

The Nascent Specter:  
Vision, Corporeality, Reproduction, and Modernity in Henry James and Photographic Theory  
by  
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## Abstract

This thesis examines the intersection of visual culture, the body, and modernity, as seen in the works of novelist Henry James and present-day scholarship of photographic images. To accomplish this task, I employ the use of an occult (and visual) metaphor—that of spectral presence, most succinctly defined as the product of the relationship between vision and corporeality in what critic Jonathan Crary describes as the modern observer. Anchored in both Crary and the highly influential work of Walter Benjamin, my analyses describe the ways in which spectral presence may be identified, spectated, and generated, and how these processes illustrate the ways in which the same regime of visual culture (and vis-à-vis Crary, modernity) has held dominance in western culture for roughly the last century and a half.

This text is split into four parts. *I. Introduction: Hauntings* works to establish and contextualize spectral presence as a useful analytic metaphor in both the scholarship of visual culture and in James' texts. Using Benjamin, Crary, and James' novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), I introduce all three authors as authorities on whose work my analyses will be founded. *II. Phantoms* sketches the relationship between James' *Daisy Miller* (1879) and the works of Susan Sontag, especially *On Photography* (1977), detailing how themes of corporeal form, visibility, and phantoms intertwine with one another in the visual apparatuses, both literal (the camera) and figurative (narrative consciousness), that underpin each text. *III. Possession* describes the means by which images come to possess meaning through and independently of spectation. Focusing on James' short story "The Real Thing" (1892) and his novel *The Ambassadors* (1903), in addition to Robert Hariman and John Lucaites' *No Caption Needed* (2007), I outline how iconicity functions both technically and structurally in the reception of spectral presence. *IV. Conclusion: Spectral Genesis* ties together the threads of each previous chapter in an analysis of James' novel *The Golden Bowl* (1904) which stresses the genesis of spectral presence and the relation between this presence, Crary's modern eye, and Benjaminian mechanical reproduction.



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Short Titles

*TA*: James, Henry. *The Ambassadors*. New York: Penguin, 2008. Print.

*DM*: James, Henry. *Daisy Miller*. New York: Modern Library, 2002. Print.

*GB*: James, Henry. *The Golden Bowl*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.

*RT*: James, Henry. "The Real Thing." *Selected Tales*. New York: Penguin, 2001. 204-24. Print.

*TS*: James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw*. New York: Penguin Group, 2011. Print.

*OP*: Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Picador, 1977. Print.

*RPO*: Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, 2003. Print.





## I. Introduction: Hauntings

The specter of death can be written into a narrative in more ways than one. Ghosts are among the most obvious examples of a death surfaced and made apparent. Another example, perhaps less obvious, is visible in the mediation of the primary narrative of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. The novel opens with a small party gathered during the Christmas holiday season for the express purpose of listening to ghost stories, to affect a just such a "turn of the screw," a dialing-up of suspense and anxiety (James, *TS* 3). But the unfolding of the story—which gives "two turns" because it involves two children—is already imbued with death (3). Douglass, the man who recites the tale aloud, is reading script written in an "old faded ink and in the most beautiful hand. . . . A woman's. She has been dead these twenty years. She sent me the pages in question before she died" (4-5). He is reading the account of a governess, who, during her time at the mansion at Bly, experienced a haunting, and whose death has made available the story of the haunting to him. But this death does not complete the transmission. There is yet another passing, another turn of the screw, in the mediation of the story, for "Poor Douglas, before his death – when it was in sight – committed to me," the narrator, "the manuscript that reached him on the third of these days" that the narrator is recounting (6). In order for the tale be made apparent and readily disseminable to an increasingly large audience, it must be imbued with death twice. Only then can the ghost story be laid bare to the world at large by the narrator—only after the text he reproduces is already haunted by two spirits, those of the dead governess and the dead Douglass. The supernatural in *The Turn of the Screw* seems to be insidious, breaking free of the primary narrative (of the governess' tale) and seeping into the frame surrounding it. Ghosts haunt the ghost story itself.

But what I find most fascinating in *The Turn of the Screw*, and in James more broadly, is not so much the supernatural as the spectral—or, more specifically, what I call *spectral presence*. In *The Turn of the Screw*, spectral presence is literal and easily examinable: in this novella, the supernatural and the spectral are one and the same. The governess has a series of visions and ghostly encounters, none of which can be either confirmed or refuted by her fellow characters, the Christmas party, or the text itself, which is narrated primarily by the governess. That her visions cannot be divorced from her self—in other words, cannot be proved by evidence found within the novella—in fact plays into a larger, “modern... regime of vision,” described by critic Jonathan Crary (3). Crary depicts this regime arising roughly a century before *The Turn of the Screw*’s publication in 1898, taking the form of a “shift signaled by the passage from the geometrical optics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to physiological optics” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an optics which is dependent upon “the capacities of the human eye” (16). “In effect,” he writes, “vision is redefined as a capacity for being affected by sensations that have no necessary link to a referent, thus imperiling any coherent system of meaning” (91). The governess’ visions, as they have neither a concrete referent nor external confirmation, function within this regime, where vision is no longer “a unified space of order, unmodified by” any “sensory and physiological apparatus,” an unmediated reflection of an external world; it is instead constituted by the organ of sight, the eye, and any sensory phenomena that that eye might register (55). To devote a great deal of time to debating the veracity of the governess’ visions, then, and to read the novella differently if they are or are not really “real,” as much James scholarship has done, is to wholly miss the implications of this insight—namely, that her visions matter inasmuch as they are real to her, regardless of their actual referential qualities or lack thereof. The primary narrative of *The Turn of the Screw* is

narrated solely by the Governess: any audience of her tale is firmly situated, as it were, in her eyes. The Christmas party, and the general audience of the novella as a whole, are privy only to the visions of these eyes—to Cray’s “redefined” vision. Though this vision might have “no necessary link to a referent,” just as surely it does not preclude such a link. Cray’s modern observer is just as unconcerned with the referential “reality” of vision as I am to the referential “reality” of the governess’ visions.

*The Turn of the Screw*’s spirits matter to me inasmuch as they matter to the governess: they matter because she believes that that they intend to corrupt her two charges, the children Miles and Flora. “They can destroy them!” she tells the housekeeper Mrs. Grose:

They don’t know as yet quite how – but they’re trying hard. They’re seen only across, as it were, and beyond – in strange places and on high places, the tops of towers, the roof of houses, the outside of windows, the further edge of pools; but there’s a deep design, on either side, to shorten the distance and overcome the obstacle: so the success of the tempters is only a question of time. (James, *TS* 70-1)

Proximity is the means by which the governess can see these ghostly figures (those of the dead former governess Miss Jessel and the dead valet Peter Quint) executing their plan to destroy the children, who themselves, the other “side” of which she speaks, also wish to lessen the distance. In some sense, by the time the governess makes this utterance, the proximity she fears has already been attained: as she is reporting her first sighting of Miss Jessel, seen across a lake, to Mrs. Grose, the governess says, “She just appeared and stood there – but not so near” (45). Mrs. Grose then asks, “And without coming nearer?” to which the governess responds, “Oh for

the effect and the feeling she might have been a close as you!” (45). The feeling of nearness is attained, despite the distance between the two figures.

This desire for closeness that the governess sees, especially on the part of Miles and Flora, is strikingly similar to the desire Walter Benjamin, in 1936, will write about with respect to photography in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” “Namely,” Benjamin explains, “the desire of contemporary masses to bring things ‘closer’ spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction,” its photograph (223). For Miles and Flora, the governess imagines, these reproductions are the spirits themselves— spectral imitations of once-living bodies. Again talking to Mrs. Grose, she says, “even while they pretend to be lost in their fairy-tale they’re steeped in their vision of the dead restored to them,” she believes, steeped in the vision of their former relations returned as ghostly images (James, *TS* 69).

Yet these apparitions are never made apparent to her confidant, nor are they confirmed by the children: during the climax of the story, after following Flora to the lake across which the governess had earlier witnessed Miss Jessel, the governess finally sees the dead woman while in the presence of Mrs. Grose, who does not likewise see. The governess writes, “Miss Jessel stood before us on the opposite bank exactly as she had stood the other time, and I remember, strangely, as the first feeling now produced in me, my thrill of joy at having brought on a proof,” a proof she imagines is visible to Mrs. Grose as well (101). Mrs. Grose, however, at the governess’ instruction, looks, cannot see, and says, “What a dreadful turn, to be sure, Miss! Where on earth do you see anything?”; turning to Flora, she soothes, “She isn’t there,

little lady, and nobody's there – and you never see nothing, my sweet! How can Miss Jessel – when poor Miss Jessel's dead and buried?" (102-3). The image of the spirits, whether or not based on some objective reality, is confined to the governess' own eyes; for Mrs. Grose the dead are not raised. Miss Jessel's spirit is not, to borrow a term from Crary, an "afterimage" of her own physical person for Mrs. Grose—only for the governess. The governess, it seems, is experiencing a form of "autonomous vision... an optical experience that was produced by and within the subject" (Crary 98). I do not mean to suggest that, as her vision is autonomous, the possibility of an actual ghost is excluded; rather that her vision is not a product of something that is truly "out there" (which would imply Miss Jessel's visual availability to Mrs. Grose), but is instead a vision circumscribed by her individual experience. Her material eyes give rise to ethereal creatures. This strange relation between spectral images—phantasmagoric bodies—and corporeal body parts is one which arises again and again, in both James' works and the field of photographic theory which can trace its lineage back to Benjamin.

So I return to spectral presence: in brief, the product of the interplay between image and body for a modern spectator, for Crary's modern observer. The aim of my study is to examine the spectral presences that haunt James' literature and the offspring of this Benjaminian theory of photography; I seek to bring together two separate discourses of visuality that, while not genealogically related to one another, are both nevertheless concerned with the same interplay of optics and corporeality. Spectral presence, then, as an organizing metaphor, is useful for two reasons. The first is practical. The images of both categories of texts are often absent of any corporeal reality. They are specters in that they are highly visible, and though they may be interacted with, they possess no materiality: they are images that have subsumed their supposedly referential body, the objects their images ostensibly reproduce. James and

photographic theory are also both captivated by specters in relation to spectatorship and a politics of looking: the manipulation of visual culture and the use of visibility as a conduit for, rather than as an object of, knowledge are critical to James and photography theory. The second reason spectral presence is useful concerns rhetoric: James and photographic theorists often lace their narratives and analyses with the language of death and the occult. To examine these works in terms of spectral presence, then, is to engage them on their own terms, and to link them to each other and to this project through a rhetorical device shared by all three.

Despite the similarities between James' work and photographic theory, however, I do not primarily engage the literal photographs that appear in either. While my analyses incorporate such events, including discussions of actual photographs, these emergences are not my focus. Nor do I use photography theory as a kind of cypher through which James may be translated: to do so would be both to privilege the visual culture of photography theory and ignore any critiques that James' texts may suggest.

Neither, finally, is my goal to suggest causal relationships—to craft an evolutionary narrative of spectral presence as originating in either James or photography. Just as the stereoscope and other “central components of nineteenth-century ‘realism,’ of mass visual culture,” which Crary argues are often identified as arising from a photographic ethos, “*preceded* the invention of photography and *in no way required* photographic procedures or even the development of mass production techniques,” so too are the discourses of visibility in James and photography theory discontinuous from one another yet implicated in the same regime of visual culture (16-7, italics in original). Crary's “components of nineteenth-century ‘realism,’” like the spectral presences of James and photography theory, “are inextricably dependent on a new arrangement of knowledge about the body and the constitutive relation of

that knowledge to social power” (17). To examine spectral presence is, I posit, another means by which this new arrangement may be understood and subsequently most effectively resisted—an arrangement that has retained dominance and overpowered most resistance, it seems, for the better part of the last two centuries.

To better examine this relationship between image, body, and knowledge, I have delineated two subcategories of spectral presence: *phantoms*, and *possession*. These subcategories will serve as the focus of my subsequent chapters: *II. Phantoms*, and *III. Possession*. My final section, *IV. Conclusion: Spectral Genesis* will be devoted to the creation of spectral presence. Though *The Turn of the Screw* presents the most obvious examples of spectral presence—indeed, the specters are literal—the inclusion of other James works, in which the specters are by and large metaphoric, will allow me a more nuanced approach. Likewise, incorporating many books of photographic theory will allow me to better sketch the ways in which the regimes of visual culture to which James and photography theory belong are, arguably, one and the same with the visual culture Cray describes as taking hold in the nineteenth century. I will not, however, lose sight of either *The Turn of the Screw* or Benjamin. The former affords clear examples of each kind of spectral presence, examples upon which the more metaphoric of my claims may be anchored, and I will return to this novella during the introduction of both *II. Phantoms* and *III. Possession*. Benjamin will remain relevant as almost all photographic theory cites or returns to Benjaminian ideas or phrases in some way—he will likewise serve as a point to which newer photographic theories may be anchored.

*II. Phantoms* begins the process of laying side-by-side the visual cultures of James and photography theory, through the examination of individualized specters—through ghosts. The title character of James’ novella *Daisy Miller* herself performs a peculiar spectrality: she is

described variously as an apparition, a sylph, and as a charming collection of parts with no ensemble or sense of form. She is made by Winterbourne, the character around whose consciousness the novella is situated, into a phantom, a kind of photographic image that draws its spectrality from the dissociation of her corporeal body. Having become an image, she then dies suddenly of malaria—a particularly torturous and bodily death, a great irony for the young woman who otherwise has no ensemble, no form. I position *Daisy Miller* chiefly in relation to Susan Sontag's *On Photography*. *On Photography* is of interest because Sontag posits that photographs become more real than the objects they ostensibly represent, subjectivizing and objectifying reality simultaneously; she theorizes that mortality, of both the viewer of the photograph and the photographic subject, is called to mind by photography—an idea resonant with Daisy's eventual death. Sontag and *Daisy Miller*, I contend, are both concerned with spectral presence as a force that accesses life through death; phantoms, in short, demonstrate the inextricability of death, photography, bodies, and visual culture.

*III. Possession* examines the processes by which images begin to subsume their referents, possessing them and their viewing audience. To accomplish this, I examine both James' short story "The Real Thing" and James' novel *The Ambassadors*. The former text describes the unsuccessful efforts of an illustrator to extricate the image of "real thing" from his work, while leaving other illusions intact; the latter is a particularly interesting novel in that Strether, the narrator, is particularly invested in the experience of illusions, and at one point seems to enter a pictorial fantasy from which he does not return for many pages. I use Robert Hariman and John Lucaites' text *No Caption Needed*, then, to examine the process by which these illusions (and their photographic counterparts, the iconic photograph) are produced and circulated, and in particular the ways in which they become overdetermined narrative units,

seemingly capable of communicating the entirety of an event in a single image. I am thus interested in the ways in which the illustrator- and Strether-as-narrator are possessed by their illusions, how iconic photographs become possessed of their narrative content, and how the reading eye and the body figure into the experience of possession.

My conclusion knits together the previous the previous threads of each section in an analysis of James' novel *The Golden Bowl*. Examining not how Maggie responds to the deceptive illusion that the Prince and Charlotte craft, but rather to her manipulation of this illusion to her own ends, I discuss how, after Fanny shatters the golden bowl, Charlotte is seen losing her corporeality and becoming a phantom, while she, Fanny, and the Prince become possessed by the narrative illusion that Maggie deftly wields. I then broaden the frames of my argument, analyzing the ways in which Maggie demonstrates how spectral presence may be subverted and resisted and its implications for the past hundred and fifty years of Crary's "modernity," including and up to the present day in which the contemporary photographic theory is circulated.

But first I return to the governess and *The Turn of the Screw*.

## II. Phantoms

In *The Turn of the Screw*, the unnamed governess' ghost sightings are not the only kind of visions she has while at Bly. Almost immediately upon her arrival at the old mansion, she observes that

it was a comfort that there could be no uneasiness in a connexion with anything so beatific as the radiant image of my little girl, the vision of whose angelic beauty had probably more than anything else to do with the restlessness that, before morning, made me several times rise and wander about my room to take in the whole picture and prospect... (James, *TS* 12)

Flora, her "little girl," is described in no uncertain terms as something unearthly that, while pleasant, still retains the ability to keep the governess awake at night, pacing, in a manner similar to that of the as-of-yet unseen ghosts. The language of a "radiant image" or a "vision" of "angelic beauty" might itself be a descriptor of ghosts, if only ghosts of an exceedingly kind (or divine) nature. To fully communicate Flora's charm, the governess must portray her as charmed; even the earthly may become supernatural, under the right circumstances, the right portrayal. The same with Miles: the governess remarks that she "had seem him on the instant, without and within, in the great glow of freshness, the same positive fragrance of purity, in which I had from the first moment seen his little sister" (21). Miles too is a charming specter.

To return to the actual specters of the novella, visions of individual ghosts, for the governess, have a similarity to itemized lists. Part of the means by which she keeps the unseeing Mrs. Grose convinced of the ghosts' existence is through a detailed description of their personal features. The governess remarks that "to keep her thoroughly in the grip of this

[belief in the ghosts] I had only to ask her how, if I had ‘made it up’, I came to be able to give, of each of the persons appearing to me, a picture disclosing, to the last detail, their special marks – a portrait on the exhibition of which she had instantly recognized and named them” (49). Specificity is a marker of verisimilitude, and the specificity is particular to the “special marks”—distinguishing bodily features—she is able to describe as properties of spirits that, by their very nature, have no physical bodies.

These relations, of both the human to the supernatural, and the specter to the itemized list, appear elsewhere in James’ work. Perhaps the most interesting account can be found in another of James’ novellas, *Daisy Miller* (1879). The text concerns the life (and death) of the eponymous woman, a young American traveling through Europe, narrated from the perspective of Winterbourne, an American expatriate. The “pretty American flirt,” is from her arrival in Geneva made out to be a curious creature (James, *DM* 13). Upon meeting her, Winterbourne notes that

Only she was composed—he had seen that before too—of charming little parts that didn’t match and that made no *ensemble*; and if she looked another way when he spoke to her, and seemed not particularly to hear him, this was simply her habit, her manner, the result of her having no idea whatever of “form” ... in any such connexion. (8-9, italics in original)

“Form,” here, has a double meaning. The first is that Daisy, in a manner similar to her tactless younger brother, the “urchin,” has little knowledge of (or little regard for) European cultural practices—of social forms of behavior (10). Winterbourne acknowledges that even his American cousins, who are themselves “tremendous flirts,” have more tact than Daisy; and “If ... Miss Daisy Miller exceeded the liberal licence allowed to these young women it was

probable she did go even by the American allowance rather far” (20). So Daisy ignores the forms dictated by any cultural standard. Form’s second meaning is related to her “charming little parts” which make “no *ensemble*.” Daisy Miller, for Winterbourne, cannot be assembled as a whole. Indeed, she is even from Schenectady, New York—from a city whose spoken name is a hairsbreadth away from “synecdoche,” the substitution of parts for a whole (11).

Winterbourne’s percept of her, fittingly, is fragmentary, and takes the shape of a catalogue of parts:

Her eyes were the very prettiest conceivable, and indeed Winterbourne hadn’t for a long time seen anything prettier than his fair country-woman’s various features—her complexion, her nose, her ears, her teeth. He took a great interest generally in that range of effects and was addicted to noting and, as it were, recording them... (9)

He is addicted to recording her parts, as it were, like a camera.

Critic Susan Sontag’s 1977 collection of essays *On Photography* will help me explicate this statement. “The camera makes reality atomic, manageable, and opaque,” she writes; “It is a view of the world which denies interconnectedness” and “continuity,” instead preferring, like Winterbourne, to deal with fragments and pieces (Sontag, *OP* 23). Sontag later describes photography as being “no less reductive when it is being reportorial than when it reveals beautiful forms. By disclosing the thingness of human beings, the humanness of things, photography transforms reality into a tautology” (111). Though Sontag’s use of the word “form” differs from James’—her “forms” are fragmentary, akin to his “charming parts”—both writers are concerned with the same concept. Winterbourne’s gaze reduces Daisy to a series of beautiful things (“her complexion, her nose, her ears, her teeth”), so that she might be reported,

recorded. His narration reconstructs her, piece by infinitesimal piece: in this way, he (and through him the narrator) demonstrates what Sontag describes as photography's "limitless production of notes on reality" (111), or what Benjamin might describe as photography's endless reproducibility—the impulse to divide reality into ever smaller fragments and even briefer snapshots.

But such a reproduction of Daisy, curiously, makes her a spectral presence: as Winterbourne's photograph-like consciousness makes her a catalogue of body parts, her overall being is elided, made a phantom in the text. Though these two processes might appear diametrically opposed (through presentation as a collection physical things, Daisy becomes a noncorporeal phantom), they occur simultaneously. They may be witnessed via Winterbourne's descriptions of Daisy later in the novella: he notes that "this charming apparition wasn't a coquette ...she was only a pretty American flirt. Winterbourne was almost grateful for having found the formula that applied to Miss Daisy Miller. He leaned back in his seat; he remarked to himself that she had the finest little nose he had ever seen" (James, *DM* 13-4). Even as Winterbourne pronounces her a phantom, he takes stock of her individual (and literally corporeal) features. Though, as an apparition, she has no idea of unified form, she has a formula: again, a collection of parts that together make no ensemble. Her inability to be assembled properly ensures that any attempt to portray Daisy Miller as a whole results in the portrayal instead of a fabrication—of the ephemeral "American flirt." This category is a designation he arrives at after realizing he is unable to answer more relevant questions about her, such as whether or not she is

simply a pretty girl from New York State—were they all like that, the pretty girls who had had a good deal of gentlemen's society? Or was she also a

designing, an audacious, in short an expert young person? Yes, his instinct for such a question had ceased to serve him, and his reason could be misled. He must on the whole take Miss Daisy Miller for a flirt—a pretty American flirt.

(13)

Yet, just as surely as he assumes Daisy to be a flirt, he admits that “he had never as yet had relations” with anyone else who might be deemed a flirt; he admits that he has never even met a flirt before (13). Thus, even his image of Daisy, the phantom, as fitting the formula of the American flirt is based on his imagination of the form of the flirt itself. She can only have a form, for Winterbourne, when that form is as phantasmagoric as she herself is. Only by reproducing her bit-by-bit, then, can she be rendered faithfully; only by recording her as a series of disconnected pieces—like a collection of photographic images—can she be really represented.

Winterbourne may thus help explicate one of the more arcane statements that Sontag makes in *On Photography*. Through photography, Sontag writes,

Reality is summed up in an array of casual fragments—an endlessly alluring, poignantly reductive way of dealing with the world. . . . In the past, a discontent with reality expressed itself as a longing for *another* world. In modern society, a discontent with reality expresses itself forcefully and most hauntingly by the longing to reproduce *this* one. As if only by looking at reality in the form of an object—through the fix of the photograph—is it really real, that is, surreal. (*On Photography* 80, emphasis in original)

Daisy’s charming parts illustrate Sontag’s “casual fragments” in that they are casually, rather than causally, related: causality would imply the constitution of a whole. Winterbourne’s

categorical recording of her (as recording and reproducing are inextricably linked in the creation of photographic images) dissociates her. It is only then by looking at Daisy as an image that she can be reconstructed: if her physical parts have been torn asunder, the way to make her whole is to ignore the physical tears and instead imagine her as an “apparition,” a “sylph,” or a phantom, who has no body at all.

Photographic images, like those images Winterbourne makes of Daisy, are inescapable because of their circularity: once introduced, they become both the problem and solution, tearing the world apart and replacing it with a facsimile. “The images,” Sontag writes, “that have virtually unlimited authority in a modern society are mainly photographic images; and the scope of that authority stems from the properties peculiar to images taken by cameras,” or, in *Daisy Miller*, the photograph-like consciousness of Winterbourne; “Such images are indeed able to usurp reality because first of all a photograph is not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stenciled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask” (*OP* 153-4). Photographs possess more verisimilitude than the world from which they create their imprints. Because Winterbourne’s depiction of Daisy is ostensibly drawn from some external source, and displays this sourcing through the categorical and casual depiction of individual body parts, his ephemeral Daisy-as-synecdoche can eclipse the Daisy from Schenectady and become “surreal.”

But Sontag, like so many theorists of photography before her, sees in photography a figure of death more apparent than a simple likeness to a death mask. “All photographs are *memento mori*,” she writes. “To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt” (Sontag, *OP* 15). Later she says that

“Photography is the inventory of mortality. A touch of the finger,” on the trigger of a camera, “now suffices to invest a moment with posthumous irony” (70). Such posthumous irony constitutes an insidious presence in *Daisy Miller*: Daisy, the spectral woman, has herself died before the narration of the novella occurs (evidenced by the most basic fact of the narrator’s use of past, rather than present, tense), and so the whole novella comes foreshadow her mortality, most evidently through the oft-repeated cautions Daisy receives against exposing herself to the malarial roman fever. As soon as Daisy arrives in Rome, she is warned of the dangers of Roman fever and of staying out at night:

The afternoon was drawing to a close—it was the hour for the throng of carriages and of contemplative pedestrians. “I don’t consider it’s safe, Daisy,” her hostess firmly asserted.

“Neither do I then,” Mrs. Miller thus borrowed confidence to add. “You’ll catch the fever as sure as you live. Remember what Dr. Davis told you!” (James, *DM* 41)

These warnings come from all directions: from her hostess, her mother, and her doctor. Moreover, they are habitual: Daisy is asked to *remember* what she has already been told. Though the novella as a whole largely functions as Winterbourne’s recollections of Daisy after her death, she is, in this moment, not yet deceased—she is instead a frozen, photograph-like image that preserves a vision (an illusion) of her as a living agent even as the moment foreshadows her coming death of malaria. In the climactic scene in the Coliseum, she is again warned of the dangers of contracting malaria. This time, Daisy makes quite clear her disregard for her own material safety, even as Winterbourne makes quite evident the “mortality, vulnerability, mutability” of her physical body.

Winterbourne had now begun to think simply of the madness, on the ground of exposure and infection, of a frail young creature's lounging away such hours in a nest of malaria. What if she *were* the most plausible of little reprobates? That was not reason for her dying of the *perniciosa*. "How long have you been 'fooling round' here?" he asked with conscious roughness.

Daisy, lovely in the sinister silver radiance, appraised him a moment, roughness and all. "Well, I guess all the evening." She answered with spirit and, he could see even then, with exaggeration. "I never saw anything so quaint."

"I'm afraid," he returned, "you'll not think a bad attack of Roman fever very quaint. This is the way people catch it." (67, italics in original)

Yet, impertinent as always, Daisy ignores him: "'I never was sick, and I don't mean to be! ...I don't care,' she unexpectedly cried out for this, 'whether I have Roman fever or not!'" (67-8). And so, as a result of her carelessness and late-night outings, she contracts malaria and subsequently dies: "A week after this the poor girl died; it had been indeed a terrible case of the *perniciosa*" (70). For James, foreshadowing plays the role of Sontag's posthumous irony: precisely by observing, recording, and reproducing these moments, these slices of past time, in which Daisy is asserting agency, the narration is ensuring that her mortality, a product of "time's relentless melt," is made more apparently imminent, for her agency is what brings about her death. She is a phantom once over because she possesses no form; she is a phantom twice over because she is already dead.

*Daisy Miller* also reads as a *memento mori* because Winterbourne, between the third-person narrator and whom distinctions of identity are often collapsed, is prone to crafting fanciful images of Daisy, images that, as before, "usurp reality" because they contain within

themselves a “trace” of the real. Winterbourne is, upon arriving in Rome, “annoyed at hearing of a state of affairs so little in harmony with the image that had lately flitted in and out of his own meditations, the image of a very pretty girl looking out of an old Roman window and asking herself urgently when Mr. Winterbourne would arrive”; he is annoyed because the image that for him has usurped reality has been proven an illusion (James, *DM* 36). These pictures, however, filtered through his consciousness, are often the only ways in which Daisy emerges in the text. Even events that initially appear to be unfolding moment-by-moment are instead made relative to his past encounters with her and to the images he has already created. While in Rome, Winterbourne meets her again, seeing that

Daisy moved at her ease over the great mounds of ruin that are embanked with mossy marble and paved with monumental inscriptions. It seemed to him he had never known Rome so lovely as just then. He looked off at the enchanting harmony of line and colour that remotely encircles the city—he inhaled the softly humid odours and felt the freshness of the year and the antiquity of the place reaffirm themselves in deep interfusion. It struck him also that Daisy had never showed to the eye for so utterly charming; but this had been his conviction on every occasion of their meeting. (63)

Though Rome itself is described in rich sensorial detail, Daisy is again made an image—amidst all possible sense organs, she is, always, “never show[ing] to the *eye* for so utterly charming” (emphasis mine). The mixing of tenses (Daisy “moved” but the great mounds of ruin “are”) is what lends this passage its seeming immediacy—but it is an immediacy that is then contextualized in the habitualized past, by “every occasion of their meeting.” For a novella that presents Daisy through a series of images, this contextualization is important: these images

function remarkably similarly to what Sontag describes as photographic memories. She explains, “Photographs that everyone recognizes are now a constituent part of what a society chooses to think about, or declares that it has chosen to think about. It calls these ideas ‘memories,’ and that is, over the long run, a fiction” (Sontag, *RPO*, 85). Winterbourne’s images of Daisy, as they are “so little in harmony” with the actuality of the situation, are just such fictions, though of a personal rather than societal nature; herein lies the problem. It “is not that people remember through photographs,” Sontag writes, “but that they remember only the photographs. This remembering through photographs eclipses other forms of understanding, and remembering. . . . To remember is, more and more, not to recall a story but to be able to call up a picture” (*OP* 89). Thus the whole of *Daisy Miller* can be read as something akin to one of Sontag’s memory-photographs, a *memento mori* Winterbourne has made of Daisy: she is always an image, in both his memory and his experience of her in the present, and an image that is often fictionalized. If Winterbourne and the narrator cannot be trusted to relay an accurate depiction, then what emerges of Daisy is a half-remembered picture divorced from what had once been material reality; she is twice made a phantom through her death, the images Winterbourne makes of her, and the ephemerality of her presence in the text. What *Daisy Miller* remembers of Daisy Miller is the image produced by Winterbourne’s minds’ eye, his autonomous vision.

Though the images of Daisy that Winterbourne crafts might be relatively stable fictions, the conclusions drawn from these fictions are far from stable precisely because the images themselves occlude the corporeal reality of the situation. Despite photographic images’ ability to usurp reality, in part through their ostensible “status” as “found objects” and “unpremeditated slices of the world,” as Sontag writes, “All that photography’s program of

realism actually implies is the belief that reality is hidden. And, being hidden, is something to be unveiled. Whatever the camera records is a disclosure” (69, 121). Yet, “Strictly speaking, one never understands anything from a photograph. ...the camera’s rendering of reality must always hide more than it discloses,” making null the photographic image’s evidentiary value (23). One example in *Daisy Miller* of these elisions of the camera, as a function of the camera’s ability to record, can be seen in the way that Daisy is made a collection of parts with no ensemble: as Winterbourne discloses her individual features, her overall collective identity is lost. But this example is not the only one present in the novella. One of the main concerns of the text is whether or not Daisy is engaged romantically to or sexually with the Italian man Giovanelli. Suggestions of her impropriety are manifold: Winterbourne sees, for example, in Daisy’s courier “an insinuation that she ‘picked up’ acquaintances” (James, *DM* 16). Mrs. Walker tells him that Daisy has been doing

Everything that’s not done here. Flirting with any man she can pick up; sitting in corners with mysterious Italians; dancing all the evening with the same partners; receiving visits at eleven o’clock at night. ...I’m told that at their hotel every one’s talking about her and that a smile goes round among the servants when a gentleman comes and asks for Miss Miller. (49)

All the same, Winterbourne never obtains any concrete incriminating evidence. When he finally spies them together and alone, at a distance, his sight is both unobstructed and obfuscated:

The western sun in the opposite sky sent out a brilliant shaft through a couple of cloud-bars; whereupon the gallant Giovanelli took her parasol out of her hands and opened it. She came a little nearer and he held the parasol over her; then,

still holding it, he let it so rest on her shoulder that both of their heads were hidden from Winterbourne. (51)

He sees, in essence, everything that they are doing, in great detail, except for that which occurs behind the screen of the parasol. Whether they are kissing, embracing one another, or merely leaning closer to one another to talk, he cannot know. Ultimately, the meaning he makes of this scene, and of any scene involving the two, is drawn not from vision itself, but from that which is beyond sight—his assumptions, which, to return to Crary, have “no necessary link to a referent” (Crary 91). Winterbourne, unlike the governess, is not experiencing an autonomous vision of the literal eye, but rather, an autonomous vision of the meaning he sees in the image of Daisy and Giovanelli together. Thus, at times,

He set her down as hopelessly childish and shallow, as such mere giddiness and ignorance incarnate as was powerless either to heed or to suffer. Then at other moments he couldn't doubt that she carried about in her elegant and irresponsible little organism a defiant, passionate, perfectly observant consciousness of the impression she produced. He asked himself whether the defiance would come from the consciousness of innocence or from her being essentially a young person of the reckless class. (James, *DM* 62)

Two almost diametrically opposed meanings exist simultaneously in the same vision: Daisy as innocent of the world and as self-consciously defiant of it. The actuality of the situation, whether or not she is truly involved with Giovanelli, in any manner, is inconsequential: Winterbourne's visions of meaning are not referentially grounded precisely because they are photograph-like, hiding, as Sontag suggests, more than they disclose. When Winterbourne sees the most, he rather, in fact, sees the least.

The optics of *Daisy Miller* reach their apex, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the climactic scene in the Coliseum, which is cast under very peculiar conditions that I will take care to describe in detail. “Above was a moon half-developed, whose radiance was not brilliant but veiled in a thin cloud-curtain that seemed to diffuse and equalize it”; the very basis of the scene is hazy, “veiled” visibility (65). Entering the Coliseum, Winterbourne sees that “One half of the gigantic circus was in deep shade while the other slept in the luminous dusk,” and feels that “The air of other ages surrounded one; but the air of other ages, coldly analysed, was not better than a villainous miasma,” a miasma, that is, that will poison Daisy with malaria and eventually kill her (65-6). Despite this haze,

Winterbourne sought, however, toward the middle of the arena, a further reach of vision, intending the next moment a hasty retreat. The great cross in the centre was almost obscured; only as he drew near did he make it out distinctly.

He thus also distinguished two persons stationed on the low steps that formed its base. One of these was a woman seated; her companion hovered before her. (66)

In emerging from the “cavernous shadows of the great structure,” Winterbourne is confronted thus with a hazy scene in which his vision is frustrated and “almost obscured” (65). The two figures, though “distinguished,” are likewise obscured, as they occupy the base of the indistinct cross. Winterbourne is specifically described as seeking “a further reach of vision,” to extend his visual plane beyond that the boundaries that confine it; these two persons are only figured within this extended “reach.” But the visual reach is a failure: only after hearing Daisy’s voice does he recognize her after “the sound of the woman’s voice came to him distinctly in the warm night-air. ... These words were winged with their accent, so that they fluttered and settled about him in the darkness like vague white doves. It was Miss Daisy Miller who had released

them for flight” (66). It is the aural quality of the figures that comes “to him distinctly,” and by which he identifies the two persons as Daisy and Giovanelli. His sight, his vision, is truly compromised: his visual field is so obscured that it bears little trace of a true referent, and he supplements it with an aural field. Winterbourne’s sight becomes unambiguously autonomous, and as such his “reach” of vision allows him to come to what he believe will be his final conclusion about Daisy—to identify, he imagines, the true referent to which his vision of her corresponds.

It was as if a sudden clearance had taken place in the ambiguity of the poor girl’s appearances and the whole riddle of her contradictions had grown easy to read. She was a young lady about the *shades* of whose perversity a foolish puzzled gentleman need no longer trouble his head or his heart. That once questionable quantity *had* no shades—it was a mere black little blot. (66, emphasis in original)

She is irredeemable, perverse and sexually involved with Giovanelli, he concludes, if in language as obscured as his vision of her. Sontag writes, “To photograph,” to pin down and capture an ephemeral image, to make an object “surreal,” as Winterbourne has made Daisy supernatural, “means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and therefore, like power” (*OP* 4). Winterbourne seeks to see her so that he might know, and thus control her. In his fervor to know, however—to craft in image of Daisy, to feel powerful—he neglects his own relationship to the visual field. “He stood there looking at her, looking at her companion too, and not reflecting that though he saw them vaguely he himself must have been more brightly presented” (66). He is not hidden by the “cavernous shadows” of the Coliseum in the same manner as Daisy and Giovanelli—he is, in actuality, silhouetted in

the “luminous dusk.” As such Daisy needs no aural cues: she sees him and exclaims, “Why it was Mr. Winterbourne! He saw me and he cuts me dead!”; she is in fact privy to the unobscured visual field that Winterbourne had originally sought with his “reach of vision” (66). She is in the position of knowledge, of power, and so she asserts her agency—she refuses to be given a curfew either by the impropriety of her nighttime stroll alone with Giovanelli or by the risk of contracting malaria.

Here is where James may be read as a critique of Sontag. Through the photograph, Sontag argues,

Reality as such is redefined—as an item for exhibition, as a record for scrutiny, as a target for surveillance. The photographic exploration and duplication of the world fragments continuities and feeds the pieces into an interminable dossier, thereby providing possibilities of control that could not even be dreamed of under the earlier system of recording information: writing. (*OP* 156)

James’ critique concerns not the effects of “photographic exploration and duplication” that Sontag posits, but rather the assertion that these effects are unique to, and derived from, photography. James, in *Daisy Miller*, has articulated exactly the control that Sontag, writing some century after the publication of the novella, denies to the printed word. This redefinition of reality occurs not with the creation and popularization of photography, but with the shift to Crary’s modern observer, which implicates both James and photography. Thus Daisy and Winterbourne, in the Coliseum, see one another as objects of exhibition, scrutiny, and of surveillance. The difference between the two characters is twofold: first, that Daisy is actually in the privileged position that Winterbourne assumes himself to occupy, and second, that it is Winterbourne who attempts, unsuccessfully, to wield power over Daisy, and not vice versa: it

is after she calls out to him that he warns her against “dying of the *pernicosa*,” telling her to go home and leave Giovanelli, to which she replies, “I don’t care... whether I have Roman fever or not!” (James, *DM* 67-8). It is the natural world (through malaria), not Winterbourne, that will eventually exact revenge upon Daisy for staying out too late in the company of an Italian: Winterbourne is powerless when faced with her lack of concern, for either catching malaria or for being thought of as a “mere black little blot” of perversity.

As phantom, then, Daisy is caught between Winterbourne’s phantasmagoric, memorial vision of her, through which she is transmitted both to Winterbourne and to the reading audience of *Daisy Miller*, and her existence as a person inextricably tied to a physical body—a tie that, while allowing her the agency to do what she likes in life, ultimately fails her in death.

### III. Possession

My use of *The Turn of the Screw* diverges here slightly from the pattern of explication established thus far; while the novella is, in fact, a ghost story, James is never so blunt as to state outright that either the children or the governess are possessed in a literal manner by the spirits of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. Rather, there is insinuation. The governess tells Mrs. Grose, after her first sighting of Miss Jessel, that “the woman’s a horror of horrors,” to which Mrs. Grose responds, “Tell me how you know.” “Know?” the governess replies, “By seeing her! By the way she looked.”

‘At you, do you mean – so wickedly?’

‘Dear me, no – I could have borne that. She never gave me a glance. She only fixed the child.’

Mrs. Grose tried to see it. ‘Fixed her?’

‘Ah with such awful eyes! ... With a determination – indescribably. With a kind of fury of intention. ... To get hold of her.’ (James, *TS* 46)

Here, in the “fixing” of Flora, is the moment in *The Turn of the Screw* that most closely resembles literal possession. While Miss Jessel’s desire to “get hold of her” may be read as a desire to take over the mind and body of the girl, what the governess sees Miss Jessel actually doing, the “fixing,” is accomplished through sight—through staring. All the governess’ knowledge of Miss Jessel (and her horrors) results directly from the visual image of the ghost woman—but, importantly, the governess’ looks are not reciprocated. For Miss Jessel’s gaze, through its disregard for the governess, makes the governess a spectator of the encounter rather than a participant. The governess is neither subject nor object in the encounter, but rather a

third party—an audience. And it is this spectatorship which will begin to possess the governess' thoughts and mind, particularly when she is not actively spectating. She is driven by her inability to control either the ghosts or her charges; though, as Sontag writes, “One can't possess reality, one can possess (and be possessed by) images” (Sontag, *OP* 163).

The governess, then, becomes possessed by her spectatorship, or rather, the later lack thereof—she becomes increasingly preoccupied with these spirits precisely because she does not see them. She asks the reader, “How can I retrace to-day the strange steps of my obsession? There were times of our being together when I would have been ready to swear that, literally, in my presence, but with my direct sense of it closed, they [Miles and Flora] had visitors who were known and were welcome,” who were ghosts hidden from her senses (James, *TS* 75). Sight is means by which the spirits are confirmed, not merely by the strength of her convictions, and through its obfuscation the governess becomes, by her own admission, obsessed.

And this obsession is not confined to the governess herself—even though Mrs. Grose does not see the ghosts, the governess does manage to convince her (for a time) that the ghosts are extant and mean to do harm to the children, and to persuade her “beyond doubt that I had seen exactly what I had seen” (49). The governess successfully persuades Mrs. Grose, as mentioned before, by naming a laundry list of physical characteristics which create “a portrait on the exhibition of which” Mrs. Grose “instantly recognize[s] and name[s] them” (49). Though Mrs. Grose is not a direct spectator of the spirits, she becomes one through the circulation of the ghosts' portraits, even if this circulation is verbal rather than directly visual. The foreboding images of the dead servants come to possess her imagination as well. Possession, as a kind of spectral presence, can be both simultaneously an individual experience and a complex social interaction, both of which require spectatorship. The possessing images

become, in other words, more than the sum of their visual parts, and come to influence and represent people, events, and attitudes far beyond their original scope. Less obvious examples of possession, better suited to examine these subtleties, may be found in other works of James', most notably his short story "The Real Thing" (1892) and his novel *The Ambassadors* (1903).

### Possessed Bodies: "The Real Thing"

Just as *Daisy Miller*'s phantoms resonate with the writings of Susan Sontag, so too does the possession in "The Real Thing" present a curious prefiguration of the dynamics of visual culture sketched by Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites over a century later in their 2007 text *No Caption Needed*. "The Real Thing" tells the story of an unnamed artist who, unexpectedly, finds himself the employer of two financially fallen models—gentlefolk who, facing hard times, solicit him to use them for his illustrations so that they might make ends meet. Upon their arrival, immediately after the illustrator realizes that these "sitters," Major and Mrs Monarch, have come for their own employment rather than his, he feels "disappointed; for in the pictorial sense I had immediately *seen* them. I had seized their type – I had already settled what I would do with it," how he would fashion images of the monarchs as themselves (James, *RT* 205). His seeing, moreover, is not merely an artistic, pictorial sight: it is also narrative in its quality. The narrator notes that "It was odd how quickly I was sure of everything that concerned them," and continues to describe the furnishings of times past he imagines they once possessed. He sees "the sunny drawing-rooms, sprinkled with periodicals she didn't read, in which Mrs Monarch had continuously sat"—sees her habitualized behaviors; likewise "I could see the wet shrubberies in which she had walked, equipped to

admiration for either exercise. I could see the rich covers the Major had helped to shoot and the wonderful garments in which, late a night, he repaired to the smoking room to talk about them”; the narrator, in short, conjures images of the material furnishings of their lives and the subsequent behaviors situated about these corporeal objects (208). These visions thus transgress the limits of mere sight—they are the imagined histories of the lives of the Monarchs, communicated, the illustrator claims, by “their faces, the blankness, the deep intellectual repose of the twenty years of country-house visiting that had given them pleasant intonations”—history, for the narrator, is inscribed in their bodies (208). The distinctions between material object and behavior and between corporeal body and history have begun to collapse. The distinction between image and narrative has also begun to collapse, imbuing the former with the latter: the drawing-rooms, shrubberies, and smoking rooms all serve to articulate the Monarch’s habitual lives before their fall from wealth, to tell the story of their more grand past. The narrator’s imaginative visions are thus at once single, discrete moments and representative icons of vast swathes of time and place, of “twenty years of country-house visiting” distilled into captured images. Moreover, these images are writ into the physical expressions of the Monarchs’ faces, which serve as material evidence, the illustrator claims, of this splendid history.

Yet these controlling images, initially attractive to the illustrator, ultimately become the reason why he finds the Monarchs useless as models. When he first begins to have them sit for him, the illustrator sees that “They looked so well everywhere; they gratified the general relish for stature, complexion, and ‘form.’ They knew it without fatuity or vulgarity, and they respected themselves in consequence” (209). Their form, effortlessly achieved, might initially seem to place them at odds with Daisy Miller, the formless phantom, guaranteeing their

immunity from spectral presence—but this is not the case: rather, the Monarchs represent a different kind, one that is best articulated as possession rather than as a phantasm. They, the illustrator believes, are possessed by their narrative, unable to escape its grasp; thus they cannot model anything but themselves, their own narrative, which is permanently evident in their very countenance—to record their image is, for the narrator, to also record their lives. They are ultimately useless for an illustrator whose livelihood depends upon both his and his models' ability to present a diverse array of images for commercial publication. The Monarchs, rather, lend themselves quite well to a different medium. While sketching Mrs Monarch, the illustrator explains that

I could see she had been photographed often, but somehow the very habit that made her good for that purpose unfitted her for mine. At first I was extremely pleased with her ladylike air, and it was a satisfaction, on coming to follow her lines, to see how good they were and how far they could lead the pencil. But after a little skirmishing I began to find her too insurmountably stiff; do what I would with it my drawing looked like a photograph or a copy of a photograph. Her figure had no variety of expression – she herself had no sense of variety. ...She was always a lady certainly, and into the bargain was always the same lady. She was the real thing, but always the same thing. (214)

Herein reveals itself the intrusion of the photographic image onto the non-photographic process, insidious in its ability to jump out of the photograph (and the photographic process) and into larger world—the ability of the photograph to possess both individuals and media. Mrs. Monarch's forms are beautiful, "ladylike," but restricted in their utility, and impart unto the drawn image the quality of the photograph, namely the appearance of being "something

directly stenciled off the real,” or here, the “real thing,” to return briefly to Sontag (*OP* 154). She is effortlessly reproducible by the illustrator’s pens and brushes, but this reproducibility comes at the price of her flexibility as a model: the illustrator can only see Mrs Monarch as Mrs Monarch, rather than as the fantastic characters she tries to represent. As such, Mrs Monarch is “stiff,”—in the eyes of the illustrator, only able to model herself, her image even encouraging the him to “follow her lines” rather than those textual lines of the book which he is to illustrate. She is possessed of one, and only one narrative. She is herself an iconic image.

“Iconic image” is a phrase I borrow from Hariman and Lucaites, and it is the one which most accurately describes the Monarchs and their place in the visual culture of “The Real Thing.” Hariman and Lucaites explain that “iconic [photographic] images are ...capable of both generating the accompanying narrative” about themselves “and cancelling its contradictions and distortions. They are chosen for reproduction because they are iconic, and their placement there continues the process of circulation through which they acquire their distinctive status” (51). Essentially, the iconic photographic image is one that, like Mrs Monarch, is possessed by narrative, and will communicate only that narrative by virtue of its inability to communicate anything else. Furthermore, this singular narrative quality of iconic images is what makes the reproduction of these photographs attractive—their meaning, their form, is more or less assured. I do not think the comparison between these photographs and the Monarchs hard to discern: simply put, the Monarch’s inexorable nobility at once “generates” narratives (of nobility) and “cancels” the narratives (of fantasy) of the illustrations the narrator seeks to draw forth during the time they sit for him. Their “stiff” image ultimately leads the illustrator to refuse to reproduce the Monarchs’ image—rather than reproduce, in a mechanical

fashion, the same picture over and over again, he ceases to work with them, choosing instead the more suitable Miss Churm and Oronte.

I do not mean to suggest that the illustrator is himself opposed to reproductions in general, for rather the opposite is true. He calls his fondness for reproduction a “perversity – an innate preference for the represented subject over the real one: the defect of the real one was so apt to be a lack of representation. I liked things that appeared; then one was sure. Whether they *were* or not was a subordinate and almost always profitless question” (James, *RT* 209). This inclination towards reproduction is similar the one that Benjamin will articulate clearly a few decades later—the “bent” of the masses “toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction” (Benjamin 223). The narrator of *The Real Thing* is operating under this Benjaminian mechanics of visibility, wherein the simulacrum is preferable to the referent. The Monarchs themselves, though they are iconic images, are absent just such a referent, for their image is of relative wealth and class, and while they possess the latter, their loss of the former has made them, objectively, very much not the people the illustrator imagines. They no longer have access to the “country-house visiting” that their image reflects, and thus, they are themselves, like Daisy Miller, images that have subsumed their supposedly referent bodies. The reason, then, why the illustrator abandons the Monarchs, is one of capitalist economics: only after his publisher expresses distaste for the illustrations of Major and Mrs Monarch, threatening the illustrator’s future job security, does he finally turn them out.

The problem for the Monarchs, ultimately, is that they are iconic images attempting to circulate in a non-photographic medium where iconicity is not a feature but a fault, and where

their very ability to do the work of modeling depends upon changeability rather than upon the ability to self-perpetuate the same narrative; as models for the narrator, their job is to provide an endless supply of illustrative characters for literary narratives, a feat which the decidedly un-iconic (and working-class) models Miss Churm and Oronte prove much more capable of accomplishing. Had their job been to produce iconic images, both the illustrator and the Monarchs would have found great success.

The Monarchs do, after all, have a prolific history of being photographed. “We’ve been photographed – *immensely*,” says Mrs. Monarch to the illustrator;

‘She means the fellows have asked us themselves,’ added the Major.

‘I see – because you’re so good-looking.’

‘I don’t know what they thought, but they were always after us.’

‘We always got our photographs for nothing,’ smiled Mrs Monarch. (James, *RT* 208)

All of these photographs, I argue, constitute the same iconic image of these gentlefolk, as the iconic image is not necessarily a unique, singular image. Hariman and Lucaites explain that, for iconic photographs, “what is assumed to be a single, transparent image is in fact something closer to an afterimage. There are multiple versions of the ‘original’ involving small alterations in angle or distance, and there always are variant crops and differences in the size of the reproductions”—here, different photographs taken of the Monarchs by the “fellows” (50). If, as for the narrator, the images of the Monarch’s bodies communicate an insidious narrative, then surely these photographs do that same work. Hariman and Lucaites continue: “despite a thousand variations introduced through the reproduction and circulation of these [iconic] images, they remain fixed as if they were a single moment of visual truth,” a single narrative,

“so much so that all the circumstances of their production and initial presentation become merely items for captioning, unstable and ultimately dispensable” (50-1). All the photographs of the Monarchs constitute this singular instance of “visual truth,” which emanates from their very bodies, and likewise, though not specifically photographs, the illustrations of the Monarchs serve this same iconic function, wherein “captions” are replaced by costumes which are equally dispensable.

So the illustrator changes his models in an attempt to find sitters for whom his costumes more effectively disguise material reality. When he finally turns the Monarchs away, he notices that “They had accepted their failure, but they couldn’t accept their fate. They had bowed their heads in bewilderment to the perverse and cruel law of virtue of which the real thing could be so much less precious than the unreal; but they didn’t want to starve” (James, *RT* 223). The narrator’s words again appear to presage Benjamin’s essay, describing the desire for reproductions rather than for the “real thing.” Both “The Real Thing” and Benjamin seem to indicate a division between the “real thing” and the “unreal,” the “object” and its “reproduction.” But James presents a more complicated argument than Benjamin. Though the illustrator indeed presents a binary choice between material reality and fantasy, in James even the material reality is mediated through reproduction. The Monarchs are “the real thing,” yet they are “the real thing” because they present the image being so—their days of country-house visiting have long since ceased, and though their fall from wealth prevents them from living the material reality of their image, they present that image precisely because it has been inscribed upon their corporeal bodies. The “real thing” is nowhere to be found in “The Real Thing,” yet it is everywhere, so much so that the illustrator cannot escape its grasp. The choice in James is

not so much between the object and its reproduction, but rather between different layers of reproduction that are more (the “unreal”) or less (the “real thing”) obviously marked as such.

Possessed Minds: *The Ambassadors*

Material reality is similarly constituted through layers of reproduction in *The Ambassadors*. The novel describes the efforts of Louis Lambert Strether, at the request of his wife-to-be Mrs. Newsome, to fetch her son Chad from Paris, bring him home to Woollett, Massachusetts, and discover any illicit relations in which he might be participating in Europe. Strether is perhaps, of all James’ protagonists, most given to illusion: the second page describes how “He was burdened, poor Strether – it had better be confessed at the outset – with the oddity of a double consciousness. There was detachment in his zeal and curiosity in his indifference” (James, *TA* 22). He is set apart from the other people, places, and things of the novel, and is instead situated as a medium, sent (literally) to preside over Chad and serve as a lens through which Mrs. Newsome might observe his goings-on. Strether is, in a figurative sense, Mrs. Newsome’s eyes—her “ambassador”—though the manner in which he sees can again be related to the mechanics of vision Crary outlines. But he is a poor pair of eyes, at least in terms of unmediated vision—he is given to “short gusts of speculation – sudden flights of fancy” and “recognize[s] the truth that wherever one paused in Paris the imagination reacted before one could stop it” (81, 88). Visiting the sculptor Gloriani, he even describes an “assault of images ...almost formidable” in which he experiences a sensation “of a great convent... of names in the air, of ghosts at the windows, of signs and tokens, a whole range of expression, all about him,” a wholly fictitious narrative, generated by the sight of his surroundings (161). So

he is ineffective—though he believes that “One thing was certain” in his dealings with Chad, that “he mustn’t dispossess himself of the faculty of seeing things as they were,” this is the one task at which he so frequently fails (103). He instead is constantly filtering information, judging his mental simulacra rather than any “objective” reality.

Even Strether himself is cloaked in reproductions: the physical description of him given in the novel is mediated through several different, distinct characters before it reveals itself to the reader, such that reproductions are substituted for his actual appearance. Upon meeting Maria Gostrey, the narrator of the novel describes that “what his hostess saw, what she might have taken in with a vision kindly adjusted, was the lean, the slightly loose figure of a man of the middle height and something more perhaps than the middle,” a description followed by a number of others (24). This passage is far from a direct catalogue of Strether’s appearance: instead, filtered once through James and once through the novel’s narrator, is Maria’s sight, but a sight that has already been “kindly adjusted” in Strether’s favor. In short, even the eyes most directly linked to material reality are occluded rather than unobstructed. The referent—Strether’s body—is elided, and the reproduced image has subsumed its referent.

His own sight is similarly occluded—though it is occluded by visual media rather than by kind intention. Dining with Maria “at his hotel, face to face over a small table on which the lighted candles had rose-coloured shades,” Strether sees his environment, including Maria herself, as “so many touches in he scarce knew what positive high picture” (55-6). Framed images—here, painterly—are one of the most basic ways Strether has of interpreting the world about him. Looking at Maria’s necklace, he asks himself, “What was it but an uncontrolled perception that his friend’s velvet band somehow added, in her appearance, to the value of every other item – to that of her smile and of the way she carried her head, to that of her

complexion, of her lips, her teeth, her eyes, her hair?” (56). Such a list of Maria’s “items” almost exactly mirrors the list Winterbourne makes of Daisy, down to the syntax—recall how Winterbourne records “her complexion, her nose, her ears, her teeth” (James, *DM* 9). The difference here, however, is that while Winterbourne is recording Daisy, making her an image, Strether is merely observing the different “items” of a reality which has already been atomized and made opaque: Maria was already part of a “positive high picture,” a picture Strether believes he has already seen and largely forgotten. He is reading spectral presence rather than creating it.

A similar circumstance arises at the climax of the novel—Strether, during a trip to the French countryside, feels as if he has himself entered into a painting he saw long ago. It is during this painterly episode that he witnesses Chad and Madame de Vionnet together upon the water, and upon later reflection realizes that this scene constitutes evidence of the less virtuous aspects of the relationship between the two. Strether visits the French countryside to see “that French ruralism, with its cool special green, into which he had hitherto looked only through the little oblong window of the picture-frame,” in a painting by Lambinet (410).

...The poplars and willows, the reeds and river... fell into a composition, full of felicity, within them; the sky was silver and turquoise and varnish; the village on the left was white and the church on the right was grey; it was all there, in short – it was what he wanted: it was Tremont Street, it was France, it was Lambinet. Moreover, he was walking freely about in it. (411)

As with the Monarchs, distinctions between otherwise differentiated categories begin to collapse: the materiality of the scene becomes varnish on canvas, distinct geographic places become one, and moreover temporality is upset—his encounter with the Lambinet in Tremont

Street is far removed from his countryside excursion, yet somehow exists simultaneously with the present. The external world has become, in short, an image, and an image which is not easily left: during the entire afternoon he “had meanwhile not once overstepped the oblong gilt frame.” (415). And the picture begins to expand into other forms of art as well: the day had been “at bottom the spell of the picture . . . essentially more than anything else a scene and a stage, that the very air of the play was in the rustle of the willows,” fallen into composition, “and the tone of the sky,” silver and turquoise with paint (416).

I set up this exposition about his countryside visit in service of my argument that this scene—in Book Eleventh, chapters III and IV—constitutes Strether’s engagement with an iconic image, and an iconic image that is possessed by the narrative of Chad and Madame de Vionnet’s illicit relations. Rather than narrative inscribed in bodies, as with the Monarchs, here narrative is a property of the eye itself, and its interaction with the iconic: Strether, in a sense, is uniquely prone to the reading of an otherwise ordinary image as iconic. That Strether’s vision is painterly rather than photographic is more or less incidental—Hariman and Lucaites’s very definition of the iconic image necessitates that the image be “*reproduced across a range of media, genres, or topics,*” here through painting and theatre, and they concede later that “there is little distinction in actual practice between image content and the materiality of the photographic object”—acknowledging that, essentially, the iconic image need not be an actual, material photograph (Hariman and Lucaites 27, italics in original; 112). Rather, an iconic image is recognized as such because of a number of visual qualities which are common across icons.

One of these qualities is the use of bourgeois artistic conventions. Hariman and Lucaites argue that “iconic photographs acquire rhetorical potential by representing events

according to the conventions of those visual arts and persuasive practices familiar to a public audience. The iconic image is a moment of visual eloquence, but it never is obtained through artistic experimentation. It is an aesthetic achievement made out of thoroughly conventional materials” (30). These materials are, in fact, “generic conventions from the middlebrow arts such as landscape or portrait painting” (29). Strether’s vision draws upon just such conventions, as the image in which he imagines himself walking is that of a landscape painting—though time and geography collapse in the image, its visual qualities are quite conventional. Even Chad and Madame de Vionnet’s entrance upon the scene, before they are recognized, speaks to convention—“What he saw was exactly the right thing,” the two in the boat. “It was suddenly as if these figures, or something like them, had been wanted in the picture, had been wanted more or less all day, and had now drifted into sight, with the slow current, on purpose to fill up the measure” (James, *TA* 418). They are, in the moment, “anonymous figures enacting stock characters,” and this anonymity also plays into the iconic image’s tendency to offer little evidentiary value of the scene it depicts (Hariman and Lucaites 84). Discussing another iconic image of a wholly distinct subject, Hariman and Lucaites describe the image as

a model fragment. Featuring anonymous figures in a featureless scene that could be occurring anywhere... it would not seem to qualify as an event at all. But it does qualify, because the photo’s fragmentation carries with it a shift in the basic definition of an event: an event is no longer an action that comes at a dramatic moment in a sequence of purposive actions; instead, it is an experiential moment having heightened intensity independent of any larger plot. (178)

Hariman and Lucaites' assertion strongly recalls Sontag, particularly in her suggestions that "Reality is summed up in an array of casual fragments" and that "Our very sense of situation is now articulated by the camera's interventions," where "time consists of interesting events, events worth photographing" (Sontag, *OP* 80, 11). Though not photographic, Strether's vision plays into this argument that suggests that events are now products of image—his painterly and theatrical frames marking "the work as a special selection of reality that acquires greater intensity than the flow of experience before and after it" (Hariman and Lucaites 31).

Strether discovers the intimacy of Chad and Madame de Vionnet through the spectation of this special selection, not during his participation in it. Though he recognizes the two almost immediately, he only discerns the reason why they are together after he returns to his room and reflects upon the events of the day. Only then "He was, at that point of vantage, in full possession, to make of it all what he could. He kept making of it that there had been simply a *lie* in the charming affair – a lie on which one could now, detached and deliberate, perfectly put one's finger;" during the day itself, inside the image, he remained unaware that "It was with the lie that they had eaten and drunk and talked and laughed" after the two disembarked and dined with him (James, *TA* 423). The image only gains its iconic, narrative power after the event has ceased, and Strether is no longer a participant in the image itself—only once he assumes the status of a spectator does he read the image, and in so reading discover the intimacy of Chad and Madame de Vionnet's relationship. He is experiencing "iconic memories [which] are intensified depictions of the past and rich resources for living in the present... Ultimately, [iconic images] function as evidence of things unseen, referring not just to what has past but to what always is outside of our given frame of perception," the object outside Strether's perception being primarily what exactly Chad and Madame de Vionnet *do* together

when they are alone (Hariman and Lucaites 92). In reading the iconic image, rather than participating in it, Strether comes to his realization—vision comes to possess narrative through its interpretation, through the filters of the eye and the mind rather than through unmediated perception. And these filters uniquely belong to Strether—they represent his own memories and visual experiences. After all, “personal understanding is always embedded” in the reading of iconic images, and it is “normative, and capable of determining subsequent action” (Hariman and Lucaites 11).

Possession, then, is a product of both corporeal bodies and the visual, of the transmission of images through individual consciousness (through the filters, the “eyes” of the spectator). As with the Monarchs, narrative possession may be written on the body, but the act of mediation is what truly catalyzes the formation of an iconic subject—the illustrator of “The Real Thing” crafts the Monarch’s history through reading their past on their faces, and discovers their iconicity by reproducing their image, filtering their bodies through his brushes into visual media. These icons have no necessary referential link to material reality beyond their generation in the spectating eye—the Monarchs are poor, Strether never sees the illicit aspects of the liaisons between Chad and Madame de Vionnet—yet they serve as evidentiary and narrative forces that shape the events of both stories. Iconic images are, I argue, critical to the understanding of spectral presence as the interplay between visual image and corporeal body, and evidence the continuity in visual culture across both generic and chronologic divides. They illustrate exactly how “one can possess (and be possessed by) images” (Sontag, *OP* 163).

#### IV. Conclusion: Spectral Genesis

*The Golden Bowl* presents one of the few occasions in which actual photographs exist as both physical objects and plot points in James' work. Late in the text, after it is apparent that Maggie knows of the affair between her husband, Prince Amerigo, and her father Adam's young wife, Charlotte, she reveals to her confidante Fanny Assingham exactly how she came to know, without doubt, that the Prince and Charlotte were engaging in illicit relations. Having met the dealer at whose shop Charlotte had almost purchased the golden bowl (and having purchased the bowl herself), Maggie finds him at her house, where he comments upon a pair of photographs featuring Charlotte and the Prince. In this "most extraordinary incident of all," he remarks that "those were persons he knew, and that, more wonderful still, he had made acquaintance with them, years before, precisely over the same article," the bowl (James, *GB* 462). Upon hearing this comment, Maggie realizes that Charlotte and the Prince know each other much more intimately than she had thought, and this realization sets in motion the events that will lead to the breaking of the bowl. The photograph, here, is a catalyst.

But this catalyst is, ultimately, completely beside the point. Fanny sees that "Maggie herself saw the truth, and that was really, while they remained there together, enough for Mrs Assingham's relation to it. There was a force in the Princess's mere manner about it that made the detail of what she knew a matter of minor importance" (422). This statement is made, in fact, before even Fanny herself has confirmation of Maggie's knowledge, and well before Maggie explains to her the photographic incident. The knowledge itself is crucial, but the means by which it is attained, and even what exactly is constituted by such knowledge, is irrelevant. All that matters is that "Maggie herself [sees] the truth." Actual photographs are, in

*The Golden Bowl*, of little importance, a quirk of the plot. As I have stated before, actual photographs in James' texts are relatively insignificant; the ways they point to the visual more broadly, however—here is where the most fascinating, crucial elements lurk.

Indeed, what I find most compelling about *The Golden Bowl* is not the photographs, nor the time leading up to Maggie's recognition of Amerigo's affair, nor the scene in which it is broken, nor even the bowl itself. Rather I find the "falling" action after the bowl is shattered to be the most captivating, for after the shards have been collected off the ground Charlotte begins to fade away. Presaged by a marked increase in the number of occult references, she starts to appear less and less a corporeal body, and more and more a spectral one, held captive by Maggie's manipulation of the illusion from which she and the Prince had so often benefited before. What Maggie witnesses in the final chapters of the novel, or perhaps more accurately what Maggie sets in motion, is the genesis of spectral presence. This is not to say that the entirety of the book beforehand is devoid of spectral presence, but rather to argue that its mechanics are made most clear after the bowl is broken, in a culmination of the supernatural, the visual, and the corporeal.

In fact, before Fanny destroys the bowl, *The Golden Bowl* much resembles *The Ambassadors*: the affair between the Prince and Charlotte is cloaked in layers of illusion, hidden behind a screen of social order. Because Maggie had been attached to her father, and her father to her, Charlotte and the Prince were free to move about with one another relatively free of their respective *sposi*, and without attracting too much attention for their strange predilection to be seen always together. When the Prince and Charlotte remain at a party after Maggie departs, the collective understanding that "They were staying on together alone" is a conclusion drawn from the idea that "it was alone that Maggie had driven away," to be with

her father, who, “as usual,” had not “managed to come” (184). The arrangement appears organic, and thus completely free from the manipulations of either Charlotte or the Prince; to that extent, Charlotte tells Fanny that “. . .it belongs to my situation that I’m, by no merit of my own, just fixed—fixed as fast as a pin stuck, up to its head, in a cushion. I’m placed—I can’t imagine anyone *more* placed. There I *am!*” (187). Fanny, well aware of the romantic history that Amerigo and Charlotte share, remains undeceived by her explanation, but she is prevented from speaking by the otherwise feasible explanation Charlotte gives. ““To-night, for instance,”” at the party, Charlotte continues, ““has been practically an arrangement. She [Maggie] likes him [Adam] best alone. And it’s the way,’ said our young woman, ‘in which he best likes *her*. It’s what I mean therefore by being “placed”. And the great thing is, as they say, to “know” one’s place. Doesn’t it strike you,’ she wound up, ‘as rather placing the Prince too?’” (189). Her hypothetical question reveals the extent of the illusion: even had she desired to do so, Fanny could not prove Charlotte and Amerigo’s relationship was otherwise improper, as the most visible explanation proves satisfactory—the two are thrown together by chance, or so the illusion holds. “What had happened, in short, was that Charlotte and he had, by a single turn of the wrist of fate. . . . been placed face to face in a freedom that partook, extraordinarily, of ideal perfection, since the magic web had spun itself without their toil, almost without their touch” (218). Their relationship, like that of Chad and Madame de Vionnet, appears virtuous. Yet when they linger too long together at a party at Matcham, Maggie starts to question the nature of their connection.

She begins to investigate this illusion by crafting another image of her own. While the Prince and Charlotte loiter at Matcham, Maggie decides “to do something, just then and there, which would strike Amerigo as unusual, and this even though her departure from custom,”

from what he might usually expect, “had merely consisted in her so arranging that he wouldn’t find her, as he would definitely expect to do, in Eaton Square” (303). She rather plans to have Amerigo, upon his arrival at Fawns, confront an “impression of her rather pointedly, or at least all impatiently and independently, awaiting him,” a plan she executes “with an infinite sense of intention. Her watching by his fireside for her husband’s return from an absence might superficially have presented itself as the most natural act in the word, and the only one, into the bargain, on which he would positively have reckoned” (303-4). Maggie, ingeniously, utilizes social convention to provoke a reaction from the Prince; though an unusual behavior for Maggie specifically, the “natural” character of the image she crafts disguises her performance as such. And she is correct in her calculations—Amerigo is startled when he returns, expecting the manner in which he and Maggie are “placed” to keep her rather occupied with her father and her son. Though he quickly regains his composure, “back and back it kept coming to her that the blankness he showed her before he was able to *see* might, should she choose to insist on it, have a meaning—have, as who should say, an historic value—beyond the importance of the momentary expressions in general” (309). In short, his quickly regained composure suggests to her, in conjunction with his surprise, that something is not quite right, that he has something to conceal; it intimates that, as Adam will suggest later, “there’s something haunting—as if it were a bit uncanny—in such a consciousness of our general comfort and privilege” (366).

Yet the Ververs are not the only characters haunted in *The Golden Bowl*: Charlotte too finds herself in the company of the supernatural. Charlotte is, perhaps, predisposed to the transparency with which she is afflicted after the bowl shatters. Moments before their affair begins in earnest, when Amerigo glances out a window to see her approaching in the rain, he

witnesses “Charlotte Stant,” who, “turning up for him at the very climax of his special inner vision, was an apparition charged with a congruity at which he stared almost as if it had been a violence” (216). After the bowl is broken, and the secret is revealed—the secret not of the affair itself, but of Maggie’s knowledge of it—Charlotte’s possession begins in earnest. Maggie wonders “*how* Amerigo, in snatched opportunities of conference, put the haunted creature off with false explanations,” but is nevertheless confident that “He hasn’t let her know that I know—and, clearly, doesn’t mean to” (465, 454). He will instead maintain the illusion of Maggie’s ignorance, and in so doing will coax Charlotte further down the path that they had been walking before: the two will continue to remain apart, so far as Charlotte knows, to ward off any suspicion of illicit relations. Maggie, confiding in Fanny, explains that

as she’s quite unable to arrive at the knowledge by herself, she has no idea how much I’m really in possession. She believes... and so far as her own conviction goes, she *knows*, that I’m not in possession of anything. And that, somehow, for my own help seems to me immense. (454, italics in original)

So immense, that is, that Charlotte will accompany Adam on his return to America, leaving the Prince behind, to maintain the illusion that she does not know has been revealed. But the most interesting aspect of these lines, I believe, lies in the language—Charlotte, previously an apparition of unpretentious beauty, is now a “haunted creature” unaware of the extent to which Maggie is “in possession” not only of knowledge, but also in possession of the coming narrative that will do her so much harm. Charlotte will herself become possessed in the following chapters, and no less a phantom than Daisy Miller; through the visual, she will be cast aside. The image that Maggie began to craft on Amerigo and Charlotte’s return from Matcham is about to be brought down upon her with full force, but never in a manner which

seems less natural than Amerigo returning to see “his wife in her own drawing-room at the hour when she would most properly be there” (309).

Charlotte, to her credit, is not wholly unaware of Maggie’s machinations, and Maggie, during one evening, finds herself fleeing Charlotte in the hopes of avoiding a confrontation. Maggie believes “Charlotte had designs upon her of a nature best known to herself, and was only waiting for the better opportunity of their finding themselves less companioned,” and so she spends the better part of one night evading Charlotte while Fanny, the Prince, and Adam play cards in the smoking-room. But Maggie’s fears are ungrounded, as Charlotte is already becoming ghostly, losing her capacity for agency. Approaching Maggie, “Charlotte... appeared now to define herself vaguely in the distance; of this, after an instant, the Princess was sure, though the darkness was thick, for the projected clearness of the smoking-room windows had presently contributed its help” (474). The scene—a beautiful woman, wandering alone outside dark house, illuminated by the faint light emanating from the windows—is befitting of a ghost story. Furthermore, this figuration calls to mind the climactic moment of *Daisy Miller*: though the optics are not here as defined as in the Coliseum, there is both a figure obscured by darkness (Maggie, by virtue of her relative distance from the windows), controlling the situation, and a figure made visible in silhouette (Charlotte, next to the windows) who believes herself to be still “in possession,” as it were, of the event. Of course, Maggie is not the phantom in the encounter, as was Daisy—that designation belongs to Charlotte—but this inversion does not lessen the impact of the scene. Rather, it indicates that Maggie has achieved what Winterbourne could not—which is to say she has, in this moment, finally realized the position in which she herself is “placed,” and the extent to which this grants her power. She will maintain the agency she has on the terrace throughout the remainder of the novel, unlike

Daisy, who dies shortly after her agential moment, and will manage to pass along a sort of death to Charlotte.

This death surfaces shortly thereafter. Having denied to Charlotte that night any knowledge of Charlotte having wronged her, Maggie sees her plan come to full fruition when Adam suggests he return to America, with Charlotte in tow. “*There* was his idea, the clearness of which for an instant almost dazzled her. It was a blur of light, in the midst of which she saw Charlotte like some object marked, by contrast, in blackness, saw her waver in the field of vision, saw her removed, transported, doomed” (496, italics in original). A new sort of physical “placement” catalyzes Charlotte’s disappearance from the image, which becomes so bright so as to wash her out entirely—as if the light silhouetting her on the terrace had suddenly become so strong so as to engulf her completely. The visual plane has consumed Charlotte, and what it leaves behind is phantom possessed by a narrative from which she cannot escape, lest she expose the entire vision as an illusion and reveal the affair outright.

Again, the language of the supernatural is here quite fitting beyond even its suggestion of Charlotte’s “doom.” Maggie will think to herself later about her confrontation with Charlotte in explicitly supernatural terms: she “lived over again the minutes in question—had found herself repeatedly doing so” and marveled at “the degree” to which “the whole evening hung together, to her after-sense, as a thing appointed by some occult power” (501). Charlotte is indeed becoming a phantom, and everything is so perfectly placed that, as Charlotte before had been so indebted to “a single turn of the wrist of fate,” so too does Maggie see a new kind of “magic web... [spinning] itself without” her “toil, almost without” her “touch” (218). The inversion of power is complete, and Maggie is in complete control of the seemingly natural

image; she has mastered the “occult use... of the machinery of diversion,” diverting Charlotte’s gaze to the illusory narrative image (452).

Interestingly enough, in the process of manipulating Charlotte, Maggie herself moves into the realm of the spectral. Maggie wanders the house, observing Charlotte, and “under such imaginations, Maggie thus circled and lingered—quite as if she were, materially, following her unseen, counting every step she helplessly wasted, noting every hindrance that brought her to a pause” (505). She “materially” tails Charlotte, but her corporeal presence is restricted to the realm of the imaginary—“as if she were” physically following Charlotte, rather than literally. Through her ascent into the image—her imagination—she gains the ability to stalk Charlotte, but to stalk her outside the realm of the visual, as an unseen observer. (This figuration of the two also presents an inversion of their previous arrangement, before Maggie sees Charlotte “doomed,” in which Maggie imagines Charlotte hunting her.) This passage also presages Benjamin’s assertion that “Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction” (Benjamin 223). By moving into the image, Maggie brings a reproduction of Charlotte (Charlotte’s imagined form) closer to herself so that she might both observe and possess Charlotte in body and mind.

For during this imaginative encounter, Maggie seemingly starts to inhabit Charlotte’s body: having “so circled and hovered, [Maggie’s attention] found itself arrested for certain passages during which she absolutely looked with Charlotte’s grave eyes,” in a cumulative amalgam of both vision and the physical eye (James, *GB* 505). The image and the body are here so entangled that one cannot be extricated from the other; Maggie’s method of manipulation is to use one to access the other. As with Strether, the play of vision and body begins to break down the boundaries between otherwise separate entities: here, Maggie and

Charlotte inhabit the same plane, though not as equals. Maggie is in possession—and Charlotte is her possessed.

Spectral presence in *The Golden Bowl*, and in James' work in general, is thus a double-edged sword. To play with an image, as did Charlotte and Amerigo, brings about the possibility of both bliss and ruin: they are perfectly situated until a more deft hand begins to turn their very image against them. Yet to opt out of the visual is not an option: even those who do not directly, intentionally engage the image, such as Miles, Flora, and the Monarchs, are ultimately also held captive. The Monarchs are left destitute and without employment; Miles is left dead. Daisy, who skirts along at the edges of vision, is both subject to and immune from the effects of Spectral presence—but she too ends up dead, of a bodily disease contracted at the very moment she finally subverts Winterbourne's gaze.

And spectral presence has a remarkable tenacity: if, as Crary argues, the shift to the “physiological optics” of the eye, which underwrites spectral presence, occurred in the mid nineteenth century, then spectral presence has had some kind of hold upon the western world for at least the last century and a half. And this hold is not transitory: from Crary's stereoscopes in the 1850s, to James, writing around the *fin de siècle*, to Benjamin in the 1930s, Sontag in the 1970s, and Hariman and Lucaites in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the basic principles of the visual realm have remained remarkably stable and resistant to change, both across history and media. Spectral presence seems not to be a thing that can be waited out, or outlived—as part of the very condition of modern vision, it is here to stay.

But the tenacity of spectral presence does not mean that the only stance to be taken towards it is one of defeat—though many of James' characters find themselves either miserable or dead, they are all ultimately relegated to their fate because they either do not engage with

the visual or engage it with little tact or skill. Maggie is the one exception: she outmaneuvers every other character in the novel and finds herself content at the conclusion of *The Golden Bowl*. Maggie, then, can serve as the guide under whose instructions modernity may be navigated: she reveals at least one method by which the visual, the corporeal, and the modern may be mastered. Through her deft manipulation of illusion, she makes clear that one of the keys to modernity is visual literacy, and that this literacy both arises from the body and is inextricable from it—the two are coextant. Maggie demonstrates how the reproduction of an illusion is the key to breaking free from it: to create and control a phantom, it is necessary to become a phantom; to possess an image it is necessary to first be possessed. Ultimately Maggie reveals that spectral presence is always in a state of nascence—that through its own reproduction the modern regime of visual culture has retained its power, an endless parade of bodies and specters emerging from and retreating to the shadows, moving towards the future.

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