there is an *a priori* difference between aesthetic forms, in the idea formed by a pure intellect, before the extended spatio-temporal event of material production. When Henry James writes that the characters in *Seven Gables* “are all figures rather than characters—they are all pictures rather than persons,” he is as much recognizing Hawthorne’s method as a romance writer who was grappling with the form’s relation to visual arts and technologies as he is criticizing his countryman’s limitations as a novelist (qtd Trachtenberg 466). One might add that Hawthorne’s pictures of people are much like people, in that they conceal temporal depths in their two-dimensional presentations, literally so in the case of the Colonel’s portrait, whose frame and wall position conceal not just the event of its making but the land deed Jaffrey has been ruthlessly hunting for (tormenting the innocent Clifford in the process), the written parchment that reveals a sordid family history and the original crime of displacement perpetrated by the Pyncheons against the Maules. Holgrave

knows that his daguerreotypes, as much visual truth as they contain, need a supplement in language to unveil the entire story with epistemological certainty, and so the photograph or painting needs a 'title' of its own, and the single image never stands alone but is the product of a concrete process that can be re-constructed through narrative.

Holgrave's photographs play a necessary role in the discovery of the true story that *backs*, forming the dorsal support for, Hawthorne's presentation of the narrative present. In this way, the daguerreotypist is Hawthorne's barely acknowledged partner, providing the necessary counter to the conventional literary tendencies invested in Phoebe. When Jaffrey's corpse is finally discovered, Phoebe is horrified that Holgrave has not called witnesses upon the scene, but the photographer "did not feel the horror, which was proper to Phoebe's sweet and order-loving character, at thus finding herself at issue with society, and brought in contact with an event that transcended ordinary rules" (1965 II, 305). Instead, he revels in "his present position," his "exclusive knowledge of Judge Pyncheon's mysterious death," in the secret that would be captured by his camera as "within the circle of a spell," in the spot of space and time that the exposure is made and that will inevitably be elided in the future story of the Judge told by the 'witnesses' of a public that cannot re-construct that "exclusive knowledge." Holgrave's enjoyment at the scene—which is also a quickening impulse that allows him to practice his craft most successfully—is far different than the heavy, gazing sobriety of his ancestor: as if gathering "a flower of strange beauty, growing in a desolate spot, and blossoming in the wind" (305), his camera-eye caresses the peculiar surface of his subject, the outermost external feature of the thanatopic scene that horrifies Phoebe (who could never abide the little death that comes with every exposure), while also grasping that surface as integrally related to the thing whose surface it is, the body that affords a triangulating glance of quick comparison, the chemical revelation of

a “secret” written on the “merest surface,” the “wonderful insight in heaven’s broad and simple sunshine” (91).

This secret is not the revelation of an interior essence or personality but rather a recovered surface reflection lost to the limitations of the human eye, in Jaffrey’s case a grimace caught by Holgrave’s camera that had been hidden by the strategic proliferation of the Judge’s conventionalized demeanor. In death, the photograph reveals all, precisely because the mystery of the human heart has been extinguished. The corpse’s “wide open eyes” are significant because of their emptiness, because the corpse is all surface. Jaffrey’s countenance is captured like the legs of Muybridge’s horse would be, or like the peak positions that in Marey’s motion studies would register heightened moments of physiological tension. In all these cases, the mystery revealed is simply that this gesture was indeed *there* in reality, covered over and concealed by the particular interaction between the movement of bodies (in Jaffrey’s case theatrical and conniving) and the apparatus of the eye, which must supplement itself with prosthetic apparatuses that do in visual terms what the writer can do through descriptive language: not get inside the subject—for Hawthorne always (strives to) respect the limits of other minds, keeping his characters’ emotional states in hypothetical free indirect boundaries—but rather subject a visual field, inclusive of a character’s looks and gestures, to a probing glance heightened by the ability to fix revealing images out of a durational flux. Hawthorne plays with the metaphorical relation between the human eye and the camera’s shutter: it is only in opening the camera eye that an exposure can be made, but the camera’s typical condition is closed and unseeing. The camera must ignore almost all of the external world as the price of its capturing a momentary surface in such intense detail.

If there are normative contradictions running throughout the novel, it is likely because

Hawthorne has one foot in a residual model of subjectivity and one foot somewhere else, stuck hanging between notions of the self as a guarded private interiority and as a collection of images not unified in any sacred interior space. On the one hand, Hawthorne's concern throughout the novel about privacy and voyeurism is ultimately a concern that the penetrating eye may heighten one particular detail of human life over all the rest, thereby mutilating the inner life. For instance, Michelle Kohler focuses at length on the narrator's introduction of Hepzibah, waiting for her to come out of her locked chamber (while at her toilet, putting on her public face) and over the "threshold" of the story, establishing a narrative vision "simultaneously propelled and constrained by the narrator's visual position: the narrator describes the physical conditions that limit his visual access to Hepzibah while for the most part retaining the transparency of the literary conventions that grant him access to the interior of the house" (86). Such narrative decorum preserves the idea of deep interior privacy while turning the locked chamber inside out through a Holgravean camera eye, spreading the novel's psychological insights along exterior surfaces—of pictures, faces, and the house—which are not always available to the eye but flicker throughout the *mise en scene*.

And so the class drama that Smith raises to the level of the whole is only one element of Hawthorne's historical insight: the way a mode of vision "seeks to be the witness of the way things are as measured by how they were at some prior point" (Casey 143), that seeks the continual re-enactment of a trauma, that reinforces the rules of the game rather than probing the way things could or should be, that pins events and people down as if "sticking a pin through a butterfly—thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude" ([1965] 2). This goes hand in hand with a critical gaze that does not connect the partial object it fixes with the rest of its connecting surfaces, with the rest of the story: here, the logic of

the explicitly conventionalized ending, the way portraits both obscure and reveal histories, the ambivalent products of the photographic process. Hawthorne demands of us an interpretational suppleness to match the glance, a vision more attuned to what is *not* directly before one's eyes but rather what withdraws from presence and availability. Such are the shadows and reflections within our field of purview and that stand out in the Gothic environment of a decaying mansion, the traces and lineaments on a picture, on a face or on an object, all of which are not themselves present as whole objects but point to something else not directly seen, a hidden source of light that "deepen[s], heighten[s], extend[s] and enrich[es] the field of visibility" (Levin 1988, 79). A mode of vision attuned to such horizons wouldn't be a "stare, an act of direct, frontal looking fixated on its object" but a glance "which delights in ambiguities, uncertainties, shifting perspectives and shades of meaning" (Levin 1988, 432).

The drama of Holgrave and Phoebe is far from simply a bourgeois version of the old battle of aristocratic female and underclass male gazes. Frank Kermode may be exactly right in his claim that the novel registers "a transition from one structure of society, and one system of belief and knowledge, to another" (429), but those epistemes are complicated networks irreducible to simple face to face gazing contests. They include the intertwined histories of the crafts of painting, photography, writing, and storytelling, each far more than mere symptoms of a single socio-political *habitus*. *The House of Seven Gables* occasions a collision of forms drawn from each art as well as from social life more broadly. Its jarring visual encounters pry Hawthorne's imaginative practice from the stultifying form of the *camera obscura*'s black box, opening his and his reader's eyes in preparation for an *ars poetica* still to come.

III

In *Talking Shop*, Peter Betjemann analyzes the literary and print discourse on artisanship in the nineteenth-century as “a Gordian knot which, in its intricacy, made text the most visible artisanal medium in Anglo-American culture and reconstructed the cultural meaning of workmanship” (11-12). He argues for the importance of Benvenuto Cellini’s nineteenth-century canonization—a cottage industry made up of fiction writers, translators, and art critics—in creating “an account of artisanal sensibility that cohered around the example of his range and charisma” (32). The contradictions in Cellini’s autobiography (printed for the first time in English in 1771), particularly the paucity of references to the craftsman’s concrete labors themselves in a narrative largely constructed around heroic feats, society anecdotes, and the winning of commissions, placed the period’s cult of Renaissance craft “on the dystopian trajectory of history summarized by Karl Marx as the ‘division and sub-division of labor’ and culminating in the mechanization of formerly artisanal tasks” (59-60). Most important for literary studies, however, is the more modest claim that, as in Cellini’s *Life*, craft became a privileged site of and content for literature as it tested its own limits as “both icon of a restored relation with the body and a misleading, dodgy narrative” about its own “potential to incarnate, to vitalize” (87). Hawthorne, who made a number of references in his fiction and in his journals to Cellini, is said to desire “to ground craft and its texts in durability, singularity, and centripetal relations with objects even as he recognizes the forces [...] that draw craft toward mutability and embed its narrative interest in the sense of possibility it offers” (103).

Betjemann writes toward the end of a long line of commentators on Hawthorne’s romances in the context of nineteenth-century modes of production and consumption. On *The House of Seven Gables* specifically, Michael Gilmore and Walter Benn Michaels represent two sides of this dialogue: whereas Gilmore’s *American Romanticism and the Marketplace* argues

that the novel affects a direct critique of an economic system wherein “appearance matters more than substance,” Michaels’ *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism* holds that Hawthorne’s focus on impalpable property and intangible imagery is a strategy whereby the author can escape from contemporary modes of exchange. But instead of positioning craft *tout court* as either a material haven from capitalistic fantasy or an idealistic activity separate from capitalistic materialism, Betjemann chooses to show how, for Hawthorne, craft is not a refuge but a problem to be worked out itself, as nineteenth-century print culture (in its multivariate response to industrialization and capital) held the artisanal ethos as *both* primarily material and ideal, objective and subjective in character. His reading of the found scarlet letter in “The Custom House” demonstrates how:

[c]raft’s mandate reverses and reverses again depending on whether it is understood from the perspective of the repressive structures of history and the “unimaginative sagacity” of the trades (in which case artisanship’s higher potential lies in subjectivity, contingency, and the inimitable aspect of handmade objects) or from the perspective of nineteenth-century trade and manufacture (in which case artisanship signifies objectivity, durability, completion, and the longevity accorded to a prior material culture). (97)

And yet craft’s promise to incarnate something either beautifully subjective or solidly objective often disappoints in Hawthorne’s fictions, less as a “critique of manual labor’s limitations than as a critique of the false promises about craft’s incarnating potential peddled in written, read, and oral forms,” which tend to sneak in claims linking the product of the craftsman to the material incarnations of the intellectual intuition of the godlike genius (103).

Several of Hawthorne’s short fictions allegorize the battle between artisanal craft and abstractly engineered labor, with morals hardly readymade (but rather troubled and ambivalent)

in support of the former: Betjemann begins, for instance, with “Rappaccini’s Daughter”—and its contest between the evil scientist and his rival Baglioni, who comes bearing the story’s tragic antidote in a vial “wrought by the hands of the renowned Benvenuto Cellini”—but also points to less celebrated tales like “Drowne’s Wooden Image” and “The Artist of the Beautiful” (1844). But no work is more invested in the nuances of craft and its relation to the visual than *The Marble Faun*, which, by focusing on a community of (fine) artists, directly considers the legibility of an *ethos* of material production as the domain of imaginative, aestheticized vision. That the figures of this romance are somewhat more insulated from the economies of Hawthorne’s other stories—they are artists rather than merchants, of course, but they are also expatriates in Rome—perhaps explains the novel’s relative neglect by Hawthorne criticism’s theorists of craft. Perhaps the privileged class position of his characters allowed the author to focus on the phenomena of vision in the practice of art making, rather than continue to run into the deadlocks of craft’s ontological standing in an individualistic market society.

In this 1860 romance, Hawthorne conceives of the material production of the visual arts as the result of a “fortunate fall” of sorts, as the ambivalent glory of a condition of finite, embodied vision. From the beginning, Hawthorne promises the reader that his Rome, an arena constructed by and for artists, will be built through the glance:

We glance hastily at these things—at this bright sky, and those blue, distant mountains, and at the ruins, Etruscan, Roman, Christian, venerable with a threefold antiquity, and at the company of world-famous statues in the saloon—in the hope of putting the reader into that state of feeling which is experienced oftenest at Rome. (C IV, 6)

Further promising a return to experiences of the utmost “weight and density,” the narrator nevertheless describes the following narrative as woven through with “some airy and

unsubstantial threads, intermixed with others, twisted out of the commonest stuff of human existence,” ultimately built out of perceptions “not widely different from the texture of all our lives.” It is in this paradoxical conflation of the weightiest with the airiest, of the antique beauties of Rome with the everyday, that the glance forges its way as the connective tissue grafting the ordinary construction of one’s lifeworld to the expert practice of the fine arts. What appears to be superficial and evanescent elsewhere, experience’s “airy and unsubstantial threads,” is recognized as foundational to experience in Rome, because that is where one cannot fail to be touched and interpellated by art. This applies as much to the writer as anyone else, for “the very dust of Rome” is said to “mingle with [his] ink” (101).

Through the competing visual registers of the novel’s artists, their various preferences for color, form, and plasticity, Hawthorne develops a narrative of a (literal) fall—of the ‘execution’ of Miriam’s Model—that has as its subtext and ultimate subject the production of art. Hawthorne’s artists spend as much time theorizing about art as they do making it. Kenyon, the sculptor, insists on what his art is not: “Flitting moments, imminent emergencies, imperceptible intervals between two breaths, ought not to be incrustated with the eternal repose of marble” (16). Miriam, a painter, responds by describing what her art is: “You think that sculpture should be a sort of fossilizing process...In painting there is no similar objection to the representation of brief snatches of time; perhaps because a story can be so much more fully told, in picture.” Sculpture, formed from the “substantial fact” of hard marble which “may be tested by absolute touch and measurement” (7), provides a cold, masculine medium for embodying “the massiveness of the past,” whereas painting, composed of the transitory and “illusive unreality of color” (134) is a warmer, softer, feminine medium that can capture the “dreamy character of the present” (6).

Each character is limited in perception according to the limitations their art imposes upon them. The narrative climax, Miriam and Donatello's murder of the haunting body of the Model, Jonathan Auerbach writes, "imitates and illuminates other acts of artistic creation in the novel, such as Kenyon's execution of Cleopatra ("with a word") and Hilda's execution of the Old Masters, who continue totally to 'enslave' the virgin Puritan precisely because her copies are too exact duplicates of the originals" (112). Each character, in their participation in the bloody act, conforms to states in the process of material production: Miriam desires and commands the purging, Donatello performs the act, and Hilda witnesses it as the audience that shares the burden of the artist's perpetual fall. If the model is a rough-hewn copy of the aesthetic idea, the artist's product is also an imperfect copy of the model: in the novel, the actual Model acts as a key intermediary between the animating idea and the fulfilled artistic creation, a "compulsive specter who obsessively dogs Miriam's footsteps like some vaguely formed suggestion from the past that demands expression" (Auerbach 111). In a number of scenes that depict the material production of art, the iterative transformation from model to plastic product is conveyed visually, as a series of glances on the part of the artist between world, model, and aesthetic object, just like when the cast of artists look back and forth, in the opening scene, between their friend Donatello and the Faun of Praxiteles.

Miriam literally executes her Model with a glance, which communicates her murderous wish to Donatello. The power that Auerbach attributes to "glances and glimpses," the ability to "convey highly suggestive but fragmentary, illusive insights into the transitory, dreamy present" (115), is also the artist's power to capture the detail in reality around which the work falls into place. But this enabling condition of vision is also a condition of finitude (is the result of that "fortunate fall"), as Hilda finally realizes at the Cathedral of St. Peters, where her dream of

overwhelming vastness and transcendence gives way to an anamorphic series of architectural remnants: “You see an aisle, or a transept; you see the nave, or the tribune; but on account of its ponderous piers and other obstructions, it is only by this fragmentary process that you get an idea of the Cathedral” (349). Her preparation for this vision is a run of Coleridgean dejection in the “long galleries”: “Heretofore, her sympathy went deeply into a picture, yet seemed to leave a depth which it was inadequate to sound; now, on the contrary, her perceptive faculty penetrated the canvas like a steel probe, and found but a crust of paint over emptiness” (341). Conceived literally, the ‘emptiness’ Hilda finds is the material ground of painting, what Antonin Artaud termed the “subjectile” or the absent surface that “takes on visible figure, comes into the open, emerges, enters into existence or exposition in its vanishing, only in the figure or design of the painting, in the colored marks on the canvas, paper, or wood left by the brushstrokes” (Miller 68). The return of this ground as a void or emptiness is a dramatic return of what is visually repressed by the success of Hilda’s “steel probe” gaze, her sympathy with the spirit of the work of the art instead of the labor that brings coherence to the scattered immanence of the material world.

It is important to note once again that Hilda is the Puritan on the scene (one of Hawthorne’s innocent maidens, like Phoebe Pyncheon or Priscilla from *The Blithedale Romance*): her decisive vision of the fragmented whole in reality itself is indeed traumatic, and she releases a cry that “came back broken into many fragments, and from various quarters of the church” (355-6), a cry “conceived as a whole and received” (in the echo chamber of the Cathedral) “as broken echoes” (Auerbach 114). Hilda attempts to repair the broken deformation in the confessional, as her sight is turned inward in order to discover “the pure, white light of Heaven” (366) unmediated by the eyes (or the stained glass pinholes of the enormous *camera*

obscura she finds herself in). She reveals her knowledge of the murder-fall so that she can reclaim her visual innocence and wash her eyes (rather than her hands) clean of the violent execution.

This visual innocence, a wholly transcendent (and often theological) equivalent of the ideal of “blind sight” is here not only impossible but an intellectual dead-end: we may attempt to see the world renewed, but in unfamiliar territory we must measure our current experience against other images, against stored memory, against the images reality itself discloses. We never look at just one thing in isolation; our vision continuously compares what’s happening against what once happened, against existing images, against conventional aesthetic preferences, and it is the active glancing between this archive that teaches us to perceive and visually construct a world. When Kenyon attempts to reassemble the dismembered statue of Venus he discovers in the ground, he tries to perform an imaginative magic trick: “It immediately lighted up and vivified the whole figure, endowing it with personality, soul, and intelligence. The beautiful Idea at once asserted its immortality, and converted that heap of forlorn fragments into a whole, *as perfect to the mind, if not to the eye*, as when the new marble gleamed with snowy luster” (423-4, emphasis mine). The “beautiful Idea” that “marries the body and soul” of the sculpture is encountered in an imaginative act that “cannot be sustained, the center cannot hold” (Auerbach 116), and the statue collapses into a “heap of worthless fragments” (424).³⁰

³⁰ A peculiar notebook entry from 1842 illuminates somewhat Hawthorne’s often derided take on the art of sculpture: “Summer squashes are a very pleasant vegetable to be acquainted with;— they grow in the forms of urns and vases, some shallow, others of considerable depth, and all with a beautifully scalloped edge. Almost any squash in our garden might be copied by a sculptor, and would look beautifully in marble, or in china-ware; and if I could afford it, I would have exact imitations of the real vegetable as portions of my dining-service” (VIII, 329). Dolis, while repeatedly using the vocabulary of ‘gazing,’ nevertheless writes that, for Hawthorne, because “the eye delights in the tangible, that around which it can playfully ‘feel’ in order to

Even if one takes the process of artistic construction to be a sort of magical incarnation of spirit in matter—as many take Hawthorne’s program in *The Marble Faun* and elsewhere to suggest—the artist’s prestidigitation is laid bare by the author through various moments of technical reveal (Hawthorne’s revelation occurs, therefore, not in the incarnation but in the phenomenological description of an embodied act). In *The American Notebooks*, Hawthorne writes of portraiture: “The pursuit has always interested my imagination more than any other; and I remember, before having my first portrait taken, there was a great bewitchery in the idea, as if it were a magic process” (VIII, 492- 93). But what this “magic process” consists of, specifically, is the way the painter captures a moment by struggling in and with time, “casting quick, keen glances at me, and then making hasty touches on the picture, as if to secure with his brush what he had caught with his eye” (VIII, 498). Painting according to a series of glances produces, in the belated viewer of a portrait, a new series of glances (what Hawthorne here calls ‘glimpses’) that work to *catch* the representation at the highest moment of the artist’s insight into his reticent, withholding model: “It is a peculiarity of this picture [of Beatrice Cenci], that its profoundest expression eludes a straightforward glance, and can only be caught by side glimpses, or when the eye falls casually upon it; even as if the painted face had a life and consciousness of its own, and, resolving not to betray its secret of grief and guilt, permitted the true tokens to

investigate the various aspects of an object, its operation mirrors the intentional unity of the perceptual object itself, the opaque appropriation of the object as a whole...[Hawthorne’s sketches], like sculpture, invite completion by virtue of [their] opaque suggestivity” (277). But his Husserlian presuppositions about intentionality prevent him from going as far as passages like this allow, limiting the register of “feeling” to the delight of the gaze itself no matter what sort of object (made or natural) it encounters. Alexander Nemerov’s study of Raphaele Peale’s still lifes (*The Body of Raphaele Peale* [2001]), which are constructed so as to allow the viewer’s body to connect with the offerings of the fruits and vegetables placed along with items of gear to be used by the hands, makes for a good interdisciplinary companion to Hawthorne criticism because it re-theorizes the way painting and the plastic arts relate to one another outside of the dominant discourse on optical distance and disembodiment.

come forth only when it imagined itself unseen” (IV, 204-05). Because Kenyon has largely foregone the activity of putting his hands on clay or taking his chisel to marble (his studio assistants execute his plans), he develops a habit of perceiving the world as if it were an unlimited art gallery for his spectatorial eye, an actualized form of Malreaux’s “museum without walls” that renders the Actual and the Imaginary indistinguishable. Persistent contradictions between his and Donatello’s interpretations of phenomena force Kenyon to doubt his artistic vision. The most compelling of Kenyon’s sculptures are those left open to continual transformation and which invite the eye to apprehend sequence, including his last series: an accidental bust of Donatello left in clay (273), a fragile snowmaiden which Kenyon refuses to “imprison...in a permanent material” (375), and the unfinished marble bust of Donatello, in which “one observer in a thousand” would apprehend “the riddle of the soul’s growth” (381). For Hawthorne the question of art is certainly a question of value, how out of the infinity of forms that can be mechanically generated an individual, in a concrete situation that includes the particular limitations of his vision, makes judgments of representational adequacy. But when the mechanics of vision in the process of making and execution are forgotten in the act of aesthetic appreciation, we also forget that the product is not an object with an aura, a portal to the Ideal, but rather a visual event of the here and now, an invitation to understand the way we see not just the art object but the world, to come to a visual awareness about how we construct a world through the *glance*, how we order that world through the arrangement and re-arrangement of real materials.

Hawthorne’s own anxieties about his career as a writer include questions about how ‘real’ the material he works with really is. This is, of course, a concern quite widespread in the nineteenth-century, when distinctions like romantic-real or America-Europe threatened to

balkanize literary activity through competing viewpoints on the ontological status of fictions. If *The Marble Faun* continued Hawthorne's long train of thought regarding the relation between the Imaginary and the Actual (and the imagination and the body) mediated and even *incarnated* in so many representations of the insights and breakdowns of optical life, it stands at the end of a career that is also a threshold upon which further technological advances in mechanized seeing were still to arrive, significant visual prostheses that would motivate, in turn, further experimentation among sensitive writers. Even more than early photographic apparatuses that would develop, with the Pictorialist and Naturalist movements, into practices of fine arts to imitate or rival painting, "philosophical toys" like the thaumatrope, phenakistoscope, stereoscope, kaleidoscope, and zoetrope would generate new theories of the image that relied upon a temporary interface between the human body and an imprinted picture.³¹ Because the 'moving' images depend for their existence upon the limits of the human eye (mechanisms of retinal retention that feed to the optic nerve a simplified version of the movement of the eye's visual field), the ontological status of those images—neither wholly 'in' reality nor 'in' the eye—would feed back into considerations of metaphor, *techne*, and the imagination by authors, like Hawthorne, already grappling with those issues in the domain of literary fiction.

Despite making much of Hilda's technique as a copyist, a trade that came to demand photographic training as part of its *techne*, the novel makes only one reference to photography (even more surprising in comparison with the ubiquity of the daguerreotype in *Seven Gables*).

³¹ This common use of "toy" might remind one of Coleridge's speaker, in "Frost at Midnight," making "a toy of Thought" through the film fluttering on his fireplace grate, the "sole unquiet thing" of the lyric. Coleridge presents here the same sort of transient interface between self and world that one finds in a device like the thaumatrope. The irony of the appellation goes both ways as well, for the playful nature of such experiences—the fanciful give and take of world and body that produces a third—can also be distinguished from a truly innocent, childlike belief in the permanence of the image as *Gegenstand* (a toy come to life, perhaps, as in *The Nutcracker*).

Because the Roman galleries forbid easels, Hilda explains, with regard to her unlikely success with the portrait of Beatrice Cenci, “I had no resource but to sit down before the picture, day after day, and let it sink into my heart. I do believe it is now photographed there” (65). Dan Clinton has noted the curious fact that

[d]espite the novel’s focus on the visual arts, optical devices like the camera appear only in figures of speech. Instead, Hawthorne frets that professional copyists have become too impersonally mechanical. Copyists who focus on a single painting are described as “Guido machines, or Raphaelic machines” (59), while the assistants who translate clay models into finished sculptures become “some nameless machine in human shape” (115). (414)

One can interpret this curiosity as the moment in Hawthorne’s career when he dispensed with the literary significance of photography, as Clinton does when he argues: “In *The Marble Faun*, sympathy has replaced the camera...[a]s a critic of the arts, Hawthorne values inspiration over mediation or technique” (415). But when Hilda refers to the fixing of a photograph on her heart, while she might be limiting photography to a mere figure of speech, she is also repeating in the domain of the visual arts Hawthorne’s own desire, spelled out in a letter to Sophia, to find “something in the intellectual world analogous to the Daguerreotype...something which should print off our deepest, and subtlest, and delicatest thoughts and feelings, as minutely as the above-mentioned instrument paints the various aspects of Nature” (*The Letters* 384). In other words, the path from *Seven Gables* to *The Marble Faun* might be a turn from the use of photography as explicit content of the romance to a more deeply embedded formal principle, less diegetic actor than one side of an *analogy* of aesthetic process.

At the same time, while the daguerreotype sinks into the metaphorical background of Hawthorne's romance, seemingly immaterial optical illusions come to the fore, visual events roughly equivalent to what Kant called "charms" or attractions, not quite substantial enough to be part of a shared aesthetic. Miriam is said to resemble "one of those images of light, which conjurers evoke and cause to shine before us, in apparent tangibility, only an arm's length beyond our grasp; we make a step in advance, expecting to seize the illusion, but find it still precisely so far out of our reach" (1990, 21). An 1860 audience would have readily associated "one of those images of light" with the images produced by a popular "philosophical toy" (often described as optical magic tricks) like the thaumatrope, which synthesized two different images printed on either side of a spinning disc; common examples include a bird and its cage or a horse and rider, though one could easily imagine Donatello sprouting faun's ears through stroboscopic effect. The synthesized image of the thaumatrope was certainly real—it was not a hallucination, for it was shared inter-subjectively by those operating the device—but could not be located at any particular site in the world, because it was "dependent on both a mechanical operation (manipulation and movement) and a perceptual transformation (a literal change in the way something is seen or appears)" (Gunning 506). In contrast to a painting or a photograph, the "philosophical" image depends upon both viewer and device for its existence, as it is neither fixed in the mind nor on canvas or paper by dry paint or sodium thiosulfate.

The optical illusion of the thaumatrope is like the visual metaphor to be fixed by the artist with his own hands, taking away from the observer his dependency on his own hand to manipulate the device and temporarily create the evanescent image (a process which Wanda Strauven calls "the eye fool[ing] the brain via the hand" [Observer's Dilemma, 154]). In this historical context, Hawthorne's concerns with the fixing of phenomena—including otherwise

fleeting psychological, phenomenological, or spiritual phenomena—could have been generalized to the point that it became a problematic shared by the ‘sister arts,’ where narratives come to be structured around the ‘fixing’ of images, like the Model’s face which threatened to become “fixed ineffaceably on [Miriam’s] brain” (190). Clinton traces this concern to the level of Hawthorne’s style, specifically his strict “limits [on] his use of free indirect style and authorial omniscience. For Hawthorne, shared images anchor fancy in the senses, inviting narration, while inner states lacking an optical correlative are available only to conjecture” (415). This stylistic principle coheres with the principles of *techne* expressed in his characters’ work and in the climactic execution of the Model, dependent as it is upon a murderous glance open to much psychological conjecture even as it proves indubitably efficient in action. What *happens* passes too quickly for the conscious actor, observer, and even the narrator to adequately narrate, but the result is an accomplished, fixed act that cannot be wished away, for it provides a trace or index of reality: “Hilda had looked into the courtyard, and saw the whole quick passage of a deed, which took but that little time to grave itself in the eternal adamant” (171).

Contained within the seeming contradiction between a momentary glance and an engraving is the budding transformation of the seeing subject that was occurring in theories of the arts, the optical sciences, and philosophy just as it was taking place within Hawthorne’s *oeuvre*. This corpus of literary texts can thus be seen as a particular (and perhaps singularly dazzling) archive of evidence for Crary’s claim that what determines vision in a historical moment is not a deep structure, economic base, or *Weltanschauung* but the “functioning of a collective assemblage of disparate parts”—literary texts, visual art objects, technologies and toys, aesthetic manifestos—“on a single social surface” (6). Hawthorne’s continued re-examination of the problem of vision occurred at a time of a massive “repositioning of the

observer” beyond the locked relations of interior and exterior “presupposed by the camera obscura and into an undemarcated terrain on which the distinction between internal sensation and external signs is irrevocably blurred” (Crary 24). And as one *sees* in the ‘magic’ of the thaumatrope or phenakistiscope, the introduction of temporality as an inescapable component of observation challenged classical optical presuppositions. The “virtual instantaneity of optical transmission was an unquestioned foundation of classical optics” (Crary 98), which led to the presupposition of a temporal simultaneity and ontological bond between the image in the *camera obscura* and the object of representation out ‘there.’ But, Crary demonstrates, “as observation is increasingly tied to the body in the early nineteenth century, temporality and vision become inseparable” (98). Shifting, fluctuating, and shuffling temporal experience began to be acknowledged as the very character of seeing itself, delivering visual theory once and for all from the wholly rational Cartesian observer, completely locked in—through a geometrically tuned gaze—on a transparent object.

The evidence that the human subject constructs a world through the embodied glance was being provided by the hard sciences. Xavier Bichat decentralized and scattered the body’s living systems, beginning the process of piecing back together the interlocking mechanism of sensory and motor nerves. Augustin-Jean Fresnel found that light waves were transverse rather than longitudinal, calling into question the independent identity of light itself relative to the human sensory apparatus. Johannes Müller posited a seeing subject analogous to the photographic camera, with a physiological apparatus susceptible to external procedures of manipulation that continuously produce new experiences for a subject suspended within a circuit of circulating energy. Finally, Hermann von Helmholtz asserted that as perception begins with “effects” of reality rather than complete images, the eye’s truths were ultimately “practical truths” depending

upon the interests of the perceiver who, never able to overcome the physical distortions of the bodily eye, is able to manage them the way a person who looks “through a prism and executes movements of his body and hands as they appear in his field of view soon learns to see through the prism correctly” (537). As the sciences destroyed eighteenth-century optics piece by piece, instituting physiological optics at the center of visual inquiry, artists and writers concerned with the process of seeing were left to grapple with a difficult question: *how* does one create an image of lasting value if “visions” are achieved according to the evanescent operations of the finite human body, through the fleeting quickness of the glance?

If the time of the glance is a sheer instant, its intentional body like a searchlight of minimal dimension that “quickly penetrates the icy surface to get to whatever inner *nisus* or *telos* might be at stake in a given phenomenon” (Casey), Hawthorne came to understand that it was its diminutive dimension that made it so powerful, because—unlike the penetrating gaze with heavy psychic baggage attached, performed by Matthew Maule and Alice Pyncheon in *Seven Gables*—it was fundamentally prosthetic and impersonal, and thus open to the new. Despite Hawthorne’s long time interest in the *camera obscura*, and his familiarity mostly with the clunky apparatuses and long (certainly *penetrating*) exposure times of the contemporary daguerreotype, he was able to imagine more nimble photographic practices as the technology was being developed elsewhere, and as various “philosophical toys” were heralding the future of the moving image and suggesting new ontologies of the image in turn. Throughout his *oeuvre* he was demonstrating the unique power of the fleeting vision on a subject ‘trained’ (or even simply reduced) to receive them and work with them. Like Goodman Parker’s lantern in “The Wives of the Dead,” “bringing into view indistinct shapes of things, and the fragments of a world, like order glimmering through chaos, or memory roaming over the past” (XI 196), the meteor that

briefly illuminates the dark sky that Dimmesdale's gaze couldn't otherwise penetrate, or Ethan Brand's flaming lime kiln that flickers and momentarily transforms the figures of the surrounding darkness, real 'illumination' for Hawthorne comes through the glances of supple, impersonal subjects who've become empty, receptive bodies "in harmony with the low relief and dimness of outline of the objects that surrounded them" (James 99).

What *The Marble Faun* does more exquisitely than any of Hawthorne's preceding works is embody this impersonal subjectivity in the figure of the artist while integrating the significance of the glance in a narrative that moves according to its rhythm (thus bridging in some sense the technical differences of the writer and the visual artist). The painter Miriam, whose instantaneous glance is the axis upon which the novel's epic form turns, appears as an "image of light" at one moment, beholds herself "as in a dim show" when the Model enters (171), turns into a waifish actor with no clear memory of the deed when she bids Donatello to murder, assures him that the act "was no more than [...] a dream; there was as little substance in what you fancied yourself doing" (199), and finally appears to Hilda and Kenyon "as a projected image," "kneeling on the pavement, just beneath the great central Eye" of the Pantheon (Clinton 420, Hawthorne 459). She is both a fleeting figure in a magic lantern show, unable to be looked upon directly and dissolving with each scene, and an artist whose being is staked upon the transformative potential of these liminal moments, the impersonality that inheres in the gestures and glances of the body as it dissolves the hard distinction between subject and object, self and world, mind and matter, imagination and reality.

Chapter 2. Emily Dickinson: Plashless as She Sees

The manuscript history of Emily Dickinson's poetry reads like a murder mystery: who killed the fascicle, and which detective-scholar-conjuror will be first to resuscitate her poems' true life? Because Dickinson's reception history is so complicated, and the poet's original materials so baffling (to many), writing anything of length about her work generates serious anxiety. As Cristanne Miller notes, even "in quoting a Dickinson poem, scholars now implicitly manifest their theoretical position as to what constitutes a Dickinson poem" (43). Perhaps this has always been the case, but now at least everyone seems to know it, and is ready to look for it. So before one presents, on the page, one's transcription of a Dickinson poem or even a single line, much throat clearing must ensue. A basic history of the afterlife of the fascicles, sheets, letters, and fragments is recited: Lavinia's discovery, Mabel's and Sue's feud, Higginson's anthologization, Johnson's variorum, Franklin's manuscript efforts, and finally a rehearsal of the most popular contemporary angles on how to categorize a Dickinson poem (with names like Sharon Cameron, Jerome McGann, Paul Crumbley, Virginia Jackson, and a large handful of others cropping up consistently).

We may no longer know a poem when we see one, but surely we know a photograph when we see one of *those*. So consider Dickinson's most famous daguerreotyped likeness. That picture, which Mary Bernhard claims was taken by William C. North³² and which her siblings Austin and Lavinia rejected as "too solemn," was made when the poet was either sixteen or seventeen, during her time at the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary (qtd. Bernhard 598). Thus, when many of us recall Emily Dickinson's face, we recall the schoolgirl rather than the mature

³² Bernhard's 1999 essay, "Lost and Found," bases its claims on correspondence found at the Jones Library in Amherst and in contemporary issues of *The Hampshire and Franklin Express*, which ran North's advertisements.

poet. We sense her looking to the future, both at *us*, at her unknown future readers who will take obsessive interest in her weird poetry and desire to unearth more likenesses from a dearth of “authorized” pictures³³, and more immediately at her own future productivity as an artist. Between she and us lies a century and a half, though as big a gulf—the gulf over which she looks and we look back—are her poems, little mysteries for us as well as for her adolescent self. But upon close inspection, she does not appear to be gazing straight at us, or at her future. Her visage is ever-so-slightly walleyed: according to Richard Sewall and ophthalmologist Martin Wand, applying the Hirschberg measurement, her right cornea deviated at least fifteen degrees from true (403). They take this as evidence that the mysterious optical illness she suffered from—referenced several times in her letters—was the effect of exotropia, the outward turn of the eye. Before she ever put her pen to paper, Emily Dickinson’s eyes were just a bit wide of the mark. She could not look at things straight on; she literally saw them slant.

To the extent that theories of the gaze have been applied in recent Dickinson criticism—often refracted through Laura Mulvey’s argument about the gendered gaze in “Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema”—they tend to promote a distinction between the poet’s look and the way the poet is looked at. There is much in her poetry, not to mention in the peculiar experience of looking closely at her daguerretyped image, to support such an approach. On the one hand, it has often been argued, Dickinson’s many “veils”—whether articles of clothing, windows, natural barriers, the enclosure of her house and room, or more generally her singular and private writing

³³ The Emily Dickinson International Society’s authentication process reminds one of the care taken in inspecting the status of a Honus Wagner baseball card. When Philip Gura purchased a possible second photograph of the poet on eBay in 2000, the Society as well as Richard Jantz, Director of the Forensic Anthropology Center at the University of Tennessee, examined the artifact. Thus far the identification has not been ruled out, though it is unlikely experts will ever be able to make a definitively positive “ruling” either.

practices—serve to mask her female body while generating a secret space wherein she can explore, through verse, her body and mind on her own terms.³⁴ Cynthia Hogue argues that “Dickinson perceived the dynamics of the [male] gaze,” and managed to resist its mastery by splitting her self in her poetry, a defensive strategy that “places and displaces” the male seer in turn, that alternatively “locates him in and dislocates him from the position of knowledge about her” (30-1, 38). Lisa Harper hits nearly all the checkpoints, arguing explicitly through Mulvey’s theory (of which more below) that Dickinson’s “poetics of veiling” is a “defensive strategy against the psychosexual and social consequences of the male gaze” that also affords the poet “the space in which to pursue alternative configurations of gender and desire and to explore the female body” (40).

Just taking in the sheer number of veil poems—from “I see thee better – in the Dark” (Franklin 442³⁵) to “We Cover Thee – Sweet Face” (F461) and “They put Us far apart” (F708)—in concert with the biographical basics indeed supports the notion that such thematic and rhetorical devices play a strategic role in producing lyrics relatively immune to the critical male gaze (often associated in the poet’s life with Thomas Wentworth Higginson), and serve Dickinson’s unique ability to carve out a hidden (ad)vantage on her period’s stifling gender norms. But I believe there are several neglected and unexplored dimensions of Dickinson’s poetic vision that depend upon advancing the cause of the body at work and play, rather than the

³⁴ See more general takes on Dickinson’s fear of male sexuality in Clark Griffith, *The Long Shadow: Emily Dickinson’s Tragic Poetry*, NJ: Princeton UP, 1964; John Cody, *After Great Pain: The Inner Life of Emily Dickinson*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1971; Joanne Feit Diehl, “‘Come Slowly, Eden’: An Exploration of Women Poets and Their Muse,” *Signs* 3.3 (1978): 572-587; Vivian R. Pollak, *Dickinson: The Anxiety of Gender*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984; Joanne Dobson, *Dickinson and the Strategies of Reticence: The Woman Writer in Nineteenth-Century America*, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989; and Mary Loeffelholz, *Dickinson and the Boundaries of Feminist Theory*, Urbana: U of Illinois Press, 1991.

³⁵ All poems are numbered according to R.W. Franklin’s *Variorum Edition* (1998).

anxious necessity of dis-embodiment by veil. Before addressing the shortcomings of sticking a Mulveyan frame on Dickinson's glancing *poesis*, it is worth understanding what she actually (may have) thought about photography, the medium that made objects of women like herself—as well as nearly everything else—from its conception.

I

While much has been made of Dickinson's troubled relationship to print culture and publication, far less scholarship has been devoted to her troubled relationship with photography. This is certainly understandable, for she was a poet, not a photographer. But like Hawthorne, though far less obviously, she often considered her craft in the context of her time's perpetual revolution in visual media. It is made clear in Dickinson's fourth letter to Higginson (L268) that her mentor asked her to provide a picture of herself, to which she responded: "I had no portrait, now, but am small, like the Wren, and my Hair is bold, like the Chestnut Bur – and my eyes, like the Sherry in the Glass, that the Guest leaves – Would this do just as well?" ([1986], 175). Contained within this response is a gesture toward the post-Lessing, nineteenth-century *paragone* taken up by Hawthorne and many others, not quite ekphrasis in this case but a friendly competition between language and light in the production of a likeness.

Circling back to Higginson's request, she writes that in any case, in her experience, "the Quick wore off those things, in a few days," likely referring to the albumen gloss on a freshly printed photograph (Dickinson [1986], 175). The technical term "quick" also referred, at the time, to a chemical accelerator (originally for daguerreotypes) that "increased the sensitivity of the light-recording compound and thus very materially reduced the time of exposure in the camera...from minutes to seconds" (Taft 44). If the quickening was what brought signifier and

signified into more immediate relation—was what appeared to collapse the gap between object and image that was so apparent in longer exposures—Dickinson’s disparaging comment suggests her knowing skepticism about such immediacy, that photography’s magic had already worn off, for her if not for everyone else. But while Judith Farr argues that, in this letter, Dickinson demonstrates her “preference for capturing images in the suggestive language of poetry rather than by strict graphic means” (20), her extensive use of the word “quick” throughout her poetic corpus—for instance, in “The Soul’s distinct connection” (F901)—instead suggests a far more complicated working relationship to photography’s mechanical process:

The Soul's distinct
 Connection
 With immortality
 Is best disclosed by
 Danger
 Or quick Calamity –

As Lightning on a
 Landscape
 Exhibits† Sheets of Place –
 Not yet suspected† – but
 for Flash† –
 And Click† – and Suddenness.

]Developes
]still unsuspected]Fork
]Bolt

(F901)

This poem, likely written in 1865 and never bound, is considered as part of Dickinson’s Set 5. The poem’s second stanza makes a subordinate clause, its “As” cordoning off two sides of an analogy and thereby splitting the poem in half according to the logic of likeness. Internally, within the second stanza, her diction splits the “quick Calamity” in which the Soul meets immortality between natural and mechanical phenomena, playing off common contemporary associations between the camera’s flash and lightning strikes, the latter “seen as capable of

‘photographing’ outlines onto natural objects” and “often regarded, like photography, as an amalgamation of the mystical and the scientific” (Vogelius 27-8). “Quick,” “Sheets,” “Flash,” “Click,” and her variant “Developes” all bring the photographic process into the domain of existential crisis, with interior and exterior “Landscape[s]” revealed in a pregnant glance. The short poem itself, its dashes increasing as it rushes to a sudden conclusion and exposure, produces epiphany’s interruption within the flow of thought and in the breakdown of common meter. Here, one of Dickinson’s characteristically tense moments of the soul’s proximity to the eternal is transformed into the rhythms of photographic revelation, of the camera-eye’s “Suddenness” as it pulls a decisive “Place” out of time.

One can perfectly imagine a coherent reading of this verse that plays up the violence, the lurking “Danger” and achieved “Calamity,” inflicted by the flash and click upon the unsuspecting “Soul.” Indeed, few Dickinson lyrics overlook the hazards of revelation, which is violent and self-destructive by (her) definition. One might ground a poem like this within a general economy of agoraphobic aversion, thinking that the “Danger” of the camera’s flash and click is its threat to the self-contained (lyric) self, scattering and disseminating its mien throughout an unfeeling, gaping, critical public. Critics have reached such a conclusion—about Dickinson’s poetry if not specifically about her feelings about photography—from various angles as they attempt to explain the mystery of her extremely sparse publication record (only about ten out of her nearly 2,000 poem-like objects appeared in print during her lifetime). Often these angles suggest Dickinson’s passivity in the face of some threatening cultural monolith: the critic, the market, print culture, eternity, God. Marta Werner, focusing on the aforementioned photograph’s “final presentation format,” a “sixth-plate portrait under glass, set in a velvet-lined leather case bearing a clasp,” suggests that the daguerreotype materializes the “ideals of

bourgeois existence and gender politics in mid-nineteenth-century America: the young woman gazing out into space is first miniaturized and then withdrawn from the public sphere, enclosed in the family home that would soon become the scene for an emerging interior life” ([2008], 477).

Sometimes the critic will turn Dickinson into a model for the production of the feminine mystique, as in Sandra Gilbert’s depressingly titled “The Wayward Nun beneath the Hill: Emily Dickinson and the Mysteries of Womanhood,” wherein her poetry is said to produce a “vision of the mystical powers in woman’s nature” all the while cultivating a “mysterious existence in which, as the Empress of Calvary, she enacts mysteries that parallel those that marked the life of Christ” (37, 39). Her “mysterious” prosody, vocabulary, and material process is thus depicted as an escapist ritual, a fragile female reaction to the impingement of the critical gaze, which conditions her artistic “immortality” by objectifying her work within boundaries as narrow as a picture frame and with as hasty a judgment as the “Flash – / And Click – and Suddenness” of the camera. The poem Gilbert takes her title from, “Sweet Mountains – Ye tell Me no lie –” (F745), includes the “unvarying Eyes” of the mountains which “Turn” their “far – slow – Violet Gaze” on Dickinson whenever she “fail[s].” Susan Howe reads the recurring trope of the mountain in Dickinson’s poetry as a metaleptic sign of confinement, particularly by the masculinized literary world that would “straight reply” only as long as she writes in a male voice.

The rich and tangled knot of gender, photography, and critical distance transports the contemporary critic (ours, not Dickinson’s) almost directly to Laura Mulvey’s influential essay. For feminist theorists indebted to Mulvey, the gaze stands “first and foremost for a charged kind of looking: an intense, perhaps unpleasant act that carries with it much more than the passive, harmless accumulation of light. It is taken to be the active projection of maleness and voyeurism,

defining entire genres of art”—in the first case, cinema—“in terms of male desire” (Elkins 6). In Mulvey’s view the “function of woman” as viewed object for the camera stands “in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by the symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command, by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as a bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” ([1975], 7). Echoing John Berger’s art historical analysis of the female form, Mulvey describes a libidinal economy wherein “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female,” so that women in film become particular kinds of objects whose significance is their “*to-be-looked-at-ness*” ([1975], 11). Abstracting her claims from any one text to the very nature of photographic cinema, Mulvey bases her claims’ expansiveness on a particular psychoanalytic interpretation of scopophilia, wherein male and female subjects inherently differ in their sexualized relationship to vision and distanced observation; the camera cannot *not* be an instrument of the male gaze.³⁶

In the case of still photography, Roberta McGrath follows Mulvey in critiquing gendered technical and stylistic approaches—if not always the apparatus as such—from a psychoanalytic perspective. McGrath, in her critique of Edward Weston in particular and Group f/64 in general, argues that the photographer’s sharply detailed pictures (achieved with a small aperture stop on a large format camera) produced “a heightening of visual qualities which excite and invoke (without allowing) a sense of touch” (333). Seeing in Weston’s photographs of vegetables and

³⁶ Mulvey follows apparatus theory here, arguing that “the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation” ([1975], 9), an illusion that corresponds with the ego’s specular development (as in Lacan’s mirror stage, which Mulvey relies on). Supposedly this illusion is fundamentally male or at least male-inflected, premised upon a primordial relationship of separation from the (image of the) mother, but Mulvey does not thoroughly or even adequately make this case.

female nudes alike “the desire for a mythic fusion (as in sex) between photography and the real, the desire to suppress the gap between the subject and the object of desire, between the negative and the print, between the subject’s own body and the other’s body, ultimately the phantasy moment of orgasm,” McGrath claims that the nudes—their heads sometimes cut off by the frame, their eyes often covered by arm or shadow—fetishize the female by turning the camera’s sexualized gaze onto the body while avoiding or erasing “the threatening gaze of the woman” (333, 335). The photographic gaze is here inherently male, while the return gaze (cleverly eliminated through form) would be inherently female.

The Mulveyan account’s popularity for feminist visual theory not only makes the gaze an instrument of objectification and psychological and spatial control, but produces a “widening gyre” wherein nearly all visual economies and visual arts fall under the aegis of the gaze (Elkins 7). As James Elkins has argued, from the theoretical center of the camera as an instrument of objectification, “gendered theories of the gaze move outward, as if through the rings of a target, toward larger and more abstract domains”:

First, the gendered gaze determines a difference between those who actively see, and those who are seen, a dynamic well visualized in Barbara Kruger’s image *Untitled (We Have Received Orders Not to Move)*. Second—especially in Sander Gilman’s readings—the gendered gaze is an origin of the master/slave dialectic, inescapably allied with racism. This reading follows from the first because the model of agency and lack of freedom is finally Hegel’s dialectic, so that once the gaze is imagined as a matter of control and freedom, Hegel cannot be far behind. Third—by a leap of abstraction from the real economy of human movements to the schemata of geometrical configurations—the gaze is crucial to the ongoing development of perspective theory, with its unresolved thematic of

the nature of seeing and being seen. (7)

These theoretical “leaps” make the gendered gaze a somersaulting figure, and visual culture a three-ring circus where philosophy, art, and society are the lions tamed by the acrobat-critic’s counter-gaze, the Medusa’s eye that turns all other acts of seeing to stone.

After Mulvey, the “male gaze” became ubiquitous in literary-cultural studies well beyond its original psychoanalytic context. Attend any contemporary talk or pick up any recent book on vision—whether literary, art historical, or purely theoretical—and you are far more likely than not to see “gaze” stand in for any act of seeing whatsoever, and “male gaze” stand in for any act of seeing by a male *qua* male, even if obviously a glance. Whether they acknowledge it or not, critics who conflate the gaze with vision *tout court* owe a Faustian debt to figures like Mulvey as well as the first generation of Lacanian film theorists like Christian Metz and Jean-Louis Baudry, as they replicate their misreadings of Lacan’s theory of the gaze (*le regard*). Indeed, the heightened general reception of Mulvey’s psychoanalytic argument in shorthand serves, paradoxically, to efface whatever explanatory power was in Lacan’s concept of *le regard* in the first place. The contradiction is quite startling, since for Lacan the gaze is not the vehicle through which the subject masters the object but a “blank spot in the subject’s look, a blank spot that threatens the subject’s sense of mastery because the subject cannot see it directly or successfully integrate it into the rest of its visual field” (McGowan 11). Lacan’s gaze is “what lacks, it is non-specular, is not graspable in the image” (Lacan [2014], 254). Or as Elizabeth Cowie puts it, “The gaze is the inverse of the omnipotent look, which is the imperial function of the eye” (288).

In *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1973), Lacan sets the gaze on the side of the object rather than the subject: the “*objet a* in the field of the visible is the gaze,” not the look of the subject at the object but a gap of insufficiency within the subject’s

seemingly omnipotent look ([1998], 105). The *objet a* is Lacan's term for the appearance of a lost object, or the residue of an object that the proto-subject separated itself from—think of psychoanalysis' several corresponding infantile proto-objects—in order to constitute itself as a socialized desiring subject. If the *objet a* in the visible field is the gaze, then the gaze looks back at us from the place of our own desire, of our own insufficiency. Todd McGowan's gloss stresses the subject's inability to “see how its own desire distorts what it sees”; the gaze “is not present in the field of the visible” because it includes the subject itself—its desire that bends or magnetizes the visual field, that leads the subject's attention within that field—which is the very thing perspective appears to eliminate (11). Our desire distorts the visual field, skews it toward a particular point in visual space, drawing the eye like a magnet. As such, it acts as a trigger for the subject's desire, representing that which we've lost and wish to retain, and so it “gazes back,” as if interrogating us. Thus the Lacanian gaze is the “point at which the subject loses its subjective privilege and becomes wholly embodied in the object” (McGowan 7).

To the extent that Lacanian film critics remain hostage to the essay on the “Mirror Stage”—where Lacan never actually uses *le regard* as he does in *Seminar XI*—they repeat the mistake Lacan saw throughout the Western tradition, which continually failed to register Merleau-Ponty's insight that “we are beings who are looked at, in the spectacle of the world. That which makes us consciousness institutes us by the same token as *speculum mundi*” (Lacan [1998], 75). Blind spots in our visual field, for Lacan, are constitutively and structurally incurable, neither by enough critical distance nor by bourgeois ideology. The seeing subject “is caught, manipulated, captured in the field of vision,” for in a visual field light “may travel in a straight line, but...[it] is refracted, diffused, it floods, it fills—the eye is a sort of bowl—it flows

over too, it necessitates, around the ocular bowl, a whole series of organs, mechanisms, defenses” ([1998], 92, 94).

In Lacan’s famous reading of Hans Holbein’s *The Ambassadors*, the anamorphic skull at the bottom of the picture, because its form and visibility changes according to the spectator’s position, erases the distance between seer and seen. Holbein’s *perspective curieuse*—a technique of distance-point perspective standardized by Jean-Francois Niceron, where the picture’s two vanishing points are pinched or pulled together—prevents one from looking straight at the picture to see the object: one must move “slightly away, little by little, to the left,” tilting and turning in order to see “what the magical floating object signifies,” to focalize the *memento mori* (Lacan [1998], 92). For Lacan, *le regard* catches the observer “*in its trap*,” marking the bodily eye’s immanence to a scene it initially assumed a distance from ([1998], 92). This immanence is revealed not through enraptured transport, not through aesthetic-mystical communion, but in an activity of embodied looking, in the twisting and turning of the head reminiscent of a writhing body caught in a snare. In McGowan’s paraphrase, “The skull says to the spectator, ‘You think that you are looking at the painting from a safe distance, but the painting sees you—takes into account your presence as a spectator’” (7). Hence, the existence of the gaze as a “stain at the level of the visual field,” which prepares the resurgence “of what lies behind, overshadowed, on this occasion the eye whose relation to this field must necessarily be elided so that desire can remain there” (Lacan [2014], 278). The gaze is a stain that sets the spectator’s *glance* in motion, a shifting arrangement and parallax attunement solicited in this case by the painter’s peculiar intervention in (and disruption of) his scene’s coherence.

In contrast with Lacan’s reading of Holbein, where the troubling gaze is on the side of the object and the fidgeting glance on the side of the viewer, Mulvey’s reading of conceptual

photographer Cindy Sherman's "Untitled Film Stills" (1977-1980)—a series of sixty-nine black-and-white photographs of Sherman herself posed in various archetypal settings, constructed like mid-century cinema stills—assumes that the pictures primarily reproduce the voyeuristic male gaze of the spectator: "The camera looks; it 'captures' the female character in a parody of different voyeurisms. It intrudes into moments in which she is unguarded, sometimes undressed, absorbed into her own world in the privacy of her own environment. Or it witnesses a moment in which her guard drops as she is suddenly startled by a presence, unseen and offscreen, watching her" ([1991], 141). But while Mulvey relies upon the presumption that Sherman is endlessly repeating a common form—the film still as any spectator would typically relate to it—Rosalind Krauss sees in Sherman an attack on form, specifically of the "verticality of the visual field," the "fronto-parallel" alignment of visual form, which gives way in her stills to a horizontal gravity "pulling downward on the various prostheses with which the bodies are outfitted" (164).

Like Mulvey herself in her reading of Sherman, the male gaze "seeks to summon, again and again, if not the completeness, the formal coherence, and the verticality of the visual":

In constantly reading Sherman's work mythically, which is to say, as an *example* of how the Male Gaze works—"You see! There is the woman fetishized in the beam of the gaze"—feminist criticism fails to notice that Sherman's art drops the veil. Not only does this criticism thereby miss the operations of an extraordinary work of imaginative projection, but, blinding itself to anything outside the vertical register of the image/form, it repeats, at the level of analysis, the very fixity it describes as operating the Male Gaze at the level of its social effects. (Krauss 206)

Krauss's defense of Sherman's "imaginative projection" beyond the purview and constraints of the gendered gaze and its theoretical discourse toward an intervention in visual form as such is an inspiration for my own defense of Dickinson's intervention in nineteenth-century visual regimes. Like Sherman, Dickinson also "drops the veil," not simply critiquing the art of photography as if it were an *a priori* extension of the male gaze. Rather, she establishes her own agency as an operator who can learn from the practice. As Werner concludes, "By withholding/canceling the 1847 daguerreotype from Higginson's gaze and offering instead a discourse of ekphrasis, Dickinson the thirty-two-year-old writer at last escapes the subject-position of 'target,' acting, instead, as the 'operator' or controller of the scene (of writing)" ([2008], 482). And her scene of writing became, at various stages of her constantly transforming poetic practice, a little world of the glance.

II

"There's a certain Slant of light" (F320) provides—within the formal economy of a single lyric, at least—a "little world of the glance" more self-contained than most Dickinson poems. I look to it as an initial example. The last poem in Fascicle 13, it was copied with no variants:

There's a certain Slant of light,
 Winter Afternoons –
 That oppresses, like the Heft
 Of Cathedral Tunes –

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us –
 We can find no scar,
 But internal difference –
 Where the Meanings, are –

None may teach it – Any –
 'Tis the seal Despair –
 An imperial affliction
 Sent us of the Air –

When it comes, the Landscape listens –
 Shadows – hold their breath –
 When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
 On the look of Death –

(F320)

As the stanzas roll, this poem describes the irreversible effect of an ordinary perception that gains in tangibility as the subject takes in the layout of the visual environment and as it grasps a surface's constituent detail as continuous with a more encompassing whole. Though light is "a diffused substance that can be apprehended but not grasped" (Anderson 30), this is a "certain" slant of light, an *image* of light, reflected at least twice from its source, its crooked face on the wall a concrete abstraction that parallels despair's mysterious imprint on the soul. In the first stanza, light quickly converts into sound, her oppression felt "like the Heft / Of Cathedral Tunes"; ground contracts into figure, gaining physical and lyrical weight.

Nowhere in the rest of the poem does the slant return as an image: Dickinson's view of the slant is a significant joint or scar on the world's surface (as on the wall's) that returns to her as her glance starts off for new vistas, with her look's path (irreparably) changed by the sight of the scar. Instead, the image leaves an "internal difference, / Where the Meanings, are": "when the psyche is once stricken with the pain of such knowledge it can never be the same again" (Anderson 31), just as the glance's return loop includes much more than its immediate circuit. It also includes, by implication, the entire reservoir of the subject's past, a whole heritage of previous perceptions, thoughts, desires, intentions, and realizations stored in the body and affecting the next glance the subject will send back out. The concluding stanza returns to the surface level of the winter afternoon: the slant is now recognized as a symptom of the sun's decline, for "When it comes, the Landscape listens – / Shadows – hold their breath –," and the

quiet of approaching dusk binds subject and world, in nervous apprehension of their disappearance in a shroud of darkness. This vision of the final and complete desolation of the landscape—concurrent with the disappearance of the poem’s founding image—is a manifestation of that “internal difference” which the action of the poem brings about in the speaker, in the dramatic shift in Dickinson’s visual attention.

Though this single poem does not offer a complete Dickinsonian theory of vision by any means, the “shift” I reference above—and which I will extend more importantly in the following consideration of the poet’s process—is hardly another example of the most common analogy for thinkers of the gaze: the moving spotlight or searchlight that supposedly characterizes consciousness’s intentional-visual access to the world. Indeed, and as in the difference between the Lacanian and Mulveyan gaze outlined above, if there is a gaze in the poem, it’s on the side of the object—the slant that moves across the wall as the absent, panoptic sun moves—rather than the subject. In terms of the eye’s mechanics, one “internal difference” is found in the saccade, in the minute parallax distance between the eye’s positions as it jumps fitfully whenever its target object is located within the central twenty degrees of our visual field (when we do not need to turn our heads or bodies to track it). The general function of saccadic movements, as J.J. Gibson puts it, “is to establish a new fixation...in the act of scanning the environment [or] in reading” (126).

“I watched the Moon around the House” (F593) extends Dickinson’s insight into the fixation-shifting character of the glance. As the moon moves around the house, like a nocturnal counterpoint to the certain slant of light, its temporality rests “upon a Pane” which allows the speaker to gaze upon it until it slides “carelessly away.” Each window onto the moon is a temporary “Rest” in a world of shifting phenomena, and so the poet must shift her lunar

metaphor constantly, turning the poem into “discursive formation in action, as the speaker makes a series of fine metaphorical or grammatical revisions that reconfigure eye, moon, and metaphor in relation to each other” (Kohler 108). The speaker finds that she cannot hold the moon fast through her gaze, through a look that sees into the life of things and produces the perfect metaphor: “The privilege to scrutinize / Was scarce upon my Eyes / When, with a Silver practise – / She vaulted out of Gaze –.” I will return to Dickinson’s use of silver, but for now it suffices to note that the moon’s “Silver practise,” its “Superior Road – / Or it’s Advantage,” is precisely what escapes the gaze, and so the meaning-making quality of the poem depends primarily on the glance as it tracks the tenor’s “finer Gravitations.” Although she does not make the distinction gaze/glance, Michelle Kohler does note that Dickinson’s vision of vision is here “a brief means of access that falls ‘upon’ the speaker’s eyes for the scarce moment before the moon ‘vault[s] out of Gaze’” (109). The emphasis should be put on “scarce,” following Dickinson’s meter.

And so the glance stitches a visual fabric out of the eye’s various fragmentary movements. The jerky eye, with its flitting movements, does not smoothly scan a visual field and capture the object it rests upon as an organic whole. Instead, it loops back on itself according to environmental feedback received (like Dickinson’s “internal difference”): “there is a critical moment just before a given saccade is wholly under way when its direction and speed can be altered significantly” by new, immediately felt information (Casey 302). The moving glance’s trajectory is attuned to respond to sudden changes in the visual environment, and can be trained to account for (and even over-plan for) expected movements of a given target object.³⁷ And the smaller the scale of the visual field, and the finer the motor skills needed to perform a given task,

³⁷ Various implications and subtleties of this general principle are demonstrated in studies like P. He and E. Knowler’s “The Role of Location Probability in the Programming of Saccades: Implications for ‘Center-of-Gravity’ Tendencies.” *Vision Research* 29 (1989): 1165-1181.

the more significant each saccade's accuracy truly is (that is, the more each unconscious flit is crucial for the continuation of the stitching operation underway). The glance makes its home at the scale of fine-grained activity, crafted and perfected through a feel for the small world it moves within.

The central optical text that consolidated data gleaned from several experiments on eye movement, Hermann von Helmholtz's *Treatise on Physiological Optics*, was published in Dickinson's lifetime, its final volume released in 1867.³⁸ In it, Helmholtz describes ordinary vision as a series of "unconscious conclusions derived from sensation," formed through a combination of perceptual data and experience, and through physiological solutions to the eye's instrumental limitations, particularly the fact that the retina's center (the fovea) contained far more, densely packed photoreceptor cells than its periphery ([1968a], 174). Helmholtz and his colleagues consolidated their empirical findings into laws describing the miraculous ability of the eye to track objects in time and stitch together coherent sequences out of worldly flux, principally Donders' Law and Listing's Law (named after two such colleagues), which explain the development of regular saccadic principles, the rules of the eye's angles of torsion depending upon particular attentional demands. The time of the eye's movements, Helmholtz argued, was the time of both construction and experimentation, in which we "test whether we have correctly interpreted the lawful behavior of the phenomenon in question, i.e. its postulated existence in a definite spatial arrangement" ([1968b], 223).

I call the glance and its saccadic, disjointed temporal structure a "stitching operation" for a good, though perhaps predictable, reason. It is well known that, beginning in 1858, Dickinson

³⁸ Emile Javal, Helmholtz's French translator, would formalize many of his insights and designate the eye's jerks as "saccades" in 1878.

copied many of her poems onto folded stationery sheets and sewed them together into small booklets (fascicles) with red string. The great villain of Dickinson criticism, Mabel Loomis Todd—she who entered the family through the basement door and eventually cut the sacred string, unbinding the fascicles for individual, anthological consumption—in fact helped produce the cottage industry devoted to reconstituting the context of the poems’ material production. As we scorn Todd other early publishers, we engage in a Neoplatonic spiral of procession from and return to the source: Dickinson’s material craft. One might argue that it was because the string was cut, turning the originally bound poems into individual lyrics, that the critical desire to understand them otherwise—as more than a collection of mysterious fragments—was generated. The Dickinson critic became a sewer, a binder, a *glancer*, one who tries to replicate the poet’s vision as a maker rather than a prophet, as someone who stitches together a world through materials rather than Ideals. And when we attempt to recapture the Dickinson family’s home economics, the sewing and unsewing of the poems (as well as Dickinson’s repurposing of various scraps and household fragments later in her life), we find that glancing attunements are far more capacious than homely, as much ontological as domestic.

Of the many interpretations of Dickinson’s *poiesis* generated by the fascicle form’s centrality in her writing life, two stand out as stark alternatives. Werner compares them to “forty locked doors [that] attest to the power of enclosedness,” each binding an “enclosed textual space in which Dickinson explored the contents of privacy and power” ([1995], 36, 12). Sharon Cameron’s suggests, on the other hand, that while binding signals a “desire for the limit,” a locking of the door against endless scattering and textual proliferation, the inclusion of variants on the fascicle sheets in effect resuscitates such proliferation, making it virtually “impossible to say where the text ends because the variants extend the text’s identity in ways that make it seem

potentially limitless” (6). I wonder, though, if these are indeed the primary hermeneutic alternatives. Certainly Werner’s position rhymes comfortably—never a good sign when it comes to reading Dickinson—with readings of the individual poems that emphasize privacy and formal-domestic veiling operations as a defense against the male gaze and its critical counterpart in the literary marketplace. Sustained attention to Dickinson’s intricate drafting and sketching process—recently done quite thoroughly by Alexandra Socarides in *Dickinson Unbound*—actually reveals the fascicles to be “flexible, ever-developing objects whose methods of construction ask us to consider them in those terms” (26). At the same time, Cameron’s appeal to the limitless still enacts a formalism, a consideration of words on the page and the production of meaning through their relations, wholly unconcerned with the poetry’s material support and way the poet makes objects by gathering worldly forms.

Ultimately, I question whether Werner’s or Cameron’s positions, as handsome as they are, can truly make sense of the visual economies of Dickinson’s *poiesis*, and the way Dickinson’s omnipresent thematic of vision *threads* her praxis through her poems’ speculative meanings. The last lyric on Fascicle 23’s second sheet, for instance, references the sewing and unsewing of the poem itself:

From Blank to Blank –
 A Threadless Way†
 I pushed Mechanic feet –
 To stop – or perish –
 or advance –
 Alike indifferent –

If end I gained†
 It ends beyond
 Indefinite disclosed –
 I shut my eyes – and
 groped as well
 ‘Twas lighter† – to be Blind –

]Course

]reached
]firmer

(F484)

“From Blank to Blank –” thematizes vision through the production of a textual landscape. The writing of the poem, pushing “Mechanic feet” from “Blank to Blank” (a phrase reminiscent of both verse meter and the presser’s progression in a sewing machine), is an obstacle-ridden hike through over a “Threadless” or pathless abyss. The poem’s forward thrust is as troubled as the dangerous course, halting and advancing in equal two-beat measure. The caesuras at the end of the first stanza break the convention of the “Mechanic” meter and resolve into a literally “indifferent” end rhyme. Here the dashes, of course handwritten in the original, are both compositional stutters (places where the flow of Dickinson’s hand halts) and markers or pitons laid down for support. If she pressed her hand a bit harder, she would have rent the page and produced new sites for her string to thread. Indeed, Ariadne must lay her thread in order to create a traceable path to the end of the labyrinth, but there is no Theseus here to benefit from the task (at least not until the finished poem is read). So it is not just “lighter” but “firmer,” as the last variant has it, to advance blindly toward an end or close that does not appear as final form until it is reached. Wrapped together in Dickinson’s taskscape are stitches and glances, blind gestures and looks—modes of touch and sight that feel their way along without bounded conceptual frames to arrest them—that are nonetheless productive in the poem’s formation and the achievement of material relation to the other poems it is bound with.

The thematic stitch linking “From Blank to Blank –” to both the other poems in Fascicle 23³⁹ and outward to the techne of the fascicle form itself proves that it is likely too restrictive to

³⁹ If there is a central theme in Fascicle 23, which opens with “Because I could not stop for Death—,” it is death indeed. From death’s personification to scenes of dying and ruminations

conceive Dickinson's bounded sequences as locked doors. And the knot that ties the poet's vision (often conceived by her readers in sublime, prophetic terms) to the working of her hands (typically a sign of her material craft, her "narrow" grasp of verse's "Paradise" (F466)) suggests that Dickinson charted the foundations and limits of meaning in both language and physical material. Branka Arsić refers to the poet, in this sense, as "someone who in order to exercise poetics and versify words, must also create an object—form matter—that will then generate and sustain the form of the poem" (238). Is this what the hand and the glance conspire to do together, and what the temporality of Dickinson's poem—inserting a word here and a thread here, halting so as not to proceed too quickly, closing one's eyes to the misleading image that arrests the body—replicates at the level of *techne*? Dickinson glances between the object-form of her poetry and the individual page like a sewer checking the progress of her local pattern against the whole. She practices *poiesis* "not as a weak form of creation—where the creation of the poem is analogous to, but does not coincide with, the creation of a material thing—but instead as a strong form of creation that produces something palpable and embodied...a question not only of aesthetical but also ontological generation" (Arsić 238).

Dickinson's palpable objects changed over time. She was not always stitching pages together. But in her fascicle stage, in part because she *was* then stitching pages together, the form of her poetry and the visual language contained therein accord with the *techne* of stitching movements. In "All overgrown by cunning moss" (F146), one of the first poems in Fascicle 7

upon immortality, nearly every lyric encounters its end in the guise of *the* end. Socarides reads "the dispersal of these poems across sheets and then the sewing together of these sheets as Dickinson's way of proliferating and repeating the scene of death, an act that reveals the conundrum over the impossibility of consolation that resides at the heart of any rendering of death" (97). In this context, "From Blank to Blank—" stands out as a summation of Dickinson's tenuous balance between hard *techne* and speculation's transports, opening the fascicle as a whole onto the world of everyday praxis.

and an elegy to Charlotte Brontë, Dickinson inserted an “Or” in between the third and fourth stanzas, producing something like this:

All overgrown by cunning moss,
 All interspersed with weed,
 The little cage of “Curren Bell”
 In quiet “Haworth” laid.

This Bird – observing others
 When frosts too sharp became
 Retire to other latitudes –
 Quietly did the same –

But differed in returning –
 Since Yorkshire hills are green –
 Yet not in all the nests I meet –
 Can Nightingale be seen –

Or

Gathered from many wanderings –
 Gethsemane can tell
 Thro’ what transporting anguish
 She reached the Asphodel!

Soft fall the sounds of Eden
 Upon her puzzled ear –
 Oh, what an afternoon for
 Heaven,
 When “Brontë” entered there!

(F146)

Dickinson’s publishers have not known what to do with the “Or,” as Socarides shows: “the ‘Or’ disrupts the temporal ordering of the poem’s experience, a disruption that both Todd and Franklin avoided when they published the poem as stanzas 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 and as 1, 2, and 3 respectively” (84). If one wishes to treat the “Or” not as legitimate poetic content but as an extraneous note for future use, it could mean a variety of things: choose between stanzas three and four, perhaps, or between stanzas two and three and four and five. One can, of course, print

all five stanzas and simply cut the “Or.” But, as Jerome McGann has argued, assuming that Dickinson’s poetry should be read according to its possibilities for future print regulation is alien to her very project.⁴⁰ And what Socarides opens up for the critic is the richness of poetic process that reveals itself when one includes—as a matter of basic practice—peculiar devices like the “Or” as elements of and keys to Dickinson’s object construction.

Socarides argues that the “Or” is “deeply linked to the subject of her poem, as it forces the poem to grapple with the problem of narrating the experience of loss” (84). While her reading focuses on the genre of the elegy, and on the temporal confusions inherent to the experience of loss and death, Dickinson’s “Or” is just as relevant to the temporal structure of the glance and the scene of material production. The “Or” produces a temporal loop internal to the poem that also, by its very disruptive implacement on the page, serves as another rent or hole for tying its multiple meaning relations to the wider economy of the fascicle. First, the “Or” troubles the static image of the bird preceding the break, foregrounding the poem’s alternatives tropes of a bird returning to its nest and the “transporting anguish” that signifies not cyclical return but unknowable termination. But even as the poem “provides the bird a way out of the stasis that the poem might have otherwise produced for it” (Socarides 85), pushing against both the natural time of cyclical return and the lyric moment of interior clarity and stillness, it produces a temporal node on the page consistent with many of her other unusual practices, like embedding variants between the poem’s lines or utilizing material page breaks to make the act of turning the

⁴⁰ McGann argues that “while Dickinson wanted readers, and while she was even ambitious of fame as a poet, she rejected the traditional (early capitalist) institution for achieving those ends...not because of some large cultural or political sense of the limits of the ‘auction’ of publishing” but “because she came to see how restrictive and conventional that medium had become” (43). McGann ultimately traces Dickinson’s verse forms to her “epistolary habits and conventions,” specifically the letter format that “encouraged her to seek an imaginative communion between the forms of prose and poetry” (50).

sheet relevant to the pacing of the poem. These nodes work by forcing the reader to glance back and forth as they progress linearly through the poem from beginning to end (for how else can one adequately judge the options produced by the “Or” or by internal variants?), turning the text itself into a recursive, non-linear, and endlessly branching event.

McGann, in his reading of Dickinson’s “textual invasions,” writes that the parallel shifts in our attention demanded by many of her poems asks us to learn to “‘better see’ what the print conventions of poetry work to keep us from seeing” (49). They also force us to see, through the glance, the netherworld of the poet’s enactive vision, the variations that crop up as the poem is being sketched on the page. Like the unconscious saccades of the human eye from the perspective of the coherent moving scan, the internal, non-linear variations of *poiesis* are often passed over by the retroactive critical gaze and what Dickinson scathingly called publication’s “Auction.” The construction of a nodal object—gaining in complexity when one moves from the individual lyric to the sheet, from the sheet to the bound fascicle—is like the “weaver’s masterpiece” in *Faust* I.4: “unseen the threads are knit together, and an infinite combination grows” (Goethe 88). And in encountering the fascicles’ infinite combinations, the threads that both bind the whole and unbind the poems from within, the reader’s glance subverts the reading subject in ways often narrated by Dickinson herself, most obviously in her post-fascicle lyrics that loosen the stitch holding the mind together just as she was loosening the stitches holding her poetry together. Just as the glance is flung from the subject, thrown rather than cautiously and delicately aimed, Dickinson’s practice constructs the object by displacing its center of gravity. “Where the gaze consolidates its gains, the glance acts to dispel and disconnect,” Casey writes. The glance alters “its course at every opportunity”; whereas the gaze seeks “a fixed point of attachment,” the glance is an “agent of displacement” (149). As the glance stitches images

together in concatenated sequence, each new image alters the store from inside, reshuffles the stock. Each new glance, like each new sheet, momentarily scatters the archive before it settles back into a new sequence. As if in complete acknowledgement of this dialectic, one already contained in the simplicity of her “Or,” Dickinson began to scatter her pages.

III

In 1886, Emily Dickinson died. In 1886, Eadweard Muybridge was completing his series of animal motion sequences following his 1878 *The Horse in Motion*. Muybridge had been working on this seminal project, which would revolutionize motion studies and spark a controversy over the relation between chronophotography and the naked eye, since Leland Stanford approached him about a bet (are all four feet of a horse ever off the ground at the same time as it gallops?) in 1872. Dickinson had been exclusively writing unbound poetry since 1871, a large percentage of which were fragments of animal lyrics. In at least one way, the birth of Muybridge’s fame—and the particular advances his work helped make in analytic visual culture—also meant the death of Dickinson’s final project, her attempt to *undo* the sequence as an experiment in becoming-animal, in seeing and working like an animal. Muybridge and Dickinson approached their animals from opposed directions—observing from without and inhabiting from within—though both strived to operate on an ocular level different from common sense anthropocentric visual paradigms. In so doing, both generated fresh insights about the peculiarities and possibilities of human environmental manipulation and the distinction between human and animal seeing. But whereas Muybridge demonstrated the power of rational, procedural, and trigonometric analysis for overcoming our embodied visual limitations, Dickinson began collecting man-made scraps

for her nest like a resourceful bird, picking things up and letting them happily fall like a being already seamlessly integrated into the world.

In order to complete this comparison, I will continue to track the development of Dickinson's *poiesis*, and glance at the work of another contemporary visual artist (painter and photographer Thomas Eakins) who reached maturity around the key moment of transition in the poet's career. There is no direct, immediate, and unproblematic line between Dickinson's fascicles and her late scrap poems and "gorgeous nothings." The path can be alternatively seen (*has been* alternatively seen) as either a progression or regression in her art, just as developments in the contemporary visual arts—the transition between realism and Impressionism concomitant with the growing use of naturalistic and scientific photography—were seen as cultural progressions and regressions in almost equal measure. Just as Dickinson was re-viewing her poetic practice in terms of more fragmentary modes of construction, Impressionists were rethinking the ground of artistic practice to incorporate contingent atmospherics, mood and tone color, and momentary isolated glances in (and not just *on*) the world, valuable for their own sake.

Dickinson's "Sets" are groups of loose poems on fascicle stationery—dated at the earliest from 1863—formed by Ralph Franklin and which follow Todd's original organization based on the assumption that each set was likely meant to be bound together in fascicle form. Franklin organized the sets "by similarity of paper and date" (Franklin xi). But the very composite object of the "set," therefore, is the product of anthologization, not Dickinson's craft. She did not make the sets, just their elements. Socarides speculates that the "misleading designation" may be the result of scholars who "could not abandon the idea of [Dickinson's] methodically-planned and well-orchestrated poetic project [of the fascicles] and therefore continued to read organizing logics where there were none" (109-110). Yet in poems like "I felt a Cleaving in my Mind –,"

now a member of Set 2, the poet explicitly narrated the transition in her working process. But consider first a thematically similar poem from Fascicle 27:

The Brain, within it's Groove
Runs evenly – and true –
But let a Splinter swerve –
'Twere easier for you –

To put a Current† back –
When Floods have slit
the Hills –
And scooped a Turnpike
for Themselves –
And trodden out† the Mills –

]the Waters
]blotted out – shoved away –

(F563)

Jed Deppman includes “The Brain, within it's Groove” within his category of Dickinson's “trying-to-think” poems, “a lyric subgenre she developed to respond to what most resisted her thought” (94). Such poems tend to reproduce the downward movement characteristic of most of her poems, as the first line sets a context that is then evacuated, never to return to solid ground.⁴¹

The Brain that follows a straight, even path or “Groove” is reminiscent of William James's definition of habit in *The Principles of Psychology*, explained in terms of the nervous system's “mechanical facts” (107). For James, habitual association and action result from a worn path of nervous energy, a “Groove” in the brain where one impulse continually excites another. James even uses the example of a woman knitting or sewing: she can do so perfectly well as she talks because one impulse triggers the next. Dickinson's stitches themselves follow a “Groove” when

⁴¹ R.P. Blackmur and Forest Pyle both write of Dickinson's contextual evacuation following her poems' first lines (what they call her “disintegration of effect” and “radical aesthetic,” respectively). Natalie Adler considers Dickinson's signature downward lyrical movement “a peculiar poetics of letting go,” where “instead of coming to a conclusion, she shows her mastery by refusing to hold on” (4, 21).

her sewing process—tied intimately to her glance—becomes automatic and pre-reflexive, temporarily effecting the ampliative relation between her material craft and her speculative metaphysic where the more “details of our daily life we can hand over to the effortless custody of automatism, the more our higher powers of mind will be set free for their own proper work” (James 122). But this poem then narrates the site (or “Splinter”) where the mechanism, as if jolted by a Lucretian atomic “swerve,” irreparably breaks down.

The Splinter is one of Dickinson’s small stains or slivers that makes all the difference—like Holbein’s anamorphic skull, Lacan’s *objet a*, or elsewhere Dickinson’s “Tooth / that nibbles at the soul” (F373) and the previously mentioned “certain Slant of light”—often sending the poem and the glance off on another track. Deppman calls the speaker of “The Brain, within it’s Groove” a “Rortian ironist who struggles between vocabularies and avails herself of tropological redescription...adopt[ing] verbs of human industry to describe how thought exceeds itself, the ‘turnpikes’ and ‘hills’ recalling the phrenological and anatomical images of brains that Dickinson knew” (97). One might just as well take the “verbs of human industry” literally: the splinter which calls to mind the shape of Dickinson’s dashes and, when enlarged, the horizontal white space between her two stanzas, also marks a transition between economic systems, between the embodied and mechanical “Groove[s]” that mark the binding of the fascicles and the large-scale “scoop[ing]” of a turnpike, another sort of groove dug into the earth. One might then speculate that the swerve Dickinson narrates is from craft to industry, and manifests an anxious fear of the future irrecovery of her technical mode. The second stanza also reminds one of New Testament prophecy—“every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low”—in relation to the Hebrew Bible’s cosmic position that God created man out of earth, dust, and clay and that all things must in time return to that state. The process, Dickinson suggests, is

irreversible—one must be God Himself to reverse it—but the poem stops short of imagining an alternative to the deluge, to the inevitable failures of a fascicle project that tries to permanently join lyrics on opposite sides of a swerve (a swerve in thought, time, and vision, for both the writer and reader who traverse a barely discernable but ultimately irreparable gap as they turn the page). The poem simply en-visions the negation of the linear groove as a master principle of thought and *poiesis* without turning that negation toward the formation of a new poetic object.

Rather than assume the “sets” are merely the fascicles’ remainders or spare parts, one might consider them new poetic objects or material supports that, in Hegelian aesthetic terms, generate a more adequate body for Dickinson’s ideas as she transitioned out of her binding phase. “I felt a Cleaving in / my Mind –,” whose commonly cited first line and stand-in title is actually already split in two, explicitly joins (paradoxically by “Cleaving”) the “trying-to-think” thematic of certain late fascicle poems with the practical problem of stitching a sequence together:

I felt a Cleaving in
my Mind –
As if my Brain had
split –
I tried to match it –
Seam by Seam –
But could not make
them fit –

The thought behind, I
strove† to join
Unto the thought before –
But Sequence ravelled
out of Sound† –
Like Balls – upon a
Floor –

]tried
]reach

(F867)

Who could seriously envision this lyric sewn into a fascicle? Or, at least, who would want to? As the concatenation of thoughts fails, as the speaker fails to “make / them fit –,” sequence as a governing principle for cognition reaches crisis. The seam is no longer in control, and the poem’s spatio-temporal coherence splits as the thought “behind” (in space) cannot harmonize with the thought “before” (in time). Such harmony is a principle of binding poems together in sequence, which assumes that spatial organization follows a corresponding temporal flow.

The last line enters the realm of sound, perhaps, because the poem stretches for something beyond the poverty of ordinary sight. But as Socarides points out, the poem’s final variant, which offers a substitution of “reach” for “Sound,” “allows us to read ‘Sound’ as a designation of space,” and thus brings the aural register into contact with sight and touch (112). This variation marks the poem’s transformation from crisis to possibility. The sequence that “ravell[s] / out of Sound –” becomes dissonant noise, but can also be taken as a rolling image, a proleptic vision of purposive scattering and release. A similar trajectory—from growing skepticism and anxiety about the seams that show in crafted sequence to a material unbinding that parallels a poetics of “scattering and release”—occurs within the sub-corpus of Dickinson’s animal poems, which more trenchantly foreground the ability of her cleavage in praxis to recast the role of sight in poetic composition.

Dickinson placed a poem shot through with peculiar juxtapositions and mixed animal media in Fascicle 17:

A Bird came down
 the Walk –
 He did not know I
 saw –
 He bit an Angleworm
 in halves
 And ate the fellow, raw,

And then he drank
 a Dew
 From a convenient Grass –
 And then hopped sidewise
 to the Wall –
 To let a Beetle pass –

He glanced with rapid
 eyes,
 That hurried all abroad –
 They looked like frightened
 Beads, I thought,
 He stirred his Velvet
 Head

Like one in danger, Cautious,
 I offered him a Crumb
 And he unrolled his
 feathers
 And rowed him softer
 home –

Than Oars divide the
 Ocean,
 Too silver for a seam,
 Or Butterflies, off Banks
 of Noon,
 Leap, plashless as they
 swim.

(F359)

Through four stanzas, “A Bird came down the Walk –” is less about the bird than the observer the bird ignores. Anthropomorphisms abound, as is certainly common in her animal poems. From the speaker’s initially detached perspective, the bird is a well-mannered diner, cutting his prey in clean halves and drinking dew from a grass/glass (an analogy not limited to the fascicle period, as evidenced by the much later “A Saucer holds a Cup” [F1407], which refers to a squirrel’s teeth as “His Cutlery”). He takes a postprandial stroll and graciously obeys the natural laws of traffic. In the third stanza the bird glances “with rapid eyes / That hurried all abroad –,”

orbs the speaker reads as “frightened Beads.” But the “I thought,” which stands out isolated on the page, generates a moment of self-reflection that turns around two analogies, the beads and the phrase “Like one in danger,” an interpretation which leads to her philanthropic impulse, the two-bit offer of a crumb. Although the poem’s form, through the “I thought” jutting out like a headland into the sea or a branch into the air, makes clear the speaker’s deictic position in the scene, the observer’s first impulse is a position of “*noblesse oblige*” which ultimately “melds her anxiety with [the bird’s]” (New 166). Her condescending act of charity goes unheeded by the bird, mistaken as it is in the first place about the function of his glance.

The speaker’s error is not anthropomorphism as such, but psychologization. The bird’s glance evinces neither anxiety nor fear but preparation. In an unexpected flight through the medium of water, his feathers “rowed him softer home – / Than Oars divide the Ocean,” with two capitalized Os like a pair of bird’s eyes, wide open on the page in contrast with the third stanza’s “frightened Beads.” When oars divide the ocean, they make the smallest possible “seam” in the body, a temporary “plash” almost immediately covered back up by infilling water. New calls the poem “an adjustment of perceptual orders, a softening of categories of belonging” in its renewed attention to the bird as he “cuts through an enveloping atmospheric element that closes back over the fissure he carved” (167). The silver seam the wing carves into the world is really no seam at all compared with the poet’s red stitch, softer as it is than the already soft oar of the skilled rower (a figure here, perhaps, for the skilled poet). The final analogy, of the butterfly’s “leap,” still compares flying to “plashless” swimming, a figure for any motion “coached on the elements, of pressing an updraft, or of cutting the tide” (New 167). Dickinson can stitch together the material joints of the made thing (the fascicle), but she cannot live seamlessly, at least not until her poetry disavows the stitch entirely, or at least finds one more

silvery and supple, one that “closes back over” the fissure it carves. And the mode of seeing that closes back over itself is that which the poet shares with the bird: the glance.

Dickinson’s evocative twinning of seam and splash, when considered as an image, likely reminds the American art historian of Eakins’s boating pictures. Paintings like *Max Schmitt in a Single Scull* (1871) use the mechanics of rowing to offer a luministic presentation of time and movement on the Schuylkill.⁴² The water’s surface is “carefully demarcated,” with the passage of the more distant sculler (Eakins himself) “marked by pairs of interrupted lines that have replaced the pockets of water out of which the oars have been lifted” (Novak 196), turning the river segment into a clock with manmade, discrete intervals traversed by the “hands” of each oar. These marks, though the product of mechanical movement—of the hands of a clock, of the beat of the oars—serve to measure time as a sequence of spatial locations. Schmitt’s track, in the foreground, is denoted with a local difference, since he has just dropped his oars, letting them drag with the course of the scull’s inertia as he rests, turning his glance toward the picture plane. As a result, his oars have made continuous splashlines on the river’s surface, not yet filled back in by the overlapping water. Instead of discrete intervals of time marking the speed of the boat’s progression, these lines are indexes of pure duration (in Henri Bergson’s terminology), impossible to measure beyond recognition of the body’s slowing. Its temporal existence is simply the fact of its *enduring*, and to endure is to be a “qualitative multiplicity, with no likeness to number; an organic evolution which is not yet an increasing quantity; a pure heterogeneity

⁴² According to Barbara Novak, “Luminist space is achieved through a series of planes, parallel to the surface, which are never violated but proceed back in orderly, measured steps, like the lulls between the columns of the classical temple. There is little flow or sweep, but rather a containment of each part within its own spatial unit that arrests the moment in Emerson’s ‘concentrated eternity’” (105).

within which there are no distinct qualities,” where “the moments of inner duration are not external to one another” (Bergson [1960], 226).

Taken in its entirety, the painting shows the mechanical beat of trained speed and the counter-experience of drag. It does so with both mathematical precision and luministic dilation, the difference occurring in the contrast between the Eakins and Schmitt figures (one at work, the other coming to rest), as well as—at the edges of the composition—the difference between the hard, spare fauna and its reflection (on the left, turning the appearance of bare trees into a projection of healthy bloom). The opposing but nonetheless interdependent relationship between the discrete pockets of water and the continuous wash marks Nelson Goodman’s distinction between “articulated” and “dense” visual syntax—or discontinuous vs. indivisible—that differentiates economies of description and depiction. The former can be turned into a symbol (one can get from the intervals of each splash to the structure of a conventional clock), while the latter remains an index, little more than a record that the oars were there, once. The remainders of the Eakins figure’s movement is a *description* of time made through an abstraction of the body’s continuous and indivisible kinesthetic motions (which is exactly what chronophotographic motion studies do, as we will see), while the line left by Schmitt—which is also a line left by Eakins *the painter*, whose body works just as continuously as Eakins the rower but with different results—is only a dense *depiction* of movement. It leaves the observer mute, forced to make analogies like Dickinson does in the face of the bird’s soft, indivisible rowing.⁴³

⁴³ Dickinson also pairs wing and oar in “I’ve known a Heaven, like a tent” (Fr257), where a “Bird’s far Navigation / Discloses just a Hue,” an avian brushstroke in the air figured as a splash almost immediately “swallowed up” from view. This particular formulation is evidence that Dickinson was likely thinking of painting as one connection to her silvery seams.

Even as the subject matter of Eakins's boating pictures (of which *Max Schmitt* is simply one example) is the human body in trained prosthetic motion, it informs readings of other paintings that explicitly position the relation man-animal. It does so by creating a workable contrast (as Dickinson strove to do as her *poiesis* developed) in the temporal experience of man's vision—between indivisible continuity and abstracted measure—that translates into an internal distinction between resolutely human experience and latent animal activity. Eakins's hunting pictures were contemporaneous companions to his boating tableaux, and in which “space also is given the dominant expressive role” (Novak 195). Eakins, unlike a resolute naturalist like precursor John James Audubon, is always concerned first and foremost with the kinesthetics of the human body at work, and there is no reedbird to be found in the frame of *The Artist and his Father Hunting Reed-Birds* (1874). But the absence of the animal quarry in the painting produces a notable contrast with the boating pictures that immediately preceded this work: the bird is associated, through transference, with the more fluid two-beat activity of the boaters also outside the frame (in those paintings a viewer would have, at one time, seen exhibited with the hunters). Here, the paddle boat's forward movement is arrested in the marsh grass, its gondolier—the artist himself, in notable contrast with his lithe figure in *Max Schmitt*—straining to navigate the vessel through its swampy impasse. The birds are not in immediate danger, for the father's lowered rifle sits at inattention. They row themselves “softer home.” In Eakins's picture, Dickinson's comparative gains its sense: softer than them, her, *us*.

Dickinson anticipates a rich (and still growing) conversation on animal ontology that took off with Jakob von Uexküll's biosemiotic theory and conceptualization of the *Umwelt* in 1909. Uexküll described how all animals, down to the tick and the jellyfish, comported themselves within an encompassing, semiotically rich and signifying environment-world, giving back to the

natural world's motes and the traditionally insignificant actors in the great chain of being a heightened subjective dignity.⁴⁴ More generally, by positing and explaining animal life's experiential complexity, Uexküll opened up the possibility of new forms of writing that could take as its setting—no less problematically than a drawing room, a social scene, or a human workplace—the spheres or bubbles (*Seifenblase*) within which animal life is transcribed: “the space peculiar to each animal, wherever the animal may be, can be compared to a soap bubble which completely surrounds the creature at a greater or less distance. The extended soap bubble constitutes the limit of what is finite for the animal, and therewith the limit of its world; what lies behind that is hidden in infinity” ([1926], 42).

From the *Seifenblase* came Heidegger's “disinhibiting ring,” every animal's—including the human animal's—circle of efficacy or sphere of instinct and influence according to which its behaviors are circumscribed. “Disinhibiting” stands for the fact that that the ring “prescribes what can affect or occasion [the animals'] behavior”; the ring “opens up a sphere within which whatever disinhibits can do so in this or that manner” (Heidegger 255). The disinhibiting ring is not a construct of repeated behaviors or patterns of life, but, as Heidegger puts it, “belongs to the innermost organization of the animal and its fundamental morphological structure.” Although Heidegger writes that the distance between the human and the animal is “abyssal”—*Dasein* is constituted in its *comportment* and being-in-the-world while the animal is characterized by *behavior* and is “poor in world”—as if sometimes yielding to the influence of Uexküll he also

⁴⁴ The tick has become Uexküll's most cited example due to the simplicity of its case: “Out of the vast world which surrounds the tick, three stimuli shine forth from the dark like beacons, and serve as guides to lead her unerringly to her goal” ([1957], 12). The tick's world is circumscribed by a limited number of cues, constitutive of its *Umwelt*, including the sun (which draws the sightless tick onto a tree branch), a passing mammal (sensed through its body heat, upon which the dangling tick falls), and the relation between the mammal's hair and skin (its hairless spots providing a site for bloodsucking and subsequent reproductive release).

suggests a more fluid continuum of experience structured by a law of inverse proportionality: the narrowest semiotic circles correspond to the sharpest senses and the strongest “drives to art” (think of the bee at work in its hive vs. the human and its endless number of sensory distractions), with the circumscription of animal behavior tied both to the character of the animal’s immediate surroundings and to the form of its body, its sense organs, and its manner of cognition.⁴⁵

Much of the difference posited between human and animal cognition, according to twentieth-century Heideggerians, Pittsburgh Hegelians, and evolutionary psychologists alike, has to do with “online” vs. “offline” thinking, or the level of immediacy/mediation with which objects are regarded or possibly conceptualized (a distinction most radically apparent between sensuous immediacy and linguistic mediation). John McDowell, following Heidegger, conceives this distinction in terms of “world”:

My experience [as a human] might disclose to me that an opening in a wall is big enough for me to go through [and a] cat might see that an opening in a wall is big enough for it to go through, [but] my experience would be world-disclosing and so conceptual in form...[whereas] the cat’s perceptual intake would not be world-disclosing and so, in the relevant sense, not conceptual in form. (348-9)

⁴⁵ Heidegger’s distinction between comportment (*Verhalten*, characteristic of *Dasein*) and behavior relates to an (ontic) being’s level of absorption in its surroundings, and its openness or closedness to being as such. “[T]he specific manner of being which belongs to man is quite different [from animals] and involves not behaviour but *comporting oneself toward*...Behaviour as a manner of being in general is only possible on the basis of the animal’s *absorption* in itself [*Eingenommenheit in sich*]. We shall describe *the specific way in which the animal remains with itself*—which has nothing to do with the selfhood of the human being comporting him- or herself as a person—this way in which the animal is absorbed in itself, and which makes possible behavior of any and every kind, as *captivation*” (237-9).

McDowell's cat sees the same material thing as a human observer, but not in the same way. Only the human being's visual experience is here conceptual enough to be "world-disclosing," where "any aspect of its content is present in a form in which it is suitable to constitute the content of a conceptual capacity" (McDowell 346). Concepts as ways of (human) seeing are thus defined as created structures that transcend immersion in the sensuous manifold and which are useful (as reasons for *acting*) outside of any given singular experience. Concepts, on this picture, would also figure into a definition of *poiesis*, since the latter relies upon repeatable activity and the manipulation of sensuous experience in language apart from the immediate experiences themselves.

In other words, on the Heidegger-McDowellian picture—and despite what Keats and Whitman may have thought—there can be no animal *poiesis* because there is no animal reflexivity and thus no metaphor. Merleau-Ponty seems to suggest as much in a wholly practical example from *The Structure of Behavior*:

[I]f an ape picks up a tree branch in order to reach a goal it is because it's able to confer a functional value on an object of nature. But...having become a stick for the ape, the tree branch is eliminated as such—which is the equivalent of saying that it's never possessed as an instrument in the full sense of the word. For man, on the contrary, the tree branch which has become a stick will remain precisely a tree-branch-which-has-become-a-stick, the same *thing* in two different functions and visible *for him* under a plurality of aspects. ([1963], 175)

The example of the ape is supposed to show how human perceptual cognition is parasitic upon a capacity to bracket the immediate practical standpoint in order to determine commonalities among multiple points of view. The animal cannot do that, always remaining "online" in its

cognition. But whereas for Heidegger this indeed disqualifies the animal from poetic activity (see his critique of Rilke, who unlike Hölderlin included animals in his “Open”), Merleau-Ponty goes in the opposite direction.

From Uexküll Merleau-Ponty borrows the notion of an “animal melody,” a tune played at the intersection of organism and environment through their rhythmic coordination: “Here the coordinated elements are not only coupled with each other, they constitute each other, by their very union, a whole which has its proper law...just as the first notes of a melody assign a certain mode of resolution to the whole” ([1963], 86). The animal’s melody is its drive to art, its *poiesis*, its mode of rhythmic connection to the world reminiscent of Jonathan Edwards’s spider and Dickinson’s bird. Metric cohesion occurs through motion, in the rhythm of *poiesis* and *techne* that—in its most engaged and successful moments—connects the human laborer with the animal. Merleau-Ponty echoes Dickinson’s “too silver for a seam” in his own account of avian movement and its “pure transitions”:

the bird which flies across my garden is, during the time that it is moving, merely a grayish power of flight and, generally speaking, we shall see that things are defined primarily in terms of their ‘behavior’ and not in terms of their static ‘properties.’ It is not I who recognize, in each of its points and instants passed through, the same bird defined by explicit characteristics, it is the bird in flight which constitutes the unity of its movement, which changes its place, it is this flurry of plumage still here, which is already there in a kind of ubiquity, like the comet with its tail. ([2002], 320-1)

The bird in flight “manifests itself as a ‘unity,” evoking “a living being giving expression to itself. It holds itself together as a fold of nature” (Buchanan 135). When it comes to vision, this rhythmic connection that grounds the animal’s expressive art occurs through the seeing body

rather than through any abstracted gaze, at the site of “a cohesion without concept, which is of the same type as the cohesion of the parts of my body, or the cohesion of my body with the world” (Merleau-Ponty [1968], 152).

As our most deeply adaptive form of human vision, the glance joins us to animal life, even as it can be honed in new ways specific to human cognitive capabilities.

Neuroanthropologist Merlin Donald claims, in his evolutionary analysis of motor skills, that the difference separating development on the hominid line from others is the human’s learned ability to engage in “rehearsal loops.” These loops involve “self-initiated performance of an action, observation of the results, remembrance of these, and renewed performance of the action with one or more of its aspects modified” (Tomlinson 73). Such loops work materially and analogically with the structure of the glance, which is fundamentally iterative and sequential as it also moves out into the world and back to the body, always resulting in a difference of worldly attunement. But the glance is *trained* to erase itself productively, to dissolve its activity back into the world it has helped to locally manipulate. Casey calls the glance “the vanguard of attention” because it is always already “scouting out the situation that calls for attention,” has always dropped its attachments and leaped ahead of itself (309).

The glance is fickle, but thankfully so, for in order to engage vision in those “rehearsal loops” necessary for human micro-industry we must be able to forget our attachments—an operation Nietzsche linked to the glories of animal life—so that we can re-focus elsewhere our drive to art. Indeed, the glance bridges the temporal difference Eakins discovered on his canvases, and which for Heidegger separated as if by an abyss the human from the animal: the elusiveness or evanescence of the glance, plashless as it sees, renounces the taking-in of mental objects that have “the constancy of perduring perceptual objects,” covering over the seam it

traces in the world by stitching back over itself, picking up and dropping attachments according to the body's rhythm (Casey 314). The glance itself is not easily distracted, even if we often associate the glance with distraction (rather, it is the "erotic fantasies" accessed through the gaze that "keep insisting on reappearing," taking us back out of intimate contact with the world into a dark inner space where "traumatic memories often return unbidden" [Casey 314]). Though to overcome my own distraction, I must return to Dickinson now, in order to show how the development of her late object poetics constructed a bridge between human and animal life—akin to and in concert with the adaptive glance—which at the very same moment was approaching crisis in analytic visual culture.

IV

"By my Window have I for Scenery" (F849), a late fascicle poem, puts the poet before an Albertian window, looking out from her room onto a pine tree set—as if upon a stage—for the variable uses of local animals. The tree is a "Port" for the Jays in flight and a "Peninsula" for the squirrels who leap out onto another branch, though it is just a "Stem" in a "Sea" for her. Later in the poem, she abstracts from the local scene to the system of global "Commerce," echoing her initial seafaring metaphors. Though Dickinson would never stop anthropomorphizing animals, this poem broaches her self-awareness about the limits of clinical vision—turning the (animal) world into a picture or virtual tableaux from which the spectator is removed—alongside its growing celebration in the scientific community. It is very likely that she read some of Louis Agassiz's "Methods of Study in Natural History"—published in the same 1862 *Atlantic Monthly* issue as Higginson's "Letter to a Young Contributor," a central text in Dickinson's poetic life—which emphasizes the epistemic importance of detached observation of nature (in the vein of

Daston and Galison's "mechanical objectivity"). Referring to the taxonomic study of animals, Agassiz attacked anthropomorphism and metaphor as veils occluding a species' "precise and definite plan" (457). Accurate empirical vision requires attaining a perspective of neither the human being nor the animal (or object of investigation) but of a neutral eye, the triangulating aperture of a mechanical apparatus.

As the scientific community rejected anthropomorphism in favor of dispassionate observation, it privileged the clinical gaze (which ironically involves "offline" seeing specific to the human sensorium) over the lively glance (which we share with animals as we negotiate our circumambient environs).⁴⁶ Dickinson went in the other direction, immersing herself and her *poiesis* more thoroughly than ever before in her *Umwelt*, stitching her poems *into* her local environment in a truly radical way. Her late scrap poems are not *about* the glance, and no more *about* animals than the rest of her output; they *are* glances, and they *are* animalian.

Werner, one of the foremost experts on Dickinson's "gorgeous nothings" and who has elsewhere contributed as much as anyone to the gaze's widespread application in Dickinson scholarship, nevertheless associates her late fragments with glancing touches: "Linked to what is in transit, disappearing, they resemble fingerprints, the light touches of the artist who, having submitted fully to the process of writing and constantly reaching new decisions, no longer thinks of finishing any particular text" ([1997], 42). Werner describes poetry as a "glancing blow," writing at an oblique angle (or *slant*) through the world instead of through representation's fully

⁴⁶ Some of the nineteenth-century's most influential clinical photographic studies—beyond Muybridge's and Etienne Jules Marey's motion studies—include G. B. Duchenne de Boulogne's catalogues of facial muscular phenomena (stimulated by electrodes), Hugh Diamond's portraits of the committed at various stages of onset and cure in the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum, Jean-Martin Charcot's arrays of diagnosed hysterics' gestures, and Francis Galton's composite portraits used to isolate features and classes of criminal physiognomies.

frontal-parallel mode. Dickinson's scraps skim material off the world's surface; they collect material from the skin of the commercial world, the life of private correspondence, and mass print culture and repurpose them through acts of writing-over that do not cancel their *place* in the layout of an *Umwelt*. Dickinson does not sublimate: she makes the manifold complex of paper in a household, in a town, in a region gleam with the quickening attention of the bird recycling a scrap for her nest.

Melanie Hubbard is right to argue that Dickinson's scraps "do their own theoretical work": "poems and prose meditations composed on advertising flyers, newspaper ads, guarantees, commercial stationery, bits of magazines, book and medicine show circulars, a flyleaf, envelope flaps, penmanship practice slips, and shopping lists both embed the motive circumstance for thought at the material level and think about the materiality of that circumstance" (28). Dickinson's poetry was always attuned to the material circumstances of *poiesis*, but these poems subsist "in such special relation to the paper upon which they appear that they are quite literally unprintable—they simply object." They cannot be abstracted into print without being utterly mutilated. One cannot take them out of the relevant domain of material praxis without first imposing the abstract container ["lyric"], turning the plastic object into something merely overheard. Instead, the object that *objects* becomes the relevant container, as in "Had we our senses" (F1310), where Dickinson's writing bends to fit the shape of the envelope flap. Without seeing the occasional shape of the poem—for an encounter with a mere fragment of the material world is a good enough occasion for Dickinson, perhaps more so now than a funeral or election day—one cannot see how the poem's visual speculation really works. A poem that backhandedly praises blindness, or vision filtered by the "Head," for allowing us to "look upon the / Earth – World / So Utterly / Unmoved –," also takes on the material structure of

the envelope, the concrete distinction between inside and out along a crease or fold. The eyes conceived “within our Head” traverses the crease, “within” sitting on the inside of the flap which, when folded over, leaves the “eyes” alone on the outside of the envelope, the “Head” beheaded as the tip of the triangle takes off its H. By opening and flattening the envelope, Dickinson was able to write the poem entire, joining interior and exterior while nonetheless revealing the conventional mechanisms—the literal sealing of a letter—whereby the world is shut off or separated out by private correspondence. Dickinson’s poetic aim, I believe, is to “move” our eyes along the object surface so that the object world in turn “moves” us and brings our senses back “Home” after a deviation, no longer trapped in the head or sealed through the fold of interior subjectivity but *unfolded* back into the surrounding world.

Indeed, Dickinson’s late praxis involved a reconsideration of the home. Scattering her scraps, not unlike her lifelong epistolary circulation of poems in lieu of publication, seemed to make up for her increasing late life alienation, what Diana Fuss relates as her developing habit of not even showing her face to visitors, becoming what Todd’s daughter called “the invisible voice, the phantom in the enchanted corridor” (45). As her already limited sphere of movement shrunk, her poems broke out of their locked boxes, lithely taking on the adaptive transformations of the animal in its habitat. Fuss calls Dickinson’s relationship to domestic space “eccentric,” a way of “lyricising space, recreating in the domestic interior the very condition of poetic address and response” (49). Her found objects broke her stanzas (Italian for “room”) for her, absolving Dickinson of any need to enter the drawing rooms containing unwanted family guests. But such “address and response” becomes less obviously social and more fundamentally physiological, as Werner notes in her consideration of Dickinson’s “process tense”: “Composed in neither the past nor the future tense but in what might be called the process tense, many of [the fragments] reveal

the kinesthetics of writing-as-dictation, the inscription of *energeia*, in which the hand that has begun to move across the page is seized and directed by an unknown agency, an other who, as Dickinson wrote, ‘comes’ and ‘over takes the mind’” ([1997], 46-7).

The sheer variety of material Dickinson fashioned into poetry is astounding, and supports on its own the notion that she scattered herself through her fragments, transferring the rhythms of both thought and physiological life to her everyday milieu. We find rhythms of immediate inspiration that disappear in the poems’ print copies, as in “A Drunkard cannot meet a Cork” (F1630), whose last line is written upside down on the back of a single leaf of lined stationery, the likely result of her turning the page over quickly from the bottom to finish her draft. Her propensity for torn or mutilated paper media whose shapes affect her line breaks and the placement of variants—more and more concentrated in final stanzas or lines—also feed into a propensity in her late years to dwell on endings, or lacks thereof: “The move to write on small, often torn pieces of paper can be read as her embracing a material that poses, as it obscures, the very problem of formal closure” (Socarides 145). There is no sense in which the late fragment, especially the torn and flattened envelope, is a locked box like the fascicles have been supposed to be. They are glances immediately transcribed, their open-endedness markings of distributed consciousness that bleed out through the joints of that other box with a broken lock: Dickinson’s dark, interiorized self.

Indeed, when Andy Clark and David Chalmers⁴⁷ first articulated “extended cognition” for the philosophy of mind, they could have used Dickinson as their primary example. They came quite close with the fictional Otto, a memory-impaired subject who scribbles in a small portable

⁴⁷ Listed, according to their initial footnote, “in order of degree of belief” in their central thesis (7).

notebook that “plays the role usually played by biological memory” (12). He writes the Museum of Modern Art’s address down where he knows he can easily find it, filing it in his own external hard drive rather than *in* the brain. Clark would go on to extrapolate from this example—and through the introduction of several more in *Supersizing the Mind*—that under certain circumstances, cognitive processes are realized in the interaction between brain, body, and environment. Dickinson, like Otto, writes on and into her environment, changing the primary model of her poetic archive from the privately sealed book to a topology of worldly space, from sequential collection to scattered network.⁴⁸ Her work had always scattered, of course, with many fascicle poems sent into the world in various forms as correspondence (often several times). But only here does poetry as a mode of extended mind, as embodied practice where thought and writing occurs at the meeting place of self and world—on envelopes, on pinned scraps, on the backs of recipes, on found advertisements and fliers—become her primary system of *poiesis*. Dickinson’s stitching glance, with the brute material world woof to her pencil’s weft, finally supplants her glancing stitch. Her quickened attention follows the gaps and spaces inherent in the given figures of found materials, foregrounding in her adaptive lines what and how those materials offer (or *afford*) the artist room for intervention.

Dickinson’s use of a stained candy wrapper, upon which she wrote “To her derided Home” (F1617) and which forced her writing to the margins of its backside to avoid the stain’s

⁴⁸ Louise Barrett discusses extended cognition in relation to animal minds and various evolutionary developments. These include “offloading” internal cognitive mechanisms to the environment or niche (much like, in her own domain, Dickinson offloads form onto made objects): “If there is information freely available in the environment, why would natural selection go to the trouble of building in internal mechanisms that do exactly the same job?”...[T]his isn’t quite the same as saying that no internal activity takes place. Instead, it’s an argument for giving the external environment as much attention as the inside of an animal’s head when we are investigating their cognitive capacities (110–111).

stickiness, shows how resourcefulness in scavenging (I am thinking of a raccoon here, perhaps) was ampliative in terms of formal invention. Socarides points out that Dickinson's unusual line placement, transcribed with the grain of the objects themselves, "is the very thing that allows the poem to multiple and intensify its inclination to include variants...the constraints presented by the material itself [forcing her] to renegotiate the relationships of space and text, urging her to press against and play off its multiple boundaries" (157-9). In the case of the wrapper, fields are opened up in the stain-marked dead center of the paper (where the variant "her" centralizes the poem's gender trouble); on advertising flyers variations in font size produce playful interregna; on envelopes the drift of her handwriting as it seeks the curved and crooked edges shape her lines into the paradox of a readymade concrete poem, shaded in by variants. Dickinson shows that working with the grain of the object goes hand in hand with deconstructive impulses, with renewed attention to the limits of a fully present interior self, with the immanence of materialist ontologies, and with the dissociative character of the glance.

Dickinson praised the art of the spider in "Spider as an Artist" (F1373)—"his surpassing Merit / Is freely certified // By every Broom and Bridget," by those domestic tools tasked with snuffing out his ubiquitous art—on one of her last pages of formal stationery, marking a definitive passage in 1875 to a more spider-like art, to her late life construction of a delicate linguistic web across the many nooks of her Amherst household. The spider is a significant figure for Dickinson and post-Puritanical American literature more generally, with Jonathan Edwards's "Spider Letter" always in the background, in which the future Northampton revivalist describes the spider's "whole manner of working" at the "mysteries of these their amazing works" (2). The mystery of the spider, for Edwards, is "a mystery of origins, intention, or simply, will, since the spider's web, medium of the arachnid's most brilliant definition, is also the

vehicle of its demise and death. The spider's knitting is an unraveling of its very being" (New 23). Edwards's flying spiders stitch their way seaward, where "their webs grow damp and moist and lose their levity and their wings fail them, and let them down into the water" (Edwards 6). They fly that way "for nothing but their own ease and comfort, they suffer themselves to go that way that they can go with the greatest ease, and so where the wind pleases." The spider works with what it has, literally stitching its world along its *Umwelt's* axes, sending its filaments forth and merging its body with available objective supports. It moves along the path of least resistance as it composes its art, just as Dickinson's glancing stitch would forego the resistance of all book forms by making her poetry an activity bound to a *Seifenblase*, to an everyday lifeworld with its wealth of tiny interstices beckoning for nimble—though penetrating, because so slight—commentary. Like the spider, too, she worked this way until her inevitable death.

Considered ecologically, Dickinson's art became a space-time event, though one of a different order than Muybridge's aforementioned temporal arrays. His *Horse in Motion* atomizes the temporality of visual perception as finely as possible, then stitches it back together in units bound by conventionalized white space, creating an object of knowledge, an abstracted diagram of visual sequence. Dickinson's abstraction in her late poetics is the result of the opposite impulse, closer to the initially inscrutable object left behind by an animal at work, not easily sublated into a larger world construction we carry with us on our diagrammatic way. In other words, the late fragments are abstract because so concrete—as in Aaron Siskind's photographic abstractions—*décollage* rather than collage, acts of unsticking objects from their symbolic relations in order to re-implace them back into the world with an illuminating difference. The scraps are apparently fragmentary, when isolated and gazed at, because they are wholly immanent to life, resistant to automatic synthesis by the reader's innocent eye. Her permanent

techne decisions were made in the name of impermanence, like her move from pen to pencil in 1879, which Werner puts down to “Dickinson's increasingly acute sense of transience. For, unlike the pen, which produces a permanent memory trace, the lines drawn by the lead point of the stylus are easily erased or retraced so that each act of copying constitutes a new performance—improvisation or extension of a thought-event” ([1995], 23). Her hand sought her eye as her craft sought the *here* to which glancing returns are always made, a poetic springboard for further writing and looking.

Muybridge undoes the worldly spatial layout within which the glance moves, gathering images in order to posit a transcendental spatial plan, organized by white space. His glances are neither animal nor human, neither horse-like nor approximations of an observer on the sidelines but turned by his mechanism into self-sufficient monadic units of a perceptual code. If the white space between his sequence's cells accords structurally with Dickinson's fascicle stitches, her late *poiesis* works instead to undo the method of substitution, to alter her code in order to more immanently distribute her poetic objects in real space and time. Unlike Muybridge, Marey, and even Eakins in his own motion studies, Dickinson's goal was not to overcome the limitations of human vision but to accept them fully as productive membranes of interaction with other views—including those of the animals surrounding her home—as they see and work within their own bodily limitations, in their forms of life rather than their sculptural deaths with each shutter snap. Muybridge's work, which opened up all manner of conceptual possibility for the photographic medium, also accorded with analytic measurements of the (animal and human) body, coinciding with late nineteenth-century advances toward maximizing the efficiency of Taylorist labor systems. In service to railroad magnate Leland Stanford, they were a part of contemporary advances in the spatialization of time (most evident in the time of the train

schedule), what Bergson diagnosed as a reduction of temporality to number and extensive magnitude, to the mechanical divisibility of fluid movement and gesture. These motion studies posited the body as an enclosed mechanical system that could be implanted into concrete workspaces, instead of a scattered or distributed mechanism integrated non-hierarchically with (rather than into) a workplace. Marey and Eakins—by preferring single frame presentations, constructed through “reciprocal operation[s] of decomposition and reunification,” preserving “a vector of spatial and temporal coherence” instead of Muybridge’s “blunt dismantling of the apparent continuities of movement and time” (Crary 140)—present more complicated cases, though the final images still capture prominent bodily positions in the midst of a motion, generalizable as visual grist for the industrial mill hell bent on regulating physiological reflexes (including of the eye itself) into the most efficient, repeatable patterns.

As conceptual objects, Muybridge’s arrays in particular were limited by the objective qualities of the printed page, thereby falling short of the final translation to cinema it seemed to predict (and that many have retrospectively posited). So were poems, one would have thought, though Dickinson’s scraps escaped the page’s gravitational field. I make an unlikely comparison when I compare Dickinson’s final workshop to Piet Mondrian’s final New York studio, the workplace of his last active months. He placed “removable color and non-color planes” made of cardboard directly on the walls surrounding his paintings, an activity we know more about than Dickinson’s late practice: “I feel that painting can become much more real...when its possibilities are realized in architecture in such a way that the painter’s capabilities are conjoined with constructive ones...I have studied the problem and practiced the approach with removable color and non-color planes in several of my studios in Europe, just as I have done here in New York” (Mondrian 357). By “letting the wall into the work in the space between cardboard color planes,”

Mondrian “has admitted the work into the world,” liberating “a space of creation that takes place between the painted planes and the wall” (Schuffreider 42). The white space is not an abstract diagrammatic gap but the very concrete place (or “free space”) where conventional art forms are unmade in order to be remade as part of the artist’s *Umwelt*, integrated in and with the world.

Harriet Janis, a visitor to Mondrian’s studio, remarked: “The rectangular pieces of cardboard pinned to the wall were part of a geometric-aesthetic game which served him as an experiment in equilibrium in which relationships were being continually studied. The infinite number of pinholes about these colored areas proves that dozens of times they had been shifted. All of them were separate, there was no overlapping, and there were no lines between them as there were in his pictures” (qtd. Henkels 40). These fragments, pinned to the walls, moved regularly as an exploration in dynamic relations, just as Dickinson’s scraps were iteratively collected, scattered, pinned, detached and re-attached. Jen Bervin notes the evidence of Dickinson’s ritualistic unmaking of her “gorgeous nothings,” asking “Where do those cuts fall and what shape do they prefigure when the space is opened out?...At Amherst College Library, Margaret Dakin has acquired what is believed to be Emily Dickinson’s lap desk; its painted wooden surface is positively riddled with myriad fine cuts” (9-10). I would be opening out a new field were I to repeat the common observation, this late in the game, that Dickinson was a proto-modernist; suffice it to simply make this comparison between her late environmental poetics and Mondrian’s plastic iconoclasm. “[S]lit open, [an envelope] functions not as a soothing bandage, but, rather, as...a site of rupture,” a concrete site of de-formation that precedes the opening of a new, expansive field (Werner [2013], 213). “It is as if she wanted her poems to be shaped by objects that were themselves on the way out of form,” Arsić speculates, “unfolding into surrounding objects, connected to them by the cuts she inflicted simultaneously on the envelope

and the desk” (241-2). It is as if she wanted her poems, against the synthesizing analytic culture of her time, to finally achieve the status of the splashless glance, inscribing the tiniest of marks on the world before folding again on the way back out of form. She unmade her world in order to live in it more nimbly.

Chapter 3. Henry James: Portraits and Portability

From June 9 through September 10, 2017, *Henry James and American Painting*—curated by Colm Tóibín and Declan Kiely—was exhibited at The Morgan Library & Museum in New York. The show gathered paintings, watercolors, drawings, photographs, sculptures, letters, and manuscripts in order to trace the varied and often intimate relationships between The Master and visual artists he knew, sat for, corresponded with, learned from, and influenced. In the exhibition catalogue, Tóibín writes that his “connection to the visual arts would nourish James’s fiction in different ways, providing him with a social and intellectual hinterland he otherwise lacked, allowing the gallery and studio space, the expatriate dilettante and the collector, a privileged place in his work but also offering the scene—a single, significant moment in the narrative, captured as though by a painter—a central pillar in his house of fiction” (7). He also notes, *en passant*, that in James’s fiction, “the glance, the glimpse, the gaze are essential tools in creating drama” (35).

If James’s great dichotomy is American-European, not far down the list might sit gaze-glance. And like the former, it’s a distinction that changes in character throughout his life, as a matter both of constructing his house(s) of fiction and in his craft’s relationship to the visual arts. Nearly at the beginning of his career as a novelist—though after he had published several pieces of art criticism in venues like *Atlantic Monthly*, *The Nation*, and *Galaxy*—James superimposed his lifelong concerns with seeing and society. *The American* (originally serialized in the *Atlantic* in 1876-77) follows wealthy industrialist Christopher Newman as he attempts to navigate Parisian society and capture its treasure, the beautiful Claire de Cintré. From the beginning, where we encounter him on his first visit to the Louvre, “It was our friend’s eye that chiefly told his story; an eye in which innocence and experience were singularly blended” (James [1978],

18). His eye, we are told, is “Frigid yet friendly, frank yet cautious, shrewd yet credulous, positive yet skeptical, confident yet shy, extremely intelligent and extremely good-humoured, there was something vaguely defiant in his concessions, and something profoundly reassuring in its reserve” (18-19). His eye is “full of contradictory suggestions,” as if caught free-floating without any assurance of what it is he is seeing, caught in limbo between the experience of his New World success and his ignorance of Old World art and custom. Indeed, the “Raphael and Titian and Rubens” he encounters there “were a new kind of arithmetic, and they inspired our friend, for the first time in his life, with a vague self-mistrust” (17). The paintings make a swarm of Charons, carrying our friend from the land of naïve self-made horizons to the European underworld of stifling social decorum and perceptual subtlety. They also let us in on a secret in advance of any narrative anagnorisis: just as there is nothing obviously “self-made” about these paintings, and just as the American relies fruitlessly on his “little red guide-book” to unlock the mysteries of such Old World treasures, his strained attention and dizzy frustration with art en masse reveals a false promise of self sufficiency that that will snare Newman in a world where the power of social arrangements dominate brute individual wills to interpretation. There is no Baedeker to help him see what he will need to see.

Newman’s eye—and the eyes of his patrician interlocutors, centered in the intimidating force of Madame de Bellegarde and her imperious eldest, Urbain—truly does tell his story, one of missed cues and furtive glances, which is also a story of his creator’s literary career and the dense social textures he observed and re-presented in fiction. From the earliest novels and stories to *The Portrait of a Lady*, *What Maisie Knew*, *The Sacred Fount*, and his late masterpieces, James’s dramas turn on looks that underlie the intricacies of his language and dialogue, his increasingly baroque style. The glance takes on a social function in James, albeit one that often

contains contradictions and projections of the unspeakable in James's world: impersonality, sexual desire, flight or escape as well as propriety, restraint, secretiveness. The glance is where social connections are made or severed, but it is also a tenuous tether connecting James's singular craft to the world he sought to evade: visual culture, photography, Impressionism, post-Impressionism, illustration, and theater (the site of his greatest artistic failure) just as much as the stately portraiture he preferred, and turn of the century urbanization with its trend of portability towards which his ambivalence knew no bounds. Like one of his great novels, this story is almost too intricate to get in its entirety, but then again so is the social life it maps, increasingly fleeing its subjective center. The goal is to somehow keep both in view.

I

James describes the artist as a man with "eyes greatly open," who responds to the "mystic solicitation, the urgent appeal, on the part of everything to be interpreted," one "[a]ddicted to seeing 'through'—one thing through another, accordingly, and still other things through *that*" (James 1962: 59, 154). Contained in this famous statement on both art and life is a curious distinction, perhaps between the young Henry who, according to Viola Hopkins Winner, was given to "habitual gazing and gaping and his need to find order and coherence in inchoate impressions" (1), and the mature Henry of the *New York Edition* whose prefaces consider the highly un-mystical processes of revision, composed sequence, everyday seeing, and the pan-semiotic truth that "everything refers." As a matter of representation, James would depict figures with "eyes greatly open" and unfortunately closed, eyes stuck on one thing and eyes glancing between several. The postures of seer and seen are the bases on which his stories get told, since the central "events" of his novels and stories are presented as visual-perceptual acts. His much-

discussed narratorial “point of view” principle means that what cannot be presented as seen through some character’s eyes is usually not presented at all. As vehicles of vision, characters are either perceptive or blind at various moments, and the drivers of James’s plots—and thus social reality—are the ones who can, when necessary, step outside its frame.⁴⁹

Winner traces James’s “interest in pictures” back to his first memory, a view through a moving carriage window of the “admirable aspect of the Place and the Colonne Vendôme...framed by the clear window of the vehicle as [he] passed” (qtd. 1). According to Winner, the “infant impressed by the view through the window was to become James the observer-artist, passionately involved yet objective and detached.” In part because of the wealth of biographical material supplied by James—including in *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), from which the above quote is gleaned, and *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914)—critics have been quick to trace the author’s artistry to experiences, visions, attachments, and anxieties of his childhood. His most comprehensive biographer, Leon Edel, stresses his juvenile reticence to act in the shadow of his much more gregarious older brother William, a notable preference for observing life from the sidelines. Such connections, while compelling, remain loosely speculative when taken as the ground for his entire subsequent writerly praxis.

⁴⁹ As Carolyn Porter argues, this is a complicated maneuver that initially relies upon the realization that one is both seer and actor, capable of both immersion in and distance from a constructed visual field. She takes *The Sacred Fount* (1901) as a linchpin in James’s corpus, for instance, with its unusual first-person narration introducing a visual problematic at the core of literary perspective: “Among its other advantages, then, the third-person center of consciousness allowed James to finesse the problem raised by *The Sacred Fount*, enabling him to invest a participating agent in the drama with the contemplative stance of the visionary seer without thereby running the risks entailed by according the seer power to speak directly to the reader. It allowed him, in short, to acknowledge the seer as a participant without sacrificing his crucial value as seer” (125).

Or maybe they're not overly speculative. Maryanne Wolf argues that the foundation of emerging literacy in a child is in emotional-physical contact, in the "association between hearing written language and feeling loved" (83), a specific extension of Wittgenstein's understanding of literacy and context in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Ben Morgan's recent study of embodied cognition in the *Bildungsroman* (a form more or less repeated in traditional biography, though not one James would readily use in his fiction) links Wolf's research to Leila Berg's on "the emotional and physical environment from which an immersive engagement with books emerges"—as well as to Colwyn Trevarthan's findings on cultural meaning acquisition through imitative triangulation between stories and other human beings—in order to claim that the somatic effects of reading, storytelling, and aesthetic engagement "are shaped and supported by the early sensuous and communicative interactions from which the habits of literacy develop" (Morgan 346, 359). James famously writes that we "must grant the artist his subject, his idea, what the French call his *donnée*; our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it" (1948, 14). One can stretch that truism too far into one encompassing an examination of the artist Henry James: more important than the subject matter of his works are the social interactions that produced them and that shine through them. It is up to others to judge how "formative" the solitary habits of his formative years truly were. I depart from this particular psychological-biographical problem in order to think through a more general one: how does a (biographical) subject's social attunement limit his capacity to act creatively, to *see* the field of affordances within which all possible actions, interventions, gestures, or positions are circumscribed?

Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenological-existential analysis, in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), of "bad faith" [*mauvaise foi*] and the place of the gaze [*le regard*] within it remains the twentieth century's most influential answer, germinal as it was for psychoanalytic, feminist,

postcolonial, and critical race theorists in diagnosing power relations inherent to subject-object dynamics. According to Sartre, I experience my being-for-others, my constant availability as an object by and for the other as subject, through the gaze. When I am looked at, I experience the looker as an ungraspable, abyssal subject. I become aware of the other's existence only in the feeling associated with the other's objectifying gaze, a feeling through which the other is experienced as a subject constituting my own being: "As I appear to the Other, so I am," Sartre states in a Hegelian-Kojevian vein (320). In feeling "pure" shame before the other—"not a feeling of being this or that guilty object but in general of being *an* object; that is, of *recognizing myself* in this degraded, fixed, and dependent being which I am for the Other" (384)—I acknowledge the other as the being that constitutes my being, sculpted and shaped from the outside. As such the gaze splits my-self into two: it is "the upsurge of an ekstatic relation of being, of which one term is the 'me' [and of which the] other term is still the 'me' but outside my reach, outside my action, outside my knowledge" (359).

For Sartre, social relations are mediated by the visual field and are thus irreducibly nonreciprocal: one's very being—being the subject or object of the gaze, being for-oneself or in-oneself—is related to a fundamental struggle for power with the other. Sartre's self and other, each originally grounded in nothingness, are constructed by gazing contests, a Hegelian lord-bondsman dialectic turned into a fight for the best view. The one who casts the look is always subject and its target is always turned into an object (or at least, objectification is the *telos* of the look, even when it comes up against the ultimate barrier of the "for-itself's" constitutive nothingness). The fundamental property of the subject, its groundlessness, is threatened when the self identifies with the other's look. By taking into itself the dense opacity of an object that contradicts its pure transparency, the self's fundamental human freedom is temporarily

undermined: “I grasp the Other’s look at the very center of my *act* as the solidification and alienation of my own possibilities...The Other as a look is only that—my transcendence transcended. Of course I still *am* my possibilities in the mode of non-thetic consciousness (of these possibilities. But at the same time the look alienates them from me” (352). The Other’s look “confers spatiality upon me. To apprehend oneself as looked-at is to apprehend oneself as spatializing-spatialized,” no more nor less than a body (*körper* rather than *leib*), a sculpture, a boulder, a kitchen appliance (357).

Ultimately, Sartre’s existential demand, that we accept and embrace our radical freedom, depends upon our recognition that we do not in fact possess the identity conferred on us by the other’s gaze. To do so is to engage in “bad faith” or self-deception, like the waiter in the café whose

movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of a automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tight-rope-walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually re-establishes by a lightmovement of the arm and hand. All his behavior seems to us a game. He applies himself to changing his movements as if they were mechanisms, the one regulating the other; his gestures and even his voice seems to be mechanisms; he gives himself the quickness and pitiless rapidity of things. He is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing at *being* a waiter in a café. (101-2)

Though the affected waiter is his most famous example, bad faith extends beyond one's identification with an occupation or social role. It extends deeper into our beliefs, attitudes, and even our basic understanding of what and how we *see*, as complexly adapted as the equilibrium our waiter perpetually re-establishes "by a light movement of the arm and hand." According to Sartre, the Cartesian problem of "inverted vision" ("How can we set upright the objects which are painted upside down on our retina?") is produced by the very same impulse to self-objectification. "[P]eople have wanted to link *my* consciousness of objects to the body of the Other," the retina an element in a purely physical system like a camera obscura: "it is a *screen* and only that; the crystalline lens is a *lens* and only a lens; both are homogeneous in their being with the candle which completes the system" (403). Our Cartesian mistake is that "we have considered a dead eye in the midst of the visible world in order to account for the visibility of this world. Consequently, how can we be surprised later when consciousness, which is absolute interiority [for Descartes], refuses to be bound to this object?" (403-4).

Sartre is being literal here, for in the *Dioptrics*, Descartes suggests "taking the dead eye of a newly dead person (or, failing that, the eye of an ox or some other large animal)" and substituting that eye for the pinhole lens of a *camera obscura* (166). His eye is not only dead and monocular but also not even necessarily human. And yet, despite the odiousness of this substitution of inert object for the armature of a supposedly ungrounded subject—ungrounded, supposedly, not only on an existential account but in the process and outcome of Descartes's first *Meditation*—Sartre retains an underlying Cartesianism in his own theory of the gaze. It does not always go unacknowledged either. For Sartre, the gaze is the enemy of our freedom, which is our true existential condition, and yet since human beings are fundamentally social our objecthood is as much an originary structure of existence as the void through which we can create ourselves

endlessly anew (as the result of losing ourselves at every moment). It is as if Sartre's anti-Cartesianism was upended not by the philosopher's historiographical preference but by his circumambient socio-visual world, anticipating in *Being and Nothingness* his recognition—17 years later in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*—that the sedimentation of social conditions encloses a horizon around and co-determines our nominally absolute freedom of thought and action.

Two visual scenarios close to home for Sartre, writing in 1943, were the trenches (not quite entirely out of fashion in warmaking) and the new “black box” movie theaters (introduced generally in the 1930s). If the former was a Sartrean “social” experience distilled to its essence—soldiers looking and shooting back and forth across “no man’s land,” attempting to turn their opposite irreversibly into an object-corpse—the latter was anti-social to the extreme, a return to the *camera obscura* in which darkness and lack of environmental ornamentation drew each viewer toward the screen like a moth toward a lamp, their chair the locus of any-subject-whatsoever in abstract visual space. The former was the ultimate example of the dueling gaze, the latter of the voyeur spying on the other’s world through a peephole (as in another of Sartre’s famous examples). The pugilistic aspect of seeing that results when two subjects face one another is wholly in line with the sort of early twentieth-century wartime experience narrated by the likes of Ernst Jünger, though also perhaps, if Martin Jay’s biographical speculation is to be trusted, the result of Sartre’s self-consciousness over his appearance: “Sartre elevated his own experience as the victim of the look—or what he recalled as such—into something very much like a universal human condition” (287).⁵⁰ The disintegrative aspect of watching—when “I am

⁵⁰ Consider, in opposition to the force of such a speculation, James’s account of meeting George Eliot in 1869: “She is magnificently ugly—deliciously hideous. She has a low forehead, a dull

alone and on the level of a non-thetic self-consciousness,” when “I am a pure consciousness of things, and things [are] caught up in the circuit of my selfness” (Sartre 347)—leads directly to Stanley Cavell’s post-Sartrean question (and answer): “How do movies reproduce the world magically? Not by literally presenting us with the world, but by permitting us to view it unseen. This is not a wish for power over creation (as Pygmalion’s was), but a wish not to need power, not to have to bear its burdens...In viewing films, the sense of invisibility is an expression of modern privacy or anonymity” (40).

So the two-sided aspect of Sartre’s analysis, derived from the Heideggerian insight that the very being of phenomena change their ontological status depending upon our comportment toward them and the use to which they are put, leads us soon enough into the realm of art, spectatorship, and (late) modernity. After all, the keyhole is a rather excessive example, though one of several memorable ones, in large part because of the psychoanalytic aura Sartre lends to them: whether in the café or the hallway, we read his set piece scenes as if encountering a primal social scene, or at least a backlit film studio where such a scene is being re-enacted. These cinematic scenarios, however, always have the potential to turn into participatory theater, as when the voyeur is caught spying and forced into object-hood by the presence of the other’s gaze and by the subsequent self-consciousness that gaze sets in motion. Thus the attractiveness of the dark movie theater, for which there is no threat—at least not until the film is over, the lights come back on, and one is ushered back onto the lonely street—of being jostled out of one’s magisterial position on “creation.” The cinema, one might then say, represents the narcotic side

grey eye, a vast pendulous nose, a huge mouth full of uneven teeth and a chin and jawbone *qui n’en finissent pas*...[But] in this vast ugliness resides a most powerful beauty which, in a very few minutes, steals forth and charms the mind, so that you end as I ended, in falling in love with her” (1984, 116).

of Sartre's phenomenology, the place one goes for popcorn and to escape the hell of other people. But the price of admission only gets you so far, and then back you go into the breach, to the suffocating warfare of the drawing room cocktail party once again.

But before we telegraph our way back to James, we should acknowledge the obvious: the Master before he was the Master, early in his career, knew neither of the cinema nor the trenches. He had even avoided serving in the Civil War, though not without a sense of failed duty. Then again, the drawing room was the battlefield he played upon, like a major general designing an advance on a tabletop diagram. And martial terminology littered his writing throughout his career, particularly in ways that equate social maneuvers—advances, hesitations, retreats, blitzes—with war games. He even overuses one of his favorite phrases, to “hang fire,” throughout several novels and stories at moments when, in the midst of a seemingly ordinary conversation, a character's decision about what to say or do next dilates ever so slightly, drawing one's attention to the all-too-brief gap where the difference between life or death might be sealed. When Gertrude Stein wrote James's life in the guise of a field general in *Four in America*, she had his tactics as a writer in mind, his formal mastery, the way he plotted out every narrative contingency ahead of time (because life and death *does* depend on it). Stein might also have recognized, however, the residue of James's command style in the form of the social sequences he set in motion, which at times seems like a quirky twist of a larger truth of the novel's history, its generic elevation of the quotidian to a rhetorical level traditionally reserved for grand martial events. One thinks, perhaps, to take only a few late examples, of Kate Croy's decoy gambit, Mrs. Newsome's reinforcements, Maggie Verver's surprise flank attack.

But then does this mean that Sartre's dramatic, oppositional gaze, whether on the side of the subject or object, the for-itself or the in-itself, characterizes the visual register adopted and

refined by James as an author? It should not surprise that my answer will be no. And what relation does he draw between seeing in social life and through art? This is a question I will answer eventually, though the sheer volume of James's engagement with the visual arts throughout his life makes totalizing statements on the matter unlikely, or unwise. Nevertheless, if we understand that his attitude and practice changed over time, that he was not simply and only ever the James of "The Art of Fiction" and that's it (as some commentators seem to think), we can make some useful historical generalizations in the end. I begin with *The Portrait of a Lady*.

II

James reached his first apex as an art critic in the five or so years before the serialization of *Portrait*. In 1875 he revealed, in one of several reviews of American painting for *The Nation*, his preference for portraiture over all other genres. It is no wonder, then, that he constructed a "portrait" of his own shortly thereafter, though James's critics have never exactly agreed on what kind of portrait he made for his beloved heroine Isabel Archer, or whether he was able to make one at all. It is not too simple a point to stress that James had no interest painting, commissioning an illustration, or producing a photograph of his protagonist (Alvin Langdon Coburn's frontispiece to the novel in the *New York Edition* would be a mansion, not a woman). And James's description of Isabel throughout the novel is entirely nondescript, beginning with her cousin Ralph Touchett's first glance: "The person in question was a young lady...a tall girl in a black dress, who at first sight looked pretty" (1975, 25). While Viola Winner, Michael Gorra, and Micia Hussey among others discuss recurring scenes of Isabel's objectification—taken as the engine of her fate in society and at the hands of Gilbert Osmond and Madame Merle—one might as easily stress her (related) reduction to visual clichés. After her marriage, Ned Rosier

beholds her “dressed in black velvet...framed in the gilded doorway, she struck our young man as the picture of a gracious lady” (1975, 309-10). Ralph, even more strikingly, compares her to a “Titian, [received] by the post, to hang on my wall—a Greek bas-relief to stick over my chimneypiece” (1975, 63).

But if she is an object to be possessed just like Rosier’s bibelots, Isabel does not seem to know it, and her competing visions come closer to the open landscape form than the closed, claustrophobic portrait: “She spent half her time in thinking of beauty and bravery and magnanimity; she had a fixed determination to regard the world as a place of brightness, of free expansions, of irresistible action” (1975, 54). Early in the novel, Isabel’s glimpse of infinite vistas is met with and countered by caricature, as in Ralph’s opinion that her free impulse is irreducibly American. Indeed, he draws her “in which she was represented as a pretty young woman dressed, on the lines of the prevailing fashion, in the folds of the national banner” (1975, 61). Already the narrative’s pulse and counter-pulse, which is also gaze and counter-gaze, is revealed by James to a reader who is not enslaved to either but can glance between Isabel and her interlocutors in a rhythm that measures her perceptions against the others’. That his heroine is never fully described prevents us from ever sitting and staying comfortably with her caricatures.

But before James could see to Isabel’s entrance into the European snakepit where she would be gazed at, framed, possessed, and commodified—precisely in the way he, James, would prefer us *not* to—he had to envision her himself. In the preface he recalls her origin as an item “in the dusky, crowded, heterogeneous back-shop of the mind,” tended to by an author-figure less like a portraitist than a “wary dealer in precious odds and ends” (1975, 8). There she waits, conserved, protected, and enjoyed by the keeper alone in a backroom purgatory, not yet on the shelf for general consumption. Hussey refers to Isabel in this vein as James’s *objet d’art*,

possessed by the male (inner) eye from the very beginning, even before crossing the threshold at Gardencourt. And yet James also begins with an intimation of Isabel in motion:

[M]y dim first move toward “The Portrait,” which was exactly my grasp of a single character—an acquisition I had made, moreover, after a fashion not here to be retraced. Enough that I was, as seemed to me, in complete possession of it, that I had been so for a long time, that this had made it familiar and yet had not blurred its charm, and that, all urgently, all tormentingly, I saw it in motion and, so to speak, in transit. This amounts to saying that I saw it as bent upon its fate—some fate or other; *which*, among the possibilities, being precisely the question. (1975, 7-8)

How then do we reconcile these competing accounts of Isabel’s figure as a founding impression, as both an object stashed away in the author-portraitist’s cluttered studio and the trace of an image fleeing that very same person, forever “in transit”?

This contradiction should not be simply ascribed to James’s own ambivalences as a writer; rather, one can say more forcefully that he was hitting on a tension at the very heart of portraiture itself. Catherine Soussloff writes of “the functional dialectic of portrait representation,” where the exteriority, objectivity, and materiality of the portrayed figure coexists “in the genre” with a claim to the very same figure’s interiority, subjectivity, and spirituality (5). One side of the dialectic, reliant upon indexicality and surface recognition of a historical individual, has from the fifteenth century through the nineteenth “reassert[ed] the social relations between individual, spouse, family, the institution of marriage, and class” (Soussloff 8). Soussloff’s ultimate antiquarian example, well before Van Eyck’s *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait*, the decorative drawing room paintings of nineteenth-century bourgeois homes, and photographic *cartes de visite*, is the Roman death masque, which “ensured the continuation through the generations of an emphasis

on kinship in portraiture.” Thus the dark possibility, in James’s re-telling, that Isabel would always remain, even when imprinted on the page and circulated through copies of *The Atlantic* and *Macmillan’s*, a dusky *memento mori* of a certain type of doomed woman in the curiosity shop of James’s (and his age’s) mind. But then James also admits, as he looks to insert this seeming readymade into the flow of narrative, into the right place in the novel’s formal mechanism so that her “destiny” will come about as if of sheer necessity, that she is “still at large, not confined by the conditions, not engaged in the tangle, to which we look for much of the impress that constitutes an identity” (1975, 8). Her fate is not analogous to the painter’s last brushstroke that completes the work. The other side of the portrait’s “dialectic,” an excessive feature of the object—a consciousness, a soul, a personality, the evanescent point of identity that is not reducible to static markings—comes to be associated with movement, the forward motion of a character in a narrative fiction.

Madame Merle makes her “very metaphysical” case to Isabel about the self nearly in direct contradistinction to Jacob Burckhardt’s ideal of the subject in portraiture, where the history of the form declined from Renaissance representations of a “free subject,” “expressed visually in paintings that exhibit no elaboration of context, nor an obvious social engagement” into decorative, costumed figures whose material draperies express only their social station (Soussloff 29). Merle tells Isabel,

“When you’ve lived as long as I you’ll see that every human being has his shell and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There’s no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we’re each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances. What shell we call our ‘self’? Where does it begin? where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us— and then it flows back

again. I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for *things!* One's self—for other people—is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps—these things are all expressive. (1975, 175)

Merle could be seen here, despite James's description of the former as a metaphysician, as the heroic forerunner to a twentieth-century, anti-metaphysical critical materialism or poststructuralist Bourdieuvianism, if not for the fact that her doctrine—resisted initially by Isabel, who holds onto a sense of the deep(er) self (““My clothes express the dressmaker, but they don't express me. To begin with it's not my own choice that I wear them; they're imposed upon me by society””)—prepares the way for her victim's entrapment. Jonathan Freedman reads Merle's partner-in-crime Osmond as an incorrigible art collector or dealer, regarding his wife Isabel “as he views everyone in his narrow world, as an objet d'art, a potential ‘figure in his collection of choice objects’” (153). Freedman argues that, while James eventually came to accept “with increasing confidence and self-assurance the *entire* burden of the [British] aesthetic movement—internalizing and deploying not merely its praise for a highly pitched and mobile consciousness, but also its ambivalent acceptance of the commodification of consciousness” (201), in *Portrait* he still critically opposes Osmond's material Aestheticism to the promise of (a feminized) immaterial consciousness subject to but ontologically distinct from the contagion of the former (a disease that threatens to take over the novel proper when Rosier identifies Isabel as a portrait: “[a]t this moment, it appears that all the novel's characters and even its author are somehow implicated in one form or another of Gilbert's malevolent aestheticism” [Freedman 158]). Bill Brown, taking the material-immaterial distinction back to the things themselves, refers to a Jamesian uncanny, “an indeterminate ontology” or an “inability to distinguish between

the animate and the inanimate” extending to consciousness “as a great thing in excess of things, as it were, which can hardly be measured by any logic of possession or possessive individualism” (137, 141). Whether it is ever right to call consciousness a “thing” in the first place (to do so risks succumbing to the very aestheticist impulse such formulations are meant to combat), there is little doubt that while the Merle-Osmond nexus views Isabel as a thing amongst things—a beautiful object amongst the furniture whose ultimate value is that she might make little Pansy one too—James’s narration resists succumbing to her complete reification. It does not even reveal the color of her eyes.

The Isabel who bursts onto the scene can be characterized, above all, by curiosity tuned toward the visible: “She had a great desire for knowledge, but she really preferred almost any source of information to the printed page; she had an immense curiosity about life and was constantly staring and wondering. She carried within herself a great fund of life, and her deepest enjoyment was to feel the continuity between the movements of her own soul and the agitations of the world” (1975, 41). So James invests her with “a great fund of life”—and an imagination “by habit ridiculously active; when the door was not open it jumped out of the window” (1975, 39)—an endowment vague enough to generate Romantic associations or promises of transcendence whose wings the novel will unceremoniously clip, with Isabel potentially foreshadowing James’s disappointing Frank Saltram in his 1894 “The Coxon Fund.” When the early portions of *Portrait* were appearing in *The Atlantic*, James wrote in his notebook (echoing a line Ralph had already used) that the “success of the whole story greatly depends upon this [upcoming] portion,” the five installments following Isabel’s marriage, where “the poor girl, who has dreamed of freedom and nobleness, who has done, as she believes, a generous, natural, clear-sighted thing, finds herself in reality ground in the very mill of the conventional” (1961, 15).

And so Isabel's own recognition of her error must involve clear-sightedness where it was once only assumed, a visual concentration that James echoes on a formal level when he describes these later chapters as "crowded," a rather "good defect in consideration of the perhaps too great diffuseness of the earlier portion." Her marriage to Osmond flattens Isabel's perspective on the world and marks the major contraction of the novel's diffuseness (and the corresponding flights of Isabel's fancy in expansive romantic metaphors): "The desire for unlimited expansion had been succeeded in her soul by the sense that life was vacant without some private duty that might gather one's energies to a point. She had told Ralph she had 'seen life' in a year or two and that she was already tired, not of the act of living, but of that of observing" (1975, 297). But is the recognition that Osmond has objectified her, narrowed her life, and sapped her energy sufficient for understanding why Isabel grows tired not of living, but "of the act...of observing"?

A clue is provided in a passage that analogously links Osmond's presence to Isabel's visual acuity. It comes in the climactic Chapter 42, Isabel's "vigil of searching criticism" by the fire, a scene James describes as having "all the vivacity of incident and all the economy of picture" (1975, 14). James further claims the scene as a "representation simply of her motionlessly *seeing*," which is not to say that Isabel is "observing" anything. Osmond has just revealed his expectation that Isabel will use Lord Warburton's desire for her to deliver him for Pansy. Prior to their conversation, Isabel "received an impression" while coming upon the threshold of the drawing room she "herself usually occupied" (1975, 342). She stumbles upon a scene she "had often seen" before, but she now "notice[s]" that Osmond and Madame Merle's

colloquy had for the moment converted itself into a sort of familiar silence, from which she instantly perceived that her entrance would startle them. Madame Merle was standing on the rug, a little way from the fire; Osmond was in a deep chair, leaning back and looking at

her. Her head was erect, as usual, but her eyes were bent on his. What struck Isabel first was that he was sitting while Madame Merle stood; there was an anomaly in this that arrested her. Then she perceived that they had arrived at a desultory pause in their exchange of ideas and were musing, face to face, with the freedom of old friends who sometimes exchange ideas without uttering them. There was nothing to shock in this; they were old friends in fact. But the thing made an image, lasting only a moment, like a sudden flicker of light. Their relative positions, their absorbed mutual gaze, struck her as something detected. But it was all over by the time she had fairly seen it. (1976, 342-3)

The difference between seeing and noticing in this scene is largely akin to Casey's distinction between "glancing around" and "concerted glancing" (312). Isabel had seen Osmond and Merle together many times before, even in situations where they felt themselves to be alone. But her attention was "on idle...not turned off the point of oblivion but not directed to any particular item either" (Casey 312). The difference is in the detail, in the non-trivial distinction between glancing "on idle" and glancing as a way of directing one's attention to singularities, "as if [one was] casting a psychical lasso around them and pulling them into the net of [one's] active mind, there to be illuminated." In this case, the detail is one of visual reciprocity, or Isabel's careful attention to Madame Merle's eyes, to *her* glance (which locks into an "absorbed mutual gaze" that temporarily turns Isabel into an unseen observer). Perhaps as a response to Isabel's conventionalized representation by others (by Osmond especially) as a static portrait of a lady, she had to this point only regarded Merle as a static form of her own, hence the recognition of her "usual" erect posture. Her renewed attention to Merle's eyes, bent on Osmond, allows Isabel to follow the look to the relation *between* the two, to the anomalous composition of their positions in the visual frame. This is not a transition between glance to gaze on the part of Isabel,

for the image lasts “only a moment, like a sudden flicker of light.” Rather, James identifies a distinction *within* the economy of the glance, between the idle, empty seeing in which Isabel had been previously engaged and the very sort of lithe-but-directed glancing she needs to re-illuminate her visual field.

Isabel retrospectively pieces together Osmond and Merle’s plot. Meditating on the “darken[ing]” of her world, Isabel thinks of her marriage’s progress “as if Osmond deliberately, almost malignantly, had put the lights out one by one” (1975, 356). She convinces herself that the “shadows” creeping in around her “were not an emanation from her own mind” but “were a part, they were a kind of creation and consequence, of her husband’s very presence.” The “impression” of the two in the drawing room becomes the central image around which her thoughts circulate, and Isabel “wonder[s] it had never come before” (1975, 355). The reemergence of Isabel’s consciousness in such a pivotal moment engenders both a narrative and gendered transgression, restoring her as a subject able to construct the truth of her social world through the concerted glance, through the surface details technically available but theretofore missed or unretained. And once the floodgates open, there is no closing them. Indeed, that’s the power of the Jamesian “impression”: its stickiness.

How does Isabel’s impression relate to what was happening in the arts at the time of James’s composition? Consider Édouard Manet’s 1879 *In the Conservatory*, on its surface an Impressionist compromise to critics like James who complained about the school’s propensity to “send detail to the dogs” (1996, 164). Indeed, Jules-Antoine Castagnary noted in his review of the 1879 Salon that here Manet presents “[f]aces and hands more carefully drawn than usual,” one of several to note the painter’s uncharacteristically conservative approach to natural form (qtd. Hamilton 215). Michael Fried agrees with the critics, calling the painting “almost

excessively ‘finished’” (314), a judgment Crary (to my mind) accurately revises: “It is in this sense of an *excessive*, overcompensating finish that I see the work as an anxious attempt to reconsolidate a cohesive visual field, in whose disassembly Manet had already prominently participated” (90-1). Manet engaged in an act of “reassemlage,” an attempt to hold fast the spinning, spectacular world in a moment of self-reflexive intimacy, piecing back together the shards of a reality principle just as Isabel does in her vigil.

Isabel by the fire “leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes; and for a long time, far into the night and still further, she sat in the still drawing-room, given up to her mediation” (1975, 354). Manet’s woman in the garden appears equally absorbed, though with her eyes open. She strikes a slightly recumbent, casual pose, her stillness partly a function of her corseted and tightly belted dress. Crary remarks on the proliferation of binding and constraint in Manet’s *mise en scene*, “necessary for the construction of an organized and inhibited corporeality”: the flowerpots and vases as “instruments of domestication,” the bench’s vertical posts “echoes of the cinched figure of the woman,” the entire image “as holding action, a forcing back of expansive or floating components into a semblance of fixed pictorial and social organization” (93). And yet the face of the woman does not meet the gaze of her male companion behind the bench. She is in one sense the perfect portrait of a Victorian lady, but her trance-like countenance marks the otherwise closed composition’s singular site of openness and escape. Her reverie, like Isabel’s, looks outside the social frame. It is, as Rei Terada would put it, an act of looking *away*.⁵¹

⁵¹ We look away, according to Terada, “when we want to create distance between ourselves and the given world, and this distance reads as a failure to endorse the given world. . .the discourse of mere phenomenality stops short of objection: it only registers a wish to be relieved for a moment of the coercion to accept whatever one does not dispute” (Terada 3).

James's Isabel and Manet's woman in the garden (his modern Eve) both dramatize the abyssal element of the subject that strains against its objecthood and the social object-world (Merle's curated collection of "things"). Their visionary capacities, in Isabel's case a *renewed* or *regained* capacity after conjugal atrophy, evade possession without re-possessing the possessor in turn; Manet's woman explicitly turns away from the man who appears to be begging for attention. This is not gaze and counter-gaze, in other words, but something far more subtle and less given to the dialectic of domination, propriety, and restraint that populates their worlds. William James, at this exact historical moment, was beginning to write *Principles of Psychology* (eventually published in 1890), in which he writes of a "curious state of inhibition [that] can at least for a few moments be produced at will by fixing the eye on vacancy." When the eyes are "fixed on vacancy," he writes,

the attention becomes dispersed so that the whole body is felt, as it were, at once, and the foreground of consciousness is filled, if by anything, by a sort of solemn sense of surrender to the empty passing of time. In the dim background of our mind we know what we ought to be doing: getting up, dressing ourselves, answering the person who has spoken to us...But somehow we cannot start. (vol. 1, 444)

Henry would put it slightly differently than his brother, whose work shares many psychological affinities despite occasional key deviations: time for the novelist never passes *emptily* (though many of his readers might beg to differ). After all, as he writes in the novel's preface, Isabel's vigil "throws the action further forward that twenty 'incidents' might have done" (1975, 14). But William's "sense of surrender" and its is/ought opposition to acting within a proscribed social and sartorial milieu nicely describe the concentrated drama of Manet's painting and his brother's keystone scene. It describes, on the one hand, the dialectic of portraiture, its figures always

staring off into empty space, its “asymmetry of intensity between external and [hypothetically] internal fact perceptions” giving the impression “of a shocking gulf between the sensible and the supersensible,” the material and the mental (Terada 113). It also, taken phenomenologically and through the guise of reverie, describes the “empty” glance as a line of flight, a *looking away* from social interpellation, a refusal to give one’s master the counter-look that confirms one’s allotted place as Sartrean object (“Get up! Dress yourself! Answer me!”).

When James writes, in the preface, of his “dim first move” towards constructing his novel—his “grasp of a single character,” his “acquisition”—he narrates a writerly process whereby an individual “under favour of occasion” comes to take on “a constituted, animated figure or form” (1975, 7-8). The imagination initially “preserves, protects, enjoys” the figure in the “back-shop of the mind,” but the character cannot stay there for long. James does *not* identify the artist with the dealer who is “resigned to keeping the precious object locked up indefinitely rather than commit it, at no matter what price, to vulgar hands.” That dealer, we find, has more in common with Osmond than the author. James thus foregrounds a particular social problem, a problem of translation that inheres in the visible and possessable body of the Victorian era female. It is not simply that Isabel is increasingly made the passive object of the male gaze. As I have already mentioned, she receives “an impression” of Osmond and Merle on the threshold of their drawing room, “an image, lasting only a moment like a sudden flicker of light,” a glance from out of the very frame James repeatedly used to contain her figure (1975, 343). As if *triggered* by the scene’s decisive moment, standing outside the “absorbed mutual gaze” locking Madame Merle and her husband together in a scheming visual embrace, Isabel begins to see her surroundings “illuminated by lurid flashes” (1975, 464). It is as if her flattened, painted world comes to take on the characteristics of the moving pictures: “The effect was strange, for Madame

Merle was already so present to her vision that her appearance in the flesh was like suddenly, and rather awfully, seeing a painted picture move. Isabel had been thinking all day of her falsity, her audacity, her ability, her probable suffering; and these dark things seemed to flash with a sudden light as she entered the room” (1975, 456). One cannot grasp the *narrative* significance of this moment in the novel if one stays in the interpretive frame of the traditional portrait, since this is where time frames and modalities collide, Madame Merle appearing “in the flesh” just as Isabel was thinking more abstractly of her “falsity.” The collision, where concept and perception meet, is the site of the glance (the “flash”), where the “painted picture” suddenly *moves*.

While there is little obviously “impressionistic” about *Portrait* (certainly less so, for instance, than a later novel like *The Ambassadors*), in these moments of formal collision one finds a resolutely literary example of a “broader attempt to reconfigure human identity by means of representational innovation, at times working within, at times transforming, and at times subverting this time-honoured and seemingly unproblematic, indeed self-explanatory, pictorial genre [of the portrait],” as Linda Nochlin says of the Impressionist project more generally (55). James does not treat Isabel as his sitter, though he does have her recline in front of the fire like Manet’s woman in the garden, in contradistinction to the fronto-parallel orientation of the typical painted likeness. But this is exactly, as in Manet, where consciousness wriggles free, where the look darts off in another direction. Her glance finally activated again, Isabel sees outside the frame of her carefully curated experience, and thereby sees *through* a single static image of Osmond and Merle to a sequence of events, transformed from the objet d’art into the artist herself, glimpsing “one thing through another...and still other things through that.” James’s description of aesthetic vision, active in Isabel’s breaking through Osmond’s “charm,” parallels Crary’s analysis of visual “gesture” in *In the Conservatory*, producing centrifugal glances

through the woman's off-screen look, through the man's pointing finger and the woman's pointing umbrella, confirming "the impossibility of a direct perception, of an attention that was an immediate possession of its object," an entire "system of deflection, in which vision is bound up in a relational field within which every point of fixation is a deferral and relay to another one" (113). James and Manet, through different media forms, show us to see (for ourselves) the possibility of new perceptions, of lines of flight past the bounds of propriety, outside of the narrow bands of attention proscribed by the unhappy marriage of male gaze and female counter-gaze.

If the glance has the capability of breaking the cage of propriety, it is because of the nimble way it relates "acts of perceptual attention and those of mental attention" (Casey 329). In Chapter XLII, Isabel plays with the glances that had fooled her as well as the new one that revealed a stark complicity to make a final leap toward an irreversible revelation: "The real offence [according to Osmond], as she ultimately perceived, was her having a mind of her own at all" (1975, 362). The delayed playback of the events of Isabel's capture allows the reader to recognize that James has been swerving this way all along, the visual material of reflection having already been provided to the mind by glances of the eye. Returning to the opening paragraph of the novel, one finds again, as it were, a scene straight out of the Impressionist toolkit, afternoon tea at Gardencourt precious for its liminal atmospheric quality, when "the flood of summer light had begun to ebb, the air had grown mellow, the shadows were long upon the smooth, dense turf" (1975, 17). James calls his description a "peculiarly English picture I have attempted to sketch" (1975, 18). Laurence Holland writes of all "posed in a state of suspension within which the novel begins to unfold arcs of widening, deepening recognition," arcs of vision already "infused with the scheme or plot—the taking up and taking hold, the

giving—which has been projected in creating them” (46). These “arcs of vision,” one then notices upon a rereading of the sketch *as* sketch, as the lineament or schematic of a narrative to be progressively filled, are glances: one initially anonymous figure “looked with a certain attention at the elder man, who, unconscious of observation, rested his eyes upon the rich red front of his dwelling” (1975, 17). With Isabel’s entrance, Ralph’s eyes are led by his terrier—a convenient sightline—to the girl in the doorway who “at first sight looked pretty” (1975, 25). Isabel in turn surveys the scene “with an eye denoting clear perception” (1975, 26).

As Holland and Carolyn Porter among several others have argued, there is in *Portrait* and in James in general (once again, a later theme in *The Ambassadors*) “an antithesis between *seeing* and the full partaking of experience” (Holland 48). But one should always be careful to distinguish the modes of seeing James’s dramas turn on. From the beginning of the novel Isabel’s ability “to see for [her]self” is associated with a determination to look “all around her [in] a comprehensiveness of observation,” to take in a scene of life as a whole, as a complex rather than a mute thing (1975, 28). In her later envy at Ralph’s dying condition, her desire to “cease utterly, to give it all up and not know anything more” like those valuable art pieces that “only grow in value, while their owners lose inch by inch youth, happiness, beauty,” we find not the reification of the heroine James’s working metaphor of the *objet d’art* suggests but the constitutive distance of consciousness *from* the state of the thing-in-itself, the recognition that her felt “absence of purpose”—characterized by eyes that “gazed vaguely before her”—is not the same sort of beautiful, tranquil absence at the heart of the art object (1975: 465, 471, 485). Even as she has been flattened and objectified by Osmond and Merle, James does not ever extinguish the re-constructive character of Isabel’s glance. Among the ruins in Rome, Isabel rests “her weariness upon things that had crumbled for centuries and yet were still upright,” deposits her

“secret sadness into the silence of lonely places” (1975, 430). She passes through Rome in a carriage, once a metaphor for the promise of runaway happiness and now a conveyance through which she reestablishes her reality principle through the eye’s cathexis. Seeing the remains of human history once again as it really is, its “starved churches, where the marble columns, transferred from pagan ruins, seemed to offer her companionship in endurance,” takes on the character of active mourning through re-integration with Isabel’s environment, where “in a world of ruins the ruin of her happiness seemed a less unnatural catastrophe” (1975, 430-31). She is thus able to reconstitute an affective community with Pansy and the Countess Gemini, fellow victim and witness to the forces of social (but also natural) dissolution in which delicate objects and arrangements turn to ruin.

James’s narrative logic involves dissociation, emptying Isabel’s gaze in reverie and transforming her own interior energies into a scene of moving pictures that *she* controls, followed by a reinsertion of herself back into things with a difference: not back into the flattened, gilded portrait but into the rhythm of the world we all share, into the *ruin* whose decay is not a threat to life but the index of its operation. Hussey writes of specific “moments” when Isabel, despite James’s “exacting novelistic architecture” and social realism, “hovers, inextinguishable” (in James’s words), a Manet-esque portrait “of that stray figure that pre-exists in possibility before the plot,” and one might add, before formal reification (Hussey 182). There are chinks in the house of fiction, some of James’s million windows “pierced...by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will,” by the pressure of conscious self-reflexive vision that brings us to the brink of the novel’s own architectural ruin (James 1975, 7). But Isabel’s experiential path doubles back on itself, never staying within the domain of dissociation, always eventually recovering a sense of the founding site of literary and aesthetic creation:

As for the origin of one's wind-blown germs themselves, who shall say, as you ask, where *they* come from? We have to go too far back, too far behind, to say. Isn't it all we can say that they come from every quarter of heaven, that they are *there* at almost any turn of the road? They accumulate, and we are always picking them over, selecting among them. They are the breath of life—by which I mean that life, in its own way, breathes them upon us. They are so, in a manner prescribed and imposed—floated into our minds by the current of life. (1975, 5)

James's empiricism, which is a glancing accumulation of sensations (germs) that are then reconstructed, selected, and combined, becomes his heroine's living experience, her reclamation of visual power coming in the delayed playback and in the assent to the metaphorical "current of life." This is something we must learn how to do again, to learn to see and travel in that "straight path" Isabel takes after her final revelatory interview with Caspar Goodwood, which we know is not geometrically straight but has the character of a clear sightline, a unity of seeing and being which is the active condition of any art, always available to us in the bleakest of circumstances (1975, 490).

III

As I have already mentioned, in his preface to *The Portrait of a Lady* James compares the novel form to a house with a million windows, "at each of [which] stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass" (1975, 7). The novelist is on this account primarily a "watcher," attached to the "human scene" through a series of apertures "of dissimilar shape and size" rather than via "hinged doors opening straight upon life." This passage comes up again and again throughout the critical history of James's style and method, which has been dominated by a

preoccupation with “point of view” as a means of access to the psychology of an individual seeing subject or observer, what Carolyn Porter calls his “exploitation of the third-person center of consciousness...designed to maintain the visionary seer’s contemplative stance despite the fact that this stance removes the ‘lucid reflector’ from the world in which she or he performs a host of nonvisual acts” (125). Porter traces James’s maturity in the “narrative miracles” he works on the late novels, casting away the troubled first-person experience of *The Sacred Fount* where either seeing or being constantly obscured the other (one cannot do both, the unnamed narrator finds, as a condition of finite subjectivity). That is, James’s principle of “point of view” narration—a load-bearing concept in his house of fiction—is built and maintained on the foundation of a hero’s or heroine’s attaining within their social milieu the stance of the third-person narrator (the most exceptional cases being Lambert Strether and Maggie Verver), adopting a new and more adequate “vantage point outside the world [they have] inhabited” (Porter 133).

Sharon Cameron acutely argues, however, that such meta-visual dramatic renderings can obscure the extent to which (for James) consciousness is “reconceived as extrinsic, made to take shape—indeed, to become social—as an *intersubjective* phenomenon...separated from the confines of a self” (77). According to Christine Britzolakis, in her reading of *What Maisie Knew*, James’s “untethering of consciousness from the subjectivity of an individual, and its repositioning within a relational field, is a necessary byproduct of the new social, spatial and visual conditions of the metropolis” (369). James’s stylistic experiments, up to and including his so-called late style, act as moves in a social field taken over by late-Victorian mass visual culture, aggressive or defensive ones depending upon what angle one takes on them. *Portrait*, a story about among other things an eclipse of innocence, still partakes in an innocence of its own

insofar as James sticks to painterly tropes and keeps the world of new representational technologies at bay. I have suggested that, beneath the competing visual registers of Isabel's increasing reification that are consummated in her marriage to Osmond, was a growing optical-technological culture of the spectacle, one that James himself was uneasy about as a potentially unassailable competitor to his writing's ponderous density and representational depth. I will argue now that, as a further stage in James's desire to create visually attentive art that assents to carriage along the "current of life," he forced himself to grapple with a new social and aesthetic regime of portability.

One might reasonably call James's life a portable one, his childhood split between Albany, Washington Square, Paris, the English countryside, Geneva, Newport, and Boston-Cambridge, and his adult life situated on the edge of several cultures and nations. He would never completely come to terms with his abandonment of his home country and his split life between the metropolis and the country. His letters suggest a man often desiring to be elsewhere, rarely content in the refuge of a "Great Good Place" so important for the working artist (for even in his favorite home in Rye, his thoughts often wandered back to London or the Italian cities). Coincident with his nearly endless reflections on the role of habitation, place, and travel in the novelist's worldview were anxieties about the necessity of producing a portable, moveable literature as an impatient, inattentive, and rapid modernity crept into his world. In the age of the Kodak camera and the snapshot, he would wonder, how can one write a big, serious, *and* successful book? On the one hand, a notion of portable prose was alien to his theory of art in the novel, but when his relationship to photography came to a head around the turn of the twentieth century, his novels and prefaces became—among many other things—guides to portable seeing and thinking. As he came to see, think, and write *diagrammatically*, he was able to envision—if

not fully achieve—a bridge between the initially immobile bourgeois subject that often populated his stories and the velocity of an increasingly alien world.

In the 1882 story “The Real Thing,” James returns to the site of portraiture to make a case against the naïve realism that attends to the cult of the model (one which would be finally eclipsed for a time by modernist pictorialism, by the cubists at first and by the abstract expressionists more completely). Although a story about a painter, one cannot help but locate photography as the extreme instance of the narrator’s problem, which is that his overbearing and overdetermining models, Mr. and Mrs. Monarch, are too much like the “real thing” he wishes to transform into art. As Edel writes, for James, “The ‘real thing’ was simply itself, photographic,” while “Art transfigured reality” (qtd. Bogardus 132). His portraitist refers to an “innate preference for the represented subject over the real one...[he] liked things that appeared; then one was sure. Whether they *were* or not was a subordinate and almost always a profitless question” (James 2003, 195). He even refers, notable given James’s longtime disregard for accompanying imagery, to the woman as “like a bad illustration,” too much given over to a single, obvious look that refers his drawing back to the indexical, biographical subject that exists prior to the initial sketch (2003, 192). He prefers another model who, “being so little in herself...should yet be so much in others,” a blank, plastic slate perpetually open to “the alchemy of art” (2003, 197, 198).

Recall that, in his working notes for *Portrait*, he described the idea of Isabel (but no actual living person) as a model-object, a barely visualizable form that only needed to be placed into the right scene for her fate to unfold dramatically. The narrative progressively fills in her being even as James resists over-description, describing Isabel only as she is *seen* rather than as she *is*. Isabel is not a Monarch. Alexandra Wettlaufer describes a shift in the work of Diderot,

Baudelaire, and Ruskin in which “visual prose” solicits the reader’s imaginative capacities of visualization, just as the painter’s sketch (rather than the finished product) produces a desire for completeness in the viewer (111). The vicissitudes of this desire as a visual and aesthetic principle—for an imaginative visual *activity* that makes of the world something other than it is, that completes an impoverished visual field by seeing “one thing through another...and still other things through that”—haunt James’s writings of this period, not only in “The Real Thing” but in “The Aspern Papers” (1888), “The Figure in the Carpet” (1896), *The Spoils of Poynton* (1896), *What Maisie Knew* (1897), and *The Sacred Fount* (1901). What the first makes clear in the others is, paradoxically, the lack of visual clarity haunting the artist at the time; “the challenge facing the late-nineteenth-century artist was, as James saw it, to learn to see in the dark,” or perhaps more accurately, to learn how to see in the blinding light, when everything is *too much* on display (Greenhill 262).

James’s writings in the 1890s often trouble the means by which writers typically affect visual display. *The Spoils of Poynton*, in the most superficial sense, is a story about a collection of supposedly pretty things whose visual profiles are never described. What Brown calls a “Balzacian novel in excess of Balzac,” *Spoils* tests the limits of realism by “evacuating the genre of...its material possessions” (141). The conflagration that, at the end of the novel, destroys all of Mrs. Gereth’s precious objects, is from this perspective set and ignited by James himself, casting all the Balzacian trinkets—which always signify something about their possessor’s moral status, an error played out to great effect in James’s novel—into a purifying blaze. The more radically realist (Flaubertian) object-description as pure “reality-effect” was anathema to James, who saw in the plodding minutiae only the crease in Mr. Monarch’s trousers that stunts his artist’s progress (recall the distinction between James’s non-descriptions of Isabel and his

villains' attempts to reduce her to the things she wears).⁵² Significantly, the point of view of his heroine Maisie, who quickly followed Fleda Vetch and Mrs. Gereth into print, could not lead James's narration that way because of her age and inexperience as a seer; on her own, she would have been denied admittance into Balzac's *Maison Vauquer*.

More so even than in Isabel's vigil, Maisie's cognitive experience throughout the novel is vision dramatized, all the action in her scanning eye's search for sensuous knowledge. Spiegel defines James's "late manner" visually, as if the formal result of the conflagration that ended *The Spoils of Poynton*: "seen objects are dematerialized by the detached and considered appropriations of a critical intellect... James translates the object into a function of analytic discourse and speculation" (55-6). His "analytic" comes to seem much like the visual-syntactic discourse of the cinema. In James's earlier "scenographic" visualizations, objects are solid, time-continuous wholes, like props on the theatrical stage. Now, in several key scenes, he engages the object-profiles in Maisie's visual field obliquely—one might even say *impressionistically*—as the narration traces her eye's sensuous vector as it explores and pieces together the fabric of her surrounding world. Indeed, "fabric" is more than a metaphor: in one scene, Maisie progressively stitches together the appearance of her mother's dress. She first sees a "fair high drapery" which prompts her eye to follow its "stiff sheen—up and from the ground, where it had stopped," until the sudden cut of a "fixed face... surmounting it... offer[ed] the climax of the dressed condition"

⁵² Alan Spiegel calls the Flaubertian visual detail "adventitious" to relate the way it "usually takes the form of an accident, the causes of which are not readily apparent; an accident that is seemingly without a narrative function and cannot be easily related to any pattern of artistic inevitability" (90). It is precisely the lack of obvious narrative function that Barthes argues produces the realist novel's "reality effect," where the concept signified by the adventitious detail is nothing other than realism itself. At times, including in "The Real Thing," James disparages these sorts of details, turning the vocation of the artist into the vessel of the visual detail's *aufgehoben*, reclaiming "artistic inevitability" for the modern, psychologically attuned artwork.

(James 1954, 167). The intrusion of dashes and short subordinate clauses (elided in my presentation by ellipses) effect a linguistic version of cinematographic syntax, the isolation of close-up shots through the grammar of montage editing. Scenes like this one are constructed as if from a storyboard translated into semi-focused cinematic shots—or, alternatively, *snapshots*—resulting from the tracks and pans of a narrative lens sutured into the diegetic eye of little Maisie. Conscious discovery occurs at the “climax” of a visual series, the result of one’s ability to follow a sequence of aspects or object-profiles amputated from the master fabric of a scene’s circumambient visual field, a dialectic of seeing brought to the fore by early narrative cinema where concatenated shots refer to each other while also momentarily isolating and dismembering individual objects (or partial objects in close-up), establishing a relay chain characteristic of the glance from part to whole and back again. James slows Maisie’s eye and thereby accentuates the singularities and opacities of the visual field, consonant with the tentative and erratic explorations of an inexperienced child and, more generally, “the motions of a mind that is trying to solve a mystery” (Spiegel 59).

These “motions of mind” appear strikingly akin to Edmund Husserl’s later theory of eidetic structures of perception, which was developed at the same time as Braque’s earliest cubist experiments and describes many of the movement’s spatio-temporal techniques. What Husserl calls “inner time-consciousness” relies upon two phenomenological operations that, together, extend (or impregnate) the subject’s present experience: protention and retention, or the immediate accommodation in perception of an object’s aspects glimpsed directly before or after an evanescent moment. For the subject, these structures do not suggest a constant association between perception and a related memory or premonition, insofar as those terms suggest a hermeneutically constitutive distance between the immediate perception itself and the feature of

past or present perception. When an object of perception is encountered in a series of one-sided perspectives (as it must be in ordinary experience, according to Husserl), consciousness does not constantly remember and anticipate the flat, time-sliced object's preceding and succeeding sides, as if consciousness is forced to jump back and forth into the past and future in order to unify the object. On the contrary, consciousness directly perceives the immediate deviation of an object's multiple sidedness: "[The] present here signifies no mere now-point, but an extended objectivity which, modified phenomenally, has its now, its before and after" (Husserl 201). Perception of temporal objects, and changes undergone by those objects, would be impossible otherwise. Thus the effects of protention and retention are immediately given in the "pregnant present"; by thus incorporating the past and future into the present, Husserl eliminates any notion of a past and future (for consciousness) which oppresses or in any way determines the present. That is, the past and future are here qualified as present-past and present-future. The present is prioritized, expanded, and the alien character of the past and future is eliminated: something has its "now and its temporal extension in the form of the now-before" (Husserl 112). Time does not flow around a consciousness that encounters a limit-present; consciousness is not in time, but the author of time, and thus the shepherd of all that escapes the proximity of the present "now."

James's choice of the inexperienced Maisie as his heroine operates much like Husserl's famous transcendental reduction would, stripping "the epistemology of the Jamesian reflective centre" down to its barest coordinates, to a scanning eye-pole (Teahan 221). James writes that his design was "to make and to keep [Maisie's] so limited consciousness the very field of [his] picture" (James 1962, 144). In his *Notebooks* he writes, as if to remind himself, "EVERYTHING TAKES PLACE BEFORE MAISIE" (James 1961, 149). James continues, in the preface, to express just how much careful reflection and technique goes into the paradoxical creation of an

innocent yet accessible eye:

[M]y first view of this neat possibility was as the attaching problem of the picture restricted (while yet achieving, as I say, completeness and coherency) to what the child might have been conceived to have *understood*—to have been able to interpret and appreciate. Further reflexion and experiment showed me my subject strangled in that extreme of rigour. The infant mind would at the best leave great gaps and voids; so that with a systematic surface possibly beyond reproach we would nevertheless fail of clearness of sense. I should have to stretch the matter to what my wondering witness materially and inevitably *saw*; a great deal of which she either wouldn't understand at all or would quite misunderstand—and on those lines, only on those, my task would be prettily cut out. (1962, 145)

The author's task, to "prettily cut out" what "TAKES PLACE BEFORE MAISIE," is to record in language the visual material that would be inevitably recorded by a largely impersonal eye when placed in a situation beyond any formal understanding, and then to take on the role of a curator or proto-film editor (with an emphasis on "cut") to arrange that material in a pleasing and minimally coherent way for an audience at a second-degree of removal from the primal scene. In this two-step photographic operation, contemporary visual media meets early phenomenological method, at that time being constructed by Franz Brentano, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Ernst Mach.

James's new camera model, *The Maisie* 1897, was a tool used for social critique as well as narrative development. He is concerned in this novel with the cultural construction of visual experience, not simply any experience whatsoever, as Husserl would claim to be in making his transcendental reduction. The novel's opening announces a recurring visual trope, of the

phantasmagoria or magic lantern show: “She was taken into the confidence of passions on which she fixed just the stare she might have had for images bounding across the wall in the slide of a magic-lantern. Her little world was phantasmagoric—strange shadows dancing on a sheet. It was as if the whole performance had been given for her—a mite of a half-scared infant in a dim theatre” (James 1954, 23). Phantasmagoric projection, reproduced in the style of James’s narration, operates as a sign for and antagonism producing the problematic nature of the novel’s realism, for its “scenic” structuring, and for its ambiguous relation to popular visual culture. Referencing James’s most famous metaphor for visual perspective, Britzolakis writes that his “shift from the field-glass, or binocular telescope, to the magic lantern, announces a redefinition of the realist project. Whereas the ‘field-glass’ represents an aspiration to verisimilitude, the magic lantern is associated with theatrical performance and illusion, substituting a reflected image for a direct one” (375-6).

One might think here of Marx’s use of visual technology as a metaphor for ideology, wherein “men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*” (154). Maisie, we discover after the money runs out on her French classes “with all the smart little girls...was to feel henceforth as if she were flattening her nose upon the hard window-pane of the sweetshop of knowledge,” a flattened screen onto which commodities and the lifestyles of the London rich dance in their own phantasmagoric procession (James 1954, 118). The image of the city as a display window stocked with attractive articles of consumption is mapped onto Maisie’s consciousness through the conduit of her *impressionable* eye. She is the zero level vessel through which James works through what Andrew Miller calls a “penetrating anxiety” on the part of Victorian intellectuals “that their social and moral world was being reduced to a warehouse of goods and commodities, a display window in which people, their actions, and their

convictions were exhibited for the economic appetites of others” (6). By exposing a near tabula rasa to a narrative conflict significantly less intricate than his readers were perhaps used to, James’s proposes “a new fictional optic” beyond psychological realism—which one could still reasonably claim when reading *Portrait*—to begin the process of reconciling a “perceived crisis of cultural authority,” an imbrication of art, entertainment, vision, urbanity, and the commodity form (Britzolakis 370).

James perhaps felt this crisis most acutely when faced with the growing portability and ease of use of the photographic camera, particularly the Eastman Kodak that exploded in popularity in the 1880s and 90s and became the rival of the sort of books—long, dense, difficult, multi-volumed, and physically heavy when in bound form—he was writing. As already mentioned, the period of the Kodak’s ascendance corresponded in his career with his biggest disappointment, the failure of his play *Guy Domville* at St. James’s Theatre, a rather violent sign—given the uproar and comic rebuff from the galleries—that his style and approach would never attain mass popularity. He despaired at the sign of the times that exceeded the narrower boundaries of literary culture: “The terms of contemporary journalism more and more impose themselves, announce themselves as, increasingly, irresistibly, the universal, the only terms, and exactly by the same law as that by which so many other modern conveniences have become indispensable, by which new machinery supersedes old, the kodak displaces the camera. They represent the portable, and the portable now is everything” (James 1996, 524-5).

Though he eventually acknowledged, sadly, that he would (or *could*) never write a bestseller, and that he was never to fully feel at home as the new century dawned (referring on January 1, 1900 to “this dreadful gruesome New Year, so monstrously numbered” [Edel 1985, 501]), he would admit his desire to somehow combine his ambition with the ascendant portable

visual regime: “I want to see all of all this I can, to miss no possible impression—that is the very basis; but I can’t knock off pages of prose like a war-correspondent writing on his knee or his hat, & I want to do a really artistic and valuable book” (James 1999, 405-6). Indeed, when he took to dictating his writing—initially to his hired stenographer William McAlpine in 1897—he found that the leash on his mobility was shortening, with the heavy typewriter standing in the way of travel and general movement, which had always necessarily accompanied his work. If James could not write like a war correspondent, he would have to open the work itself up to the contemporary world, re-conceiving his writing in “transmedial” terms. Jordan Brower calls a writer’s capacity to imagine the afterlives of their prose works at the moment of composition fiction’s “transmedial possibility.” This capacity he sees developing in the decade after James’s *New York Edition* (focusing however on Fitzgerald’s *Gatsby*), when the extension of copyright protection to literary film adaptations produced an “acute awareness” of how one might prepare fiction for adaptation (Brower 258). In James’s case, *The Master* revised his long-held aversion to visual illustration, his new awareness centered on the diagrammatic relationship between word and image inescapable for writers in the Kodak era.

James was indeed, for most of his career, resistant to any accompanying illustration to his writing. He preferred serializing his fiction in *Atlantic Monthly* over *Century Magazine*, in part because the latter included illustrations and the former did not: “as a writer one hates ‘em,” he complained, according to biographer Leon Edel, “and how their being as good as they are makes one hate ‘em more! What one writes suffers essentially, as literature, from going with them, and the two things ought to stand alone” (Edel 1962, 156-7). Such was his sentiment in the mid-90s. By “stand[ing] alone,” James sought to fight the *mobility* of word and image, and indeed—given the mass market appeal of illustrated serials in magazines like *Collier’s*, where “Turn of the

Screw” was published and which Edel compares to James’s childhood favorite, *Frank Leslie’s New York Journal* “of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art” (Edel 1985, 465)—perhaps police the class boundaries inherent within the most common pre-modernist media crossings. But the slight change of heart (or at least of mind) that led to his collaboration with photographer A.L. Coburn, who took the frontispieces for the *New York Edition*, nevertheless accorded with an intuition he’d had for a longer time on the topic of the visual arts writ large.

Though, as we’ve seen, always a sharp-eyed lover of painting, James could not conceal his general agitation after attending an 1876 Paul Durand-Ruel exhibition in Paris, claiming that the Impressionists on display were “absolute foes to arrangement, embellishment, selection, to the artist’s allowing himself...to be preoccupied with the idea of the beautiful” (James 1996, 164). I mentioned his criticism of Impressionism earlier, as the public position a young James took despite slowly (and quietly) integrating the visual insights of contemporaries like Manet. He also recognized that their system reconfigured conventional perspective by inventing a role for the mobility and subjectivity of the artist through their attention to the fugitive moment: “the painter’s proper field is simply the actual, and to give a vivid impression of how a thing happens to look, at a particular moment, is the essence of his mission” (1996, 164-5). This was a gamble, for James: “To render the impression of an object may be a very fruitful effort, but it is not necessarily so; that will depend upon what, I won’t say the object, but the impression, may have been” (James 1956, 217). Or, as Viola Winner writes, “To James’s way of thinking, the painter who records a quick visual impression of a scene runs the risk of being shallow if his perceptions are limited. To achieve the highest result, the painter must take time to see deeply into his subject” (50). It is as if James celebrated or at least recognized the power of the quickened impression while nevertheless castigating the process by which the Impressionist achieved it.

Indeed, French critics writing on the first three group exhibitions were clearer on this point than James was. Emile Blémont writes that the Impressionists succeeded in extracting from the landscape the multiple lines and colors that, “in one glance, the eye perceives before a scene.” A. Descubes relates the supposed intention of the painters to give “the impression of the first glance, of the first shock, so to speak, in order to fix the fleeting vision of a...landscape as if seen through a window suddenly thrown open.” He adds that they capture “a fugitive form, which disappears as soon as it is glimpsed.” And Théodore Duret, using a similar term in “fugitive impressions,” writes in 1883 of the Impressionist method as an “impulsive” *coup-d'oeil*, “a glance cast upon the natural scene” (qtd. Isaacson 432-3). James appears to have objected not to the fugitivity or the shock of the Impressionist glances but rather to the impulsiveness; for James, impressions are valuable materials for the artist and writer alike, but not just any impression. It has to be mediated, something the rhetoric of the “innocent eye” or “blind sight”—promoted in this circle by Charles Baudelaire’s writing on Constantin Guys (of which more later) and in English by John Ruskin—seems to take us away from by making the fresh vision a matter not of technique but of achieved epistemic ignorance, of passivity rather than selectivity, of imposition rather than composition.

Wendy Graham argues that James’s engagement with Coburn and modernist visual culture “helps us puzzle out the obvious paradoxes in James’s attitude towards Impressionism” (15). Writing about John Singer Sargent, he praises “the artist who sees deep into his subject, undergoes it, absorbs it, discovers in it new things that were not on the surface, becomes patient with it, and almost reverent” (1996, 430) and James struggled to “reconcile this fundamental requirement with the art of painting quickly” (not to mention writing or kodaking quickly) (Graham 16). The impression—which initially appeared all surface to James—presents one end

of the transformation, through the nineteenth century, of Albertian constructions of linear perspective into strategies of selective description. The pictorial world expanded beyond the purview of the studio artist who had previously unhinged the formal-visual pyramid from his body's concrete confines to wield at large in pursuit of his subject, staging a stable scenic geometry within which that subject matter would be emplaced. *Plein air* impressionism—mobilized through technical advances like tin tubes that kept oil paint fresh and portable—could capture immediate and ephemeral atmospheric properties otherwise “imperceptible to photographers with their heavy, large-format cameras, slow-speed emulsions, and long exposure times” (Modrak 35). Eventually, when cameras attained a sufficient level of portability, artists could dispense with the first procedure of linear perspective—establishing the visual pyramid as an abstract container—because they carried around with them a program for translating any site into perspectival form. Whereas the Baudelairean ideal of the innocent eye dispenses with all forms of optical program as so much habitual and academic deadweight, the camera reminds us that there is always a controlling schema at work in the coordination of image-world and body, even if wholly impersonal and pre-conscious, as the condition of possibility for any visual experience whatsoever.

Indeed, control is a significant concept for James, and it leaks out into his meta-textual writing in a variety of ways. It is a critical commonplace that, despite his numerous discussions in the prefaces of the reader's role in the reception of his fictions, he in fact erects barriers to the reinterpretation of his oeuvre by ultimately making the supreme seer, author, and reader the same person: Henry James. In order to grant himself the authority he desires as a re-reader of his own work, which is the purpose of the late career *Edition's* prefaces in the first place, James is forced to acknowledge the contribution “the reader” makes to the meaning of the text, if only to

foreclose the many bad readings out there in circulation. On this view, James arrogates to himself all the available critical territory in a deliberate act of intellectual imperialism (or managerial control) that supplements his original act of creation both by retelling the tale and by interpreting it again from a later position. One of the more charitable deconstructive versions of this argument is Paul Armstrong's reference to "doubled acts of attention" in the prefaces, where we encounter a "future reading or rereading through James's reflections on the past": "James's repeated recollections about the origins of a work or his aims in writing it claim to give definitive guidance about how it should be taken, and a large part of the authority that the prefaces have accrued as magisterial documents of James's artistic intentions is a recognition of this ambition. But when critics turn to the prefaces to resolve an interpretive dispute, they typically find that James is silent or ambiguous on crucial matters" (131, 133). Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent, perhaps, or maybe James's desire to foreclose new interpretations is just a monumental task. Either way, his prefaces chase their own tails.

Of all the prefaces, *The Golden Bowl's* (one of the last written) focuses at the most length on revision: "What has the affair [of revision] been at worst," James asks, "but an earnest invitation to the reader to dream again in my company and in the interest of his own larger absorption of my sense?" (James 1962, 344-5). By this time, he seemed to think that the era's new visual media also provided a domain for the "larger absorption of his [literary] sense." Without a doubt, there were pangs of jealousy and anxiety for James: he refers to the great number of "plastic" possibilities in the staging of his work, and wonders whether literature can be "pictorial enough" by itself to generate the visceral images sought by the modern reader. But from the beginning of his career a rude dismitter of photography as an art form, James

nevertheless hired Coburn to provide the frontispieces to the *New York Edition*, even wandering the streets with him to look for “optical echoes” of and “connexions” to his texts.

With the rise of the avant-garde photo-secession movement at the beginning of the twentieth century as well as mainstream snapshot culture, photography in all its forms provided the most literal access to the “renewed visions” James speaks about in his preface. Perhaps soon his readers could find the sites of his stories in London, or Paris, or Venice, and maybe giving in to the budding connection between new visual media and literature was just another way to forestall bad fan photographs (certainly James admired Coburn, ever since he sat for him in 1905, above almost all other practitioners and amateurs who could have sought out and captured the storefront they put at the front of the novel). He did tell Coburn to avoid the “pompous and obvious things that one everywhere sees photos of” (James 1984, 428). But we also know that James admired his heroine Maggie Verver’s ability to re-envision her world from outside of her experience’s frame, and the Master was more open than ever about doing so himself. As David McWhirter notes, he was also seeking images outside the frame of the original work: “The photographs, typically of houses, streets, or landscapes, unpeopled scenes or images that indirectly evoke settings from James’s narratives, are striking in their radical break with long-prevalent practices in illustrating fiction, which dictated the representation of specific dramatic scenes from a narrative in drawings, and the use of accompanying captions quoted directly from the illustrated text” (8). “The prefaces and the photographs, sister foyers for his fictions,” Anna Kornbluh posits in her architecturally minded analysis, “powerfully articulate the work of the novel chez James: myriad productions of unindexable social space” (202). The illustrations were meant to *unfix* the novels’ social scenes for the reader’s eye, just as “the prefaces’ discussions of settings emphatically dislocate his works from recognizable geography.” Before his death, James

was given over to the possibility of ampliative transmedial *rapport* as a form of revision and adaptation, as a productive and portable echo of word in image and image in word.

John Bender and Michael Marrinan use “rapport” to describe the portable, combinatorial relationality or correlation that characterizes a diagram’s use value. Their “culture of the diagram”—whose Enlightenment origin they locate in Diderot’s and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*, constructed to promote epistemological relays between images and activities, profiles and tableaux—is a culture of portability, in which images become user-friendly objects in the world rather than distanced reflections of it. The virtual space constructed as an interface between correlated elements in the *Encyclopédie* “provides support for the composite play of imagery and cognition that is the motor-energy of the diagram” (Bender 23). The useful diagram—or the difference between a diagram and a mere image—augments or enhances the user’s ability to make worldly connections, to move forward with a task by transporting its visual lineaments beyond the page and into the world. Thus a diagram is never merely illustrative; it is not secondary to a written text nor designed to replace it but integrated with it. James’s 1909 preface to *The Golden Bowl*, by complaining of the “‘picture-book’ quality that contemporary English and American prose appears more and more destined, by conditions of publication, to consent, however grudgingly, to see imputed to it,” speaks specifically of images that dominate and replace—fighting the word for priority as in Lessing’s *Laocoon*—and thereby drain the text’s language of its own visual qualities (1962, 332). As he bemoans illustration’s supplementary logic, he leaves room for a good kind of portability, one that would not “graft or ‘grow’...a picture by another hand onto my own picture—this being always, to my sense, a lawless incident.” James hoped to discover, by contrast, a *lawful* relation between linguistic and pictorial

imagery, which would also be a law of portable seeing, heightening a reader's ability to move from one visual register to the next in seamless sequence.

Kendall Johnson writes that Coburn's frontispieces "coordinate the pictures and text to avoid any unrestrained promiscuity" (2007, 5). And yet a certain sort of promiscuity abounds when writing on their process: as James and Coburn wandered the streets of London together, their "pleasure of exploration" turned the metropolis into "a field yielding a ripe harvest of treasure" (James 1962, 333). Johnson elsewhere claims that James had sought throughout his career to protect the aura of the traditional work of art—in Walter Benjamin's sense, from "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"—which is "not predicated on the original art object per se, but rather on a visual economy of representation and reproduction whose underlying network of social relations, courtesies and hierarchies in status and taste James glances backward to appreciate" (2010, 371). But he was looking forward when wandering with Coburn, their visual "treasure" a glint from the future, not the past. Indeed, one should not be distracted by Benjamin's reference to the lost "aura" of the artwork, as James's visual modernism captures the ambivalence underlying the appeal. Benjamin first conceives of the camera as epitome of the destructive, consumptive political economy of capitalism, dispelling the "aura" of things by reproducing them in a leveling, automatic, rationalized, *portable* form: "that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art... To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'sense of the universal equality of things' has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction" (221, 223). Yet it is also a potential agent for dialectical inversion, "the first truly revolutionary means of production," a medium that was invented

simultaneously with the rise of socialism and that is capable of revolutionizing the whole function of art and the human sensorium (Benjamin 224).

James held such a desire for his art—revolutionizing the human sensorium—at least since “The Art of Fiction.” He aims at least to *goad* the sensorium, “not only to *show* things to the reader but to *act upon* him,” enjoining him to negotiate the intersecting imaginations and idealizations of a shared world (Holland x). Like his older brother, he champions writing from “experience,” which “is never limited and is never complete,” like a “kind of huge spider-web, of the finest silken threads, suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching ever air-borne particle in its tissue” (1948, 10). James’s sense of worldly visual *rapport* in his late writings, the seeds of which can perhaps already be found in “The Art of Fiction,” was among other things a response to growing feelings—and even contemporary theories, sciences, and technologies—of irreversible perceptual mobility.⁵³ His fiction, too, did its own theorizing on portability, often grounding James’s deepest perceptual (and *formal*) concerns in representations of objects, circulating in the midst of whirlwind commodity exchange and a general economy of advancing reification.⁵⁴

⁵³ Charles Scott Sherrington’s work on the nervous system, just prior to James’s late phase, forever set the seeing subject in motion (a trend that had been picking up steam throughout the second half of the nineteenth century with optical science’s and visual culture’s progressive detachment from the classically immobile eye modeled on the *camera obscura*, as Crary argues at length in *Techniques of the Observer*). “Part of Sherrington’s task was to explain the human organism’s capacity to integrate in a functional and practical way the overwhelmingly complex amount of sensory information in a given milieu” (Crary 348). Sherrington linked human vision—already dispersed among “137 million separate ‘seeing’ elements spread out in the sheet of the retina”—intimately with motor behavior, with “wide tracts of musculature as a whole,” with the entire body’s movement through the world (Sherrington 234).

⁵⁴ As Porter argues, reification in James’s late phase extends to his characters, as in *The Golden Bowl*, in which “[t]here can be little doubt in the Prince’s mind as to the fact of his being purchased, since Maggie has explicitly told him that he is ‘a rarity, an object of beauty, an object of price’ . . . James’s strategy has the effect of presenting an unalienated man confronting his own

Even if the advance of capital, consumerism, urbanization, and industrialization is best considered on a continuity rather than rupture model of history and temporality, it's clear that a rapid sea change occurred in James's rhetoric as the new century dawned. How did the Master who always seemed to possess, as his friend John La Farge claimed, "a painter's eye" and who disdained photography as merely an indexical link to the "real thing" in its grayest countenance, take on a late style more photographic and cinematic than painterly? How did he not only allow Coburn's work to enter the *New York Edition* but come to actively *pursue* that work alongside a co-conspirator he would have earlier given his gouty toe a hundred times to avoid? Ralph Bogardus notes the turn in his language in a letter to William Dean Howells in 1896, James's positive use of "images" and "impressions" together, and phrases that "suggest photographs and photographic vision": "impressed with a view, framed by the clear window," "saved intensity," "individual *vivid* image," "experience consists of impressions" (133).

Walking the streets of the European metropolis with Coburn, James was on the one hand doing something he had always done, and that had always been attached to his art, beginning with he childhood walks that, "with an obsession of their own, constantly abetted our daubing" (James 1913, 308). He explained the impetus of *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) in his "habit and interest in walking the streets" during "the first year of a long residence in London...One walked of course with one's eyes greatly open...Possible stories, presentable figures, rise from the thick jungle as the observer moves, fluttering up like startled game" (James 1962, 59-60). With Coburn an experiential ecology, a walking technique of the bodily eye in motion, came to be presented as such through the glancing *rapport* between the word and photographic image.

alienated self in the form of alienable wealth" (138-9). Her reading goes on to analyze the circuit of relationships in the novel according to increasing and decreasing exchange-values along the Marxist pattern M-C-M.

The photographer would later pointedly remark, “Henry James must have had sensitive plates in his brain on which to record his impressions” (qtd. Bogardus 134).

It is as if James, at the end of his career, worked out the contradiction Charles Baudelaire could not: that between an epistemology given over to *flânerie* and a hatred of photography also on epistemological grounds. “If photography is allowed to supplement art in some of its functions,” the French symbolist wrote in 1859, “it will soon have supplanted or corrupted it altogether, thanks to the stupidity of the multitude which is its natural ally” (1955, 230). In his vitriolic critique of photography as an aesthetic practice, Baudelaire retreats to the primacy of inner eye’s gaze, as in Constantin Guys’s example, wherein “All good and true draughtsmen draw from the image imprinted on their brains, and not from nature...[so that] finally ideal execution may become as unconscious and spontaneous as is digestion for a healthy man” (1986, 16-17). The relation here established between imaginative seeing and digestion turns vision into a Nietzschean will to power (shot through as it was with masticatory metaphors), wholly on the side of the gaze that thoroughly digests its object. And yet Baudelaire’s analogy relies upon Guys’s particular working method, the way he sketches his scene *after the fact* of viewing, rather than *en plein air*, a distinction made clear in the former’s use of “glance” as a thing to be transcended by the artist:

Bending over his table, darting on to a sheet of paper the same glance that a moment ago he was directing towards external things, skirmishing with his pencil, his pen, his brush...in a ferment of violent activity, as though afraid that the image might escape him...the external world is reborn upon his paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and more than beautiful, strange and endowed with an impulsive life...All the raw materials with which the memory has loaded itself are put in order, arranged and

harmonized, and undergo that forced idealization which is the result of a childlike perceptiveness—that is to say, a perceptiveness acute and magical by reason of its innocence! (1986, 12)

Baudelaire's celebratory description of Guys at work partakes in classic empiricist representationalism, the artist merely an arranger of a "forced idealization" from the mere scraps of daily reality collected by the glance, which is guilty rather than innocent because it's a habitual form of seeing shared with everyone else on the street. It is peculiar, then, that a poet whose most famous lyric turns on a glance in the street, "À une passante," and who along with Poe brought the twentieth century its celebrated figure of the *flâneur*, would associate photography, an irredeemably base form of seeing, with the multitude while relating the true artist (who possesses an eye like a convalescent or an innocent child) with a priestly figure, presiding over the natural world's rebirth once back in his chamber, with a hunched, ritualistic stoop over his altar.

Indeed, for such purposes one must entrap a child's eye, which actually wanders too much rather than too little, in a vice or a restrictive metaphor, which beginning in the 1880s came together in the tachistoscope, a device that turned glance into gaze, immobilizing the patient's eye and body so that the former cannot shift its point of focus during a rapid exposure (its shutter moving faster than the muscular capabilities of the human eye). As Paul Virilio argues, faster mechanical shutter speeds, from "Niépce's thirty minutes in 1829 to roughly twenty seconds with Nadar" to the approach of instantaneity at the end of the century, produce bodies more firmly situated in place, for now "seeing the world becomes not only a matter of spatial distance but also of the *time-distance* to be eliminated," a gathering of the dynamic worldly surround into atemporal (near-)immediacy (21). As attention deficit became a problem

with over-stimulation—a common refrain for theorists of urbanization like Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin—the seeing subject was conceptualized as the immobile center of an increasingly mobile lifeworld. The Baudelairean artist’s “forced idealization” is the result of a tachistoscopic operation, his vision turned wholly to the page (rather than back and forth from world to page and back again), his pen or brush fervently registering and organizing images at a speed now in excess of his previous glances, the speed of his hand keeping the rest of his stooped figure still all the while.

By comparison, James strikes the unlikely figure of a really existing *flâneur*—we know how much he liked to walk, both in the city and from his country house at Rye—whose walking-tour collaboration with Coburn produced the glances in the street that, rather than serving as heightened, transfigured representations of scenes from his stories, bring one back to the *impersonal* origin of dramatic action and emotional discovery. For all the Baudelairean and Ruskinian celebration of childlike seeing in painterly originality, James gives us a child (Maisie) with a camera eye as if to mark the (breech) birth of photographic portability as the ocular regime upon which all art must now stake its visual truth claims. Coburn’s de-peopled glances, of storefronts and housefronts and carriages and doorways, suggest modern anomie, modernist depersonalization, and the “wind-blown germs” one finds at “almost any turn of the road,” images as spores that settle on the mind unbidden. They are sites to be *found*, used, and traversed, as Coburn’s diagonals suggest, offering landmarks along an open path rather than as static monuments that dominate the viewing body. “There is no seeing without exploring,” as Arthur Koestler writes (158). Further, Coburn and James, by setting in motion a relay or *rapport* between isolated images and literary worlds, re-situate the site of aesthetic inspiration outside of an interior mental space (and corresponding drawing room camera obscuras), along the “current

of life” now canalized on the boulevard, its velocity matched in turn by the speedy shutter. When James writes that the image-germs “accumulate, and we are always picking them over, selecting among them,” he identifies the two-sided aspect of the modern artist’s vocation: a rapid accumulation of (photographic) sensations and a second-order construction that is equally rapid on another ontological level, the analytic arrangement of a stable and coherent world of action out of the materials offered by an unstable and largely incoherent environment and mediated by a physiological apparatus no less slippery and unsettled.

Photographing urban cityscapes became much easier with the introduction of high-speed emulsions, a technology consonant with the chronophotographic revolution of Muybridge and Marey. City and country, already marked with rhetorical differences in nineteenth-century literature, demanded different things of the photographic apparatus, with the slow speed of rural life already perfectly amenable to the far less portable collodion wet plate process. The photographer’s access to the urban lifeworld as a function of camera technology thus mirrored the awkward transition many felt between country and city life, literalizing the analogy between human and machine vision that had also been developing in contemporary optical science. Meanwhile, among the Impressionist painters one finds many scenes of Parisians out for a stroll in which compositional form has moved away from a stable center, seen obviously in the negative space of Edgar Degas’s *Place de la Concorde*. The scene’s network of visual relay contributes to the centrifugal character of the figural placement, the Vicomte Lepic and his daughters looking off frame in three different directions, their dog and a horse drawn carriage turned along alternate vectors of movement. James and Coburn’s urban frontispieces, taken no doubt in a post-Impressionist world, can be seen to radicalize the visual *rapport* activated in a dynamic tableau like Degas’s, with each photograph a node in an urban network made up of all

the other pictures. One should, I suggest, read them as a series of their own, as a sequence of rapid exposures to city life as much as a collection of isolated image-text relations, and thus as much an anticipation of the twentieth-century photobook as a modernist residue of Victorian serial illustrations. In writing, this proleptic impulse appears at the time the *New York Edition* was being collected, in *The American Scene* (1907), where James's return to his native land (and, in four out of fourteen chapters, his native New York City) is managed by a series of verbal snapshots, which taken together "seemed not at all to speak of different things—by so quick a process does any one aspect, in the United States...connect itself with all the rest" (1968, 116).

What I'm only slightly hesitating to call the "Jamesian moment" at the turn of the twentieth century Thierry de Duve has called the "Cézannean moment," characterized by two "inseparable" questions: "What is the world, if my very vision, modeled by that of my artistic predecessors, is no longer certain of its own reality? And who am I, if my image in the mirror vacillates, unsure of its own objectivity?" (77) Paul Cézanne died mere months before James's *New York Edition* was published, prior to which he wrote a striking letter to his son:

Finally I must tell you that as a painter I am becoming more clear-sighted in front of nature, but that with me the realization of my sensations is always very difficult. I cannot attain the intensity that is unfolded before my senses. I have not the magnificent richness of coloring that animates nature. Here on the edge of the river the motifs are very plentiful, the same subject seen from a different angle gives a subject for study of the highest interest and so varied that I think I could be occupied for months without changing my place, simply bending my head a little more to the right or left. (262)

For Cézanne, visual intensity is premised upon proprioceptive mobility, a feature of his work that many art historians have classified as proto-cubist and commensurate with the phenomenological

moment on the horizon. An unlikely bedfellow, Cézanne's post-impressionist work shares with James's a desire to become a "recording machine," or what Crary calls a "grave attentiveness," a sensorial attunement which is "simultaneously a piercing social estrangement and a mode of unprecedented invention which imagined the radiant dissolution of the monadic confines of the self" (355). The monad already cracked in *The Portrait of a Lady*, but it is thrown wide open on the way to James's late style, arriving in the integration of Coburn's impersonal pictures with a proto-cinematic syntax, sentences wandering like the author's stuttering gait, images of bridges and doorways and windows just barely askew as if one simply bent one's head a little to the side before continuing on one's way.

Coda: Slicing the Eyeball

*Surgeons must be very careful
When they take the knife!
Underneath their fine incisions
Stirs the Culprit - Life!* – Emily Dickinson, F156

“Got me a movie / I want you to know / Slicing up eyeballs / I want you to know...” – The Pixies

Louis Lumière’s *Boat Leaving the Port* (*Barque sortant du port*, 1895) captures a simple sequence. A small boat, rowed by two men and steered by a third at the back, enters the frame from the right foreground and makes its way diagonally toward the back left. The tip of a jetty peeks out in the right middle ground, upon which stand two women and two children. There is a breeze, though not a gale, as registered by the fabric of the most prominent woman’s dress. For about twenty seconds the boat handles the swell easily, until the wake turns it broadside to the wind. A larger wave lifts the boat sideways. The camera cuts and the film ends.

There is nothing spectacular about Lumière films except the field they open up. What could be more banal than workers leaving a factory after a long day, a train pulling into a station, men paddling out from a harbor? Indeed, early cinema’s achievement, at least on the realist side (trick films present a different challenge), can be measured against its routine pro-filmic matter, in many Lumière films the mere fulfillment of a time schedule. Which is why I should be clearer: there is something about *Boat Leaving the Port* in particular that suggests other possibilities. As Dai Vaughan recognizes in contrast with the short film that started it all, *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* of the same year, here the “unpredictable has not only emerged from the background to occupy the greater portion of the frame; it has also taken sway over the principals” (65). Those principals are not simply following an institutionally pre-prescribed path out of the workplace but reacting spontaneously to an uncontrolled element, the waves, which draw man’s self-representation “into the contingency of events” (Vaughan 66).

Lumière's framing leaves space and time open for contingencies to develop, the camera set up to allow a scene to unfold whichever way it will. Noël Burch writes of a "quasi-scientific attitude" in his practice, his camera like a microscope set to allow something to "happen" under its purview, albeit at a human scale (18). Lumière eventually describes his work to Georges Sadoul as "endeavors of technological research" without "what they call 'direction'" (qtd. Burch 19). We are back to what Daston and Galison call "mechanical objectivity," a residual *fin de siècle* need for an "objective view" marked by an ability to see "without interference [or] interpretation," or in the realist filmmaker's vein, without the theatrical manipulations of that unabashed magician-trickster Georges Méliès (Daston 17). Whereas Méliès largely rejected linear perspective in favor of the flat tableau vivant, built on set according to the structure of the theatrical proscenium, Lumière's seemingly undirected mise en scène (a contradiction in terms recognized as such by many subsequent film critics and theorists) won out in the new century only to be sliced up by new techniques in film editing, perhaps most obviously in the chase films that progressively stitched temporal sequences along axes of continuity while taking fuller advantage of the depth of the frame's perspective box.

There is no single path to the institutional mode of representation, no neat linear sequence of developments from the single shot (non-)narrative film to D.W. Griffith's continuity system of film editing and beyond to Hollywood's golden age. What one finds, digging through the messy and woefully incomplete archive of early cinematic genres, is a plethora of experiments in possible continuity techniques constructing synthetic diegetic geographies in piecemeal fashion: through eye-line matching and counter-shots, sequential and parallel cuts, alternating shot scales, and oblique camera angles that reinforce the positionality of objects. One also finds a silent cinema that wasn't so silent, not only because of accompanying organs and orchestras but also

thanks to “lecturers” who served several functions at the site of projection—narrator, showman, barker—before soundtracks made them largely obsolete.

Lecturers played a key role in the exhibition of films that were neither self-evident single shot shorts nor near-seamless narratives edited into sufficient coherence. André Gaudreault writes that around 1902, with the explosion of multi-shot films, transparent cinematic meaning “came under threat,” for “every camera hiatus could cause spatial or temporal hiatuses, knock a hole in the narrative thread and leave room for interpretation—or incomprehension” (277). In 1908, the year Griffith’s career as a filmmaker began, Van C. Lee claimed in *Moving Picture World* that “not more than one out of every fifty feature films is properly understood by the audience to whom it is shown” unless some explanation is given prior to or during the viewing (93). Intertitles were an option, but they were costly and visually cumbersome, an obstacle to the viewer’s fantasy of cinematic absorption. Live lecturers accompanying the film, standing in an ambiguous space both inside and outside of it (“out there” with the spectators while acting as a necessary supplement to the film’s structural breaks, gaps, and lacks), commonly operated as extra-diegetic narrators until an adequate narrator function immanent to the film itself could be institutionalized. They corralled and directed audience attention to the film’s most important details; they told viewers what they “should” be looking at when the text failed to do so clearly.

No wonder Ezra Pound had mostly negative things to say about cinema at the beginning, even as scholars like Susan McCabe suggest that Imagism’s “ideographic roots anticipated Eisenstein’s theory of montage as ‘copulation (perhaps we had better say, combination) of two hieroglyphs’” (32). Pound formulated his Imagist doctrine at the very time visual presentation in cinema was sundered by the overlapping of two lacks (of sound and of adequate editorial principles) that had to be filled in with prosaic language and deictic direction from the outside.

Amy Lowell writes, as her final “rule” of Imagist doctrine, that “most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry,” that good poetry directs the attention, which is also to say that it needs no supplement (240). It admits no vagary, no blurred outlines characteristic of Decadent art and of a cinema whose primitive montage effects are not visually or semiotically transparent. Imagism, which in another context could be (mis)taken to mean “cinematicism,” does share something with celebrations of the artistic freedom film opens up in the new century, particularly in Lowell’s allowance of “absolute freedom in the choice of subject,” acceptance of “the artistic value of modern life,” and call to “create new rhythms” (239-40). But as filmmakers and operators struggled to find the visual grammar which would guide the eye in interpreting soundless narrative sequence, Pound, H.D., and Richard Aldington agreed upon their own principle of semiotic transparency: the poet must “use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation” of the poetic object (Pound 1954, 3).

So no lecturer need apply, nor any writer of intertitles; the poet already has the semicolon. Take perhaps the most famous example of an Imagist poem:

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

(Pound 1957, 35)

Pound gives his two lines (cut down from an initial thirty-six) a title straight out of Lumière. Reading them, much is demanded of that semicolon. It stands in for a “like,” perhaps, in much the same way a cut in one of Eisenstein’s dialectical montages stands in for an “and” or a “but.” If, as Todd McGowan puts it, Soviet style montage “aims not at providing spectators with the experience of singularity but at prompting them to think about the dialectical linkages between what appear as singularities,” then film syntax must be designed to accommodate multi-shot

linkages without any outside source giving away the sequence's internal logic (317). Pound's semicolon, likewise, caresses and eases the line's jamb, not totally unlike a cross-dissolve. As in montage, simile is implied rather than asserted, neither vehicle nor tenor subsuming its other; each insists or pulls on its partner image across the porous membrane fashioned by the line break.

There is, of course, little movement in Pound's finished fragment except what that semicolon contains. And if there is any one thing that distinguishes cinema from the other arts that ground its technics, it's movement. The sheer number of frames even the most rudimentary films squeeze into a small segment of clock time explodes the meandering rhythm of the magic lantern shows, generating the tantalizing possibility of visual narration without monstration. In the early twentieth century, visual comprehension was being learned again at the screenings of not-yet-continuous films, and modernist poets asked themselves a question that paralleled filmmakers' then experimenting with visual syntax: how can we organize language, taken as opaque and material rather than transparent or immediately representational, to better direct our newly fickle and fragile attention?

William Carlos Williams writes that the "new" poetics requires a formidable understanding of the "physiology of the nervous system" as it relates to "the larger processes of the imagination" (2011, 54). The poet shares with the filmmaker a battle over the spectator's attention deficits, but he has already lost the war if he does not recognize the need to wedge down into the body with his art. The poetry wholly unsuited to their shared historical moment is that "designed to keep up the barrier between sense and the vaporous fringe which distracts attention from its agonized approaches to the moment" (2011, 3). Language, specifically in the aspect of its material density, is a thick frontier through which we direct our senses in/through

the world: “But can you not see, can you not taste, can you not smell, can you not hear, can you not touch—words?... Words roll, spin, flare up, rumble, trickle, foam—” (1971, 159-60). For Williams, poetry is a *feeling* for words, and the poem must have movement in space, the form of a motion, if it is to pull the “agonized” tensions of a moment together in feeling. We organize ourselves to give the mind its stay, he says, but the self is in the poem as much as it’s in the film for an artist like Griffith. To give the mind its stay, to settle it down, one must inhabit the cuts through which motion, sequence, and sums are built.

In *The Great American Novel*, published in 1923 along with *Spring and All*, Williams writes that “America is a mass of pulp, a jelly, a sensitive plate ready to take whatever print you want to put on it... We have only mass movement like the sea” (1971, 175). Dr. Paterson, on his walk in the late long poem, would refer to the public he encounters as “The ‘great beast’ come to sun himself” (1995, 54). But here, photographic technology figures prominently: if the American mass is a “sensitive plate,” naturalized like the endlessly mutable formal canvas of the sea, all the poetry fit to “print” will cut *into* the mass in order to select the elements that, when taken back together, form new objects. Williams specifically disparages the commonplace realist metaphor of the “mirror up to nature” not for being too photographic but because his poetics rarely stays, despite popular misconception, within the boundaries of the single frame (2011, 50). In the very first poem in *Spring and All*, “One by one objects are defined— / It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf” (2011, 12); the eye accelerates toward the edge of things, where Williams’s famous line breaks make incisions not simply to dismember, but also to suture.

Poem VII cuts a prose passage on Juan Gris off at mid-sentence, continuing to snip the tradition’s rose to give it back its edge: “The edge / cuts without cutting” (2011, 30). The edge is where the action is, and Williams’s unconventional line breaks are where his poetry’s tension

resides. Each snip gives a word its thickness back, even the littlest one, though it reaches out onto the page for the next word that will re-connect it to a network of sense. “It is at the edge of the / petal that love waits,” and the waiting is the hardest part (as in the sharpest point, the non-site across which the eye must re-learn to track change according to new rhythms) (2011, 31). The poems of *Spring and All* emphasize absence and fragmentation. Williams does not “dissolve” one image into another, and his rose is not Mallarmé’s ideal flower “absent from all bouquets”: “to engage roses / becomes a geometry— // Sharper, neater, more cutting,” so that at the end (of an object, a line, a frame) “the start is begun” (2011, 31). The overdetermination of a single image or metaphor is dislodged / new permutations can commence / the field is open / the age of montage is upon us.

In Poem XI, which begins with “In passing with my mind,” Williams’s moving car—a recurring motif—pulls the eye past a scene as it glances backward. The poet launches the “art of driving a car,” as opposed to Baudelaire’s “art of taking a walk,” as “a means of observing the ‘seeing eye’ in flux and disarrayed” (McCabe 127). That eye is only able to make out a couplet’s worth of detail in discrete units, as if the unfolding poem is structured by a sequence of saccadic jerks. In what may be the first lyric to address the twentieth century’s newest form of (non-)seeing, so-called highway hypnosis, the driver’s mind passes “on nothing in the world / but the right of way” (2011, 47). But the absorbed directness granted the driver “by / virtue of the law” gives way to a “spinning” relay of glances: “I saw // an elderly man who / smiled and looked away // to the north past a house”; “a woman in blue // who was laughing and / leaning forward to look up // into the man’s half / averted face”; “a boy of eight who was / looking at the middle of // the man’s belly.” Each look traverses the gap produced on the page by the white space in between the couplets, the directed glance split from its direct object. The double strokes I have

produced above replicate Williams's doubled cuts, jumps made not only in the gap between eye and object but also between the speaker-driver-viewer's (meta-)eye and *its* double object, the permutations of which make up "the inevitable flux of the seeing eye toward measuring itself by the world it inhabits" (2011, 26). The poem asks how the eye can master scenic continuity once it's been set in motion, and ends with a literalization of enjambment, with a vision of "a girl with one leg / over the rail of a balcony," a close-up amputation of the female body (a Lillian Gish turned upside down) in a hanging "jambe" (2011, 48).

If we are right to imagine a Dr. Williams wielding his scalpel, how far he nevertheless takes us from the serene dissection of the cow's eye in Descartes' *Dioptrics*! Discussing the "fixed categories into which life is divided," Williams emphasizes that they exist only insofar as they are *not* "dead dissections" (2011, 75). What he goes on to call "cleavage" is the effect of the imagination, not of "anatomitization" (76-77). For Williams, to watch one's own cleaved/cleaving eye—to watch oneself watching, to strain after an impossible maneuver—is to "[witness] the larger processes of the imagination," an embodied faculty that does not cut one off from the world but rather cuts and folds one's self *into* it. As Hillis Miller writes, the imagination for Williams is not a vehicle of "indirection or transposition" but of a "paradoxical movement both toward and away from the object" (308). The eye splits because it works both ways, its glance a two-beat oscillation, an out and back. As in Luis Buñuel's and Salvador Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), a slit or cut in the eye becomes a "self-reflecting comment on the very process of making metaphors" (L. Williams 71).

Buñuel writes in his notes, in a negative formulation straight out of a modernist poetic manifesto, "NOTHING in the film SYMBOLIZES ANYTHING" (30). Instead, so his initial story goes (as related by Georges Bataille), Dalí devised the famous shot of a man slicing a

woman's eyeball with a razor after seeing "a narrow and long cloud cutting across the lunar surface" (Bataille 29). And that is precisely what's shown in the preceding shot, as if the master anti-ocular metaphor of surrealist art is cut out of a situated vision in/of the natural world and a sense of the embodied eye's perspectival limitation. Martin Jay notes the surrealists' "rich ocular iconography," a preoccupation with "enucleated, blinded, mutilated, or transfigured" eyeballs (common in the work of de Chirico, Ernst, Man Ray, and Magritte as well) (259). And yet Buñuel himself argued against relegating his violent imagery and jarring sequential juxtapositions to an unconscious, oneiric manifold often taken as the movement's ground zero: "The plot is the result of a CONSCIOUS psychic automatism and, to that extent, it does not attempt to recount a dream, although it profits by a mechanism analogous to that of dreams" (29). This mechanism, with Freud as the main source, is metaphor (condensation), but here it's borne not out of unconscious pressure but conscious "automatism," or in visual terms: the glance. The filmic cut, made self-reflexively thematic by the opening of *Un chien* (not to mention gendered so pertinently at the same time, a point film theorists would eventually jump on), marks the institutionalization of the glance as the structuring unit of visual art in the twentieth century.

In the wake of Williams (and the new art form that would be the twentieth century's aesthetic and commercial obsession), how poets and visual artists used or misused cuts and jams became the key question of measure. Later in his career, Williams developed the variable foot—most famously in his triadic line—as if to forcefully reclaim an experiential freedom from the regularity of so many frames per second. Hugh Kenner posits, in a letter to Mike Weaver, that Williams' triadic line originated in an inability, following his late-life strokes, to scan *with his eyes* (demonstrating, with this hypothesis, the intimate triadic relationship between the eye,

ear, and poetic meter): “His eyes could follow a line but not jump back and locate accurately the beginning of the next line...I’m convinced that the 3-ply typography of his late verse was originally a set of helps (with the tab stops) for just such line-finding in rereading” (qtd. Weaver 85-6). Whether this is true or not, the step-down line served to reintegrate the sensorimotor body of the poem, to put the body back into action when arts like the cinema threatened to do the opposite, to isolate and even disable (to slice and therefore fragment) the passive, spectatorial eye. The glance, as the acts of driving and cinematic viewing made readily apparent, can be taken away from the coordinated capacities of the body. The poet, through the integration of the body in action, can also take back the constructive qualities of the glance. In *Paterson* (completed in 1958), Williams does just that, using his variable foot to “catch something of the walking world’s measure” (Crawford 107), to reclaim the shifting space-time intersections of the stroll that “leaves the path, finds hard going / across-field, stubble and matted brambles”:

The descent beckons
 as the ascent beckoned
 Memory is a kind
 of accomplishment
 a sort of renewal
 even
 an initiation, since the spaces it opens are new
 places
 inhabited by hordes
 heretofore unrealized,
 of new kinds—
 since their movements
 are towards new objectives (1995, 78)

To walk is to quicken and lengthen one’s step as needed, just as to glance is to the accelerate and

decelerate one's look as needed. And the tether between body and image is in memory as a "kind / of accomplishment" or "a sort of renewal," not as a metaphysical transport but as a slight lengthening of the thought to complete a movement. Memory inheres in thought's variation and in the body's (and the bodily eye's) directedness, in its movements "towards new objectives." As the eye steps down in a dilating and contracting rhythm corresponding with the body's walking movement, it also moves out and back across the field of the page, returning again to the margin from which it endlessly projects itself.

As we move and see and write we collect, as long poems like *Song of Myself*, *Paterson*, and A.R. Ammons's *Sphere* do, "rolling / up the sum" of concrete particulars as doggedly (if also as futilely, from the perspective of some impossible democratic ideal) as Whitman's dung beetle (1995, 3). When the final volume of Williams's most famous poem was published, Robert Frank's photobook *The Americans* was prepping for its United States release. At a time when the *Life* photo essay was most Americans' chief exposure to serious photography—a form where pictures follow each other according to a written narrative logic independent of the visual series itself—Frank (in the mode of his predecessors like Walker Evans) tantalized with the possibility of visual narration without monstration, the very engine of early cinema's development. "I wanted to create some kind of rhythm," Frank said of his masterwork (19). Or many kinds of rhythms. His photographs depict presence and absence in oscillation, open and closed forms, acts of looking and things looked at, movement and stillness, power and impotence. As Leroy Searle writes generally of photography constructed as and through visual networks, Frank's sum/making moves "from a conception of 'art' narrowly defined by aesthetic concerns to a conception of 'art' as a form of investigation and a form of cultural communication" (9). As in the poetry of Williams, meaning inheres in the jambs—in Frank's case, in the *cut* of his frames,

often made in unorthodox compositional locations, that maintains the tension between inside and outside, a self and an other—where investigation happens and connections are made and re-made.

All a writer (and teacher) can do, most of the time, is take a sliver of those near-infinite connections. Sometimes it's enough just to show or tell someone where to look, knowing full well that one's world-view is far from exhaustive and always will be. That's the thing about the glance: it doesn't come to a full stop and it's never fully satisfied. But I take only one of Frank's photographs here, because I really must insist on coming to a full stop. And because one of his photographs, which has smartly been replicated on the book's cover, provides a user's key for the kind of relational looking Frank's series demands. In *Trolley—New Orleans* white and black passengers look out towards the picture plane, separated by the stanchions that cut them up into cells, as if caught in their own film negatives. A white boy and black man, the two figures whose attentions are most directly oriented towards the camera, reach outside of their frames. Near opposites, they both break out of their delineated portraits at the juncture where the segregated trolley turns from white to black. And above each "cell," closed upper windows abstractly reflect the unseen side of the picture, the site of the photographer's position. These reflections form a surface where the visible meets the invisible, a positive meets a negative, the seen meets the unseen, the scene meets the un-scene.

Frank shot this photograph in 1955, only weeks before Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus. Glancing horizontally and vertically along the complementary axes of the photograph, one submits to a visual syntax no less social for being intricately formal, and no less bewitching for being ethically and politically urgent. The appearance of classical symmetry is there, with the children's window square the central element, but it's the off-center

jamb *between* them and the black man to the camera's right—the dark backdrop on the right half of his square creating the effect of his face dissolving into or out of a void, which places the white skin of the children against the stooped, darkened figure behind them into further relief—that holds the picture together. How far we are here from the seemingly Edenic pro-filmic world Lumière's camera gave us, but also how close we are to power of the cut in *Boat Leaving the Port*, where the at edge of the composition we're thrown into the contingencies of a world that we didn't make but that we nevertheless hope to shape. At the edge of the civil rights era, or at the edge of our own precarious future (but what future isn't precarious?), we look for the jamb upon which we can hang the right relation, to make something that will last. When we make a world through our glance, we are that jamb, our eyes the cut that precedes the picture.

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