Henry James Today

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Edited by

John Carlos Rowe

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Scot McGehee's and David Siegel's film, *What Maisie Knew*, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival on September 7, 2012, made me wonder once again what drives popular fascination with Henry James's fiction in our postmodern condition. Set in contemporary New York City, rather than James's turn-of-the-century London, the film is surprisingly faithful to the novel. The directors seem to be suggesting that Henry James still has much to teach us about children, bad parents, divorce, and social relations. Scholars of James have responded to the numerous film, theatrical, and operatic adaptations of his works with enthusiasm for the very idea that his writings remain interesting and relevant. Of course, I count myself in their company. I love Henry James and have spent much of my scholarly career reading, teaching, and writing about his works, but I also understand that they are aesthetically and intellectually difficult, lack "action" if not plot, deal with the wealthy classes, and depend on subtle psychological ambiguities many readers miss completely. "What?! Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond had an adulterous affair in *The Portrait of a Lady*? Isabel Archer's step-daughter, Pansy, is really Madame Merle's *daughter*? When did that happen? I *missed it*!" Or better yet, "Prince Amerigo was in love with Charlotte Stant, his wife's best friend, before Charlotte married Maggie's father and became Amerigo's mother-in-law? And now you're telling me Amerigo couldn't control himself and had an adulterous affair with Charlotte after he married Maggie?"

So it goes for the distracted reader of Henry James these days. Did your smartphone vibrate in your pocket? Your friend tweet you from Starbuck's? Telemarketer catch you unawares with a new mortgage offer? You missed it, the whole shebang, the significant event that turns everything else around in Henry James. Bellegardes break off their daughter Claire's engagement to the rich American, Christopher Newman, in *The American*? Alert the media! Bellegardes are cold-blooded murderers! Cold shoulder in Mrs. Walker's salon in Rome? Daisy Miller is dead! Wink, a nod, and a sleepover in Venice between Kate Croy and Merton Densher in *The Wings of the Dove*; their best friend, Milly Theale, is history! Bad lecture by Verena Tarrant in *The Bostonians*? That

Southern gentleman, Basil Ransom, arrives on his white horse to carry her away to southern hell.

Much as we dislike how scandal appears in Henry James, perhaps it is just such secrecy we also *love*. James anticipates our contemporary world in which celebrity depends not only on glossy appearances but vile depths, riddled with scandal. How happily distressed we are to learn that that fabulously rich, young, beautiful, generous Milly Theale is in fact being cheated on and by her two best friends. What *Schadenfreude* we experience when the radical chic Princess Casamassima must bear responsibility for young, pathetic Hyacinth killing himself, rather than assassinating the Duke. As the one-percenters grow ever more distant from us in earning and political power, how satisfying it is to witness their destructive urges, whether it is Michael Jackson's drug-riddled nights or Adam Verver's cheating wife. Yes, James appeals to us the ways contemporary soaps and *telenovelas* draw us, not so differently from those romance writers of James's own period, "the mad tribe of scribbling women" his mentor Hawthorne and James himself so envied.

At the same time, James lures us with big ideas, *metaphysical* thoughts in the heads of well-dressed men and women, who can recognize a vintage Lafite and have read Milton and Schopenhauer. James has "cultivation" far beyond what Donald Trump can imagine, Michael Jordan score, and it may well be this seventh sense of his characters for which we yearn nostalgically. In *The Wings of the Dove*, Lord Mark can show Bronzino's *Lucrezia Panciatichi* to the young Milly Theale in the gallery of his ancestral estate, and she can respond promptly and complexly: "She's dead, dead, dead!" Bronzino's Italian Renaissance mannerist style is indeed cold and angular, and the poor Lucrezia must have been trapped by her Catholic, aristocratic, patriarchal circumstances. Above all, Milly rejects Lord Mark's subtle pass at her. All in four words. However terrible the scandals they must someday face, whatever the desperation James's characters must endure, they are the original multi-taskers in the complex meanings that revolve in every sentence.

Our teachers tell us that we keep reading Shakespeare because he is the master of the English language, penning more memorable lines than even the couplet-loving Alexander Pope. We think we should love Henry James for his prose style, but how many lines do we actually remember? "Then, there we are!" or "his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped" or "The house of fiction has not one window, but a million"? No, it is not the lines by James we remember, not his notable style, early or middle or late; it is James's *cultivation*, an aesthetic sensibility that no inherited title, no

accumulated wealth, no diligent study can ever quite afford us. “We work in the dark, we give what we can, the rest is the madness of art.”

The Jamesian aura of cultivation encompasses more than wealth, possessions, and good taste. The cosmopolitans in his fiction are often deeply flawed characters, who lack the moral sensibility that is so invaluable and can never be bought. Christopher Newman in *The American* and Adam Verver in *The Golden Bowl* are both fabulously rich and yet still desire cultural sophistication. Both try to buy it either in the form of specific art objects – the copies of masterpieces in the Louvre Newman commissions Noémie Nioche to paint for him; the rare tiles Adam Verver buys from a collector to add to his vast museum in American City – or what today we call “trophy wives.” Claire de Cintré appeals to Newman not so much for her beauty as for her family’s heritage, and Charlotte Stant dazzles Adam Verver with her combination of sexual vitality and European education. Charlotte always seems to *know* what Adam has only read about. What is “it,” the *je ne c’est pas* quality of cultivation that James manages to convey so well when Christina Light, the Princess Casamassima, enters the room, or when Madame Merle first plays Chopin for Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady*?

“It” is art, of course, which the other characters do not possess. And art is also a capacity to imagine others, comprehend their situations, *listen* to them, and respond to their needs. This talent, sometimes genius, appeals to us, because we wish to emulate it. The lure for the reader in James’s fiction is that such imaginative power can be learned as a consequence of the otherwise idle pastime of simply *reading*. Few of James’s characters possess such aesthetic sensibility and fewer still can sustain it. Madame Merle turns out to be a fraud, hiding her secrets behind a grand veneer of sophistication; Isabel never quite discovers her own power, even if it shows itself at key moments in the novel and may well be what she’s pursuing at the end. Henry James is the only figure who really possesses this artistic power and its complement, historical consciousness, so it is his figure in the carpet we try to decipher as we read his works, emulating his comprehensive vision of the world.

Is Henry James thus a universal genius, like Shakespeare, whom we pursue vainly down the corridors of history because he eludes us, “gives the rule while remaining above that rule,” as Kant defined genius? The essays in this volume do not attempt to answer that venerable question, but instead take up how and why James continues to attract our attention in an era and in places that seem so utterly different from his own. Of course, one of the reasons James interests us has to do with the complex times in which he lived and wrote. Whether we consider James as heir to the

romantic tradition of his immediate predecessors, like Hawthorne and Stowe, or as one of the major realists of the late nineteenth century or still again as an influential modernist, we know he confronted numerous changes in the prevailing aesthetic styles and social values of his times. In an age dominated by the British Empire, James both criticized political imperialism while contributing to what we recognize today as cultural imperialism. Achieving success as a literary professional, he was a prosperous member of the middle class that would displace hereditary aristocracy in both wealth and political power. Yet James is profoundly critical of bourgeois values and the measure of value in purely economic terms. Witness to the rise of American power at home and abroad, James nonetheless would give up his U.S. citizenship in the last years of his life in order to support his adopted nation in Britain's role in World War I. Having lived in Italy, France, and England, James was a cosmopolitan and early example of the modern expatriate, but he devoted much of his literary attention to the future of American democracy. Although James often condemned new technologies such as mass media, typewriters, telegraphs, and automobiles, he used them all both as conveniences and as subjects in his fiction. Publicly critical of the iconoclasm of homosexual activists like Oscar Wilde and John Addington Symonds, James was himself homosexual.

Few great intellectuals and artists of his generation could have claimed more contradictions and fewer still used them to produce such a diverse and large body of work. The Jamesian *oeuvre* is in its own right a commentary on the emergence of modern society. Critical of modernity's excesses and aberrations, James was also committed to the promise of greater social equality and justice. To be sure, his egalitarian views are often clouded by his reversion to popular prejudices. He expresses anti-semitic, racist, and sexist views in many works, but he also represents Miriam Rooth, the Jewish protagonist of *The Tragic Muse* (1890), as one of his few successful artists. He capitalized on the popularity of the liberated women of his era by stereotyping them as the morally suspect Daisy Miller or the politically correct lesbian, Olive Chancellor in *The Bostonians* (1886). Yet James's continuing popularity has much to do with his creation of psychologically complex feminine characters, like Isabel Archer in *Portrait of a Lady* (1880), the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), the nameless telegraphist in *In the Cage* (1898), Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), and Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl* (1904). Naïve in his overt comments on race, James nevertheless offers in *The American Scene* (1907) a profound criticism of

how Southern provincialism created a white society of self-delusion to avoid confronting the immorality of slavery.

James's uncanny ability to represent the transitional age as well as his own conflicted attitudes to social change help explain his enduring relevance. Equally important is his talent for posing key questions for the reader to answer. Are Peter Quint and Miss Jessel *real* ghosts or phantoms of the Governess' mind in *The Turn of the Screw*? Is Maggie Verver taking vengeance on her best friend, Charlotte, and the Prince for their adulterous affair or simply saving her marriage in *The Golden Bowl*? Is John Marcher a closeted gay man or simply too self-absorbed to acknowledge May Bartram's love in "The Beast in the Jungle"? Just how each reader decides such crucial issues tells us more about that reader than Henry James, although the author's strategic ambiguity remains one of his hallmarks. In our postmodern era, such undecidability between the author and reader, sender and receiver, producer and consumer is part of our daily lives. Did Henry James prepare us for these circumstances, or was Henry James merely responding to a semiotic crisis that begins in modernism and defines postmodernism?

The essays included in this volume are organized to address James's continuing significance from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries. The first five essays focus on James's responses to modernity; the last two essays deal centrally with James's influence on postmodernity. All of the essays treat James's articulation of the relationship between modern and postmodern periods. Read in order, the essays provide a short history of the development of key concepts, social attitudes, and aesthetic styles from emerging to late modernity. Brad Evans understands Art Nouveau's influence on James's style to anticipate modes of association and internet links typical of digital knowledge. Ashley Barnes finds the popularity of late nineteenth-century collage art suggestively represented in the relationship between Bob and Fanny Assingham in *The Golden Bowl*. Both Harilaos Stecopoulos and Harold Hellwig interpret James as a defender of Western culture and thus forerunner of today's cultural imperialists. And Geraldo Cáffaro reads James and his Brazilian contemporary, Machado de Assis, as treating the postmodern phenomenon of the "death of the author" (and the philosophical subject) well before Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida. In the final two essays, the contributors consider the persistence of James's influence today. John Carlos Rowe asks how James continues to influence American novelists struggling to represent national identity in a transnational age. Shawna Ross makes the surprising contention that

James's extraordinary prolixity and involuted prose style have far more in common with digital styles than we might have thought.

This volume began with two panels sponsored by the Henry James Society at the Modern Language Association Convention in Boston in January 2013. As President of the Henry James Society in 2012, it was my responsibility to organize these two sessions. Our guaranteed session was dedicated to "Henry James and the New Media," and another session was proposed in cooperation with the Mark Twain Society on the subject of "Mark Twain and Henry James on Imperialism." I am grateful to Professor James S. Leonard of the Citadel, President of the Mark Twain Society, for his cooperation in organizing and co-chairing the latter session. The essays included in this volume represent the work most relevant to James scholarship delivered in those two sessions. I wish to express my thanks to all the members of the Board of the Henry James Society for their support of our work at the 2012 Modern Language Association, especially Greg Zacharias and Susan M. Griffin.

CHAPTER ONE

RELATING IN HENRY JAMES (THE ARTWORK OF NETWORKS)

BRAD EVANS
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

The topic of this essay falls not far from the mark of Sharon Cameron's *Thinking in Henry James*, which beat a path away from the psychologizing of consciousness in James's fiction by instead externalizing it, insisting that consciousness be "represented spatially as being situated not 'inside' the single self but rather 'outside' 'between' persons."[1] In the chapter that most concerns us here, Cameron points out a contradiction at the heart of James's conception of consciousness. She notes that in the prefaces to the New York edition James put forward an argument for human consciousness as coming from somewhere within his characters and, indeed, from within his own consciousness as the author of his novels. However, this psychologized notion of consciousness was a revision of the more regular portraiture of his characters' consciousnesses as being external to the characters themselves. In the novels and stories, consciousness takes shape in the intersubjective relays and gaps between them and their relations—relations both to other characters and to things, and more complexly to other characters by way of things, as well as by way of the plethora of images and scenes with which they come into contact. Cameron's reading of consciousness in James's fiction is characteristic of phenomenological approaches to James being published at the time. Consciousness, in these accounts, is not the production of a coherent, unified subject, or of a Freudian unconscious; rather, it is assembled, over time, and often belatedly, from experiences linking the self to things external to it.[2] In the prefaces, Cameron sees James revising, unconvincingly, the relentless representation of consciousness in the novels as something taking shape "not in persons [but] rather between them," not below the surface but in relations external to the self. She argues, correctly, that despite what he

wrote in the prefaces, James framed consciousness in the novels in terms similar to those used by his brother William, whose essays on radical empiricism rejected the notion of a consciousness anterior and interior to experience (77). For William, the logic of this externalization led to the thoroughgoing redescription of consciousness in terms of a psychology of experience. Cameron maintains that very much like William, Henry was exhilarated in his fiction by the idea of consciousness as something extricated from the duality of mind and body, of subject and object, and shaped instead in the space of the relation.

Bruno Latour makes an argument about society analogous to that of Cameron about Jamesian consciousness, and to the extent that Latour's "actor-network theory" looks to extend phenomenology's disruption of the Cartesian split between subject and object, this similarity should not be a surprise. Both were coming straight out of William James's radical empiricism, for which the idea of the relation was essential.[3] And just as Henry can be read in phenomenological terms, so too is his work amenable to the concerns raised by Latour. Over the last decade, Latour has argued for thinking of society not as a homogeneous matter of fact, but rather as "a trail of associations between heterogeneous elements," not as a "special domain, a specific realm, or a particular sort of thing, but only as a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling."[4] In much the same way that, in Cameron, Jamesian consciousness is "disseminated," and that thinking is "interactive, fleeting, and ultimately interpenetrated" (77, 59), the social in Latour takes shape in the process of "mediation," "translation" and "association" (128-132). James might have found the particular word "networks" unartful; but it is only to the credit of our comparison that Latour discredits the word as well, favoring instead the more descriptive language of an inveterate Jamesian, describing networks as "flows of translations" or "the trace left behind by some moving agent"—and, in the end, as "a benchmark of literary quality" (132, 132, 131).[5] Indeed, Latour would seem to imagine his fellow relational sociologists, whom he affectionately refers to as "ANTs" (for their obsessive perseverance, a pun on "actor-network theory"), to be engaged in the authoring of an altogether Jamesian fiction. "Can the materiality of a report on paper, a story, or rather a fiction—there is no need to abstain from a word that is so close to the fabrication of facts—extend the exploration of the social connections a little bit *further*?" he asks, and we might imagine the creator of Strether nodding in agreement (128). Could anything better describe, say, the hero of *The Ambassadors*, and never more so than when Strether finally comes to understand what he saw when seeing Chad and Marie de Vionnet in a rowboat on a river in the French

countryside? Strether only gets himself into relation with their "virtuous attachment" (another relation) by way of going one step further, relating them to a painting, an exquisite little Lambinet, which he had almost bought many years before in his youth, and which he had been thinking about all day during his stroll.[6] The social for Latour, like consciousness for Cameron, is nothing less than Strether's process of tracing those relations.

What is striking, and what I want to focus on in this essay, is the particular resonance that obtains between the language with which both Cameron and Latour describe the all-important matter of the "relation"—language that, I will argue, is provocatively elaborated in James's fiction in ways that signal the beginning of a relational era in modernist aesthetics. Apart from the important work of understanding how the relation can serve as a solution to the subject-object divide, a solution cultivated both by phenomenology and Latour's science studies, the task of simply describing the externalized, temporally bedeviling, between-space of the relation is confoundingly difficult. When in Latour (and as we will see in Henry James), the relation is not only between people but also between things, the description becomes even harder. And yet the metaphorics of the relation have become increasingly important not only in philosophy and sociology, but also in literary criticism for the assessment of Henry James and for reimagining the sociality of the novel. It is thus to the project of describing the language of the relation that my work here is directed.

For let us be clear, *relating* has been the fulcrum for many of the most important pieces of James criticism in the last thirty years, and not only those with phenomenological approaches. This fact has been most especially true among those attending to questions of the social in late James, starting with Leo Bersani's promise to offer a "most resolutely superficial reading of texts . . . [that] would trace the continuous disappearing and reappearing of relations and forms."[7] The peculiarity of the Jamesian relation manifests in the various critical attempts to describe and recontextualize the gaping absences around which so many of James's fictions circle—the figure in the carpet, the beast in the jungle, the crack in the bowl—whether it be, say, in Eve Sedgwick's seminal reading of a queer James in "The Beast in the Closet" (1986) or Robert Pippin's very different account of *Henry James and Modern Moral Life* (1999). For both critics, meaning assembles around the formal gesture of James imbuing "a lack" with content: the "apparent gap of meaning . . . far from being a genuinely empty one . . . is no sooner asserted as a gap than filled to a plenitude" (in Sedgwick); "an equally radical claim about the

intersubjective and unstable nature of subjectivity itself" (in Pippin).[8] J. Hillis Miller's recent deconstructive reading of the indeterminacy of the effect of Caspar Goodwood's kiss of Isabel Archer at the conclusion of *The Portrait of a Lady* also turns to the problem of the gap, the between-space of relation. The problem for Miller is that we never know what the kiss between them helps Isabel decide, or why; we are given, instead "the hiatus, the elision," "the connection, the bridge," "the blank place in the language," "the gap," and "the absence of the verifiable ligatures the reader would need, with a clear conscience, to fill in a blank like that between Caspar's kiss and the knowledge it gives."[9] And for Miller, we find ourselves inhabiting the same blank space as Isabel when deciding the "what" and the "why" of her decision, James having cleverly overdetermined the indeterminacy of the space of our relation not only to Isabel but also to his novel.

The critical energy directed at the relation can be explained by how terribly hard it is to describe a gap in meaning, or a transitive space between two nominal poles. Most often, we turn to giving it a name. How do we represent the connection between two people, between people and things, the subject and the object? Most of our conventional terms are abstractions: love, desire, ethics, art. But what about the metaphorics of the relation itself? My interest in describing it, here, is motivated by the kind of work I associate with Latour, which might be linked more generally to the move currently afoot to reinvigorate the field of literature's sociality by letting go of "contexts" in favor of assembling a more flexible and imaginative notion of historical and cartographic literary relations.[10] If the history of the novel pushed us towards consciousness, might we conjecture that the history of the novel's sociality may be pushing us more fully towards the confounding temporal and spatial complexity of the between-space of the literary relation? Cameron remarks that the interest of understanding consciousness in James came from the place he holds as epitomizing the central concern of analysis of the novel with the representation of psychology, as the author of "the psychological novel par excellence" (1). We could certainly follow this observation with one about the "extreme perspectivalism" of the novels and stories, their most salient stylistic trait, noting as does Peter Brooks that it is "not things and persons and happenings that matter so much as the way they are perceived by a certain consciousness."[11] But as both Cameron and Latour would seem to suggest, there is something to be said for resisting not only consciousness but also set ideas about the social when tracing histories of the novel. What might it look like to settle with the transient externalities of the relation, the art of associating, which in James is a thing no less

curious and even more difficult to describe? How does the language of relating *in* the James novel help us think about relating to it *as* a novel?

The relation in late James is a constant; it becomes visible thematically by being broken and stylistically by being opaque. If the window is the mediating object in James's house of fiction, the window gets cracked in the later James so that we actually perceive ourselves seeing through the glass (instead of just looking through an open frame). We might note that it would seem to be in recognition of something like this general formula that Latour becomes most Jamesian in his descriptive approach to the social. For a network sociologist, Latour is largely uninterested in network visualizations of the kind that have begun to appear in recent literary studies.[12] These would seem to offer an "open window" onto the societal habitus of literature, a neat and clear view of, say, the citation and publication networks linking authors to each other and to their publics. Even if his ANTs initially sharpened their edges on networks in the technical sense (subways, the Internet), Latour has always been interested in eliciting a more literary sense of the ongoing movement of networking, movement which network graphics tend to lock in place. The visualizations to which networks lend themselves can all too easily capture a static image of a network in time, but what Latour is after instead is the evolution of relations over time. The network relation, in Latour's words, "is not made of nylon thread, words or any durable substance but is the trace left behind by some moving agent" (132). So, too, literary relations can move beyond immediate historical contexts, be they publication histories or political ideologies, and I take it that the project of the humanities in its most ambitious formulation is that of tracing new relations to older ones.

The fiction of James's late period is full of the traces of such movement, traces visible because of broken relations. One of the clearest examples is *What Maisie Knew*, which I will suggest in what follows offers a blueprint for the later fiction by using the shattered social relations of a nasty divorce to make visible the relational character of how a little girl comes to know. In Maisie, a novel all about extenuating relations, the issue is made explicit. The sense of relations is doubled in Maisie, for just as she literally functions as a relation between people, she also knows what she knows by the slow process of tracing the connections between things she sees and hears. This process is explained at the start of the novel in terms that are particularly apt for this discussion. From the beginning, Maisie was to be educated in "opposed principles" and "she was to fit them together as she might."[13] Her little world was like a "magic lantern" it was "phantasmagoric—strange shadows dancing on a sheet" (11:9). As time

went on, "she found in her mind a collection of images and echoes to which meanings were attachable . . . like games she wasn't yet big enough to play," and the novel progresses by way of her increasing ability to make the attachments, and especially to relate those attachments to words (11:12). One of the great delights of Maisie comes from the troubling mismatch between what she knows and what we know. What she knows is quite often a delicious surprise for us, both in those moments when what she knows is not as much as what we think she ought to know, but even more so in those moments when she comes out with something in excess of what we know, for example the name of her mother's lover, Lord Eric, or the club where her father spent the night, the Chrysanthemum. We did not know either of these names when she throws them out. Lord Eric and the Chrysanthemum were outside our streams as readers, and for this reason, they send our heads spinning. We feel we ought to know them, but in fact we have no way of knowing them because we have not been told. We are given the answer without having been asked the question, which only produces the delirious sense that there is really so much more that we ought to know, so many more relations that we ought to be able to trace.

Maisie is a novel about social relations, but were we to imagine its author invested in the contemporary moment as a theorist of social networks, he would surely have been more interested in their illusoriness than their promise. James's fiction in today's terms would be interested in the social dysfunction of Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, and Snapchat—the overlaps and silences and misperceptions that, so it would seem, make such ephemeral connections so perversely addicting. An emphasis on consciousness in James misdirects us from what the late James stories and novels are all about: the failure of social relations to apprehend themselves. James's formal experimentation with perspective may center *What Maisie Knew* on the consciousness of the little girl, but the story in the end is that of the failure of her relation to all the adults of the novel. In the same way, his other late fictions are most ostensibly about broken relations: between Lambert Strether and his new friends in Paris, between Millie Theale and Merton Densher, between Maggie Verver and Prince Amerigo, and between John Marcher and May Bartram. As a metaphor for the relation, nothing is quite as apt as the crack in the golden bowl, and as critics we have delighted in describing the broken relations that crack signifies. If we are to reconsider the history of the sociality of the novel, then the fractured and fractal character of so many of these relations in James's fiction would seem to impress upon us the interest in not losing the feel for the benchmark of literary quality of social networks. Networks need narrative. They are the novel's art, the tracing of relations both subtle

and direct, in and out of context, and with a curiously uneven and asynchronous relation to time. We can think through a theory of networks with James, but, even more, we can turn to him for a description of the impossible-to-describe art of associating.[14]

Relations are the product of movement, and once put in motion, relations have a tendency to multiply over time. This understanding of motion and multiplication over time is suggested in a particularly interesting way by James when he wraps up his 1905 lecture on "The Lesson of Balzac" with something of a variation on the frequently noted theme of the preface to *Roderick Hudson*: "[r]eally, universally, relations stop nowhere" (1:vii). To sum up his discussion of Balzac's permanence in the literary imagination, our relation to Balzac being an evolving constant without which the art of fiction could not go on, James ends with the following paradox:

> There is none the less such an odd condition as circulating without motion, and I am not so sure that even in our own way we do move. We do not, at any rate, get away from him; he is behind us, at the worst, when he is not before, and I feel that any course about the country we explore is ever best held by keeping him, through the trees of the forest, in sight. So far as we do move, we move round him; every road comes back to him; he sits there, in spite of us, so massively, for orientation.[15]

It is interesting that James puts Balzac's influence in such relational terms; the description would almost seem to suggest what the sociologists Duncan Watts and Steven Strogatz call the "collective dynamics of 'small world' networks," as if Balzac were a hub in a heavily clustered network, his presence there part of a dynamic system enabling "enhanced signal-propagation speed, computational power, and synchronizability."[16] So, too, in "The Lesson of Balzac," does James circle around this unfathomable problem of how Balzac, in his "immediate presence causes our ideas, whether about life in general or about the art they have exemplified in particular, to revive and breathe again, to multiply, more or less to swarm," while at the same time Balzac himself remains "fixed by virtue of his weight," marked by an "inaptitude largely to circulate" (116, 138, 139). It is through (and thanks to) Balzac that relations multiply. But as James intuits, the fixed nature of that hub, upon which any network graph would depend, is an illusion. There is no relation without circulation, and there is no circulation that is not moving through time. We cannot produce a graph of Balzac's importance; we can only keep graphing, tracing the

continuous disappearance and reappearance of relations, as they multiply and shift around him, over the course of literary history.

This paradox James identifies with Balzac between the swarming multiplicity of thought over time and the illusion of the fixed image, "the odd condition [of] circulating without motion," brings to mind any number of well-known moments in his fiction, especially in its later phase, where a suddenly glimpsed object gives way to swarms of "connexions"—a word used 23 times in *Maisie* and 42 times in *The Ambassadors*. Lambert Strether offers many of the best examples, as with his belated understanding of Chad and Madame de Vionnet's appearance together in the rowboat, but also, much earlier in *The Ambassadors*, with the many associations he attaches to a velvet neck band worn by Maria Gostrey, which becomes for Strether "a starting-point for fresh backward, fresh forward, fresh lateral flights," for "[a]ll sorts of things [that] in fact now seemed to come over him, comparatively few of which his chronicler can hope for space to mention" (21:51, 52). It is by way of the velvet band that we learn, for example, of the death of Strether's wife and child; but it is less that fact than the Balzacian swarming of "fresh backward, fresh forward, fresh lateral flights" that holds particular interest for the novel as a whole. Joan Richardson, pursuing a similar vein of interest in linking both Henry and William James to contemporary advances in cognitive science, has recently suggested that the "mental space created by this kind of contemplation is not linear but *n*-dimensional, connections radiant, multiple, constellated, superpositioned, a 'sea of spuming thought,' requiring navigation" and that navigating it "is Henry James's singular writing project."[17] Writing along the same lines, Paul Grimstad describes "the ambassador effect," in which "relations are as real as, and external to, their terms."[18] I would agree and go further. The traces left behind by the moving agent of Strether's streaming consciousness as it circulates between Maria's neck band and the memory of his past not only describe the narrative modality of *The Ambassadors*, but also the novel's reason for being. The novel is about Strether relating, about the exponential swarming of relations linking in all of the backward, forward and lateral flights of Strether's attention (and our attention to it). As with Balzac, relations beget more relations, multiplying over time to the n^{th} degree.

The relation is centrally important to any representation of movement in fixed forms, be they network graphs, paintings, or novels. Following Jonathan Crary's insight into the fin-de-siècle transformation of understandings of perception, I would suggest that the relation in this sense was an integral part of the network field most often associated with the disintegrative forces of the modern world, and that it can be found in

everything from William James's radical empiricism, to Henri Bergson's work on the mind, to Eadweard Muybridge's sequential photographs of horses' movements.[19] The resonance between modes of perception and the development of modernist aesthetics is one I want to emphasize, here, by way of an admittedly obscure historical link, a network of largely forgotten proto-modernist little magazines published in the 1890s and known variously as "ephemeral bibelots," "toy magazines," "brownie books" and "fadazines."[20] My excuse for turning to the bibelots is the fact that James published *What Maisie Knew* in the *Chap-Book*, which was by far the most well-known of over 300 such little magazines appearing in the United States. These included not only *The Chap-Book*, but also magazines such as *The Lark* (1895-1896), *M'lle New York* (1895-1896, 1898), and *The Lotus* (1895-1896). Relations in and between these magazines more or less swarmed in the most Balzacian of senses, drawing on an interest in the ethereal aesthetics of movement that was, at the same time, taking shape among the symbolist poets and artists of the shadow theater shows in the cabarets of Montmartre—cabarets so risqué and cutting edge that most Americans seem never to have frequented them, not even those among James's characters who were most in sympathy with Paris (Miss Barrace and Little Bilham, for instance, never get much further than the artist studios of the Latin Quarter). The French literary historian René Taupin remarked in his seminal study of the influence of French symbolism on American modernism that 1895, the year before *Maisie*, marked the apex of American attention to the French symbolists and their progeny, notable by the crush of the "little revolutionary magazines in the style of the French symbolist journals and dedicated for the most part to French propaganda [petites revues revolutionnaires imitées des revues symbolists françaises et consacrés pour la plupart à la propagande francaise]."[21] At about this time, it would seem, any young bohemian traveling through Paris would return home with the idea of starting an ephemeral bibelot of his or her own. James's fictional character, Lambert Strether, would have been part of this group, for what is it that he does in Woollett if not rekindle the lost Parisian years of his youth with his editorship of his little *Review*, with the cover of "the most lovely shade" of art-nouveau green, the best of his "tremendous things," and Mrs. Newsome's "*greatest* fad" (21:100-101). James's model for the *Review*, though unmentioned, must most certainly have been one of the ephemeral bibelots, and perhaps he had something like John Sloane's cover decoration for *Moods* (1894) or Will Bradley's for the *Echo* (1895-1897) in mind when evoking the green of its cover [Figs. 1 & 2].

Fig. 1 John Sloane's cover for *Moods: A Journal Intime*. 1894. Courtesy Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries.

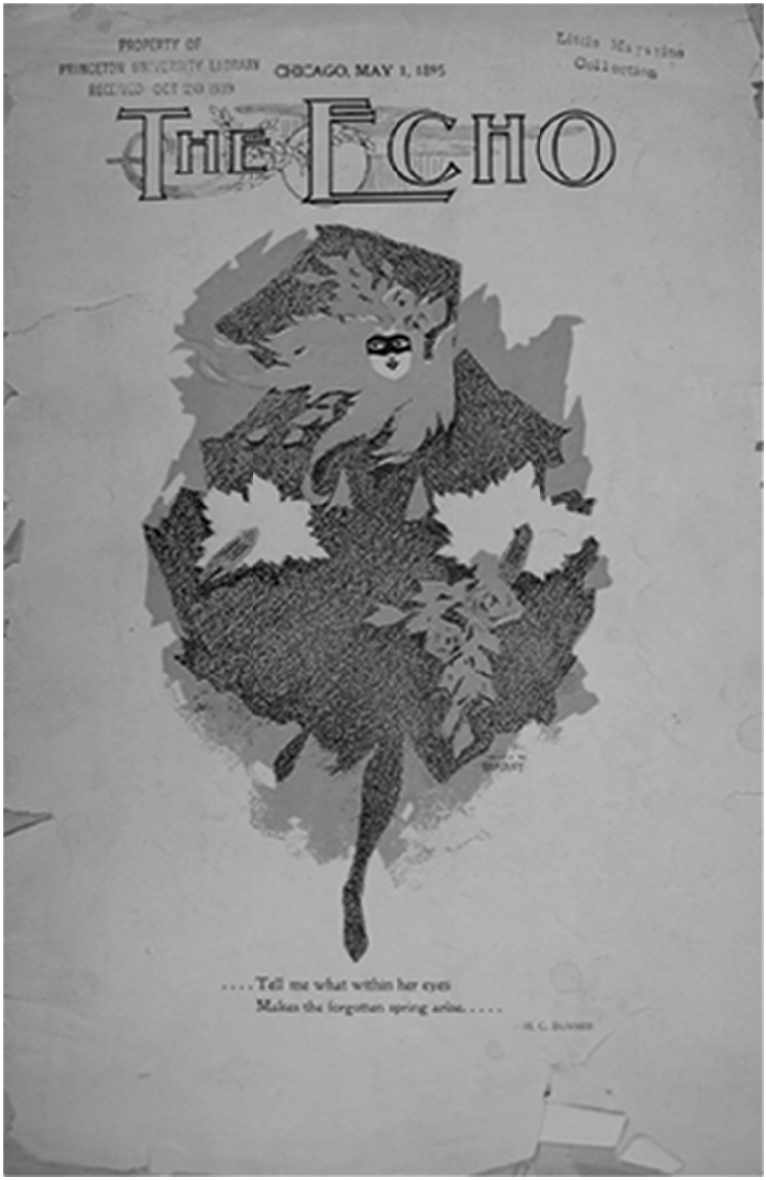

Fig. 2 Will Bradley, cover design for *The Echo*. May 1, 1895. Courtesy Princeton University Library Special Collections.

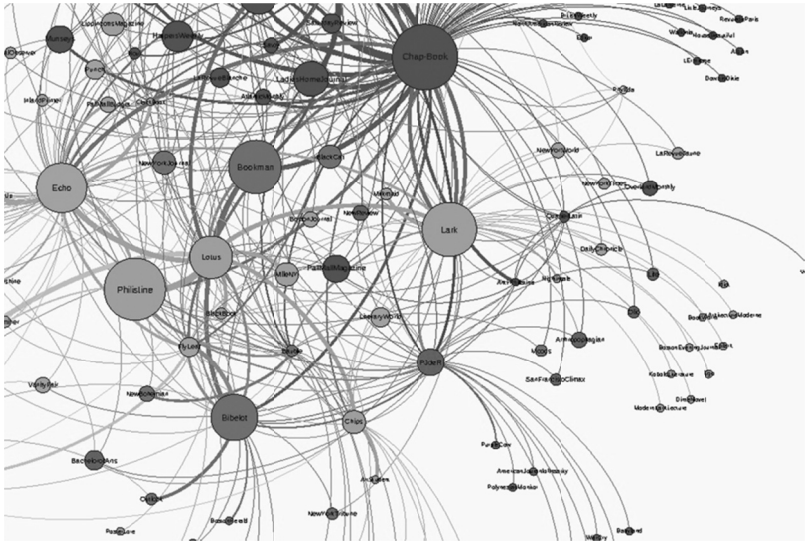

Fig. 3 Detail of a visualization of the citation network of "ephemeral bibelots" from 1895 to 1897, produced by the author.

The fad for the bibelots depended upon the relations developed between them, which came to register as what was "modern" in art (as a reviewer for the German avant-garde magazine, *Pan*, noted, "the *Chap-Book* is turned towards getting its readership *in touch with the most modern creations* of the world").[22] We need an art of networks, an art of associations, to describe the feeling of those relations. Network visualizations are quite useful for representing the swarming multiplication of relations that characterized the fad for these bibelots, but they have a great deal of trouble with the representation of circulation over time. I can produce a picture like the one here [Fig. 3] that tracks the number of times one ephemeral bibelot cited another, and one sees in it the relations swarming to connect with *The Chap-Book*, which was cited more than any other bibelot over the three years of my survey. But the image freezes those relations in time, a snapshot rendering of Latour's "traces of movement." They miss what Richard Hocks, following William James, has called "ambulatory relations," and what Jonathan Levin, following Emerson, refers to as the "poetics of transition" characteristic of the period's engagement with the French symbolists' notion of "correspondences."[23] For this notion of relations, we need a finer and more nuanced art than the network graph, as the bibelots themselves seem to have known.

Fig. 4 Loïe Fuller dancing, ca. 1900, a photograph by Samuel Joshua Beckett that had been in the possession of the sculptor Theodore Rivière. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gilman Collection, Purchase, Mrs. Walter Annenberg and The Annenberg Foundation Gift, 2005. www.metmuseum.org.

The artworks associated with the bibelot network, as suggested by three examples from *The Chap-Book,* can be seen to be grappling with the paradoxical problem of representing "circulation without motion": a series of images of the American dancer, Loïe Fuller, who was enjoying a meteoric stint in the Parisian cabarets with her development of a dance form that put light in motion; the publication of French symbolist poetry by both Verlaine and Stephane Mallarmé; and the serialization of *What Maisie Knew*. In each instance, the paradox of representation swirls around the problem of the artistic rendering of the relation as it multiplies over time. Loïe Fuller's success in the Parisian cabarets in the early 1890s generated a swarm of interest in her work among the American bibelots, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the early numbers of *The Chap-Book* shortly before its publication of *What Maisie Knew*. Fuller is known for the dances she developed at the Folies Bergères, especially the Serpentine Dance and the Fire Dance, in which a central torque of her body sent yards of silk expanding into the periphery, lit from underneath

Fig. 5 Jules Cheret, poster featuring Loïe Fuller at the Folies-Bergère. 1893. Lithograph, printed in color, 48 ½ X 34 ½" (123.2 X 87.6 cm). Acquired by Exchange. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, U.S.A. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY.

Fig. 6 Loïe Fuller, as sketched by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 1892.
Public domain.

by colored lights that produced what would later be known as a strobe light effect [Fig. 4]. Her dance became one of those Balzacian objects around which relations multiplied as she captured the imagination in France of the poster artists Jules Cheret and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec [Figs. 5 & 6]. The problem, and delight, of picturing Fuller comes from her embodiment of the paradox of representing circulation, and as such it is particularly telling that representations of her seem emphatically to stress the between-space of the relation—between Fuller in one instance and Fuller in the next.[24] She is reported to have inspired Mallarmé's famous description of the mystery of the ballet, which he outlines in precisely these terms with talk of the "ellipsis or élan":

> The dancer is not a woman dancing, for the juxtaposed causes that she is not a woman, but a metaphor summarizing one of the elementary aspects of our form . . . suggesting, by the miracle of ellipsis or élan, with a corporeal writing that would necessitate paragraphs of prose in dialogue as well as description to express. . . . [She is] a poem disengaged from all writing apparatus.[25]

The dance scholar Ann Albright clarifies what was so profoundly new about Fuller's dance in these same terms. "For the first time," she writes, "audiences were asked to attend not to the poses at the end of a musical phrase, but rather to the motion between phrases, not to the decorative arrangement of arms and legs, but to the sequence of movement from center to periphery and back again." Rather than a series of "poses linked together by graceful transitions," Fuller's work "used the body sequentially, constantly initiating the movement with her spiraling torso, flowing out through the arms into the wands and fabric, then looping back into the center in order to start the cycle all over again."[26] The serpentine swirls of her dress confused the conventional ways of looking at dance by taking out poses and leaving only movement.

In his illustrations of Fuller for *The Chap-Book*, Bradley develops two different strategies for representing Fuller in motion: he either shows the flow of her dress swirling back on itself [Figs. 7 & 8], or he superimposes one dancer upon the other in a sequence [Fig. 9]. The latter choice resembles something like the famous paintings from the modernist exhibitions of the subsequent decade, most notably Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912), which has been linked to Muybridge but seems equally related to the theatrics of Fuller and the representations of Bradley. It is also like William James's description of the stream of consciousness from the early 1890s, and particularly to his distinction between "'substantive' and 'transitive' states of mind."[27] In much the

Fig. 7 Will Bradley, "The Skirt Dance," published in *The Chap-Book* 2:2 (December 1, 1894), 56. Public domain.

Fig. 8 Will Bradley, "The Serpentine Dance," published in *The Chap-Book* 2:2 (December 1, 1894), 62. Public domain.

same language that Mallarmé uses to describe the ballerina, William James compares the stream of our consciousness to a bird's life with "an alternation of flights and perchings," where the stream is like the flight "filled with thoughts of relations" (159, 160). Bradley's illustrations seem to struggle to come to terms with such relations, to the visual description of the conjunctions between Fuller's poses. They are a visual register of William James's transitive mode, and like James we might say that the images register "a feeling of and, a feeling of but, and a feeling of by, quite as readily as . . . a feeling of blue or a feeling of cold" (162). When James goes on to describe the "feelings of relation" in terms of "psychic overtones, halos, suffusions, or fringes," we might be led to wonder what the stream of consciousness is, after all, if not Bradley's depiction of Fuller's serpentine dance (168).