Jamesian Cultural Anxiety in the East and West

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The Co-Constitutive Nature of the Cosmopolite Spirit

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Henry James International Conference has been organized by regional, national, or international Henry James Societies, and held regularly every three years or on some other regular basis over the 25 years with the venue alternating between the United States and Europe. The European Society of Jamesian Studies launched in 2009 joined the Henry James Society in promoting James studies by "fostering conference meetings in different European institutions" with its emphasis on European setting for the Society's conference. And other commemorating events and meetings took place in Toruń, London, Genoa, Paris, and Cambridge (Massachusetts) between 2013 and 2016.

I used the expression *alternating between the US and Europe* paying attention to the absence of the Asian initiatives for implementing changes in the organizational or geographical configuration of the 'regular' (if you permit me to say) "Henry James International Conference" meetings even though seminars, symposia, and annual /biannual conference meetings on Jamesian studies have been held in various Asian countries such as China, Japan, Turkey, and Korea (the Henry James Society of Korea, for instance, has met biannually in the spring and in the fall for symposium and workshop with different focuses on Henry James between 1993 and 2003, and intermittently since 2004 in conjunction with the meetings of other literary societies in Seoul and other cities).

Identifying the conference locality is important especially when it involves real knowledge combined with a sense of lived experience of a writer in question: it enables us to situate the novelist's empirical relationship in its spatial context. In this sense, the conference location becomes a perspective within which its visible or invisible structure of cultural factors and assumptions configures and embodies conference theme. Given the importance of transatlantic relations for both creative writing and literary criticism of Henry James in the past 'regular' transatlantic meetings, such considerations provided no warrant for Asian locality in terms of the spatial meaning as Jamesian perspective imbued with a desire for making relationship between the location and the conference theme—"a sort of virtue or obligation."

Meanwhile in 2017, the 7th Henry James International Conference was held in Asia, in Seoul, South Korea, perhaps for the first time in its history

of a quarter of a century, followed by the US (New York) in 1993, France (Paris) in 2002, Italy (Venice) in 2005, the US (New Port) in 2008, Italy (Rome) in 2011 and the UK (Aberdeen) in 2014. Such a belated Asian, or rather Korea's initiative was due to the uncertainty about formulating spatial framework in terms of its spatial context that involves a sense of lived experience of Henry James from within Asian perspective.

When I learned that the value of considering overlapping encounters between Western cultures and other Asian forces of modernity asks us to consider how contemporary 'Henry James studies' naturally call for global analyses and responses in terms of *cosmopolite exercise* in the process of understanding the evolution of human consciousness, I have set my first question about *Asian consciousness* of Jamesian matters: how to define Asian consciousness of Jamesian matters in the sense of sharing values of lived experience of Henry James in Asian context without losing a sense of relating to Western scholars in transatlatic and global perspectives.

Prior to the planned date for the conference in 2017, significant research has been done for years to identify Jamesian context of creative works in modern Korean literature. As a result, it became a real momentum in seeking to generate Asian glocal meaning imbued with a sense of lived experience of James as immediate historical context in a Korean novelist's literary mind—a certain intertextual relation *between* the East and West rather than *within* the Euro-American transatlantic tradition—and to address the new consciousness of Asian perspective on Jamesian cultural value as a new conceptual framework for future James studies.

As you can see from the theme of the 7th Henry James International Conference "Jamesian Cultural Anxiety in the East and West," this is the theme of *coexistence* between Eastern and Western cultural values focusing upon different aspects and perspectives of Jamesian cultural anxiety—aiming at reconfiguring cultural geography of James studies in order to newly conceive and relocate it across the spaces of the East and the West—towards a new perspective on transcultural dynamics of Jamesian cultural values.

The volume explores the world that shaped James's work and influenced his legacy through the themes of Jamesian cultural anxiety between and beyond spatio-temporal boundaries. As such, each chapter constructs a mode of reading to map and formulate one's own cultural perspective in various contexts relying on their unique engagement with James's and Jamesian creative acts of writing—the neuroscience of consciousness and aesthetics, autobiographies as accounts of an identity, socio-cultural issues in the story of an artist, editorship and readership of

the complete fiction of Henry James in a global context, Henry James from the Chinese perspective, James studies in translation and its influence in Japan, Jamesian realistic anxiety in a Korean novel about Henry James, and the practices of literariness and cultural context for James's authorship—to generate insights and establish new intercultural understandings. In the process they demonstrate new ways of activating Jamesian legacy that could be called 'distinctively human.'

These are the traces of the contributors' national, social, cultural consciousness that allow the definition of the Jamesian worldview as a *particularly universal* one in a global context and that can be incorporated in the Jamesian philosophy of 'Being a cosmopolite': "There comes a time when one set of customs, wherever it may he found, grows to seem to you about as provincial as another; and then I suppose it may be said of you that you have become a cosmopolite. You have formed the habit of comparing, of looking for points of difference and of resemblance, for present and absent advantages, for the virtues that go with certain defects, and the defects that go with certain virtues. […] the consequence of the cosmopolite spirit is to initiate you into the merits of all peoples" ("Occasional Paris") to validate the co-constitutive nature of the Jamesian perspective of the cosmopolite exercise—"a sort of virtue" or perhaps "obligation"—in different contexts of opposition and contrast.

When engaged in this way, we attach great importance to the co-constitutiveness of different contexts that concerns the proper understanding of the Jamesian aesthetic experience in terms of the cosmopolite exercise. And sure enough, the contributors's diverse viewpoints in which their Jamesian perspective in terms of the co-constitutiveness of different contexts can be largely understood as equivalent to the cosmopolite exercises of the Jamesian aesthetic stance committed to the "sympathetic justice" emphasized by William James.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the chapter authors—Paul B. Armstrong, Donald C. Bellomy, Mirosława Buchholtz, Xianmei Dai, Philip Horne, Choon-Hee Kim, Hitomi Nabae, and Greg W. Zacharias—for kindly agreeing to give invited talks at the 2017 Henry James International Conference in Seoul and for contributing their time and expertise to the development of this book. And my special thanks go to Henry James for giving me permission to use his beautiful graphic image *Henry James* for the book cover.

This book may offer insights into new values in positioning Henry James in global context that lead to potential paths for further research towards a new conceptual framework for 'becoming a cosmopolite' in terms of pragmatizing the co-constitutive nature of the cosmopolite

exercise as well as in terms of building the cosmopolitan mind frame as inclusive morality. In this sense, our book may also be a necessary evolution of interpreting the "consequence of the cosmopolite spirit" by responding to "the cosmopolitan world of Henry James" explicitly highlighted by Adeline R. Tintner for her *The Cosmopolitan World of Henry James: An Intertextual Study*—the world that shaped Henry James's work and influenced his legacy.

Choon-Hee Kim, a cosmopolite
with a very feeling sense of "a sort of virtue or obligation"
within and/or beyond the "sympathetic justice" …

CHAPTER ONE

HENRY JAMES AND NEUROSCIENCE: COGNITIVE UNIVERSALS AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

PAUL B. ARMSTRONG

A Jamesian sentence and an fMRI machine might seem to have little in common other than their technical complexity and the fact that they need an expert to operate them. But both are instruments for registering the workings of consciousness which, if you know how to use them and can appreciate what they can (and cannot) tell you, may be valuable tools for understanding various paradoxes of embodied cognition. Neither provides direct, unmediated access to consciousness, the mind, or the brain. Both offer only an indirect representation of the relationship between our embodied minds and the world. Indirect representations are all we have, however. That is something that a reader of Henry James understands. The vagaries of indirect representation are notoriously integral to the joys and frustrations, the pleasures and instruction, that his works provide. Neuroscientists also know that the life of the mind is unavailable to direct observation. As William James vividly explains, "introspective analysis . . .is in fact like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion, or trying to turn up the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks" (*Principles* 1:244). What it is like to be conscious–what philosophers and cognitive scientists call *qualia*–is not something that introspection can ever catch up with and directly display. As Merleau-Ponty observes, "our reflections take place in the temporal flow that they are attempting to capture" (*Phenomenology* lxxviii), and so, when we begin to reflect, we always find a reservoir of unreflected experience already there whose flickering, obscure immediacy we can never fully elucidate. Brain-scanning technologies seek to bypass the indeterminacies of introspection by disclosing the electrochemical and physiological processes of the brain and the body underlying cognition. But this quest for foundations avoids one

set of problems by creating another inasmuch as the indirectness of these technologies begs the question of how consciousness emerges from the biological processes they disclose.

The recent emergence of the fields of "neuroaesthetics" and cognitive literary studies has called attention to the question of what the different perspectives of science and literature can reveal about the life of the mind and the workings of consciousness. This is not an entirely new question for James studies, given the long history of interest in the relation between his art and his brother William's psychology. The so-called "cognitive turn" has given new momentum to the tradition of exploring the relations between Henry James's understanding of consciousness and the cognitive theories of his period, and this has produced some very interesting work.[1] As Sarah Blackwood rightly observes, however, James's "representations of psychology always both reflected shared ideas about consciousness in his time and transcended those available discourses" (273). James's techniques for representing consciousness emerged out of their historical context–the psychological theories of his time and the formal conventions of the late nineteenth century novel that he took up and transformed–even as his dramatizations of our cognitive processes provide enduring insights into various paradoxes of the life of our embodied minds that neuroscience is still trying to fathom. William James's *Principles of Psychology* still holds up very well and is often cited in the neuroscience literature, and so it should come as no surprise that Henry's depictions of consciousness resonate productively in many ways with the insights of contemporary cognitive science.

My career as a Jamesian began with an oral report in graduate school on Henry James, William James, and phenomenology that became my dissertation and first book, and this has led to a lifetime of work exploring consciousness, the reading process, and problems of interpretation in literary theory and the history of the novel. Like Monsieur Jourdain who was surprised to learn that he had been speaking prose all his life (just as, in recalling this anecdote, Henry told his brother he was amused to learn he had always "unconsciously pragmatised" [*LHJ* 2:83]), so I have recently discovered that I am a cognitive literary critic, and the latest offshoot of my graduate seminar report has been work on neuroscience, phenomenology, and literature. The point of this essay is to reflect about how this work on the neuroscience of consciousness and aesthetics joins up with my lifelong involvement with Henry James.[2]

What can the theory and practice of James's art of fiction reveal about cognitive questions of interest to neuroscience, and (vice versa) what can cognitive science suggest about his techniques and themes as a novelist

fascinated with the vicissitudes of conscious life? One result of this encounter may also be to clarify what the different perspectives of cognitive science and literature can (and cannot) tell us about consciousness and embodied experience, showing how and why we need both science and art to understand the paradoxes, perils, and possibilities of our cognitive lives.

A pressing issue for both cognitive science and literary studies is the problem of cognitive universals and cultural differences. What in our experience as conscious beings is relative to our historical, social context, and what is a universal consequence of our embodied cognitive equipment? The question of what is biological and what is cultural in the life of our species is fundamental to understanding how cultural differences arise and whether they can be mediated. As Merleau-Ponty points out, for our species, "everything is constructed and everything is natural, in the sense that there is no single word or behavior that does not owe something to mere biological being–and, at the same time, there is no word or behavior that does not break free from animal life" (*Phenomenology* 195). Human beings are bio-social hybrids whose knowledge, behavior, and institutions are an inextricable mix of nature and culture.

Contemporary brain-imaging technologies have mapped the anatomy of the cortex with increasing accuracy and have identified a variety of areas that are hard-wired for particular functions that are lost or impaired if they are damaged. Different regions of the rear visual cortex, for example, respond to orientation, motion, and color; the hippocampus plays a key role in memory-formation; the amygdala is linked to emotions involved in "fear and flight" responses, and the structure of the pre-motor cortex correlates sub-section to sub-section with the various body-parts it controls. Although neuroscience has become skeptical of the claim of "universal grammar" that posits a "mental organ" for language, it has also long been known that particular regions of the brain (Broca's and Wernicke's areas) are linked to syntactical and semantic functions that go haywire if they are damaged. Patients with lesions to Broca's area can understand meaning but cannot form coherent sentences (a syntactical disturbance), whereas patients with damage to Wernicke's area formulate fluent, grammatical, but meaningless sentences (a semantic deficiency).

In these and other ways, there are often demonstrable connections between a cognitive function and a specific, genetically fixed structure of the brain, but how a particular cortical area reacts may change as it is used. For example, MIT neuroscientist Nancy Kanwisher has identified an area of the visual cortex dedicated to face recognition–a hard-wired anatomical

feature that, if damaged, can result in *prosopagnosia*, an inability to identify faces (see Kanwisher et al.). One patient with a lesion in this area did not recognize his father at his bedside but immediately identified his voice from the next room. The prolific neurologist Oliver Sacks, himself afflicted with this disability, reports that babies at six months recognize and respond to a broad spectrum of faces, including other species like monkeys, but that the response diminishes over time to kinds of faces to which the infant is not exposed (monkey-faces cease to elicit a response unless this is repeatedly reinforced). As is the case with the visual cortex in general, our face-recognition cells "need experience to develop fully," Sacks notes, and will develop differently according to how they are used: "To a Chinese baby brought up in his own ethnic environment, Caucasian faces may all, relatively speaking, 'look the same,' and vice versa" (41).

Henry James was not a biologist, but he was fascinated by the paradox that everyone in our species has the same cognitive equipment with which we construct disparate, even sometimes incommensurate and irreconcilable worlds. This is the paradox underlying his well-known "international theme" where, in works like *The Ambassadors, The American*, or *The Europeans*, the epistemologies of different communities confront each other with sometimes comic, sometimes tragic consequences. This paradox also informs James's oft-quoted claim in the preface to *The Portrait of a Lady* that "the house of fiction has . . . not one window, but a million–a number of possible windows not to be reckoned, rather," at each of which "stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other," even as "he and his neighbors are watching the same show" (*AN* 46). How our bio-cultural eyes and field-glasses construct multiple perspectives on a shared world is a question that Henry James's fictions and the instrumentalities of neuroscience can shed light on in different, complementary ways. Recognizing and exploring this parallel will not resolve cultural conflicts or ease the anxieties they may provoke; it can, however, help us understand the causes and consequences of our bio-cultural hybridity, and that is useful knowledge.

The term *qualia* is associated with the philosopher Thomas Nagel's memorably titled essay "What is It Like to Be a Bat?" in which he argues that conscious experience–for example, the first-person, lived experience of a sensation like "seeing red"–cannot be adequately explained in the objective terms of science. Nagel's critique is aimed at the program of neuroscientists like Francis Crick who, defiantly proclaiming "you're nothing but a pack of neurons," contends that "the neural correlate of

'seeing red'" is objectively definable (3, 9). "The scientific belief is that our minds–the behavior of our brains–can be explained by the interactions of nerve cells (and other cells) and the molecules associated with them," Crick argues, and so "we may be able to say that you perceive red if and only if certain neurons (and/or molecules) in your head behave in a certain way" (7, 9). This assumption informs much work in "neuroaesthetics," the field pioneered by British neuroscientist Semir Zeki, who purports to explain artistic beauty as a response of the "reward system" in the frontal cortex (see Zeki and Ishizu). His much-watched TedTalk (with more than 20,000 views on YouTube) shows him pointing to a patch of color on an fMRI image where experiences of beautiful art and music intersect and pronouncing that this is the location of beauty in the brain.

There are a number of problems with this claim, among them that aesthetic experiences set in motion far-reaching to-and-fro interactions across the cortex and between the brain and the body that are not localizable in any region of neural anatomy. For my purposes, however, the key question is what fMRI images can and cannot show about consciousness. These striking color images look like snapshots of the brain in action–neurons firing in response to beauty–but this appearance is deceiving. As any neuroscientist will tell you, fMRI technology offers at most an indirect measurement of cortical activity, tracking differences in blood flow to parts of the brain with a considerable temporal lag. Further, Zeki's images here are visualizations–representations of statistical measurements of differential blood-flow averaged across a group of 21 subjects–images that are more like graphs or charts than photos. Crick may be right that we only can have an experience of beauty or anything else if neurons fire, but these images are at most vivid statistical displays; they are not "what it is like" to be conscious of music or visual art.

A closer approximation of neuronal activity may be provided by single-cell measurements of the electrical activity of individual neurons, a more direct and specific technology of measurement than fMRI, but ordinarily not possible in human subjects due to ethical restrictions. Occasionally, however, as with epilepsy patients prior to surgery, it is necessary and permissible to insert probes into the brains of live human subjects and record electrical activity, and interesting experimental findings sometimes result–as in one notorious case in the neuroscience literature where a single neuron was discovered in the face-recognition area of an epilepsy patient that responded exclusively to images of actress Jennifer Aniston and not to pictures of her and her ex-husband Brad Pitt or to other faces or objects (see Quiroga). This is what Crick is looking for–the neuronal activity underlying an experience–but it is not what it is like to be conscious of

Jennifer Aniston.

Hence Nagel's skepticism that first-person experience can be captured by the terms and concepts of the physical sciences. As he argues, "every subjective phenomenon is essentially connected with a single point of view, and it seems inevitable that an objective, physical theory will abandon that point of view" (437). Further, he claims, "even to form a conception of what it is like to be a bat (and a fortiori to know what it is like to be a bat) one must take up the bat's point of view" (442n). Whether humans without sonar echolation can ever do this is perhaps doubtful, but any reader of Henry James will recognize (as Nagel does not) that "point of view" is also a literary term with a long, sometimes controversial history in the theory of the novel. Whether and how a point of view (of a human, if not a bat) can be rendered in a work of fiction so that the reader can imaginatively recreate its lived immediacy is a non-trivial question that has been much debated in narrative theory.

Cognitive literary critics have recently argued that neuroscience has much to learn from literature because of its understanding of phenomena like qualia that defy objective, physical analysis. When David Lodge claims that "literature constitutes a kind of knowledge about consciousness which is complementary to scientific knowledge" (*Consciousness* 16), it is no accident that the example he chooses is a novel by Henry James. After the cognitive scientist in Lodge's novel *Thinks . . .* explains "the problem of consciousness" (that is, "how to give an objective, third-person account of a subjective, first-person phenomenon"), the other lead character who not coincidentally happens to be a creative writer replies: "Oh, but novelists have been doing that for the last two hundred years," and as proof she recites from memory the opening lines of *Wings of the Dove* (*Thinks* 42-43). As Lodge observes, "we read novels like *The Wings of the Dove* because they give us a convincing sense of what the consciousness of people other than ourselves is like" (*Consciousness* 29-30). This accomplishment is not unique to James (the other example Lodge's writer cites is a poem by Andrew Marvell), but James's experiments with point of view are of special cognitive interest because they seek to represent not primarily the "what" of the world but the "how" of its perception by consciousness.[3] This thematization of perception lays bare processes, problems, and paradoxes that are involved whenever literature and other arts attempt to render subjective experience.

James's experiments with perspective and focalization are instructive because the access literature provides to qualia is not as straightforward as Lodge suggests. The artistic representation of experience is not, after all, a matter of simply offering up consciousness for direct inspection or of

immersing us fully and immediately in another world. The "like" in "what it is like" can only be rendered by the "as if" of aesthetic staging (see Iser). When literary works from whatever genre or period attempt to recreate what it is like to be someone other than ourselves, they can only do so by using styles, conventions, and techniques that are not identical to the subjective experience they seek to represent. Cognitive literary critic Terence Cave is certainly correct when he argues that "Literature offers a virtually limitless archive of the ways in which human beings think, how they imagine themselves and their world" (14). To mine this archive, however, requires an appreciation of the aesthetic variability of the "as if" in rendering the cognitive experience of "what it is like" to be conscious.

Hence the paradox of Lodge's example that Henry James renders the consciousness of Kate Croy not immediately and directly but through a recognizable, finely wrought, and notoriously controversial literary style:

> She waited, Kate Croy, for her father to come in, but he kept her unconscionably, and there were moments at which she showed herself, in the glass over the mantel, a face positively pale with the irritation that had brought her to the point of going away without sight of him. It was at this point, however, that she remained; changing her place, moving from the shabby sofa to the armchair upholstered in a glazed cloth that gave at once–she had tried it–the sense of the slippery and of the sticky. (*WD* 1:3)

Even in these two sentences one can recognize James's distinctive manner. Following his well-known method of representing a scene indirectly through the point of view of a "central intelligence" (which is why Lodge chooses this example), James's novel opens by depicting Kate's perceptions and reflections (her sight of herself in the mirror, for example, and her annoyance at her father's delay) and even her tactile sensations (the "slippery, sticky" old sofa). James is sometimes criticized for portraying characters with huge heads and non-existent bodies, but here Kate Croy's consciousness is haptically embodied. Just as visible in this passage as what Kate is thinking and feeling, however, is James's writing (even how he renders the materiality of touch by the rhetorical trick of turning adjectives into nouns ["the slippery and the sticky"]). This is not "stream of consciousness" (whatever that hopelessly vague term signifies) but, rather, a finely balanced structure of phrases and clauses that calls attention to its verbal play. The style itself implies a presence and a perspective other than the character's–giving us a doubled sense of observing Kate from an implied narrator's viewpoint while also inhabiting her interiority. We are there, watching with her, even as we also watch her–and also as we watch James and marvel at his style (or despair, because how can we do all three things at once–an understandable frustration that prompted his

brother William to complain and to admonish Henry just to get on with it and tell us what's happening in the story). "What it is like" to be Kate Croy at this moment in time, as James portrays it in this passage, is a complex product of aesthetic staging.

Lodge credits the invention of *free indirect style* with giving novels extraordinary power to open up inside views into other lives (see 37-57). Not simply natural, immediate, and transparent, however, this technique is a contingent historical construct–a stylistic convention that only emerged through a long history of literary experimentation and that can be deployed in a variety of ways for different purposes.[4] There is an enormous difference, for example, between the biting ironies of Flaubert's free indirect style in *Madame Bovary* and the generous sympathy informing James's depiction of Isabel Archer's consciousness as she sits up all night reflecting on the disappointments of her marriage in the famous Chapter 42 of *Portrait of a Lady*–or the notoriously ambiguous, undecidable detachment of Joyce's rendering of Stephen Dedalus's sensibility in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Literature may have powers to render what it is like to be conscious that the objective measures of science lack, but the "as" of the "as if" still leaves a gap between the recreation of another point of view in art and the immediacy of first-person consciousness. This gap is both disabling and empowering. It prevents literature from ever completely transcending the divide between one consciousness and another, but it also makes it possible for art to stage versions of other lives and to experiment with different ways of doing so.

If the "as" of representation prevents a work of fiction from presenting *qualia* immediately and directly, it also allows a novelist to display and explore various aspects of perceptual experience. One of the ways neuroscience can assist literary theory is by identifying the cognitive processes that a particular narrative technique seeks to represent and recreate. It is not enough to identify the formal features associated with a technique associated with a term like *point of view, stream of consciousness,* or *interior monologue*. Because different novelistic methods for representing consciousness foreground different aspects of human understanding, a particular strategy for depicting the life of the mind will not be fully elucidated until its cognitive implications have been analyzed and explained.[5]

Henry James's characteristic representational strategies are aesthetic instruments for exploring three distinct aspects of perceptual life: how patterns of consistency-building and gap-filling define a particular point of view, how understanding is a temporal process of anticipation and retrospection, and how the relation between consciousnesses is

paradoxically both intersubjective and solipsistic (complementary perspectives on a shared world riven by an unshareable my-own-ness). His distinctive techniques dramatize each of these dimensions of consciousness in ways that are correlated to what cognitive science reveals about the workings of the brain. These techniques are grounded on universal, neurobiologically based aspects of cognition that can give rise to different cultural practices, institutions, and ways of knowing. Complementary to the kind of knowledge science can provide, James's narrative experiments stage for the reader simulacra of what these different aspects of perceptual life are "like" and at the same time call for reflection about their epistemological and aesthetic implications.

On the first point, it is a basic principle of cognitive science that the brain knows the world by constructing patterns. Despite centuries of visual metaphors that depict the mind as a mirror, the sensation that we are watching a full-color picture that corresponds point-by-point with the external world is an illusion–a complex illusion that the brain constructs so efficiently that we rarely notice the hermeneutic machinery that produces it (see Armstrong *Brain* 54-90). As the neuroscientist and neuroaesthetician Zeki correctly notes, "what we see is determined as much by the organisation and laws of the brain as by the physical reality of the external world" (*Vision* 3). Visual inputs are filtered and differentiated according to the variable sensitivities of the receptors on the retina (rods and cones) and of the pathways transporting them (large- and small-ganglion cells that lead to the optic nerve). These separate, distinctive signals are then structured into patterns by reciprocal interactions among visual systems within the cortex. For example, as the notorious ambiguity of the blue- or gold-colored dress shockingly demonstrated to Taylor Swift and the Twittersphere, color does not exist as such in the external world but is a complex construction of constancies out of a flux of inputs that depends on the sensitivities of our sensory apparatus and interactions between neurons across the cortex (see "The Dress"). Different areas of the rear visual cortex are specialized to detect orientation, motion, and color and to identify objects and faces, and vision is a complex process of "binding" (to use the customary neuroscientific term) that synthesizes the activity of anatomically distinct, relatively autonomous regions of the brain. Because of the interactions produced by these reciprocal connections, the brain makes it possible for us to see by combining elements into meaningful patterns. Vision is literally hermeneutic–a circular, recursive process of assembling parts into wholes.[6]

What this constructive activity is like in the experience of consciousness is a defining preoccupation of James's epistemological

realism. James makes "point of view" a central principle of novelistic composition because of his fascination with the constructive powers of consciousness–how we know the world by "guessing the unseen from the seen," as he puts it in "The Art of Fiction" ("AF" 388), composing patterns from a limited perspective that leaves some things hidden and indeterminate. Readers of *What Maisie Knew* or *The Ambassadors* are given a simulacrum of what this composing power is like–an "as if" experience of seeing the world as Maisie or Strether do, but also noting ironically and sympathetically what they probably fail to observe or too imaginatively fill out (so that we share the child's bewilderment even as we understand the narcissistic machinations of adults that baffle her, and so that we are not as surprised as our poor friend Lambert Strether is when he learns that the "virtuous attachment" between Chad and Madame de Vionnet is not purely chaste). By thematizing a character's perspective on the world and dramatizing how it is constructed according to certain assumptions, habits, and expectations, James allows us to immerse ourselves in another consciousness (experiencing what it is like to share their point of view) even as we also observe its characteristic limitations and blind spots and notice the disjunctions between its hold on the world and other points of view that would construe things differently (the adults who cruelly laugh at Maisie's naive questions, or Woollett's worries that Strether has been carried away by the Parisian Babylon). This doubleness calls attention to the constructive powers of cognitive pattern-making that we ordinarily do not notice in everyday perception and that traditionally realistic fiction tacitly employs to portray objects and characters by unfolding a series of aspects that display them. James's experiments with point of view make perspectives a theme in themselves and playfully shuttle his readers back and forth between inhabiting another consciousness from the inside and observing with ironic if sympathetic detachment the defining strengths and vulnerabilities that characterize its constructive activities.

James's characteristic fascination with epistemological ambiguity is similarly an aesthetic instrument for exploring and displaying the role that figuration or "seeing as" plays in cognition. One reason why neuroscientists like Zeki and phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty are fascinated by ambiguous figures like the rabbit-duck gestalt and the Necker cube is that the shift from rabbit to duck and back again–or the way the faces of the cube flip back and forth–foreground the constructive activity of cognition, the circular, recursive work of configurative pattern-building not only in vision but in epistemological processes of all kinds.

As the narrator of James's notoriously ambiguous novel *The Sacred*

Fount explains, cognition is inherently circular: "When one knows it, it's all there. But what's that vulgar song?–'You've got to know it first'" (70); or, as he elsewhere notes, "I was sufficiently aware . . . that if one hadn't known it one might have seen nothing; but I was not less aware that one couldn't know anything without seeing all" (169). Cognition is a reciprocal process of pattern-formation whereby we know the world by projecting figures that give us an anticipatory understanding of particular details, even as their configuration only emerges as parts fit together. This is the cognitive principle that James stages aesthetically in his many ambiguous fictions that invite different, conflicting interpretations based on the frameworks through which readers configure them: Is the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* acutely sensitive to the evil threatening her wards, or is she an insane hysteric whose fantasies are the real danger (and the cause of one child's death)? Is there a hidden "figure in the carpet" of Hugh Vereker's narratives, or is this an elaborate ruse whereby the author seduces and taunts his readers by keeping them guessing about his intentions?[7] Such conflicts of interpretation are not unique to ambiguous texts but are a consequence of the constructive powers of cognitive pattern-making that are a built-in feature of our embodied brains. James's trademark narrative ambiguity is an aesthetic strategy for making these processes visible.

James's oft-noted elaborate metaphors are similarly an aesthetic instrument for displaying and exploring the configurative workings of cognition. The best-known, most frequently commented example is perhaps Maggie Verver's invocation of a "pagoda" as a figure for her dawning intuition at the beginning of the second volume of *The Golden Bowl* that all might not be well in the arrangement that has thrust Charlotte and the Prince so much into each other's company while she and her father cultivate the intimacy they enjoyed before their marriages. Sometimes criticized as a strained, unsuccessful figure, its very complication and ornateness call attention to Maggie's inability to make her world cohere–her struggle to fit its parts into a consistent whole inasmuch their formerly familiar arrangement now seems strange and unnatural.[8] At first glance the foursome seems not at all like a pagoda–but this incongruity is not only a sign of Maggie's groping effort to find new patterns to make sense of her world. It also dramatizes how metaphors construct patterns of relationship by joining the "like" and the "not- like"–what cognitive scientists call "conceptual blending" (see Fauconnier and Turner).

Maggie's use of the pagoda image to re-figure her sense of the couples' relationship foregrounds the cognitive workings of metaphor as a tool for configuring the world. Metaphors can have this epistemological power

because cognition always entails "seeing-as," a configurative process of projecting part-whole relationships. By elaborating the pagoda-image with such ornate complication, James displays and dramatizes these functions and, by doing so, reveals how consciousness is itself metaphorical.

In reading as in life, cognitive pattern-formation is a temporal process of projecting expectations that are then modified, refined, or overturned. One of the many ways in which the brain differs from a computer is that its temporal processes are not instantaneous and perfectly synchronized. Unlike electrical signals that discharge at nearly the speed of light, action potentials at the neuronal level take more than a millisecond to fire, and different regions of the cortex and the body respond at varying rates. Although we typically don't notice these disjunctions, the non-simultaneity of these cognitive processes means that consciousness is inherently out of balance and always catching up with itself (see Armstrong *Brain* 91-130). This imbalance is not a bad thing because it allows the brain to play in the ever-changing horizonal space between past patterns and the indeterminacies of the future. As William James observes, "we live forwards, . . . but we understand backwards" (*Pragmatism* 107). Neuroscientist Francisco Varela has shown how the lived experience of time's to-and-fro is correlated to how neurons fire (how they generate "action potentials") and to how neuronal assemblies form and dissolve (see Varela). Neuronal assemblies come and go in a cycle of excitation and relaxation that exhibits a particular periodicity. This rhythm is a natural property not only of single neurons but also of collections of brain-cells, and it is the neural correlate of our consciousness of time passing.

The temporality of brain rhythms makes it possible for different regions of the brain to coordinate their activities. When we listen to music at a concert or watch a music video, for example, regions of the brain interact from the far corners of the cortex: auditory neurons in the mid-brain, motor and sensory areas across the central sulcus (as we tap our feet or recall playing an instrument), the visual cortex (as we coordinate what we see and what we hear), and areas of the cerebellum and the amygdala (as we respond emotionally). After an assembly is synchronized through a wave-like pattern of oscillatory excitation, it relaxes and must form again–or be replaced by another assembly. This pattern of phases corresponds neurologically to the rhythms of the passing moment as we read or listen to music or talk to a friend.

James dramatizes the temporality of understanding through a peculiar, distinctive strategy of temporal doubling that attempts to stage what it is like for a point of view to revise itself. Recreating the back and forth interaction of anticipation and retrospection, James typically invokes a

kind of temporal double vision that joins together simultaneously the perceptions of a present moment and future acts of backward-looking reflection. Again and again, at key dramatic moments when unexpected complications take Lambert Strether's consciousness by surprise, James depicts in tandem the immediacy of his present experience and the mediating musings of the future that reflect back on it as part of the past. For example, when Strether unexpectedly encounters Chad and Madame de Vionnet in the countryside, the narrative soon shifts from the present to a complex temporal double vision that holds two pictures against each other simultaneously–the embarrassments of the moment that everyone awkwardly attempts to cover over and our hero lost in thought on his bedroom sofa until the early hours of the following morning: "He was to reflect later on and in private . . . Strether was afterwards to remember . . . Strether was afterwards to remember further . . . he was to remember further still" (*A* 2:259-60). This conjoined rendering of the scene itself and Strether's retrospective reflections on its various meanings and implications is a more complicated version of Isabel Archer's famous all-night vigil in chapter 42 of *Portrait of a Lady*, where James depicts the present of self-consciousness as it looks back over the past. In the temporal double vision of *The Ambassadors*, James plays with how we live forward but understand backward by simultaneously showing Strether doing both.[9]

This temporal doubleness is a way of staging aesthetically the brain's paradoxical balancing act between its need for pattern, synthesis, and constancy and its need for flexibility, adaptability, and openness to change. As William James observes, the brain is "an organ whose natural state is one of unstable equilibrium," constantly fluctuating in ways that enable its "possessor to adapt his conduct to the minutest alterations in the environing circumstances" (*Principles* 1:139). The temporal fluctuations in the brain's syntheses combat their tendency to rigidify as patterns created through repeated neuronal firing lead to the formation of habits. As William James notes in his famous chapter on "Habit" in *The Principles of Psychology,* the establishment of habitual modes of pattern-formation is both a blessing and a curse–enabling cognitive learning and the acquisition of skills for coping with typical, recurrent situations, but making us vulnerable to the danger of becoming locked in behaviors that may blind us to anomalies and reduce our ability to respond to changing circumstances.

Strether is open to revelations when he arrives in Paris (but also vulnerable to deceptions) because he is, as the narrator bemusedly remarks, "burdened . . . with the oddity of a double consciousness. There was detachment in his zeal and curiosity in his indifference" (*A* 1:5).[10] Because

Strether is internally at odds with himself, torn between conflicting attitudes toward Europe (den of iniquity, realm of possibility), he is more open to a change in his horizons, more prepared to recognize novelty and seek to accommodate it, than he would be with a unified consciousness. The Pococks, by contrast, are blind to any anomalies that might challenge the habitual, long-established convictions with which they come to the European Babylon, and so they find only what they expect to discover. The pair of possibilities generated by Strether's "double consciousness"–openness to novelty, vulnerability to deception–dramatize the temporal dependence of what we see on what we anticipate, a doubleness that makes cognition a precarious balancing act.

A crucial point in this balancing act is the moment when we change our minds and the patterns that had established our sense of the world suddenly shift. The famous recognition scenes in James's fictions dramatize the peculiar, paradoxical combination of gradualness and abruptness through which a small anomaly can prompt a global gestalt-shift. Isabel Archer comes home unannounced one afternoon, momentarily spies Madame Merle and Osmond positioned strangely (her standing, him sitting), and then stays up most of the night thinking about the anomaly of "their relative positions" and "their absorbed mutual gaze" (*PL* 2:164-65)–odd inconsistencies contrary to her perceptual expectations that suggest a need to rearrange her accustomed patterns of understanding in a wide-ranging way. Lambert Strether sees "exactly the right thing" to fit the picture that had framed his afternoon in the French countryside, "a boat advancing round the bend and containing a man who held the paddles and a lady, at the stern, with a pink parasol" (*A* 2:256)–but then is startled when the boat wavers, its occupants behaving strangely (will they acknowledge that they know him?), and this anomaly cascades into a series of recognitions about Chad and Madame de Vionnet's other-than-"virtuous attachment." Or recall Maggie Verver's "two strangely unobliterated impressions," first of the Prince's surprise at finding her waiting for him at home (not, as usual, at her father's house) after the adulterous weekend at Matcham, and then Charlotte's "prompt uncertainty" the next morning about the meaning of this unexpected act–small matters with large suggestive powers for Maggie because "the kinship of expression in [their] two faces" seems to indicate some "inscrutable comradeship. . . against which the young woman's imagination broke in a small vain wave" (*GB* 2:103, 35, 49). As the Prince later observes to Maggie, "you're apparently drawing immense conclusions from very small matters" (*GB* 2:193).

In each of these reversals, minor anomalies give rise to sweeping epistemological readjustments in the manner of a small fluctuation or

disturbance that then sets off a global realignment in our cognitive patterns.[11] The suddenness of a gestalt-shift may seem out of proportion to the minor inconsistency that provokes it, but this imbalance is a reflection of the double claims on the brain of pattern and flexibility, stability and openness to change. These recognition scenes stage what it is like to have a small anomaly prompt a large-scale gestalt-shift as the brain fluctuates between equilibrium and disequilibrium.

James's experiments with point of view play similar double games with the reader in order to stage what it is like to share the world with other consciousnesses. Any experience of reading entails a doubling of my consciousness with the intentionality held ready by the text, a doubling that enacts what Maurice Merleau-Ponty memorably calls "the paradox of the alter ego." As he explains, "the social is already there when we come to know it or when we judge it" (*Phenomenology* 379) because the intersubjectivity of experience is primordially given with our perception of a common world. And yet, Merleau-Ponty continues, equally primordial is "a lived solipsism that cannot be transcended" (*Phenomenology* 374) because I am destined never to experience the presence of another person to herself.[12]

Neuroscience has proposed three ways of explaining the paradox of the alter ego, and the emerging consensus is that all three probably work in combination in the brain's complicated, messy interactions with the social world (see Armstrong *Brain* 131-74). The first approach, known as *theory of mind* (ToM) or *theory theory* (TT), focuses on our capacity to attribute mental states to others–to engage in "mind reading" through which we theorize about the beliefs, desires, and intentions of others that we recognize may differ from our own. The second approach, *simulation theory* (ST), argues that we do not need "theories" to understand the simple, everyday behavior of others but that we instead automatically run "simulation routines" that put ourselves in their shoes by using our own thoughts and feelings as a model for what they must be experiencing. Critics of ST claim it begs the question of how the simulator senses what is going on in the other person, but an answer may be provided by *mirror neurons* that were first discovered in the motor cortex of the macaque monkey. These neurons fired not only when the animal performed a specific action but also when it observed the same action by another monkey or an experimenter–not only when the monkey grasped a piece of food, for example, but also when the scientist did the same thing. Although the mirror neuron research has been controversial and is still somewhat unsettled, experiments have conclusively shown that mirroring processes are evident not only in the motor cortex but also across the brain,

in regions associated (for example) with emotion, pain, and disgust. In different ways, all three of these theories–theory of mind, simulation theory, and mirror neurons--are attempts to explain the acts of doubling "me" and "not-me" that human beings routinely, automatically engage in as they negotiate their way through a paradoxically intersubjective and solipsistic world.

James thematizes this doubling in his experiments with point of view. By projecting the reader into the world of the character whose perspective he recreates–into Maggie's suffering but scheming consciousness in the second half of *The Golden Bowl*, for example, as she learns to read the inwardness of other characters while holding herself opaque–he gives us a rare view of another life from the inside, experienced by another for herself. Simulating and mirroring her consciousness, the reader experiences as she does the gap between her perspective and other points of view that remain obscure and mysterious to varying degrees. Theorize as we might about other minds, we can never know, for example, whether Adam Verver shares his daughter's awakening, or whether her rival Charlotte realizes she is defeated even though she pretends victory. We know more than Maggie does about their worlds because in the first half of the novel we have inhabited not only the Prince's but also Adam's and Charlotte's perspectives, and so we know what it is like to see things as they do. This experience of intersubjectivity provides a basis for empathizing with these characters in the novel's second half when they are opaque to us, but the fact that we can only theorize about their minds gives the reader a paradoxical sense of the solipsism that invariably makes other minds a problem and a challenge for understanding.

This double movement of transcending and reencountering the gap between selves dramatizes in the reader's own experience the paradox of the alter ego, the combination of intersubjectivity and solipsism that (as Maggie discovers) makes personal relations unstable and ever-shifting, an experience recreated for James's readers as we alternate between seeing with and through a character's perspective that then we observe from the outside and at a distance, its interiority opaque and inaccessible.

James's hallmark "international theme" is an aesthetic vehicle for exploring and dramatizing these epistemological paradoxes. In ordinary, everyday cognition, we assume that others who share our world see it as we do, so that (for example) sides hidden from our observation appear to other observers as they would to us if we stood where they do. This tacit assumption of primordial intersubjectivity confirms our habitual cognitive patterns (surely others think as we do) and naturalizes them, disguising their contingency (the fact that they are epistemological constructs

established and reinforced through a history of use that could have been otherwise). James's international fictions blow up this assumption for comic and tragic effect. For example, bewildered by the Pococks' refusal to recognize how Chad has changed, Strether wonders: "Had they come in short to be sane where Strether was destined to feel that he himself had only been silly? He glanced at such a contingency, but it failed to hold him long when once he had reflected that he would have been silly, in this case, with Maria Gostrey and Little Bilham, with Madame de Vionnet and little Jeanne . . . Wouldn't it be found to have made more for reality to be silly with these persons than sane with Sarah and Jim?" (*A* 2:81). This juxtaposition of alternatives–"sane or silly?"–confronts Strether with the absurd possibility of communal solipsism. Can an entire cognitive community be misguided, caught solipsistically in a web of intersubjectively self-confirming delusion?

This possibility is frightening, a cause of anxiety on poor Strether's part, because the conflict between cultures here lays bare and calls into question the assumption of primordial intersubjectivity on which our confidence in our cognitive constructs rests. The international theme denaturalizes this ordinary, usually invisible assumption by bringing opposing cognitive communities into collision, and the resulting bewilderment is an occasion for Strether's epistemological education–and also ours.

Because there is no place outside of our embodied perspectival constructs from which to observe their operations, the defamiliarizing disruptions that may result from this collision have special cognitive and existential value. Strether's experiences in Paris have the effect of "sweeping away, as by a last brave brush, his usual landmarks and terms" (*A* 1:195). Again and again he finds himself bewildered because events have "taken all his categories by surprise" (*A* 1:271). In Woollett the world may have seemed stable, determinate, and independent of interpretation–"real," pure and simple–because the "categories" and "terms" that made it up were never radically questioned. Strether's bewilderment in Paris reveals that this reality is at bottom a cognitive construct, a framework of configurative assumptions and hypotheses now cast into bold relief because they have been surprised. The effect is like the experience of the phenomenological reduction, "putting out of play" or "bracketing" the assumptions of the "natural attitude," "loosen[ing] the intentional threads that connect us to the world in order to make them appear" (in Merleau-Ponty's words), thereby "reveal[ing] the world as strange and paradoxical" (*Phenomenology* lxxvii). Strether says at one point that "surprise is paralysing, or at any rate engrossing" (*A* 1:168)–and

it is both for him: "paralysing" because his disorienting experiences undermine his cognitive frameworks, but "engrossing" because the unfamiliar is fascinating and novelty invigorating, an opportunity for reflection and discovery, self- transformation and self-transcendence.

James suggests in this way that the anxiety brought about by cultural collisions may be either fearful and potentially destructive or revelatory and possibly transformative. On the one hand, anxiety may cause us to flee in fright and denial or to fight to defend cultural and cognitive constructs threatened by their contingency. There are elements of both flight and fight, for example, in Sarah Pocock's defiant response to Paris, first refusing to recognize Chad's changes and then facing down Strether and Madame de Vionnet in tense confrontations. On the other hand, faced with what the existentialists call "*Angst*" or "dread," we may come to realize that fleeing and fighting are inappropriate because our anguish is provoked not by external threats but by disturbing revelations having to do with our ownmost potentiality-for-Being (what Heidegger calls *Jemeinigkeit* [68])–aspects of existence that cannot be escaped because they will come right along with us when we flee. The attempt to evade and deny contingency, for example, only demonstrates its ubiquity (in this case, Sarah's defensive absolutism providing inadvertent proof of Woollett's provincialism). The fears and anxieties that cultural conflicts provoke in James's international fictions span these alternatives. Feeling nervously but also excitedly out of place, Strether has much to fear from the uncertainties that the collapse of his categories exposes, but his anxiety also opens him up to possibilities he hadn't previously imagined.

Neuroscience can help us understand how the universally shared cognitive capacities of our species result in the construction of contingent cultural categories, but it cannot tell us what to do, morally or politically, about the precariousness of our bio-cultural hybridity. Here literature and philosophy are more useful. Reflecting on the paradox of the alter ego, Merleau-Ponty observes: "As a matter of principle, humanity is precarious: each person can only believe what he [or she] recognizes to be true internally and, at the same time, nobody thinks or makes up his [or her] mind without already being caught up in certain relationships with others. . . . Everyone is alone and yet nobody can do without other people. . . . there is no 'inner' life that is not a first attempt to relate to another person. In this ambiguous position, which has been forced on us because we have a body and a history (both personally and collectively), we can never know complete rest" (*World* 66-67). Strether's career as a beleaguered, restless ambassador is a case in point. According to Merleau-Ponty, we "should find this situation both a cause for anxiety and a spur to courage. In fact,

these are one and the same thing. For anxiety is vigilance, it is the will to judge, to know what one is doing and what there is on offer" (*World* 67). Hence, perhaps, Strether's decision to return to America after his Parisian adventure for "his final appreciation of what he had done": "what Woollett would be with everything there changed for him. Wouldn't *that* revelation practically amount to the wind-up of his career?" (*A* 2:293-94).

This choice is, of course, debatable, as generations of readers have demonstrated–as any choice must be in a world of contingent categories and constructs. In such circumstances, Merleau-Ponty reflects, "what makes the mind self-critical and keeps it sane" is not "to suggest that all is absurd. . . . It is much more a question of implying . . . that human life is always under threat and of using humor to prepare the ground for those rare and precious moments at which human beings come to recognize, to find, one another" (*World* 68). Maria Gostrey and Strether have such a moment of recognition at the end of *The Ambassadors* as they part ways with the novel's wonderfully comic, tragic, ironic last words: "'Then there we are!' said Strether." (*A* 2:327). Where, indeed! Reading Henry James "makes the mind self-critical and keeps it sane" by again and again offering ambiguous, undecidable moments like this that attune our sense of irony to the potential for comedy and tragedy in a contingent, precarious world. That is useful knowledge that an fMRI machine cannot provide.

Another difference between a brain-scanning device and literature is that reading can transform the consciousness of the operator. As cognitive critic Terence Cave pithily observes, "literary works make you think differently" (5)– not always, perhaps, but potentially. Neuroscience is not entirely irrelevant here, however, because it can shed important light not only on how reading can change us but also on the limits of its ability to do so (see Armstrong *Brain* 131-74). Reading entails a paradoxical duplication of consciousness. The paradox of reading is that I think the thoughts of someone else, but I think them as if they were my very own. As Henry James points out, the grand illusion of literary art is that it "makes it appear to us for the time that we have lived another life–that we have had a miraculous enlargement of experience" ("AD" 93). This other world exists, however, only because we bring it to life through our own cognitive acts. This doubling can take different forms, and have different consequences, with different works and different readers. It may make possible an immersion in another world whose illusion carries us away for a time from our customary sense of things, or it may confront us with alien ways of thinking, feeling, and perceiving whose foreignness exposes and calls into question previously unnoticed characteristics of our customary understanding of the world.

The variability of what such doubling can produce is related to various ambiguities of empathy and identification that have been much studied and debated in cognitive science. In experiences of empathic identification, one both does and does not feel what the other feels, and empathy consequently does not always result in sympathy and compassion. As psychologists Grit Hein and Tania Singer observe, "empathy can have a dark side," as "when it is used to find the weakest spot to make her or him suffer" (154). Or feeling another's emotional state can lead to "personal distress," as empathy researcher Jean Decety notes, and make us withdraw defensively rather than opening ourselves to another's suffering. Examples of the two faces of empathy abound in James's fictions. Strether may invoke the figure of Madame Roland on the scaffold during the Reign of Terror in order to empathize with Madame de Vionnet by imagining what it is like to feel her suffering and doom near the end of *The Ambassadors*. But Maggie Verver may have more Machiavellian intentions in *The Golden Bowl* when she imagines the abjection behind Charlotte's efforts to save face and even perhaps takes a kind of pleasure in her rival's suffering that some readers have found perverse and sadistic ("She knows, she knows!" Maggie thinks; "Charlotte was hiding neither pride nor joy–she was hiding humiliation" [*GB* 2:348, 329]). Empathic identification is not a simple oneness with others but a doubling of me and not-me that does not necessarily have a morally straightforward result. This is one reason why, as cognitive critic Suzanne Keen rightly points out, claims for the humanizing effects of empathy in reading are overly simplistic. Reading may make it possible for us to "live another life" from the inside, but there is no predicting what the consequences of such doubling may be.

A fundamentally collaborative process, reading is a crucial vehicle for the facilitation of what Michael Tomasello and other neurobiologically oriented anthropologists call "'we' intentionality," the apparently uniquely human capacity "for participating in collaborative activities involving shared goals and socially coordinated action plans (joint intentions)" that give rise to culture (676). The to-and-fro play of reciprocal social interaction set in motion by aesthetic experiences contributes powerfully to cultural evolution by enhancing shared intentionality (see Easterlin). Doubling self and other in reading and other cultural interaction is not necessarily beneficial or benign, however. The capacity to imitate others can provoke conflict and competition as much as it can support collaboration and reciprocity. As neuroscientist Marco Iacoboni notes, for example, there is considerable if much-debated evidence that "exposure to media violence has a strong effect on imitative violence" (206). The evidence is mixed–watching violent movies or playing violent video