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Snapshots of a Fictional Past: Photographic Nostalgia in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Art Novel.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Harry Alexander Jones IV

Bachelor of Science, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006.

Master of Art, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2016.

Doctor of Philosophy, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2022.

Director: Oliver Speck, PhD.

Associate Professor, Director of Media, Art, and Text

Virginia Commonwealth University

Richmond, Virginia

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Abstract

**SNAPSHOTS OF A FICTIONAL PAST: PHOTOGRAPHIC NOSTALGIA IN THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ART NOVEL**

**By H. Alex Jones, PhD.**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.**

**Virginia Commonwealth University, 2022  
Major Director: Oliver Speck, Associate Professor,  
Media, Art, and Text**

In this dissertation I argue that the proliferation of a mass codependent relationship with nostalgia in the twentieth century shares a parallel history with the widespread adoption of the reproducible image being used by collective audiences as a supplement for natural memory, or what Proust names “voluntary memory.” This conflict between nostalgia-hungry consumers and artists inspired groups such as Alfred Stieglitz’s Photo-Secessionists and artistically minded authors like Henry James, who employed increasingly complex photographic and literary practices to resist the images’ tendency to debase the aesthetic quality of their own work. Authors such as Marcel Proust and William Faulkner used allusions to photography as a critical foil to subvert the effects of group thought. While the artists discussed in this dissertation used the image as a means of intellectual protest, proto-fascists would master the politicization of image and text to advocate for their own nostalgic interpretation of memory at the expense of others. Therefore, by looking at the literary evidence of this conflict, I hope to better understand how photography and literature and their audiences’ ideologies interact with each other, and how we can better examine both these artistic mediums and develop axiomatic ways of approaching any text with a sort of nostalgic caution.

## **Vita**

Alex Jones was born on September 17, 1983, in Roanoke, Virginia. In 2006, he graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Entrepreneurship. After waiting table with his bachelor's degree for several years, Alex returned to VCU to earn his master's degree in English Literature in 2016. Subsequently, in 2022 he graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy in Media, Art, and Text to attempt once again to enter the workforce just before billionaire boomers tanked the housing market.

## Introduction: What is Nostalgia?

In his 17<sup>th</sup> century medical dissertation, Johannes Hofer combined the Greek terms *nostos*, returning home, and *algia*, meaning pain. They describe a communicable wasting disease common among Swiss mercenaries who longed to return to Switzerland. Nostalgia, according to Hofer causes a deep melancholy that needed to be quarantined to avoid having it spread to other soldiers. Over 100 years later, Baron Dominique Jean Larrey would expand on Hofer's initial diagnosis describing what he believed were the symptoms of nostalgia, which included a brief sense of euphoria, followed by a debilitating feeling of ennui, swelling of the brain, and painful death if the sufferer hadn't already taken their own life. Of course, we know now that what Larrey described as nostalgia was likely caused by many battlefield-related stressors. However, one thing that both Larrey and Hofer's definitions had in common was this overwhelming sense of homesickness.

Nowadays, the term nostalgia describes something slightly different. As technology compressed time and space, making the home in homesickness a place we've passed in time; that is, an amalgamation of personal and collective memory. Nostalgia is then the euphoria felt experiencing what Proust in his novel *In Search of Lost Time* called involuntary memory. Specifically, nostalgia is the driving force, an obsession that led him to write a million-word nightmare of a novel. Today, nostalgia is an obsession with the past and an insatiable drive to re-experience better times. Nostalgia is always debilitating. It is an irrational drive towards self-destruction that leads us to, as Fitzgerald wrote, "beat on boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (Fitzgerald 182). My goal in writing this dissertation is to examine what happens when new modes of representation, such as photography and the art novel, try to



capture those memories and what effect, if any, those snapshots of a mythical past have on our romantic readings of nostalgia.

In his often-cited book *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era*, W. J. T. Mitchell explains that, while a digital image may look like a “traditional photograph it actually differs profoundly,” as much as a traditional photograph differs from a painting (*Reconfigured Eye* 4). Mitchell’s book discusses the cultural consequences of the differences between “analog (continuous) and digital (discrete) representation”; that is, traditional and digital photography (at least as it existed in 1992) (4). While I do not touch on digital photography, Mitchell’s differentiation between continuous and discrete representation is a key theme throughout this dissertation, as well as the cultural consequences of nostalgia, the glue that connects these two modes of representation. However, unlike Mitchell, I argue that despite being referenced using different terms, both discrete and continuous imagery predate the emergence of digital photograph. Since its inception, photographic realism has always walked the line between discrete, the controlled presentation of information, and continuous, the abundance of information in an image. My definition of an image does not strictly refer to painterly or photographic representation, but includes the textual images projected into a reader’s mind by a work of fiction. Mitchell’s work focuses primarily on the rasterization and the manipulation of the discrete image. If the same can be said about all images photographic or otherwise, then the rasterization and manipulation of all images comes with certain consequences. Alan Trachtenberg responds to Mitchell in his 2008 essay “Through a Glass, Darkly: Photography and Cultural Memory,” explaining “people seem still to believe that if it looks like a photo, it must be one of the old kind, a record of something that truly happened.” This pretense of reality is what makes certain artificial memory appeal to the collective memory

(“Through a Glass” 115). This assumption, that a static artifact is a record of something that truly happened, is an assumption shared with a literary work of fiction. In most cases, the term “fiction” is the only thing needed to relieve this tension in the minds of the reader. Of course, a work of fiction isn’t the “record of something that truly happened,” so why is the photograph? Trachtenberg continues by suggesting that this assumption originates in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century when “the most commonplace idea of photography was of its role as memory” (115). Early art photographers, like Nadar, balked at the idea that photography steals and preserves a layer of its subjects’ soul, but, as I will discuss, during this time “people spoke in awe of how photographs made the past seem here and now, restored to visible presence in ghostly vividness” (115). This ghostly vividness is a symptom of the image aligning with the observers’ pre-established understanding of their own familiar past.

To begin any discussion on nostalgia, it is important to establish a working definition for a few associated terms, such as sentimentality, ritual, and tradition. Sentimentality, as William James defined it, is a personal reading of the past; ritual is the group observance of the past; and tradition, as Marx employed the term, is the economic or political status quo of a society, inherited burdens of past generations that “weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living” (Marx 116). Tradition, as Svetlana Boym defines it in her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, is “delivery — handing down or passing on a doctrine” or ideology. Observed through ritual, tradition is practiced by groups or individuals who have a sentimental connection to a shared ideology (Boym 19). Moreover, it is important to note that these traditions, especially those which take the form of collective historical narratives, walk a fine line between truth and myth. Nostalgia, Boym explains, is a “preoccupation with tradition and interpretation of tradition” caused by one’s “anxiety about a vanishing past” (19). Nostalgia is an obsession with the past.

My first chapter focuses on the convergence of visual nostalgia and literary tradition. However, I would like to start with a more recent political example to illustrate how nostalgia functions.

On July 19th, 1980, at a Houston, Texas rally, future president Ronald Reagan proclaimed in front of a “tumultuous” crowd, “We can make America great again,” Of course this is not the first-time politicians have used similar phrases for similar purposes, and I am sure most of us would prefer it had been the last. However, the success of this phrase as a political tool entirely depends on a visual mode of nostalgic vagueness (Associated Press A3). To say that the meaning of this phrase is ambiguous is an understatement since it could mean many things to many observers. For Reagan, a great America might include Diana Lynn and himself teaching human morals to a chimpanzee in *Bedtime for Bonzo* or some suburban melodrama like his 1942 film, *Kings Row*. Likewise, for some of his audience members, a great America might invoke *Dobie Gillis* illusions, or harmonious familial fantasies like in *Leave it to Beaver*. Alternatively, for an outside observer, a great America might be a pre-colonial America, or no America at all. What these different interpretations of the same phrase have in common is that each allusion has a visual component, and these visual components all represent a prosthetic, or conveniently artificial memory for each rememberer. The imagined path to a Great America, a home that never existed, is always the path of least resistance, even if that path comes at the price of great suffering for the observer and those in their path. Therefore, since Reagan’s statement is explicitly nostalgic, calling to mind an amalgamation of memory and ideology, tradition, and sentimentality, it also serves to unite a mass audience behind a collective memory that is unique to the individual but universal to the group. While this project does not directly address current politics, only focusing on early 20th century photography and literary examples, I would argue the implications of this project extend beyond this period to the present day. In recent years,

remakes of one hundred-year-old films, newly packaged toys from decades ago, and remastered pressings of our parents' music has become a profitable new snake oil, promising consumers the possibility of reliving better times, to make everything great again. As I argue, our current condition results from an untethered modern world, one in which artificially constructed memories are readily available and more easily accepted than reality. This proliferation of a mass codependent relationship with nostalgia in the twentieth century shares a parallel history with the widespread adoption of the reproducible image being used by collective audiences as a supplement for natural memory, or what Proust names "voluntary memory." This conflict between nostalgia-hungry consumers and artists inspired groups such as Alfred Stieglitz's Photo-Secessionists and artistically minded authors like Henry James, who employed increasingly complex photographic and literary practices to resist the images' tendency to debase the aesthetic quality of their own work. Alternatively, authors such as Marcel Proust and William Faulkner used allusions to photography as a critical foil to subvert the effects of group thought. While the artists discussed in this dissertation used the image as a means of intellectual protest, proto-fascists would master the politicization of image and text to advocate for their own nostalgic interpretation of memory at the expense of others. Therefore, by looking at the literary evidence of this conflict, I hope to better understand how photography and literature and their audiences' ideologies interact with each other, and how we can better examine both these artistic mediums and develop axiomatic ways of approaching any text with a sort of nostalgic caution. György Lukács connects this nostalgic creation directly to the demonic dualism of literary fiction and its ability to manipulate the individual reading of the outside world, as he explained in his 1920 book *The Theory of the Novel*:

Philosophy, [...] determines the form and supplies the content of literary creation, is always a symptom of the rift between the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, a sign of essential difference between the self and the world, the incongruence of soul and dead. (Lukács 29)

Lukács’s book, prior to the Second World War, would inspire many of the theorists that have inspired this dissertation, including Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer, who used Lukács to examine the nature of the visual unconscious in film and photography. Ultimately, this project is a mix of both, examining the symptoms of nostalgia on the visual “inside” and the strange loop created as visual art converges with literary art. A close examination of this relationship will shed light on our current willingness to fetishize the reproduced, remade, and reprinted media that defines how we view the world.

Nostalgia is the combination of visual, textual, and psychological triggers. In his novel *In Search of Lost Time*, Marcel Proust uses the term “involuntary memory” to describe the initial feeling of “exquisite pleasure” associated with nostalgia (*Swann’s Way* 60).<sup>1</sup> For example, a reader may experience a moment of literary nostalgia when a text creates a mental image that they associate with some emotion. Neither of these three resemble the actual place or experience in the observer’s past. Photography changed this dynamic; reproducible images, whether literal snapshots or photo-printed images in a periodical, he explains, “the signature of a perception whose sensitivity similarity [...] defeats even the unique” (“A Short History of Photography” 209). Photography is an apparition of closeness, as powerful as the actual moment; however, like Proust’s petites madeleines, with repeat viewing the image loses its “virtue” since the experience is a part of the observer, not the image. Therefore, to the chagrin of late-modern novelists, as the

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<sup>1</sup> In the French edition of *Swann’s Way*, the narrator describes the experience as a “Un plaisir délicieux” or delicious pleasure (*Du côté de chez Swann* 44).

periodical publication of photography proliferated through late nineteenth-century print culture, the image, and its propensity to engrave itself into the “optical unconscious” of an ambivalent audience, truncated the limits of the image text (203).

Benjamin’s concept of an “optical unconscious” describes the detail of the everyday world that we see but cannot recognize. As he explains, photography shone a light on these details in the same way that we notice the “instinctual unconsciousness through psychoanalysis” (279). Since the photograph could capture more detail than the human eye, its authenticity superseded that of human memory, or even the technical ability of the artist. In his 1931 essay “A Short History of Photography,” Walter Benjamin comments that before the photograph, common observations were infinitely more complex:

While it is common that, for example, an individual is able to offer an account of the human gait, the same individual has no knowledge of the human posture during the fraction of a second when the person begins to take a step. (“Little History of Photography” 278)

Benjamin’s use of the term optical unconsciousness is not the first time this phenomenon was observed, and his statement concerning its cross-discipline connection with psychology is not a coincidence. Since the emergence of modern psychology, the nature of memory and the image have been a topic of study, including William James and his student Gertrude Stein’s study of color blending. James examined the idea that an image, memory, or otherwise, is affected by its placement in a series of other images and memories. In his 1890 magnum opus *The Principles of Psychology*, William James discusses memory as it relates to willpower and recall. In his text he defined memory as the “interval perception, or the perception of time,” in which a person views the present and future in context with the images of the past as a linear line (*Principles* 2:206).

This line of moments then forms what he labeled the “stream of consciousness” since these moments and experiences were absorbed in what he imaged was a “string of bead-like sensations and images” (*Principles* 2:206). These beads, as he writes, are additive: the present bead is supported by each previous one; “the knowledge of some other part of the stream, past or future, near or remote” coalesce with “our knowledge of the present thing” (2:206). Put simply, interpreting the present requires the recapitulation of the past, ‘learning from our past mistakes’ or basing our ideological viewpoint on our culture’s traditional values. Therefore, the photograph is an artificial bead in this stream of consciousness or chain of memories. In the broadest sense, this dissertation is primarily concerned with the process by which artificial beads are prioritized over real memory. Specifically, it addresses whether the photographic image, real or figurative, influences what W. J. T. Mitchell called a “double-coded system of mental storage and retrieval” to the extent that these images influence the language and text of fiction or even override visual experience (*Iconology* 192). In literature, the image text functions in reverse, as figurative language leaves unconscious visual impressions in the reader’s mind. Returning to William James, before Benjamin had conceived of the optical unconscious, these mental images rely on the reader’s personal sentiment of a “materialistic, or so-called ‘scientific’” ideology; or lack thereof (*Principles* 2:667). This personal ideology, James argued, is the “net of *a priori*” that everyone unknowingly “fling[s]” over the “bare shape” of reality (“geometrical, arithmetical, and logical”). “Illusions of fancy” attach to “accidental clouds of dust,” images where there is only text (2:667). At their foundation, these sentimental constructions, according to James, are prone to “thought[s] of ‘yearning,’” pothos that leads to “real ‘yearning’” or, to use a more unifying term, nostalgia (2:458).<sup>2</sup> This nostalgia for a popular history, as my third chapter will

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<sup>2</sup> Pothos brother to Eros and servant to Aphrodite is commonly associated with sensation of romantic longing.

touch on, can ultimately isolate the individuals within their own ideological echo chamber, a sort of interpretive tunnel vision.

Expanding on Benjamin's idea, in a written text, the optical unconscious becomes the literary unconscious. What the reader's unconscious mind sees is based on personal experience, tradition, and sentimentality. While reading a novel, textual images are the amalgamation of a reader's perspective and the author's design. For James, the goal of a successful author was to wrestle as much control over this image from the reader, leaving other narrative components purposefully vague. In an ideal situation, the mental images that the reader forms, imagined scenario, imagined setting, imagined characters, and imagined appearance of those existents are an amalgam of the reader's culture, traditions, and environment. However, visual modes of representation, like illustration and photography, threaten authorial control. To counter this, in his later work, James began experimenting with new narrative forms as a way of mitigating the impact of visual representation. In my first chapter, I focus on these attempts to take control of his readers' mental images. Specifically, in the second volume of *The Golden Bowl*, James prioritizes the psychological experiences of his characters, while Alvin Langdon Coburn's photographic front pieces provide the novel's visual components. Several prominent works have been written on nostalgia in photography and literature, including Helmut Illbruck's excellent 2012 book *Nostalgia: Origins and Ends of an Unenlightened Disease*. Illbruck's text specifically looks at the history of nostalgia since Johannes Hofer first coined the term in his 1688 medical dissertation until its meaning becomes a term to describe the chronophilic satisfaction that comes from remembering. Similarly, Susan Stewart's *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* examines the object's role as a catalyst for nostalgic longing, thus bridging the liminal space between figurative and physical modes of



nostalgic longing. This gap as it relates to the physical and figurative nostalgia in late modernist literature is exactly what this dissertation intends to show: how the image creates an illusion of closeness while pushing us further away from real memory; or at the very least, that real memory is anything other than memory, not a true representation of real history or the real world. While Stewart bridges the aforementioned gap, Michael North's 2005 *Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth Century Word* argues that the photographic image is linked with modernity. As "recording media extended and perfected human perception," it also had a secondary effect of "undermining confidence in it," since the limits of human perception are superseded by that abundant detail of the photograph (North 9). As James would later argue in his "Art of Fiction," the psychological image created by the author of fiction could be just as vivid. This author, who may have not belonged to the same social class of his characters or experienced the events of the novel, could subvert the pull of illustration or photography by engaging with the reader's sentimentality directly. In his *The Novel Art: Elevations of American Fiction after Henry James*, Mark McGurl argues that James's 1884 manifesto marks the birth of what he terms the "art-novel," or what is often referred to as modernist fiction. By the early twentieth century, James made the stylistic choice to focus his efforts on appealing to "the mind's eye" of his readers as opposed to the common tropes of popular fiction (McGurl 30). However, as I will discuss, these textual images have just as much influence on the reader as the readers' sentimentality has on the image; therefore, one key aspect of this subjective reading is based on the nostalgic leanings of those same readers and the ideological implications of these prosthetic histories. If we are to believe that the photograph does in fact undermine confidence in human perception, then it also must have an influence on the nostalgic reading of those captured moments, creating what Proust referred to as voluntary memory. These voluntary memories, as he discussed at length in *In*

*Search of Lost Time*, are false stand-ins for real experiences used to maintain habit in a world lacking narrative consistency, but as Proust's narrator comes to find out, an overreliance on the habit of voluntary memory hinders progress. Likewise, the overreliance on mechanical memory can have a dangerous ideological impact on the collective memories of an entire society.

In literature, we often associate stream of consciousness narrative with the late modernism of the 1920s, with one example being the final chapter of James Joyce's 1922 novel *Ulysses*. However, in my first chapter, I will argue that accurately illustrating the characters' stream of memory in the present was a key aspect of the later works of William James's brother, Henry, the second half of whose 1904 novel, *The Golden Bowl*, sought to accomplish the same task. However, James's novel does not rely on the same abstract punctuation-free style of *Ulysses*, instead it takes its cue from earlier French realists such as Gustave Flaubert to develop a style of focalization in which the main character Maggie Verver casts mental snapshots of the events in the novel, almost moving James's secondary characters into action through pure mental willpower. For James, sentimentality is a more benign form of homesickness, a personal yearning for the past, whereas nostalgia is much more malevolent, a contagion that spreads its influence in the master narratives that make up the broad cultural memory. In many of his novels, including *The Golden Bowl*, his characters often find themselves trapped between their own changing sentimentality and their surrounding social traditions.

Until photography, we confined visual representation to the imagination. Portraiture, for example, required the painter's hand and eye to create an amalgamation of the artist's impression and his subject's ideal self in paint on canvas. The novel reality of the photo, as Benjamin explained, appealed to a distracted mass culture obsessed with this new medium. They were "willingly becoming absorbed" by the image, and in extreme cases supplemented their own

memories and experiences with the perceived authenticity of photographic reproduction (“Work of Art” 14-15). This proliferating obsession contributes to the spread of nostalgia. Boym argues that the “fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future.” The photograph has the nostalgic pretense of the past as artifact of the period in which it is created (Boym xvi). These images, Lukács writes, represent the reproduction and distribution of fantasies. The resulting fantasies are thus confined by the readers’ “youthful confidence in an inner voice” that has “diminished or died,” and conflicts with “the outside world to which we now devote ourselves” (Lukács 86). Nostalgia then is the homesickness brought on by the dead voice of fantasy seeped into the outside world that “will never speak to us in a voice that will clearly tell us our way and determine our goal” (86). The danger then is when these fantasies becoming communicable, seeping into the popular consciousness of a mass audience (Lukács 86). Therefore, endemic nostalgia combined with the misunderstood “modern objectivity” provided by the photograph, results in realist representation becoming the unifying force of collective consciousness, a path of least resistance (70). In his novel, Proust’s narrator’s ultimate escape from his *Search* is in a post-war France, in which explosives, dropped from aircraft, have literally obliterated these artifacts of habit; planes and bombs are described in as terrifying language as the narrator addresses the snapshot. In the absence of these artifacts of memory, he is thus left with only a deep longing for an obliterated home explaining, this abrupt loss “is so violent that the soul must, with blind impetuosity, take the first path that seems” to most resemble home (87). This semblance of home for Lukács and, as I will argue, Proust’s narrator leads to a heightened sense of “selfhood” (87).

In Henry James’s novel, these class conflicts present themselves at a more personal level than what I will discuss in Proust’s work. James’s heroine, Maggie, finds herself torn between

her wealthy American industrialist father, Adam Verver, and her old-world print fiancé, Amerigo, who serves as a stand-in for the assumed truth in tradition that had pulled James himself to migrate to England in his later life. Truth, in the novel, is subjective. It is something, in the first half, that is defined by the character's perspective and ultimately reevaluated by Maggie in the final half of the novel. James's characters unsuccessfully cling to the failing ideals of an antiquated European gentry class that is being threatened by the mounting influence of the American nouveau riche (xviii). This will be a recurring theme throughout all the works discussed in this dissertation: Proust's story of collapsing French aristocracy and the rise of the intellectual class during the Dreyfus affair, the new traditions of fine art during the rise of Alfred Stieglitz's Photo-Secession, and finally Faulkner's subversion of early twentieth-century stereotypical Southern perspectives in *The Sound and the Fury*. Michael Kammen's work, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, is an indispensable resource on the history of this topic in which he examines the collective histories of the status quo in America between the Civil War and the book's contemporary world during the Reagan administration. According to Kammen, the tradition of these "utterly contrived myths" maintains the self-serving cultural memories and accepted legends "that sustain the political or economic superiority of one group" over another; this is the seed of conflict in each of these three novels (Kammen 4).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, as Kammen explains, "technology had developed to assist memory and, sometimes, verify and contradict it." The photograph was a new form of representation that initially ran parallel with other art forms (Kammen 96). After George Eastman's Kodak snapshot cameras gained popularity, photographs' influence left the scientific and art world and became an easily accessed medium for a mass audience. James and his peers began associating the inclusion of illustrations and photographs in periodicals with the

diminishing attention span of the “Anglo-Saxon mind” (*Letters* 1:397). Similarly, in France, after freedom of the press became law in 1881, photographic printing had a similar effect on Parisian audiences, creating a sharp political divide between the Dreyfusards and antisemitic anti-Dreyfusards. As my third chapter will discuss, photographic reproductions consistently have a polarizing effect on the populace that adopts them. Reproduced imagery exacerbates this rupture according to Kammen, “democratiz[ing] the use of visual record keeping” and further popularizing “the belief that a camera could be ‘truthful’” while making truth subjective in the beholder's eye (Kammen 96). This reproduction of sentimental imagery relieved the burden of first-hand experience and marked the beginning of what Andreas Huyssen has named “the great divide,” the point at which artists began breaking from “referential mimetic” forms, and like James, isolating themselves from a mass culture that had become increasingly dependent on photographic imagery’s ability to replace real experience (Huyssen 9). In this environment, all “artifacts of civilization [are] made available and disposable,” and nostalgia has become ersatz truth, an armchair experience in which “fetish possession” becomes a modern commodity (Boym 38). The artifacts of nostalgia thus become valuable as propaganda, forcing their mass adopters to accept a “specific understanding of time.” The aesthetic closeness of the image is used to exploit the haze of memory and temporal distance, injecting false clarity into the individual and popular consciousness (38).

In his 1884 response to Walter Besant’s lecture “Fiction as One of the Fine Arts,” Henry James’s literary manifesto “The Art of Fictions” warned his peers about the shortcomings of an overreliance on realism. Instead of writing from personal experience, James sought to broaden artistic fiction. He took issue with Besant’s thesis, arguing that fiction should possess some “measure of reality” but not be “real” or taken from “actual life.” As long as the author as artist

abided by what he described as the “Laws of harmony, perspective, proportion,” he could call his fictional setting “into being” without sharing the class or character of his creation (“The Art of Fiction” 5). From Besant’s perspective, a novelist could not “write a good novel unless [they] possess a sense of reality;” that sense of reality for the literary realist was worldly or scientific. James argued that realism could include the psychologically accurate portrayal of a character’s impression of the events in the novel (10). According to James, if the author had a desire to “partake of the substance of beauty and truth,” his work would always reflect the “quality of the mind of its producer.” Intention, imagination, and craftsmanship took precedence. “Humanity,” he theorizes, is “immense and reality has a myriad of forms,” and thus even trying to reproduce reality with any objectivity is impossible (5). As I discuss in my first chapter, James concludes that fiction differs from the visual arts because textual paint does not create images painted by the author or photochemical on paper or canvas, but images in the minds of the reader; fiction, he concludes, is a “Titianesque effort,” to render the drama of “innumerable points of view” in “adorably pictorial” form (9).

“The Art of Fiction” is the genesis of what Mark McGurl calls the “art-novel,” or the genre of fiction that focuses on the psychological experiences of its characters to mediate their “relationship with the external world” (McGurl 31). The art novel is tantamount to what we call the modernist novel; however, McGurl refers to proto-modernism, the transitional period at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, before fiction has solved what Mitchell explains was the “problem of the ‘imagetext’ [*sic*]” the point in which “respective representation regimes of words and pictures” become “entwined and mutually antagonized” (qtd. in McGurl 32). It is important to keep in mind that when he refers to “innumerable points of view” he is not referring to the innumerable works of fiction, but the diverse readings of those

works of fiction. The deficiencies in the realist tradition, especially the works of the movement's French founders, like Gustave Flaubert or Émile Zola, were that the authors had spent an exhaustive amount of effort trying to limit the reader's point of view to their own without considering the diversity of readers' perspectives. Perspective is an amalgamation of experience, sentimentality, ideology, tradition, and nostalgia. In every example I discuss, the author or artist seems to be aware of the dangers of intentionally trying to limit or control the perspective of others. In one of the more extreme examples from my third chapter, public opinion is pigeonholed through false objectivity into what a contemporary audience might understand as a political echo chamber, one that is ultimately shattered by artist intervention. The problem James and his peers were trying to solve was the conflict between the image and text: the image alone lacks "discursive meaning" until we pair it with text, but this pairing causes each medium to fight to fill the representation gaps; the image alters the reading of the text, and vice versa. That is, the image has the potential to alter the "invisible images" that a text might "evoke in the mind's eye of the reader" (32). Introducing the photograph into the public discourse further antagonizes this relationship. As Proust argues, photography lacks the subjective "thickness" of art indicative of illustration or painting; because of this, photography poses a greater threat to the perspectival freedom of the reader (Proust 1:38).

Photography's popularity and the propensity of the public to use it as a supplement for involuntary memory run in parallel as James predicted. The modernist novel is the creative response to this deep longing. As Lukács explains, it is an abstraction with the "desire to be the only true reality" (Lukács 70). Therefore, within this abstraction, the "nostalgia of characters for utopian perfection" overwhelms and "narrow[s] reality" so much so that the reader risks being overtaken by the fantasy of the image (70). Mixed with visual art, the fantasy becomes more real or at the very least requires a less engaged imagination. As industrial technology further collapses time and space around the modern population, photography fills the gaps of an increasingly international popular mythology. Edward Steichen's 1901 photograph of the Flatiron Building is one such example. For an international audience, the photograph was the only way to access the strange new architecture of New York's vertically expanding skyline. This begs the question, if a European author describes the Flatiron building having never seen it, are they describing the photograph or the actual building? As James explains, the author of fiction in this situation is illustrating some combination of real experience, the photographic copy of the place, and "the quality of mind of its producer" ("The Art of Fiction" 10).



*Fig. 1* Alvin Langdon Coburn. *The Curiosity Shop* (1907). Photogravure. Author's collection.



In 1907, James stepped into the world of photography while arranging and editing his twenty-four volume New York Edition.<sup>3</sup> His publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons, and editor, James Brand Pinker, pressured James into including an illustration in each volume of his work. After his introduction to photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn, who had been staying with George Bernard Shaw, James decided that Coburn's brand of photography was the best suited to be an accompaniment for his novels and tales. As he explains in the preface for the twenty-third volume of his collection, *The Golden Bowl*, Coburn's image of an unmarked curiosity shop (see Fig. 1) was the sole real representation of the novel's setting, or as James describes it, his "stage with the actors left out" since the psychological world of the characters was his to create (*The Golden Bowl* 1: xi). Luckily for this chapter, both James and Coburn left a long trail of letters, notebooks, and critical works to suggest that they both were cognizant of the effects of the printed image and textual accompaniment on their own work. In his preface for *The Golden Bowl*, James refused to reveal the real-world location of his "shop of the mind," explaining that Coburn's photo represents his "projected world" which is not "'taking from' a particular establishment anywhere" in the real world. Counterintuitively, the photographic front pieces in the 26 volumes of his collected New York Edition, I argue are as fictional as the novel of which they introduce (xii).

As with any technological advancement, the catalyst is often a response to social disillusionment, and concerning the art novel, this is no different. My first chapter focuses

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<sup>3</sup> The New York Edition is the title given by James to his *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*. In his letter to Charles Scribner's Sons in July 1905: [30 July 1905] he writes "If a *name* be wanted for the edition, for convenience and distinction, I should particularly like to call it the New York Edition if that may pass for a general title of sufficient dignity and distinctness" (*Letters* 4:368).

mainly on the work of Henry James, and specifically on his struggle for his fiction to compete with the proliferation of illustration, the saliency of the textual images created by his fiction, and his eventual collaboration with Alvin Langdon Coburn. Beyond finding himself in constant competition with the visual art included with his fiction, James found himself at odds with the reading public during the second half of the nineteenth century. After the failure of his career as a playwright, the failure of his New York Edition, and the failure to capture the interest of an audience in his home country, he began focusing on the increasingly experimental modes of fiction that his biographer Leon Edel and others would come to label as James's "late style." Of course, James was not the only artist experimenting with their chosen medium. Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, and later Alvin Langdon Coburn had positioned photography as a new form of fine art. Prior to this period, the mainstream art community had largely ignored photography, seeing it as a tool for science, portraiture, and reference material for traditional painting and sculpture. First, examining these two moments in art history independently, my first chapter explores the collaboration of James and Coburn, what I argue is a seminal moment of convergence between these two mediums. Beginning with the publication of James's 1884 "Art of Fiction," this chapter serves as a frame for a more comprehensive look at the childhood experiences and inspirations that would lead to the publication of his twenty-four-volume New York Edition, and specifically *The Golden Bowl*. I hope to show the path from the French Realists like Flaubert and Zola and the intricacies of the earlier forms of the art novel, James's fascination with nostalgic Americanism, and the feelings of disillusionment which ultimately lead him to move to England. I take a more critical look at moments in which photography seems to have had an influence on his readers and later works he inspired. Ultimately, this chapter contends that James's brand of psychological realism, when paired with Coburn's images,

opened the door for more grandiloquent styles of fiction and image that appeal not only to the nostalgic sentimentality of the reader but also constitute a more precise form of image text. While, as he explained in his autobiographies, *A Small Boy and Others* and *Notes of a Son and Brother*, James had contempt for the increasing verticality of his former New York City stomping grounds, Coburn's generation of photographers stood in sharp contrast with the former generation, reveling in the rapid urban expansion they saw as distinctly American. While each artist I discuss maintains individual definitions of what makes something distinctly American, there is no definitive definition. Michael Kammen, for example, in *Mystic Chords of Memory*, argues that a lack of established tradition is the root of the novelty of Americanism.

American modernity for James' was not a hopeful prospect. He saw the industrial growth towards the end of the nineteenth century as incompatible with the romantic image of an anglophile American future that he had hoped to see. In my first chapter, I discuss how this discontent with his native home shaped his impressions of the *American Scene* during his last 1905 tour of the country. Where the human mind was the subject of James's image texts, Coburn and his peers frequently made the city their subject, one notable example being a series of images of the New York Flatiron building between 1902 and 1916. The construction of this early skyscraper is as nostalgic a symbol for Stieglitz and his peers as being introduced to European culture was for James, making the building a powerful simulacrum of their own movement. My second chapter builds on the penultimate discussion of Coburn's and James's collaboration. Specifically, I consider the art movement from which Coburn's pictorialist style emerged, beginning with Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen's publication of *Camera Work* from 1903 to 1917, during which they exposed a European audience to the work of their aptly named Photo-Secession, as a way of moving photography out of the documentary and scientific realm and into

the prestigious world of fine art. This chapter will also introduce the idea of photography as a technological surrogate for visual memory, looking at the transition from pictorialism with its soft focus paired with painterly characteristics to Stieglitz's eventual shift to straight photograph, and his eventual acceptance of photographic abstraction exemplified by the work of Paul Strand.

Although it is not uncommon to see authors use photography in their writing as a shortcut to illustrate a setting much like James literally had for his New York Edition, Marcel Proust stands alone as one of the first to engage with the eponymous snapshot in a more reflexive manner. Proust's seven volume bildungsroman, *In Search of Lost Time*, is, as the title suggests, a melancholic tour through the heart of its narrator's unrecoverable past. As my third chapter will discuss, while there are a few instances in the novel in which the narrator has a dramatic encounter with photography, mostly the language of photography is a recurring metaphor for nostalgia, or what Samuel Beckett in his often-cited work *Proust* called chronophilia. Overcome with this chronophilia, Proust's narrator uses several shallow substitutions in place of people and experiences from his childhood. For this reason, if we consider the novel in its entirety, the overture, as told by an elderly narrator at the end of his life, is just another one of these snapshots, and ironically this first volume is often the only one of the seven discussed by critics. Throughout his life, the narrator unsuccessfully recreated nearly every childhood event as described in this overture.

Similarly, in *The Sound in the Fury*, Faulkner uses various levels of descriptive complexity to illustrate the effect of images from prosthetic histories of past generations to illustrate the decay and death of the culture they infect. My final chapter uses the definition of literary photography established by Proust's narrator to demonstrate how Faulkner, in his novel *The Sound and the Fury*, uses style tropes commonly associated with modernist authors like

James Joyce to destabilize his readers' understanding of time through the nostalgic perspectives of members of the Compson family who are trapped by the mythical past of the American South. Faulkner's reproduction of sentimental events subverts the natural order of memory and experience. Pam Cook, in her work *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*, defines this as a "prosthetic memory" or the "reconstruction of the past to produce replacement memories that simulate firsthand experience" (Cook 2). Photography made this process possible, leading the observer to believe that they have gained firsthand experience through an image so tied to reality. As I argue, the Compsons have no path that leads from the present backwards into the past. They can only recall the past, live in the present, and lack the retrospective view to see the world beyond a lens of nostalgia. As Alter argued, consciousness is "a tireless maker of poetic constructs an inventor of endless imaginary" that resists being restrained in static imagery (Alter 154). My objective for this section is to show how "invented imagery, 'fictional-events' of a re-imagined history" within and outside of the text become the historical fact. They "order the data of experience" and eventually "make the world real," so that over time, the fictional event, like the photographic image, dissociates the observer from the historical setting, real or reimagined (154).

## Chapter 1: The Existents of Realism: A Brief History of the Evolution of Jamesian Realism and Its Photomechanical Confederation

This first section focuses on the effects of generational disillusionment on the development of literary and photographic realism during the second half of the nineteenth century and the influence that both had on turn-of-the-century modes of representation. Specifically, this chapter examines why Henry James used photography in tandem with his brand of psychological realism for his collected New York Edition. By looking at key historical moments, I illustrate how the connections between these two mediums are not merely a coincidental product of their time, but a natural solution to the long discursive conflict between visual and figurative realism. According to McGurl, James's increasingly psychological narratives sought to refocus the intellectual consciousness of his readers, who were quickly becoming inundated by "pictorial" illustrations and photography, the "more immediate" visual effects of which overshadowed the "mental images created by words" (McGurl 37). This process was effectively making obsolete the model of realism of James's predecessors, Balzac and Flaubert. While James argued that artistic fiction only needed to be a mindful representation of reality, the iconophilic threat was spreading, with substitution by the public of documentary and snapshot photography in place of real visual experience. Ultimately, this chapter contends that while the early realist project failed to liberate its audiences from the control of romantic ideals, it opened the door for more grandiloquent styles of literary fiction and photographic art. Specifically, this chapter examines why Henry James used photography in tandem with his brand

of psychological realism for his collected New York Edition. Beginning with James's 1884 essay "The Art of Fiction," research in this chapter focuses on James's and Coburn's collaboration for the first twenty-four volumes of the New York Edition, compiled from 1907 to 1909.

The main literary and photographic texts for this section will be James's novel *The Golden Bowl* and Coburn's photographic frontispieces for James's New York Edition. Primary texts for this section include correspondence between Coburn and James edited by Leon Edel, and the notebooks of Percy Lubbock, Phillip Horne, and James, edited by Edel. During his career James wrote several critical essays on visual art. For this section I have only used compilations of essays edited for the *Atlantic* by William Dean Howells, including *The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts* (1989) and *Picture and Text* (1893). My scholarly perspective of James and Coburn's collaboration is based on Ralph Bogardus's *Picture and Texts: Henry James, A.L. Coburn, and New Ways of Seeing in Literary Culture* (1984), Colm Tóibín's 2017 exhibition catalogue titled *Henry James and American Painting* (2017), critical essay "Pictures for Texts" by Wendy Graham (2003), Joseph Firebaugh's analysis of Coburn's 1953 interview for BBC Three, "Coburn: Henry James's Photographer" (1955), "Revising Vulnerability: Henry James's Confrontation with Photography" by Edward Schwarzschild (1996), Mike Weaver's biography *Alvin Langdon Coburn: Symbolist Photographer* (1986), Michele Bogart's *Advertising, Artists, and the Borders of Art* (1995), and Mark McGurl's *The Novel Art: Elevations of American Fiction After Henry James* (2001), whose art novel definition will help me better tie Coburn's and James's work together through a close examination of their independent and collaborative advancement of photographic and literary art.

In summary, this chapter begins with the publication of James's twenty-four-volume New York Edition as a framing device for a more comprehensive look at his childhood experiences

and correspondences with French Realists like Flaubert and Zola, as well as their influence on the intricacies of his later style. I also consider his fascination with nostalgic Americanism and the feelings of disillusionment which ultimately lead him to patriate to England. I take a more critical look at moments in which photography influences both James's readers and his style throughout his career. Finally, this chapter concludes by suggesting that, by 1905 when James toured the American East Coast for a final time, the country of his childhood had been almost completely relegated to his own nostalgic memories, and even the skyline of his boyhood New York was unrecognizable.

In his 1983 biography, *Henry James A Life*, Leon Edel explains that, even though during his early career he had briefly acted as a fledgling art critic for *The Atlantic*, Henry James “was not, as modernity defines it, an ‘art critic’” (Edel 129). Edel argues that James “was slow in assimilating the Impressionists”; likewise in his senior years he was “bewildered by the post-impressionists” (129). As James would explain in his 1913 autobiography, *A Small Boy and Others*, he found many of his earliest experiences with visual art mystifying and occasionally uncomfortable. This was the case while posing for a portrait with his father, Henry James, Sr., in 1854. James was not an inexperienced consumer of painting, illustration, or photography. He describes seeing Paul Delaroché's *Les Enfants d'Edouard* during an exhibition in the “bleak salles of the Ecoles des Beaux-Arts [*sic*]” as the “thrilling” moment in which he realized art could be both visual and psychological (*A Small Boy and Others* 207). As an adult, James had a contemptuous relationship with illustration, explaining in an 1886 essay on American illustrator Edwin Austin Abbey that the “hapless” author “who may have spent hours in trying to produce something of the same result by sadly different means” was immediately overshadowed by the illustrator's “immediate projection of the figure by the pencil” (qtd. in Tucker 25). Throughout



his career, to avoid this issue, he often recruited artist friends to illustrate his periodically published novellas and novels, including John LaFarge's illustrated header for *Collier Weekly's* publication of "The Turn of the Screw," a charcoal portrait of himself by John Singer Sargent for his 1894 *Yellow Book* edition of "The Death of the Lion," and George du Maurier's 1880 illustrations for the *Cornhill Magazine* edition of "Washington Square." However, according to his collaborator, Alvin Langdon Coburn, James chose photography for the illustrations of his self-titled New York Edition, a twenty-four-volume collection of his novels and tales, because it was "as different a 'medium' as possible" from his own writing.

While James is partially correct in that photography was a visual contrast to his literary art, photography and James's focus on psychological realism is homoplastic, formed by the same realist tradition during the American Civil War and the formation of photographic and literary artistic regimes at the turn of the twentieth century. Since creative labor, specifically literary and photographic art, can never exist in a vacuum, and since the histories of both share common realist themes, the events that inspired these nineteenth-century artists are not entirely the result of personal experience, but a cultural experience defined by periods of war, cultural decay, and disenfranchisement of individuals born during these instances of upheaval. For this reason, photography might have been the ideal medium to set the stage for James's collected works, since as Edel concludes, "The picture for him was not only canvas and paint; it was feeling and memory, history, ambition, power, conquest," all of which are closely related to a more grandiose realist tradition (129). How the world shapes meaning is not an exclusive catalyst for any one group but is indicative of a continuing artistic tradition in which a penultimate generation responds aggressively to the nostalgia of its predecessor, rejecting the ideological fallacies that they identify as the cause of cultural decay they have inherited. Unbeknownst to

these groups, their own efforts to reject tradition and form new aesthetic regimes only recapitulate the same cycle they had sought to escape, contributing to the prophetic history accepted as a cultural norm or status quo.

This cycle of nostalgia and literary innovation, beginning with the origins of realism after the French July Revolution, is framed by Henry James's contribution to the shift from the realism of Flaubert, Zola, and Balzac to the psychological realism of his late period, specifically in his 1904 novel *The Golden Bowl*. These moments, including James's 1884 manifesto "The Art of Fiction," are key vectors in literary history as James would argue, culminating with the legitimization of the novel as an accepted artistic medium. Finally, these literary moments run parallel with a similar movement in the visual arts, in which photography is slowly gaining momentum as a modern medium which epitomizes the same cynical view of realism as James and his peers held during the final and first decades of the nineteenth and twentieth century. These are historical, literary, photographic, and literary-photographic-historical moments in which artists and authors made something different instead of what Pound famously demanded: something "new." The phrase "make it new" is a nostalgic fallacy, as the term "new" only exists in the shadow of old tradition, insinuating that "it" is being remade into something "new," and discarding old traditions and mediums for something different. By looking at this timeline, artists like James and Alvin Langdon Coburn have effectively made something different, whether it be the art novel or straight photography. By acknowledging past artistic tradition, they can separate themselves from the ebb and flow of a collective history. At first glance, these two mediums sit on the opposite ends of an aesthetic spectrum but share similar technological origins. For literature this technology is the language transcribed in text; for photography, visual composition as reflected light captured by a mechanical device onto photo-reactive emulsion. As Alan

Trachtenberg explains in his book *Reading American Photographs: Images as History*, James E. McClees a “Philadelphia daguerreotypist” frustrated with the technology’s lack of cohesive terminology began referring to his work using the term “‘photography’ [...] writing with light” (*Reading American Photographs* 3). Henry James is not the only author of fiction to engage with photography; however, he represents one of the most visual points of reference across both art history and literary scholarship. Born in 1843, he is also a member of the first generation to live his entire life in a world in which photography exists. I would argue in terms of photography, he is not even a prominent promoter of photography or even the catalyst for its popular adoption in England; in this regard George Bernard Shaw was far more important. Having organized many of the early London exhibitions of American photography, he also introduced Coburn to James in April 1905 (Coburn 52). However, in literary circles at the conclusion of the nineteenth century, James was a major proponent of the mass adoption of fiction as fine art in much the same way as Coburn and his peers were for photography. Moreover, Coburn is a tertiary contributor to the history of early twentieth-century photography and owes much of his future prominence to his work with James. Ultimately, I believe this collaborative expenditure of creative labor was the culmination of a longer process of renunciation in which these innovators loosened the bonds of aesthetic tradition, setting the stage for the proliferation of new forms of representation indicative of twentieth-century modernism.

At the end of his 1905 American lecture tour, James, who in 1897 had permanently patriated to England in a modest Sussex estate, Lamb House, wrote to his literary agent James Pinker explaining that the “time had come for the long-planned definitive edition of his works” (Edel 591). Afterwards on July 30 of the same year, he sent his proposal to Charles Scribner’s Sons: “my idea has been to arrange for a handsome ‘definitive edition’ of a greater number of my

novels and tales” (*Letters* 4:366). Inspired by Balzac’s *Comédie Humaine*, he had intended to arrange his New York Edition (NYE) “according to themes and subjects” (Edel 624).

Throughout his career, he had suffered several significant blows to his authorial confidence. In 1895, his theatrical ambitions crumbled after being booed off the St. James Theatre stage with the critical failure of his play *Guy Domville*; the general disinterest of his American audiences during his aforementioned tour and the eventual failure of his NYE would be another painful turn of the screw. In his bibliographic catalogue on the works of Henry James, David Supino notes the first ten volumes of the NYE, sold by subscription, sold so poorly that a mere 1,500 copies were sold (Supino 399). For the final fourteen volumes, Scribner’s and sons cut their losses, printing only one thousand copies (399). Ultimately, the combined sales of the NYE earned James 50 pounds in annual royalties, as confirmed by his 1914 income ledger: “received from J.B. Pinker 25.5.8 Scribner’s ½ yearly royalties on sale of Edition. Lowest figure, alas, yet!” (Notebooks 608). Notwithstanding being labeled as unpatriotic after his relinquishment of his American citizenship prior to World War I, the NYE was a killing blow for a half-century-long career. In his letter to Edmund Gosse, he would bemoan the experience, writing “the Edition has been, from the point of view of profit either to the publisher or to myself, practically a complete failure; vulgarly speaking, it doesn’t sell” (*Letters* 4:777). In fact, according to his biographer Leon Edel, the author was so distraught that in 1910, “in a fit of sadness, perhaps prompted by fantasies of death, he gathered his private papers” which included a lifetime of “letters from his contemporaries, manuscripts, scenarios, old notebooks” and burned them “in a rubbish fire in his garden” (Edel 664).

Instead of ordering his collection by subject and theme, James’s work might have been more profitable had he organized his works by style and narrative complexity. By the time of their

publication, his “American audience had labeled him as a novelist of the aristocracy” and others felt he had become a “condescending expatriate who talked of ‘the advance of civilization’ in America as if he were still in the world of Fenimore Cooper” (Edel 609). Unfortunately for James, it would not be until a few years after his death in 1916 that scholars, such as Joseph Warren Beach, divided James’s career into distinct stylistic periods. James’s middle period, including “The Turn of the Screw” and *What Maisie Knew*, according to Beach focused on stylistic experiments culminating in the later novels such as *The Golden Bowl* and *Wings of the Dove*. This later period, Beach argued, contains some of the first works which “best demonstrated” James’s methods’ “possibilities for art” (Beach 255).<sup>4</sup> This later period serves as the focal point for this analysis. After his theatrical failure, his work matured in ways that made it less a transatlantic copy of traditional French realism and more an advancement of the structural conceits of his Parisian predecessors. James is rarely the “omniscient author” in his later works; instead, his narrator acts as messenger, transmitting the memory of his focal characters to the reader (Beach 56). For example, in *What Maisie Knew* and *The Golden Bowl*, James’s drama is told in the past tense through the focal perspective of Maisie and Maggie Verver. The narrator is distilling these memories into text. In this way James’s fiction is less concerned with the setting or stage in which his characters find themselves. For this reason, Beach’s study discussion of James’s setting is brief, suggesting that the visual component of his fiction is psychological. Further connecting these novels to the visual is that James’s predecessors, Beach explains, “are given to the development of an idea or a motive” whereas “James conceives his [motive] as the subject of a picture” (24). These later-period works

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<sup>4</sup> Beach’s book *The Methods of Henry James* was published in 1918; however, as the author notes, his study began in 1914 “during the first year of the war, while James was still living” prior to the posthumously published twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth volume of the New York Edition in 1917. These two volumes include *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past* (Beach 7n7).

differentiate themselves from the experimentation of the avant-garde and postmodern in that the setting of James's novels may define the social class of his actors but never seems to route their progress through the novel. For example, in *The Golden Bowl* the state of being, whether in America or Europe, never influences Maggie Verver's impressions of the scene, it only establishes the "ethics" of his characters and their social class (Beach 27). The photographic image took away these first realists' creative agency, hampering their freedom to craft a vibrant fictional reality without referencing a growing photographic index of the real world. Armstrong describes this change using four summary propositions, first that the fiction in the "mid-1850s" sought to "put readers in touch with the world [...] by supplying them with certain kinds of visual information" (Armstrong 7). To be clear, the visual information she is describing here takes the form of figurative description. Susan Stewart describes this process as "metonymic," in which the text and photograph are still-life images that stand in the place of "everyday life; its configuration of objects does not frame another world so much as it enters the frame of the world" (Stewart 30). "In order to be realistic," Armstrong explains, which differs slightly from literary verisimilitude in that "realistic" and "believable" seem to be medium-specific in this instance, "literary realism referenced a world of objects that either had been or could be photographed" (Armstrong 7). To be realistic, the descriptive language is visually indexable with its extra-literary physical counterpart. In Flaubert's example, Emma's eyes may have grown "like two globes of a dying" hurricane lamp, streetlamp, something more specific to France in 1857, or even the cat-eyed flame of a milk glass streetlamp that the author remembered from his childhood. The authoritarian control of the narrative causes the unraveling of the tenets of realism.

According to Stewart, the modernist's "suspicion of point of view as a critique of omniscience," led to the historical shift towards a more skeptical reading of romantic fiction beginning with the realists. It is this critique of the "self-conscious," she concludes, "that proclaims an omniscience of its own ontology, its own history" its own tradition (3). "The movement from realism to modernism and postmodernism," Stewart argues, is the movement from "the sign as material to the signifying process itself." Instead of referring to an object in the real world, this process "points to a world as a transient creation of language" (5). Therefore, to subvert the original fallacies of realism, the predecessors of this French project sought to "reveal the concentration of those productive forces resulting in and from the hegemony of mass culture," specifically how that mass culture took for granted the authenticity of figurative language in artistic fiction (5). Paraphrasing Barthes, in his book *The Antinomies of Realism* Frederic Jameson described the birth of modernism as the "irreconcilable divorce between lived experience and the intelligible" or the transition from realist forms of representation to the "sensory experience" of which "modern times [are] contingent" (*Antinomies* 34-5). I believe that this transition is not only a transition from an external to an internal point of view, but also a transition from a "literal" narrative point of view to what Seymour Chatman in his *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* classified as the "figurative" point of view in which we view the world in relation to "someone's world view (ideology, conceptual system, *weltanschauung*, etc.)" (Chatman 152).<sup>5</sup>

For later authors like Henry James and his contemporaries, figurative language that was both realistic and believable needed to converge with the reader's sentimentalities as opposed to fight against them. Since as Armstrong concludes, "Fiction could not have taken the pictorial

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<sup>5</sup> Chatman defines *weltanschauung* separately as the narrator's "practical interests" opposed to the conceptual world view (Chatman 152).

turn to the extent or in the way it did, were its readership not already hungry for certain kinds of visual information” (8), James often forgoes literal description in favor of a figurative illustration of setting. For example, in his 1904 novel *The Golden Bowl*, James does just that, writing:

[The prince] had strayed simply enough into Bond Street, where his imagination, working at comparatively short range, caused him now and then to stop before a window in which objects massive and lumpish, in silver and gold, in the forms to which a hundred uses and abuses, whereas tumbled together as it, in the insolence of the Empire, they had been the loot of far-off victories. (*Golden Bowl* 19)

Dissimilar to Flaubert’s text, James leaves almost the entire setting up to the reader’s imagination. The only clues we have been given concerning the store’s true contents are presented in the form of the street name, “Bond Street,” while the objects beyond the window are almost completely ambiguous. Aside from introducing their thematic qualities, James describes them as the misbegotten spoils of British imperialism. The gaps left in the setting are thus filled with the objects imagined by the reader who might imagine their own family heirlooms or fanciful golden lamps stolen from some far-off land. In this way, James is not a stranger to his own narrative, but is instead a subjective observer guiding the reader down an imagined path. The windows along this path are intentionally left empty to be filled with the bric-à-brac of mass culture. According to de Man this form of pseudo-realism or surrealism “is not limited to the reflected world: but takes place with the figurative language of the text,” like Chatman, de Man agrees that this language “leads to a new totalization” in which the “reflected world” of the text reconnects to “the real world” (41). Likewise, in this example, according to Chatman, the prince Amerigo’s, “senses are directed outward upon the story-world” and the narrator “peer[s] into’ the character’s mind and reports its content from his *own* point of view” in such a way as to be



understood by the reader (Chatman 155). Because we read what the text reports, we are being pulled closer to events in the novel that are temporally displaced in the past. James was sharply aware of the power of nostalgia in impressionable minds. In his first autobiography, *A Small Boy and Others*, he explains, “my impression composed itself of many pieces” (53). Of these pieces, he recalls “burying his nose into a half-open book” and the olfactory effects of “paper and printer’s ink” or what he called the “English smell” (53). Interestingly, he uses the term “*infected*” to describe these autobiographical memories, writing “I had been prematurely poisoned” (53). To further iterate that he is not describing a purely euphoric memory of browsing London bookstores with his brother, James acknowledges that the smell was having a more profound impact on his early development. The bookstore was not the thing making an impression on his consciousness, “the true inwardness of these rich meanings [...] was just simply of certain impressions, certain *sources* of impression again, proceeding from over the sea and situated beyond it” (54). He even suggests that the seed of these impressions is planted in previous generations “or even much rather of [his] parents [...] the fruit of a happy time spent in and about London with two babies and reflected in that portion of their talk with each other to which I best attended” (54). His parents, as James describes them, “were homesick” not for a place but for an “ancient order” not “inconvenienced by the more immediate features of the modern” (55).

During one such journey, possibly to his father's "fondest" Broadway bookstore, the Elder James remembers one such encounter between parents and modernity (53). By the time Henry James Sr. and his son were walking between Fulton and Broadway in 1854, Daguerreotype portrait studios had become a frequent sight in Manhattan store fronts. One such photographer, Mathew Brady, who later found notoriety with his Civil War photography, offered classes and frequent services for elite New York residents, including the Jameses (see Fig. 2).

While he admits that his retelling has "strained the last drop of romance" from the memory, the aspect of this early photography that made the biggest impression on James was the uncomfortable awkwardness of the process (56).

In his autobiography, he recounts the feeling of his head being restrained by the photographer's vise during the "interminably long" exposure time (57). The future author's father, Henry James Sr., would later reflect on his own experiences with photography, paraphrasing Brady's 1853 "Address to the Public" by

commenting that to elevate "the cause of genuine art" one must rise above the mechanisms of their medium, in this case the "daguerreotype[']s] faculty for presenting one exact copy of nature" (qtd. in *Reading American Photography* 26).<sup>6</sup> It is this artistic entrepreneurial spirit that in



Fig. 2 Brady, Mathew. *Henry James and his Father* (1854).  
Daguerreotype. Houghton Library, Cambridge, MA.

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<sup>6</sup> Brady's "Address to the Public" reads:

Brady's, James's, and later Stieglitz's minds, Americanizes the photographic medium. The mechanisms of fiction and photography sprung from the tradition-minded European consciousness; however, those mechanisms became tools of the artist in the hands of American ingenuity. While I admit this hypothesis is hyperbolic, in each of the examples I will cover throughout this dissertation, whether it be the industrial wealth of Adam Verver overshadowing Amerigo's inheritance in James's *Golden Bowl*; Alfred Stieglitz's journal *Camera Work* legitimizing photographic art; or the Lost Cause revisionist histories weaponizing nostalgia, the American perspective always seems to push any process of narrative inscription to an industrial extreme.

James places this experience in sharp contrast with his father's sitting for William Makepeace Thackeray's amanuensis and portrait artist, Eyre Crowe. Unlike his experience with Brady's photograph, James remembers being "held spellbound" by Crowe's work, explaining, "I was to circle so wistfully, as from that beginning, round the practice of his art" (59). Possibly inspired by this early encounter with painting, both James, his brother William, and family friend John LaFarge would later study painting in Newport, Rhode Island, under École des Beaux-Arts alumnus, William Morris Hunt. Ultimately, while attending Harvard Law School for less than a year in 1862, James would discover that his medium of choice was the written word, while William continued experimenting with visual art, including photography (*A Life in Letters* 2). In his second autobiography, *Notes of a Son and Brother*, he describes his sibling's photographic experiment while living in their shared Paris apartment, writing:

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I wish to vindicate true art and leave the community to decide whether it is best to encourage real excellence or its opposite; to preserve and perfect an art or permit it to degenerate by inferiority or materials which must correspond with the meanness of the price. (*Qtd. in Reading American Photographs* 26)

Trachtenberg never mentions James and his father's portrait session with Brady, but this does acknowledge that they were acquaintances, at least professionally.

He had been at the same time quite [...] addicted to ‘experiments’ [...] the practice of photography in the room I for a while shared with him at Boulogne, with every stern reality of big cumbersome camera, prolonged exposure, exposure mostly of myself, darkened development, also interminable, and ubiquitous brown blot. (*Notes* 328)

As James and his brother were becoming culturally literate, the two younger James brothers, Garth Wilkinson James (Wilky) and Robertson James (Robbie) were parroting their father’s transcendental abolitionist ideology. In August 1863, both Robertson and Wilky had “obtained commissions in the Volunteer Army” serving in the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts under Colonel Robert Shaw (402). As James recounts, on 18 July 1863, during the second Battle of Fort Wagner, Wilky was “badly wounded both in his ankle and the side” by the shrapnel of an exploding artillery shell (402). Afterwards, Cabot Russell, the father of a boyhood friend who had traveled to Charleston to search for his son, returned home with James’s brother. Wilky’s friend had subsequently died and was possibly buried in the same mass grave with Robert Shaw and never identified. As James explains, his brother “cried aloud for his friends gone and missing” (403). The popular battlefield photography of Brady and his peers must have lacked some sense of reality for James and his brother William. William’s own image, a sketch of war-torn Wilky, James writes, “tells for me a double story—I mean both of Wilky’s then condition and of the Draughtsman’s admirable hand.” James’s own textual portrait of his brother is less direct. It is possible that James’s character Jack, from his second published story, “The Story of the Year,” which appeared in the March 1865 issues of the *Atlantic Monthly*, is based on Wilky’s experience. In the story, Jack postpones his engagement to Elizabeth before being called to war. He is ultimately killed before their relation was announced publicly. According to Edel, Jack may have represented an amalgamation of the loss the James family experienced during the war.

Gus Baker, James's cousin, "was shot down by a guerrilla in 1863"; later, he would lose a second cousin, William Temple (Edel 73). Neither Wilky nor Robertson seem to have ever recovered. Wilky would die before he was "forty after a period of prolonged ill-health," while Robertson, after bouts of "heavy drinking and guilt," died in 1910 (63). Later in life, the Civil War and its aftermath would fuel James's discontent for his home country. Bosanquet would later transcribe James's thoughts on the matter, in which he explained, "nothing of the smallest interest, by any perception of mine, as I suppose I should still blush to recall, had taken place in America since the War" (Bosanquet 745).

In 1876, according to Edel, James "fell into London [...] as if he had lived there all his life" (Edel 204). The author had left America for Europe in search of the originals of that English smell he recalled as a boy. Feeling a nostalgia for a past that was not his own, he would ultimately permanently patriate to London in the 1880s and make Lamb House in Sussex his permanent residence in 1897. The United States lacked the ancient traditions of his class taught to him by his parents. Similarly, in his book *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, Michael Kammen makes a similar claim. Kammen, associating nostalgia with the terms heritage, tradition, and collective memory, argues that in America in the period between 1870 and 1915, "Old World traditions are deemed preferable whereas those of the new range from despicable to being barely acceptable" (Kammen 175). Until the latter half of this period, the preferred works of art and literature were primarily European: "American thought and culture" was slowly gaining "preferred status" (175). Henry James was at the forefront of the rising European interest in American literature. From his newly established transatlantic vantage point, he published his three major "studies of America abroad;" *The American* in 1877; *Roderick Hudson*, first published in London in 1879; and the seminal *The Portrait of a Lady* in

1881 (Edel 248). *Portrait's* central character Isabel Archer was the natural evolution of the titular *Daisy Miller* of his 1879 novella and proved that he could create a fictional female character with more agency than Flaubert's Emma Bovary who was at the same time as provocative. As Edel explains, William Dean Howells, the editor of *The Atlantic* at the time, commented that "Isabel was being over analyzed" to which James replied, "I will say that I intended to make a young woman about whom there should be a great deal to tell and as to who such telling should be interesting" (261). Both Edel and Kammen agree *The Portrait* was "one of the best-written novels in English in its evocation of American and European backgrounds (Edel 262). For Edith Wharton, in 1909, James's novel was the first work by an American author included in her girlhood list of favorite books (176).

For the rest of his career, the American in Europe was a prominent theme in James's work, including his 1907 travelogue, *The American Scene*, which recounts his 1904-1905 tour of the United States, the first time he had returned to his native country "in nearly a quarter of a century" (*The American Scene* xxv). *The American Scene* represents James's attempt to look at the United States as free of the burden of nostalgia as possible. His introduction summarizes this project explaining, "I was to return with much of the freshness of eye, outward and inward, which, with the further contribution of state of desire, is commonly held a precarious agent of perception" (v). To paraphrase, he was interested in examining the United States through as pure a viewpoint as possible; however, he knew the risk of falling for the traps of nostalgic sentimentality. According to Kammen, "the problem with citing" James is that "he is unrepresentative," an opinion that I do not share. While James's travel writing shares the lengthy parentheses of his fiction and can be hyperbolic, his impressions of American society, particularly those of the South, are hauntingly relevant even today.

As he explained, while traveling to Richmond from Baltimore he looked forward to being “romantically affected” by the city’s antebellum charm, writing, “I had to feel myself at Richmond, in the midst of abnormal wintery rigors, take in every pore of a southern impression” (*The American Scene* 368). While in the city, he spent two days examining the vacuous artifacts in Richmond’s Museum of the Confederacy, speaking to native Richmonders, and finally visiting the city’s 1890 monument for Confederate general Robert E. Lee. James’s assessment of the monument had a lot in common with its later critics. He was careful to “tread the scene on tiptoe,” for in the eyes of native Richmonders he found that even broaching the subject of slavery or the war was equivocal to an attack (376). His account, even with its aforementioned flaws, offers its readers a paradigmatic example of a nostalgic narratives’ effect on the community consciousness. Moving through the snow-covered city, the apparent absence of any “references” to the Confederate consciousness which he had prepared himself to find disturbed him; no physical artifacts, no “shadow” of the “supreme holocaust, the massacres, the blood, the flames, the tears” which had defined the city forty years earlier (376). Cultural evidence that Richmond was the former Confederate capital, he explained, was hidden from both the native and the outside perspective, “rewritten *ad usum Delphni*.” Any hope for a “budding Southern mind” was placed on “permanent quarantine” (*Letters* 3:394). Rummaging through the Museum of the Confederacy’s archives (then named The White House of the Confederacy), he writes, there were “a hundred applications of the idea of civilization which, [...] outside the library, would all be wrong” (3:393). The only evidence of a “real” Richmond was a snow-buried shrine, as he explained, to a “false god” and a “cause that could never have been gained” (3:394). In the Southern ideologue’s master narrative, the Confederacy never saw defeat; they gave up on their own terms from fatigue. Creating these false narratives, from the perspective of the federal

government, was a necessary step towards reconciliation of the white North and white South, officially placing blame on the formerly enslaved peoples that was excluded from these false histories. Ultimately, before leaving Richmond James concluded that “the negro had always been and could absolutely not fail to be ‘on the nerves’ of the south” (*The American Scene* 376). As Kammen explains, “We arouse and arrange our memories to suit our psychic needs” (Kammen 9).

James’s final voyage to the United States would be shortly after William James’s death in 1910. However, during his penultimate visit to New York, he visited their old stomping grounds near the bookstores he remembered visiting with his father over forty years earlier.<sup>7</sup> He was disgusted by the first modern skyscrapers while visiting the city, describing them as “grossly tall and grossly ugly” blemishes on the “quickened memory [...] of Fifth Avenue Heritage” (*The American Scene* 87). “Sky-scrappers,” he continued, are the “last word of economic ingenuity only till another word is written [...] a word of even uglier meaning.” These new buildings represented American industrialism devouring the New York of his childhood, a “thousand glassy eyes [...] of the mere market” (78). In “The Art of Fiction” he had commented, “In

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<sup>7</sup> Both of James’s autobiographies *A Small Boy and Others* and *Notes of a Son and Brother* were intended to be homages to his brother William; because of this they represent the most nostalgic of James’s writing. Both texts are generally considered autobiographical. However, there are several instances of self-reflection that blur the line. One such example reads:

As I sit in the light of my kerosene, with the fire quietly consuming in the grate and the twilight on the snow outside and the melancholy old-fashioned strains of the piano dimly rising from below, I see in a vision those at home just going in to dinner; my aged, silvered Mother leaning on the arm of her stalwart yet flexible H., merry and garrulous as ever, my blushing Aunt with her old wild beauty still hanging about her, my modest Father with his rippling raven locks, the genial auld Rob and the mysterious Alice, all rise before me, a glorified throng; but two other forms, one tall, intellectual, swarthy, with curved nose and eagle eye, the other having breadth rather than depth, but a goodly morsel too, are wanting to complete the harmonious whole. Eftsoons, they vanish, and I am again alone, *alone* – what pathos in the word! (*Notes of a Son and Brother* 133).



proportion as that mind is rich and noble will the novel [...] partake of the substance of beauty and truth.” These new vulgar structures then were monuments to more vulgar ideals (“The Art of Fiction” 520). These easily identified ideals were personified by nouveau riche American characters like Adam Verver. Both figuratively and literally hid the “highly pleasing edifice of [...] of Broadway” (78). Faced with the torturous gaze of nostalgia, James described his impression as the “bitterness of history,” and wherever he looked he saw “the new landmarks crushing the old quite as violent children stamp on snails and caterpillars” (81).

By the late nineteenth century, as Henry James pointed out in his January 31, 1880, letter to fellow novelist William Dean Howells, America had yet to produce a novelist at the level of Balzac: “I shall feel refuted only when we have produced [...] a gentleman who strikes me as a novelist—as belonging to the company of Balzac and Thackeray” (*Letters* 2:267). Five years prior to his letter, James had the opportunity to meet his Parisian inspirations. As Eric Savoy described in his essay “France, French, and the French,” in November 1875 James arrived in France expecting to find the nostalgic Paris of Balzac’s *Comédie*, but instead “he found himself in the politically unstable early third republic” (Savoy 198). Fortunately, being an expatriate from a wealthy Massachusetts family, he could avoid the visible aftershock of revolution and the “famine of the Franco-Prussian war” (198). While in Paris, he had the privilege of meeting several prominent French authors, as he explained in his December 20, 1875, letter to his father Henry James Sr., and frequently he had dined with Flaubert and Émile Zola. Flaubert, he explains, “[was] not at all what his books lead me to expect [...] he looks like some weather-beaten old military man” (*Letters* 2:14). These brief episodes with Flaubert, as we will see, had a lasting effect on James’s later career. Savoy confirms this, describing his fiction after 1896 as being “far more indebted, in its treatment of bafflement and unknowable realities, to the

compositional principles of Flaubert.” However, James would eventually perceive Flaubert’s work as “formalist emptiness” (197). Second wave realism, Savoy argues, constituted a ‘designification’ of the world”; a deconstruction of the world into its tangible parts or physical reality, whereas James and his contemporaries were experimenting with the “phenomena as ‘hypersignificant,’” where the social and actual dangers of his narratives have real-world counterparts that are not empty but flow towards “the same scene[s] of archival deployment and ignominious failure and destruction” (204). His 1897 novel *What Maisie Knew* is one of his first long-form works to employ these late-period narrative structures.

Nearly half a century before Benjamin, in his 1890 magnum opus *The Principles of Psychology*, William James expanded on the contemporary definition of the unconscious and its relation to willpower, memory, and recall. Memory, he argued, was the “interval perception, or the perception of time,” a linear timeline forming what he defined as the “stream” of consciousness, arguing that experiences absorbed in the past resembled “a string of bead-like sensation of images” (*Principles* 2:206). These beads, he argued, are additive: “the knowledge of some other part of the stream, past or future, near or remote is always mixed with the knowledge of the present thing” (2:206). Interpretation in the present depends entirely on the recapitulation of memory, meaning the photograph serves as an artificial bead in this chain of memory, simplifying the mental labor associated with recall and interpretation of remembered experience. Therefore, the photograph acts on figurative language in the same way that figurative language acts on the reader; for example, a photograph of *The Golden Bowl*’s curiosity shop can fill in the space left in the text’s wake, and the text will add the paraphernalia of the setting to the photograph. McGurl reiterates this theory, suggesting that literary art functions in reverse, as processing figurative language leaves unconscious visual impressions in the reader’s mind. This

process relies on the reader's personal sentiment of "materialistic, or so-called 'scientific'" ideology (2:667). The images constructed by the reader, W. James argued, are the "net of a priori" we "fling" over the "bare shape" of reality "geometrical, arithmetical, and logical" as "illusion of our fancy attached to accidental clouds of dust" (2:667). Sentimental constructions, he continues, are prone to "thought[s] of 'yearning'" that lead to "real 'yearning'" or nostalgia, further contributing to interpretive tunnel vision for those affected (2:458). Nostalgia, as Illbruck contends, is a "longing" for the same totality described by Chapman and de Man (Illbruck 214).

Savoy notes that *What Maisie Knew* fits into the same stylistic categorical "realm of French realism," without its author being a prisoner to the "cold objectivity" of prior examples (205). In *Maisie*, James shifts from the traditional scientific realism to a verisimilitude of consciousness; the novel focuses on the "perspectival complexity" of Maisie, forced to face the fractured moral reality of her parents' domestic separation (205). As Edel explains, *Maisie* succeeds in "illustrat[ing] to an extraordinary degree how the adult mind and professional skill can create a work in the face of inner bewilderment" (Edel 457). To accomplish this, James's novel differs from Flaubert's work through its illustration of what Maisie knew and not what Maisie saw. James addresses this difference in his NYE preface, writing, "I should have to stretch the matter to what my wondering witness materially and inevitably saw." However, unlike Emma, James's heroine lacked the mental aptitude to process what she observed, as James writes, as a child "she either wouldn't have understood at all or would quite misunderstand" (*Maisie* 294). Similarly, how he imagined Maisie differed sharply from Flaubert: where Flaubert invented Emma intending to create a realistic representation of a young woman, James let Maisie emerge from the writing process, as he explained, "that vague pictorial glow which forms the first appeal of a living 'subject' to the painter's consciousness" (290). Since Maisie observes

everything in the narrative, James had the foresight to recognize his own “light vessel of consciousness” could never completely supply her with any pure verisimilitude, choosing instead to focus on what his subject might “might be conceived to have understood—to have been able to interpret and appreciate” (293). In this way *What Maisie Knew* is the prototype for this new form of self-aware narrative that both marked the beginning of his late career and laid the groundwork for his more experimental novels like “The Turn of the Screw,” published a year after *Maisie* in 1898, and eventually *The Golden Bowl* in 1904.

According to Stewart, “the Locus of action is not in the text but in the transforming of the reader,” and likewise transformed, the text reflects either the reader’s own sentimentalities, or “reveal[s] the concentration of those productive forces resulting in and from the hegemony of mass culture” (Stewart 5). Ultimately, the goal of a self-aware author like James is not to push his audience into an interpretive box, but to guide the reader in such a way that compliments the intended meaning of the text. Stewart describes this connection as the “reader’s ‘quicken[ing]’” or “the internal recognition of signs through reading.” These signs are a combination of the text and the reader’s “immediate,” “external,” and continually changing environment (4). In the New York Edition, Coburn’s photography paves the path leading to James’s intended reading. These photographs limit the one temporal variable associated with this process, change over time (4). Without this authorial control, paraphrasing Bakhtin, Stewart consigns the text’s temporally fluid interpretation to the “ideological function” which separates the ordinary, poetic language, and its “hierarchization of access to meaning” or readers’ sentimental reading of text based on their own external surrounding, which often relies on the “convention, repetition, and necessity of maintaining a predictable social reality” (19). Both James and Coburn are aware of this relationship, and thus the photograph is not a miniature of some outside reality but the catalyst

the reader uses to construct the text's setting. *The Curiosity Shop* is a more accessible substitute for the reader's own external observation, a moment frozen in time that easily fits into the place the real memory would otherwise occupy. Since, as Stewart continues, we can define nostalgia as a "crisis of sign, emerging between signifier and signified," ordinary and poetic (23), nostalgia creates a longing for a future-past that can never exist "except as narrative" and the image helps to anchor that longing to the author's intended narrative.

Henry James's observations, in the absence of Stewart's semiotic framework, in his collected critical writings, *The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts*, mirror Stewart's concept of the reader's "quickenings" (4). During the latter half of his career, in the periodical publications where his work was primarily published, illustration and photography were becoming an increasingly prevalent presence. In his 1893 collection, James would argue that correctly crafted fiction could possess the same psychological agency as the printed image, writing:

Anything that relieves responsible prose of the duty of being, while placed before us, good enough, interesting enough and, if the question of picture, pictorial enough, above all in *itself*, does in the worst of services and may well inspire in the lover of literature certain lively questions as to the future of that institution. (*The Painter's Eye* 23)

For James, the visual images created through well-crafted textual descriptions, and those produced by the illustrated image were specific to the artist's mode of production, a mode that for James was textual. As the "qualities of the modernist text" began to "reflect an increasing distance between the forces of literary production and those of literature's general consumption," as Stewart explains, the literary artist was forced to innovate with increasing complexity.

In 1884, the same year George Eastman filed his patent for the rolled paper film that superseded the need for glass photographic plates, Henry James published his manifesto “The Art of Fiction.” Written in response to Sir Walter Besant’s lecture “Fiction as One of the Fine Arts,” James’s essay sought to broaden artistic fiction. James took issue with Basant’s thesis, arguing that the novel should have some “measure of reality” but not be “real” or taken from “actual life”; if it abided by the “laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion” the novelist should call his fictional setting “into being” based on whether it shares the class of his characters (“The Art of Fiction” 5). Besant’s novelist could not “write a good novel unless he possesses a sense of reality.” According to James, if the author had a sincere desire to “partake of the substance of beauty and truth,” his work would always reflect the “quality of the mind of the producer” (10). “Humanity,” he theorized, is “immense and reality has a myriad of forms” and reproducing it with any objectivity was impossible (5). Fiction differs from photography or painting because, as James explains, it is a psychological art—one in which the image is painted in the reader’s mind. Fiction, he concluded, is a “Titianesque effort” to render the drama of “innumerable points of view” in “adorably pictorial” form (9).

For James, the novel “enclose[s] seemingly infinite amount of detail within an absolute frame” (McGurl 30). Alternatively, Besant felt that detail could only be captured through personal experience. James argued this detail completely depended on the authors’ skill, which provided them with the ability to craft narrative in the absence of real experience. This idea led to James’s main criticism of his realist forerunners, specifically Flaubert and his characterization of Emma Bovary. In his 1902 essay “Gustave Flaubert,” James explained what he considered “defects” that ultimately lead to the failure of Flaubert’s project, which he considered a “middling” attempt to illustrate Emma’s “nature of consciousness” (“Gustave Flaubert” xix).

According to James, Flaubert falsely assumed that the realist creation could exist outside of the bourgeois sense of agency of her male creator, since his obsession with “style” had intimately linked his “consciousness” with that of his character, giving it “something of his own imagination” and therefore his ideology, in sharp contrast to that of the readers (xx). For James, as McGurl explains, the “self-conscious” adherence to a “sense of reality” led to a structural “unreality” that Flaubert hoped to avoid (McGurl 69). Philip Grover, in his book *Henry James and the French Novel*, expands on this theory, explaining, “there is a mind in which certain experiences do not take place, or cannot take place” (Grover 45). Similarly, Huyssen in his essay “Mass Culture as Woman” attributes Flaubert’s failure to “objective neurosis” in which the author is “fetishizing in his own imagination femininity while simultaneously sharing his period’s hostility towards real women” (Huyssen 45). Emma is the symptomatic by-product of a prewar nostalgic society “in which masculinity is identified with action, enterprise, and progress—with realms of business, industry and law” (44). James and his peers would base their own work on these realist shortcomings, focusing on the unique conscious experiences of their characters instead of stringently adhering to the tropes of authenticity formerly associated with imagery. They began focusing on the observation of the world through the conscious experiences of new unique focalization. Continuing in the vein of “The Art of Fiction,” each of the 26 volumes of James’s New York Edition opened with a prefatory explanation equally labyrinthine as the novels and tales that follow. Hoping that these prefaces would create a “certain freshness of appetite and effect,” each of these sections offered readers “frank and critical talk about its” title stories (*Letters* 4:367). Prior to the New York Edition, he explained in a July 30, 1905, letter to Charles Scribner’s Sons, “I have never committed myself in print in any way, even so much as by three lines to a newspaper, on the subject I have written” (4: 367). Each of these sections

offers a few clues to help explain the choices he made during each work's composition and a justification for the emendations made in these final authorial editions.

In the preface to his New York Edition *Golden Bowl*, James reaffirmed this authorial philosophy of textual representation. The author, he explains, should:

Reduce one's reader, 'artistically' inclined, to such a state of hallucination by the images one has evoked as doesn't permit him to rest till he has noted or recorded them, set up some semblance of them in his own medium. (*The Golden Bowl* x)

While this philosophy is hyperbolic, by the time he had published *Maisie* in 1897, it was becoming a pragmatic means of survival for writers who published regularly in a growing number of illustrated periodicals. As McGurl explains, the dominant genre of mass print culture, the novel, was being held hostage by "pictorial images more immediate in their effects than mental images created by words" (McGurl 37). James was quickly becoming a "slave" of "too-fascinating" literary theories and began building a wall between himself and the general consumer (84). While most of his income had come from the adoption of his work by the middle-class masses, his work had made several stylistic concessions. For James, a popular audience required his work to be dumbed down in such a way as to be easily read by the masses. As McGurl continues, this "crisis of popularity suggested a loss of authorial agency [...] and illustrations were, in a sense, the visible form of this stupidity, the *graven images* that would sully the spirit-pictures hidden in James's words" (McGurl 38). Illustrated magazines, bemoaned James, considered their authors mere employees, "dust beneath their feet" to play second string to the image (*A Life in Letters* 278). These publications, he argues, were working towards the complete "negation of all literature" and would fill the resulting void with more marketable "insolen[t] picture book[s]" (278). Demoralized, James and his contemporaries began



indignantly constructing a wall between themselves and the modern consumer, subordinating reader accessibility to “ever-fresh complexities of design” (Wharton 84). During the twilight of his career, friend, and fellow novelist Edith Wharton recalled how James, like Flaubert, had become obsessively “preoccupied with the architecture of the novel” and the complex mental images his unique narrative style could paint in the minds of his readers (84).

James used *The Golden Bowl* to some extent to comment on the conscious interpretation of these literal and textual images. In the novel, through the discovery of a vaguely described photograph, the proverbial crack in Maggie and Amerigo’s marriage is revealed. After the novel’s opening in which The Prince and Charlotte find the titular golden bowl in a London curiosity shop, the salesman recognizes the two shoppers in a photograph, thus relaying their conversation to Maggie, who explains:

While he was waiting, he looked at a few photographs that stand about there and recognized two of them. Though it was so long ago, he remembered the visit made him by the lady and the gentleman. [...] he told me of your having wished to make each other presents [...] he would see how wisely you had guessed the flaw and how easily the bowl could be broken. (*Golden Bowl* 468)

While the content of the photograph is irrelevant to the progression of James’s narrative, the provocative moment of realization brings the image into the reader’s mind. The images, like Charlotte and Amerigo’s relationship, are recognizable and permanent, unlike the bowl’s hairline crack and fragility. In James’s passage, many of the signs such as “objects massive and lumpish” do not have firm real-world equivalent. For each of the 26 volumes of the New York Edition, specifically the two parts of his novel *The Golden Bowl*, photos are used as visual simulacra for key settings in the novel. Coburn’s image *The Curiosity Shop* is featured in the first of these two

volumes; taken using a soft focus, the photo is carefully manipulated by the photographer to hide any identifying characteristics of its real-world location.

Therefore, to pair the two inside a single text was a precarious undertaking. Several months after James's death in 1916, in an essay for *Photograms of the Year* titled "The Future of Pictorial Photography," Coburn explained, "An artist is a man who tries to express the inexpressible." This artist, literary or photographic, he continued, "struggles and suffers knowing that he can never realize his most perfect ideal" ("The Future" 194). As both Stewart and De Man suggest, this struggle to express the inexpressible is a struggle between the balance of "figural and metafigural language" (De Man 14). As McGurl explained, *The Golden Bowl* and James's other later period novels are prototypical examples of the artistic fiction being embraced by early twentieth-century novelists who, like James, rejected mainstream consumer culture and focused on the intricacies of their craft. The works of James's middle and late period are indicative of the early development of the "art-novel" but never quite reach the level of complexity in his later work (McGurl 1). As he made clear in "The Art of Fiction," James held firm to his belief that the novel could be a medium representative of "fine art," thus making the novelist, "in its honorific sense of the term, an artist" (3). In a notebook entry dated January 26, 1895, he described the ongoing struggle with the current state of mental labor and artistic production: "the artist, the man of letters, who all his life is trying—if only to get a living—to do something vulgar, to take the measure of the huge, flat foot of the public" (*Notebooks 180*). Given this, it is obvious a lack of public appreciation for their more artistic or experimental work frustrated Henry James and his peers. McGurl equates the "popular success" of the mainstream novel to an increase in public education and literacy. Citing Charles Dudley Warner's "Novel and the Common School," McGurl explains that the rise "of popular novel" ran in parallel with

“the mass-circulation newspaper,” which I believe at the time would have oversaturated the print market leaving little remaining real estate for authors who were pushing the novel genre to its stylistic limits (McGurl 5). If James’s novels were doomed to be a vulgar commodity for the literate masses, then his “narrative of consciousness” would be the embodiment of these “textual things,” through which he sought to use the “power of his mind to give form to the material world.” As previously suggested, the project of these modernists authors was to create a realism of consciousness independent from the previous defects of their predecessors. In her 1924 work *The Writing of Fiction*, friend, and fellow author Edith Wharton suggested that this shift came as her contemporaries “became more and more preoccupied with the architecture of the novel,” focusing on their own unique narrative styles. Prior to completing *The Golden Bowl*, James had “unconsciously subordinated all else to his ever-fresh complexities of design,” including reader accessibility (Wharton 84). Alternatively, Amy Tucker’s book *Illustration of the Master* argues that had James embraced the proliferation of the illustrated text, his “complications of diction and syntax” might have been more “easily broached” by including “recognizable and comprehensibly” illustrated points of reference (Tucker 15). Instead of taking away from his authorial agency, Tucker argues that illustrated and photographic accompaniment might have given him room for more complex narrative styles. Quoting James’s 1897 eulogy for illustrator and author George du Maurier, Tucker explains that this timidity resulted from James’s self-described “Jealousy of any pictorial aid rendered to fiction from outside [...], jealousy on behalf of a form prized preciously because [...] it can get on by itself.” Textual art could exist independently of visual illustration and therefore should not be flagrantly combined into something entirely different (std. in Tucker 25). While James saw value in the fine arts of the Victorian genteel, he loathed these illustrated periodicals because of their ability to overshadow

his own authorial influence. As Edel explains, in 1871, having recently been elected editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, William Dean Howells “asked James to serve as an occasional art reviewer” (*A Life* 128). Henry and William James’s childhood friend John La Farge had recommended him for the job, commenting that he possessed “the painter’s eye” (129). While writing for *The Atlantic* James published several critical essays including “Portraits of Places” (1883), “Transatlantic Sketches” (1875), and many early drafts of what would later become his 1893 collection *Pictures and Texts* and *The Painter’s Eye* (129). However, Edel contends that “James was not, as modernity defines it, an ‘art critic,’” as he was slow to recognize the importance of “the impressionists” and in later years was “bewildered by the post-impressionists” (129).

Yet, when Scribner requested that each volume of his NYE include a visual frontispiece, James still had his finger tightly pressed against the pulse of the modern art world and finding himself cynically enamored with the pictorial work of a young Alvin Langdon Coburn, he requested “twenty or more” photographic plates “of thoroughly fine quality” including *The Curiosity Shop* tipped in just before the title page of *The Golden Bowl* (qtd. in Edel 627).<sup>8</sup> Coburn, McGurl writes, was a “satisfactory solution to his problem of the image text,” as his “photos did not ‘keep or pretend to keep anything like dramatic step with their suggestive matter’” (McGurl 38). One the more difficult aspects of the Coburn and James’s project was the paradigmatic nature of both of their mediums, as Armstrong explains, “since images,” and from Walter Besant’s perspective, the novel, “were supposed to be historical records pure and simple,” both relying on the external world to create an image of the past in the present. Therefore, one “might expect them to adhere most closely to the doctrine of realism” (Armstrong 91). However,

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<sup>8</sup> “I should particularly appreciate a single very good plate in each volume, only one, but of thoroughly fine quality” (*Letters* 4:368).

when viewed from a present moment, recordings of the past are naturally “obsolescence” (91). As Armstrong suggests, this gives the images “a fantastic quality that puts them at the opposite pole from realism” (91). In James’s novel, the central conflict is entirely based on this concept. In the novel, Charlotte and the Prince describe their surrounding objects in terms of the past, acting out their nostalgic longing for their affair before Amerigo married Maggie. In the same scene where the characters first cross paths with Charlotte, considering the curiosity shop’s floor, Charlotte shouts “Oh, marble floors!” to which James’s narrator indirectly explains:

But she might have been thinking—for they were a connection, marble floors; a connection with many things; with her old Rome, and with his; with the palaces of the past, and a little, of hers; with the possibilities of the future, with the sumptuosities of his marriage, with the wealth of the Ververs. (109-10)

Here the language does not assign any visual qualities to the object being described, instead describing it in terms which negate the physical, making the marble a constant symbol of temporality which represents the past and the expected future based on Charlotte’s understanding of Amerigo and her previous life. Ultimately the bowl, shattered on a similar marble surface, becomes a correlative for Maggie’s flawed marriage. For Amerigo, the same marble floors represent nearly the same thing, albeit from a different point of reference. As McGurl explains, the floors point to “the practice [of] assimilating commoners with money to European aristocracies” that has been reversed because of nouveau riche American capitalists overshadowing traditional European gentry wealth (41). In the novel, as McGurl explains, “the ‘real’ aristocrat, Prince Amerigo, seems so [*sic*] almost literary to be the property of Adam Verver, another of his authentic works of art” (42). Like the photograph, Amerigo is a static image of the past that seems to lack agency beyond being a tool for James to shatter nostalgic

notions of “common culture and common knowledge” of “aristocratic value[s]” (53). In the novel, James is effectively attempting to liberate the aura of romance from the social elite in the same way that Benjamin argued photographers like Coburn were at the turn of the twentieth century. By replacing the traditional social hierarchies of the past by something more accessible to a mass audience, Stewart writes, “the authority of the ‘original’ is jeopardized, [...] the work of art is emancipated from its dependence upon ritual” (Stewart 8).

James knew that Coburn’s frontispieces would not attempt to illustrate what his narrative had already illustrated, instead endowing each volume of the New York Edition with the visual consciousness of their author. James must have been confident that his young photographer understood, as Edward Schwarzschild explains in his essay “Revising Vulnerability: Henry James’s Confrontation with Photography,” the “threat the images posed to James’s writing” (Schwarzschild 62). Coburn, he continues, through the “beautiful conformity” of each frontispiece, assured both artists that their individual “control had been definitively satisfied” (65). The images offered James’s readers a glimpse into the everyday world of the author and the place in time he inhabited, which set the intended tone of the stories and novels in each volume. In his 1966 autobiography *Alvin Langdon Coburn Photographer*, Coburn reminisced on the “triumphant culmination of this adventure” as commemorated in James’s preface (*Alvin Langdon* 58). Coburn’s photographs, James wrote, “were not to be competitive with the text, or obvious illustrations” but acted as an independent accent to the novel (58). Similarly, in a notebook entry from June 21, 1909, James makes note of his meeting with Coburn in Hammersmith, London, to begin their search for the first piece to accompany the 23<sup>rd</sup> volume. According to Edel’s annotation, “a day later on June 22 James mailed off the preface to *The Golden Bowl* for the New York Edition” (*Notebooks* 304). For the image of the curiosity shop, he wrote:

Optical symbols or echoes, expressions of no particular thing in the text, but only of the type of idea of this or that thing [...] the most small pictures of our 'set' stage with the actors left out. (*The Golden Bowl xi*)

Coburn's dusky photograph dipped into the first gathering of the text depicts the nouveau-accented windowed front of a small curiosity shop mimicking the "muffling fog" emblematic of narrow London alleyways (*The Letters of Henry James 277*). Throughout the image, Coburn has carefully scratched the surface of the glass plate negative, skewing the identifying text of a small street sign reflected in the right corner of the display window and blurring the identity of paintings behind the glass, leaving only their rough shape and size silhouetted in the image (Schwarzchild 63). To further illustrate the importance of the photograph's visual anatomy, in the novel James resists the temptation of providing any real description of the "small but interesting dealer in Bloomsbury Street," making Coburn's photo the only real representation of James's "stage" as his narrator focuses on the players: Charlotte, the Prince, and "the man in the little shop" (*The Golden Bowl 104*). Even in his letters, notebooks, and the preface, James refused to reveal the location of his "shop of the mind," explaining that the photo represented the "author's projected world [...] and therefore not 'taken from' a particular establishment anywhere" (xii). While not intended to be taken literally, this statement comments on James later style. Unlike Flaubert's figurative description, the nature of the store front is not left ambiguous; instead, a clear image of what the store looks like gives externality to the text, preventing much deviation of the reader's imagination from the author's intended image. All the contents, aside from a cracked golden bowl, are left for the reader's mind to discover as it fills in the blanks of James's setting. Coburn understood these implications as well, keeping, like James, the location of the real world store a secret until his own death in 1966. Over three decades after James's

death, in 1953, during an interview for BBC 3, Coburn admitted he was the only living person who knew the location. Explaining “probably by now it too has gone, destroyed by bombs or wiped away by the ruthless modernization of these latter days,” he again recapitulated the photographic image’s ties to a nostalgia of earlier times, times before world-shattering conflicts (Schwarzschild 76n27).<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, James and Coburn’s collaborative work was ultimately a lost cause. In her memoir, *Henry James at Work*, James’s final amanuensis Theodora Bosanquet explained, “the artist ... in complete possession of his ‘faculties,’ did not need to bother himself with doubts as to his ability to write better at the end of a lifetime of hard work [...]. He knew he could write better” (Bosanquet 258). This would prove true of James’s New York Edition. After the poor reviews of his later fiction, and “waning popularity after his 1906 lecture tour across the states,” he found that “his American audience had labeled him as a ‘novelist of the aristocracy’” (Edel 609). In his later years, many felt he had become a “condescending expatriate who talked of ‘the advance of civilization’ in America as if he were still in the world of Fenimore Cooper”; his nostalgia for the old world of his youth left its mark on the innovation of his later life (609). As previously noted, the New York Edition would see abysmal sales and very little profits for James, especially after he agreed to forgo a portion of the royalties to purchase publication rights for many of his early novels and pay Coburn prior to Scribner’s and Sons’ publication. His 1914 income ledger confirms this: “Received from J.B. Pinker £25.5.8 Scribner’s ½ yearly royalties on sale of Edition. Lowest figure, alas, yet!” (Notebooks 608).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Both Ralph Bogardus’s “Henry James and the Art of Illustration,” and Edward Schwarzschild’s “Revising Vulnerability” cite University of Michigan professor Frank Huntley’s 1955 transcription of the BBC program (Firebaugh 215n2).

<sup>10</sup> In the *Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, James notes a monthly income beginning on February 11, 1909, labeled “Syracuse” averaging 51.4.7 English Pounds or approximately 618 pounds a year (Notebooks 600). In his 1985 edition of *Henry James: A Life*, Leon Edel explains that Henry James



Conclusively, as Crinson explains, the point at which Coburn and James's pictorial representation of illustrative art and textual representation converged "took a strong symbolist line" (Crinson 157). For Coburn, this meant avoiding "the chaotic manifestations of twentieth century life" to "penetrate below the surface of things" without being "distracted by the world's multitudinous detail and workaday concerns" (157). The "multitudinous detail and workaday" concerns of modern city, society, life, and class permeate many James's later novels. In a way, his work represents a sort of textual pictorialism mimetic of the illustration he chose to accompany it and the nostalgic consciousness of his characters. Bogardus corroborates this relationship, arguing "that certain qualities were present both in photography and in the literary movements that James's fiction fits into" (Bogardus 141). "Coburn's art," Bogardus explained, transformed moments from life into "beauty and meaning" (176). Whilst James's characters inhabited these suspended moments, their "various and progressively more penetrating understanding, of each other" was the primary focus of James's text (176,183). The scenes in Coburn's photographs were auxiliary to the text; however, when combined with text, as James wrote, they "performed a miracle," became "interesting" and "recognize[d] [*sic*]" his original vision (*The Golden Bowl* ix). Leading the young photographer through his beloved London streets, "although not literally a photographer," Coburn writes, "James must have had sensitive plates in his brain on which to record his impressions!" (*Alvin Langdon* 58). As aforementioned critics have noted, James's photographic tastes were mimetic of the best trained Pictorialists: "He always knew exactly what he wanted, although many of the pictures were but images in his mind and imagination" (58). As Schwarzschild explains, "born in 1843, Henry James belonged to the

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inherited James Sr.'s Syracuse estate valued at "\$80,000 [...] yielding seven percent after taxes and maintenance, or about \$5,000 a year" (Edel 285-86). Edel converted the dollar amounts in *A Life* to 1983 exchange rates; therefore, in 1983 £25.5.8 was approximately equal to \$202 (Edel 462).

first American generation to come of age in a world already pervaded by photography” that was artificially constrained by lengthy exposure times and the claustrophobic flatness of the daguerreotype (Schwarzschild 51). It would not be until years later that photography could “accommodate James’s young ‘throbbing consciousness”” and thoroughly illustrate the twisting grammar or the scenes his characters inhabited (54). Through photography and “the fragility of human control,” James and Coburn’s “Dual discovery” lead to the relinquishment of “absolute authority and control” sought by the French Realists in such a way as the early Pictorialists had not expected.

While James had a contemptuous relationship with the ever-growing New York skyline, Alfred Stieglitz and his burgeoning photographer peers saw these early skyscrapers as a fascinating subject for their photos. One of the structures which they found particularly interesting was the Flatiron building. Within five city blocks of their Fifth Avenue studio and gallery space, the invention of Stieglitz and Edward Steichen’s Photo-Secession developed and grew on a timeline parallel to the Flatiron building, both being founded and finished in 1902. Inspired by the building, Steichen, Stiglitz, and later Coburn, would capture many photographic studies of it from nearly identical angles. From a retrospective perspective, these images represent an intertextual dialog on the effects of time on the captured image. In an interview for Dorothy Norman’s 1946 essay, “Alfred Stieglitz: Six Happenings,” Stieglitz described taking the first of these three photos, “I suddenly saw the Flatiron Building as I had never seen it before” (“Six Happenings” 14). Photography at the time of James and Coburn’s collaboration had not quite been accepted by the art world, however, portrait and documentary photography were already mainstream commodities. However, in its early history the very nature of photographic authenticity was a matter of debate.

As Charles Baudelaire famously argued the Daguerreotype was a mere illusion of authenticity. Baudelaire was “appalled” that photography was being forcefully inserted into a “popular definition of fine art” that valued the “accurate representation of some external reality” in opposition to mastery of the artists (Baudelaire 86). In his indignant commentary he compared the camera to an indifferent pestilence of “an avenging god” answering the “prayers” of the masses with “Daguerre as messiah” (87). The camera’s images were closer than any traditional art’s ability to illustrate nature, and thus its photochemical illustrations sought to usurp the agency of artist. Photography, he concluded, was a “refuge of all failed painters with too little talent” and those “too lazy to complete their studies,” and “not only assumed the air of blind and imbecile infatuation but took on the aspect of revenge,” threatening the wellbeing of the industry it sought to emulate. (87). Moreover, photographic reproduction, he complained, is “a form of lunacy, an extraordinary fanaticism” whose misuse was an endemic “impoverishment of French artistic genius [...] if photography was allowed to deputize art.” He explained it might corrupt all “art all together” (87). Instead, he argued that photography is the “handmaid of the arts and sciences,” a visual shorthand to “enrich the traveler’s album and restore to his eye the precision his memory may lack” (88).

Interestingly, like Baudelaire, Balzac approached photography with a similar level of skepticism. In his 1900 memoir, *When I Was a Photographer*, Nadar would recount the novelist’s reaction to being photographed in 1842. According to Nadar, Balzac imagined that “everybody in its natural state was made up of a series of ghostly images superimposed in layers of infinity, wrapped in infinitesimal films” (qtd. in Sontag 158).<sup>11</sup> The camera, he imagined, could capture one of those layers. The nostalgia one felt while looking at the photograph was the

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<sup>11</sup> Nadar Félix is the pseudonym of Gaspard-Félix Tournachon

effect of a deep longing for the past, represented by that last layer of self. The camera locked the memory of a moment in place, and the memory then became subordinated to the photograph, which is then ultimately interpreted as truth. Paraphrasing Balzac's "fanciful theory," Susan Sontag in her book *On Photography* explains that "the whole of a life may be summed up in a momentary appearance." If a "change in appearance" is equivalent to a "change in person," then the photographic process captures a momentary appearance that previously could only be consciously recalled in different forms from differing focalized points of view (Sontag 160).

As Illbruck explains, Balzac's thesis predates photography, and was previously conceived by German Romantic poet Friedrich Schlegel, who, in 1797, theorized that "no moment of consciousness is the first." Instead, its syntax is one in which each impression "presupposes an early [*sic*], preceding one and leads back to it" (Illbruck 138). Through this process, Schlegel argued, our self is derived from memory as time distances us from "the originary [*sic*] I." A person's identity in the present is a summation of all their previous experience, and the modification of a single memory causes a chain reaction altering the present self. Nostalgia is a longing for a return to the "originary I." This longing, he argues, "can resolve itself only in art," which represents a "separation between reflection and perception" (qtd. in Illbruck 138). Both Schlegel and Illbruck suggest that art is a remedy or reconciliation for the disease of nostalgia. Disease, Sontag would later argue, "is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship" (*Illness as Metaphor* 3). In our specific example, the night-side of life is a longing for the past surviving in the present. "Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship" in both "kingdoms" (3).

Ultimately, the mid-nineteenth century realism was only useful to its proponents if it promoted their own nostalgic world view, leaving the door open for James and his peers' stylistic retooling. Nadar's own autobiographical account of working with Balzac, which varies in tone

dramatically from Sontag's solemn interpretation of photography's seemingly mystical properties, made this bias clearer. Nadar, one of the earliest proponents of photography as a subjective art form, is much more cynical, focusing more on Balzac's use of hyperbole to misrepresent the medium. As he explains, as photography was widely adopted by the public the more superstitious views of the media were quickly dispelled. In its infancy, "the appearance of the Daguerreotype—which more legitimately should be called the Niépce type," Nadar explains, "could not fail to provoke considerable emotion" from those seeing it for the first time ("Balzac and the Daguerreotype" 2). Photography, he continues, "unhinges the mind" of the more conservative public, immediately being described as the work of the "Prince of Darkness" (3). Nadar comments that these interpretations were more prominent among "ignorant and illiterate" groups, whereas a celebrity socialite such as Honoré de Balzac, "one of the most beautiful minds [,] suffered the contagion of this recoil" (4). However, Nadar asks his readers whether the author's "terror before the Daguerreotype" is sincere or simulated, concluding that if it was sincere, he had "only to gain from his loss, since his abdominal abundances, and others, permitted him to squander his 'specters' without counting," suggesting that the poetic description of the camera's power was only a real concern when being captured by its eye did not benefit the author's celebrity (5). When Balzac and his peers' denial of the "scientific explanation of the Daguerreian mystery" eventually "passed to the domain of the banal" and was no longer an effective tool to promote his own celebrity, the author stopped frequenting Nadar's studio (6).

Chapter one examined both the European origins of realism and how late-modernist writers and photographers adapted it to create vivid impressions of the world they inhabited. I have shown that both photography and Henry James's psychological realism had parallel developments, and both became integral parts of James's revised narratives. To paraphrase

James, Coburn's photography was the stage on which the text's actors exist. My second chapter builds on this, showing how, like James, Alfred Stieglitz and his peers cemented photography's place as fine art, how their work made photography a primary surrogate for visual memory, and how these images acted as a visual index for the rapidly expanding urban American landscape. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the repeatability of photographic imagery by looking at four benchmark photographs of New York City's Flatiron Building taken by Stieglitz, Coburn, Edward Steichen, and Paul Strand between 1905 and 1917 and what each has to say about the reproducibility of memory. I have chosen these four images because they link James and Coburn's work with the work of Stieglitz's Photo-Secession and embody similar themes of generational disillusionment with previous aesthetic traditions. While James's relationship with the city's verticality was contemptuous, the construction of this early skyscraper is as nostalgic of a symbol for Stieglitz and his peers as being introduced to European culture was for James, making the building a powerful simulacrum of their own movement.

## Chapter 2: The Art of Memory: Stieglitz, Steichen, Strand, and the Evolution of Perspectival Isolation

Using four benchmark images of New York's Flatiron building, this chapter examines how Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen's journal *Camera Work* helped differentiate photography from painting as its own independent artistic medium. I have used these images of the Flatiron because of the skyscraper's proximity to the galleries of the Photo-Secession and its role as a symbol for the rapidly expanding urban cityscape commonly associated with modernity. Moreover, for these artists, the Flatiron is indicative of the transition from the anglicized hopefulness of James's generation to something new that helped the Photo-Secessionist brand of photography differentiate itself from traditional art, to becoming something distinctly American. It was American, in that the creative output of the Photo-Secession focused on legitimizing its medium free from the weight of the old-world tradition commonly associated with more painterly modes of representation. In a broader sense, using the theory of interwar scholars like Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer and contemporary proponents of Avant-garde photography such as Rosalind Krauss, Clement Greenberg, Peter Bunnell, and Joel Smith, this chapter will better define what it means to be photographic. To put it bluntly, this chapter addresses the question of why this medium is associated with visual realism and the consequences of an overreliance on technologically augmented memory. This chapter follows the research path of the previous sections, foremost engaging with the primary materials on Stieglitz's photographic research introduced in this chapter, including Steichen's autobiography *A Life in Photography* (1963); letters and interviews from Dorothy Norman's *Alfred Stieglitz* (1979); Coburn's autobiography *Alvin Langdon Coburn, Photographer: An Autobiography with*

*over 70 Reproductions of His Works* (1978); essays and editorials from *Camera Work*, including the two issues in which Steichen's and Stieglitz's Flatiron images are published; and several contemporaneous discussions on the uniqueness of the photographic medium taken from Alan Trachtenberg's 1980 collection *Classic Essays on Photography*, his 2008 essay "Through a Glass, Darkly: Photography and Cultural Memory," and 1990 book *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*. My theoretical framework builds on the previous section, as well as on Kracauer's essay "Photography," Benjamin's two essays in which he defines his theory of the aura, "A Short History of Photography" and "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproduction," Nicholas Gaskill's *Chromographia: American Literature and the Modernization of Color*, Krauss's "Photography's Discursive Spaces," and Susan Sontag's *On Photography*. Last, to provide historical context, I have used biographies and exhibition catalogues such as Allan Sekula's essay "The Body and the Archive," Peter Bunnell's book *A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography*, Mark Crinson's essay, "Pictorialism and Industry," Michel Frizot's *A New History of Photography*, Maria Hambourg's catalog *Paul Strand Circa 1916*, Joel Smith's *Edward Steichen: The Early Years*, and Mike Weaver's *Alvin Langdon Coburn: Symbolist Photographer*.

Late in his career, when his fiction had reached its experimental peak, as he had when assaulted by the proliferation of periodical illustration, James developed a more contemptuous relationship with the technological expansion of the urban spaces that he had been familiar with. Upon seeing New York during his 1905 tour, he describes the concrete and glass structures jutting out of the city scape as teeth in a "monstrous comb" built for "raking in profit" (*The American Scene* 49). The mature James's cynical view of urban progress stands in stark contrast to that of his youthful persona. During the earlier years of his career, his outlook was much more



positive, as reflected in his 1871 novella, *A Passionate Pilgrim*. In his story, his titular pilgrim, on his deathbed, looks back on the state of the world since his boyhood, praising the ingenuity of his attendant's "young imagination" in a post-bellum America establishing itself as a burgeoning international presence. "There was a certain grandeur," he explains, "in the lack of decoration" of a young nation, free of the restraint of tradition (*The Passionate Pilgrim* 418). Considering the adolescent nation, James was hopeful for a fresh future where, according to his character, this new generation can "invent its own tradition" to create its own path "and raise high into our morning-air, with a ringing hammer and nail" new "Castles" in which they could dwell (418). However, as an adult, his perspective of the nation of his birth had changed. This becomes abundantly clear after his United States tour in 1905, that America had not lived up to its full potential. The South had never quite reconciled itself after the Civil War adopting the traditions of a fabricated antebellum mythology. Moreover, the New England of his childhood had, in his opinion, was too materialistic and too industrial. Likewise, technology reflected his ideal modern advancement: he had replaced his pen with a typewriter in 1895, became a frequent bicyclist, and began dictating to his final amanuensis whose personage was emblematic of the 'new woman' ideal that he had popularized in his novels, writing to his brother in October 1907, as Edel summarizes, "the 'young boyish Miss Bosanquet' was 'worth all of the other (females) that I have had put together'" (Edel 635).<sup>12</sup> Bosanquet would be with James for the rest of his life and would eventually publish an account of the experience titled *Henry James at Work* in 1924.<sup>13</sup> In her book, she describes James's mixed reaction to the increasing frequency of motorcars driving

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<sup>12</sup> Here he is referring to his previous amanuenses Mary Weld, and several interim candidates sent from "Miss Petheridge's secretarial office and employment agency" (Edel 634).

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Bosanquet's book was set and printed on Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press the same year as Woolf's seminal modernist manifesto "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown" which could be argued to be the late modernist equivalent of James's "The Art of Fiction."

past his Lamb House office, commenting on the look of excitement and existential dread as he watched them pass. “The sight of one of these vehicles,” she explains, drew from him a “vigorous outburst of amazement, admiration, or horror” for a modern world that could produce “such efficient monsters for gobbling protective distance”; the technology and speed of this new world was leaving James behind (Bosanquet 731). As his Gilded Age and Edwardian peers were fading from the public spotlight, new forms of fiction and visual art were quickly taking their places. Coburn and other young artists were gaining prominence among the artist elites of New York City collaborating with their peers to develop increasingly precise definitions of photographic art.

As Peter Bunnell explained in his book *A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography, 1889-1923*, these earlier photographic artists believed that the “pure, or straight, photograph was too perfect, that it represented too much of actuality, of what was there” (Bunnell 2). The world captured through the lens of the camera is, in some ways, perfect (2). The level of detail presented by a photograph is nearly complete, thus almost completely open to any utopian interpretation of the viewer. In his seminal 1927 essay “Photography,” Siegfried Kracauer argues that photographs are “likenesses” of their subjects, but the amount of the verbal narrative paired with them dictates how they are viewed (Kracauer 48).<sup>14</sup> Written in 1927, his essay focuses on the mass production and consumption of photography, specifically the over-proliferation of the snapshot and the effect of this deluge of visual information on a mass audience, which, he argues, uses the photo as a supplement for memory. While Benjamin’s “Short History of the Photograph” looks at the photographic image’s history in parallel with the dissemination of the

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<sup>14</sup> “Die Photographie” was first published in the 28 October 1927 issue of *Frankfurter Zeitung*; however, the following citations were taken from Thomas Levin’s 1995 translation of *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*.

aura, Siegfried Kracauer is less optimistic.<sup>15</sup> For him, the commodification of the image opens the door to misuse; the camera's ability to capture infinitely more detail than the human mind makes it the ideal supplement for actual memory, memory that is naturally incomplete. "The flood of photos sweeps away the dams of memory," he explains. The photograph has a role as a convalescent aid, but "if it were offering itself as an aid to memory, then memory would have to determine the selection" (58). For example, if someone wanted to confirm the existence of the oddly shaped office building on the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street that they had walked past years earlier, a photograph could confirm the material validity of their memory (58). As I argue in my previous chapter, James uses the photograph of his father and himself as a child to validate his recollection of the day. For him, the photograph is not a stand-in for the oral narrative, just an artifact of it. Likewise, Coburn's images in the New York Edition are not a reactant of the *Golden Bowl* or any of James's other novels and tales; they only reaffirm the spatiality of the setting. If the image is used as a narrative reactant or a replacement for the setting in the text, according to Kracauer, the photograph "threatens to destroy the potentially existing awareness of crucial traits" found within the written narrative, thus overshadowing, and degrading the descriptive integrity of the text (58). Similarly, in his 1989 book *Reading American Photography*, Alan Trachtenberg reiterates Kracauer's thesis, suggesting that the term "photography" meaning "writing with light" places the medium somewhere in between "writing and drawing," mimetic and diegetic "practices of making legible inscription" (*Reading American Photography* 4). In this liminal space, to be photographic means to be a part of a "dialectic of

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<sup>15</sup> My citations for this essay are taken from the 2008 Jennings, Doherty, and Levin edition of *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility*, which lists the essay as "Little History of Photography." However, it was originally published in *Die literarische Welt* in 1931 with the title "Kleine Geschichte der Photographie" or "A Short History of Photography" as it appears in Alan Trachtenberg's *Classic Essays on Photography*.

strange and familiar, of astonishment mingling with recognition” (4). Meanwhile, as Kracauer argues, the reading of the photographic always depends on the historical narrative applied to it unless, as with the Photo-secessionists, photography is disconnected from its painterly peer through the ultimate rejection of those prescribed historical narratives.

Accepting a photographic image as a glimpse into a “moment of the past,” Kracauer explains, in the absence of “oral tradition,” the “image alone” cannot “construct any likeness of reality” (48). Thus, any single reading of a photograph depends on multiple points of convergence between mimesis and diegesis: the image shows us a complete report of visual information while the caption tells us about how to read that information. Therefore, to invent art photography, Stieglitz and his contemporaries required a method of presenting their images as a convalescing narrative in which a reading is derived from the image alone, without the image acting under the pretense of narrative propaganda in which nostalgia or sentimentality made the viewer adopt an unreliable image of the past. Kracauer frames this argument using the question, “Is this what grandmother looked like?” The photograph contains all the details of his grandmother, including wrinkles on the face, and clothing but is “neither the entire spatial appearance of a state of affairs nor its entire temporal course” (49). Associated with the caption “my grandmother,” the clothing in the image, he argues, only reflects popular dress at the time, as opposed to the tastes of the real person who wore them, likewise, the girl in the photo “smiles continuously” but it is always “the same smile” which “no longer refers to the life from which it has been taken” because that life at that moment only exists in his own constructed memories (48). That same is true of an image of a building, specifically the four images of New York’s Flatiron building I discuss in this section. Kracauer’s reading of the photographic image suggests the photographs of the Flatiron made by Stieglitz, Steichen, Coburn, and Strand do not represent

a history of the building but instead a visual index for an oral tradition. In my case, the image points to an oral history of the photograph as art, each image marking a key moment of development in the first twenty years of the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, in his book *Camera Work: Photography and the Twentieth Century Word*, Michael North argues that Stieglitz and his peers acknowledge the issue with this abundance of detail as being the main barrier to entry for photography as its own art form. Therefore, the first major step to overcome this barrier was to “deny one of the more fundamental characteristics of photography,” limiting the amount of detail captured by the camera (North 43). At its inception, North writes, photography, specifically the Daguerreotype, left its “first observers [...] struck by its infinite depth of detail [...] more detail than an individual could perceive” or “record accurately,” this detail makes photograph distinctly different from any form of natural memory, artistic innovation, or process of de-escalation (44). Photographers such as Henry Emerson and late nineteenth-century Pictorialists favored an imperfect soft focus to the “technically perfect camera lenses” that made the photograph “inartistic and unnatural” (44). “Faithful mimesis” of the world recreated with the camera requires a combination of these “selective” methods of “suppression of detail,” including extrication of chromatic aberration with increasingly complex combinations of objects (44). *Camera Works*’ Flatiron photos are evidence of the process by which the artist wrestled for control over the mechanical realness of his medium.

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<sup>16</sup> Here Kracauer is making an argument similar in nature to Clement Greenberg’s “Avant-Garde and Kitsch.” Greenberg argues, that because traditional portraiture has a more historical or traditional reading, we are more inclined to understand it as simulacra. Therefore, we read it under the pretense of its penchant for artifice. Greenberg uses the term “kitsch” to describe this artifice, explaining that kitsch, “using for raw material the debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture,” presents the mass audience with easily read narratives that might hide the seeds of disastrous prosthetic histories (“Avant-Garde and Kitsch” 10).

To combat this issue, Kracauer explains, “truth can be found only by a liberated consciousness,” or, in less pretentious terms, truth, at least as it pertains to a photographic image, requires a viewer to acknowledge the illusion, and to a lesser extent understand the potential to be manipulated by an image, assessing “the demonic nature of the drive” to be fooled (51).<sup>17</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, photographers, specifically Alfred Stieglitz, began actively responding to this same issue which Baudelaire and Nadar had both acknowledged decades earlier. As Peter Bunnell explained in his book *A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography, 1889-1923*, these early photographers agreed with Kracauer’s assessment that the “pure, or straight, photograph was too perfect.” However, the term “Straight photography” is quite a bit more complicated (Burnell 2). While “Straight” refers to a photograph that is absent of the painterly accoutrements of Pictorialism, the definition, eventually epitomized by the work of Paul Strand’s “Straight” photography, lacked the painterly aesthetic, instead relying on space-restricting composition. Pictorialists were less concerned with a strict adherence to visual realism, instead focusing on capturing their own impression of the scene in front of the eye of the camera. As Sontag explains, “by the 1920s the photographer had become a modern hero.” The popularity of snapshots and availability of paper film gave almost everyone the ability to “apotheosize” the world around them by putting everything under the unblinking eye of the camera (Sontag 90). Two years after James’s death in 1918, Coburn would proudly proclaim that the camera was a tool of “fast seeing,” a sentiment that “echoed the futurist apotheosis of machines and speed” (124). Whereas time had been a major limiting factor for the mass adoption

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<sup>17</sup> Both Kracauer and Lukács use the term demonic in *The Theory of the Novel* and “Photography,” as shorthand for being deceived. The reference is taken from Descartes, 1641 *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, in which he contends “I will suppose, then, not that Deity, who is sovereignly good and the fountain of truth, but that some malignant demon, who is at once exceedingly potent and deceitful, has employed all his artifice to deceive me” (Descartes’ 20).

of early photography, the eventual truncation of photo-time became a symbol of the rapidly expanding modern world.

Thus, returning to Kracauer's essay, this transition represented a moment in which the detail of photography began replacing our natural understanding of memory. Because "memory does not pay attention to dates," he writes, a person is their ideal self in context with time in memory, counterintuitively making the painting a more accurate recreation of memory than the photograph (Kracauer 50). In a painted portrait "the meaning of the object takes on a spatial appearance," the portrait may lack the discursive traits of setting, but the image represents how the sitter wants to be remembered through a thickness of art or the lack of "surface coherence" of paint on canvas (52). For "history to present itself" in a photograph, its "surface coherence [...] must be destroyed" since the photograph, as I have discussed previously, is too close to being an image of objective reality: it captures only a moment that loses meaning the more the present becomes displaced from the captured moment in time (52).

Compared to the public's quick adoption of portrait photography, the European and American art world's acceptance of the photo was a more drawn-out process. Before The Museum of Modern Art became the first large institution to establish a department of photography in 1940, small groups and clubs organized most exhibitions of photographic art in smaller galleries. While photography was nowhere near as cumbersome as has it had been in its early years, for the auteur, photographic processing still required a fair amount of space and equipment that might not have been readily available in an increasingly dense metropolitan area such as New York. For this reason, these organizations often provided their members with collaborative space, community dark room access, and a place for more prominent members to display and sell their work. One of the first such organizations in the United States was The

Camera Club of New York. Founded in 1884, the club offered workspaces, and in 1897 under the editorship of Alfred Stieglitz, the camera club began their periodical publication of the “Official Organ of The Camera Club” *Camera Notes* (*Camera Notes* 1:1). In 1890, at the same time James and his peers were advancing the plight of the Art Novel, Alfred Stieglitz had returned to his family home in New York after studying chemistry in Berlin. Like James, Stieglitz, upon his return “experienced an intense longing for Europe.” However, dissimilar to James, he had “a glowing vision of America — of its promise” and was thus more interested in advancing American culture than adopting European tradition (qtd. in *Alfred Stieglitz* 5). One night while walking the streets of New York he rediscovered his American identity. Stumbling upon a stage adaptation of Alexandre Dumas’ *Camille* with Eleonora Duse, a prominent Italian actress, playing the lead role, he writes, “I felt, for the first time since I had left Europe, there was a contact with my country once more,” realizing that there is a possibility of a productive cultural interchange between the new modern American art and the popular tastes of the European connoisseur (6). America for Stieglitz’s was a blank slate ripe for innovation. Therefore, he saw adapting European traditions as an opportunity to make something new, something American. Given his background in photography, and likely early experimentation while in Berlin, he adopted photography as the ideal medium for this cultural interchange, capturing more “things like that woman, and that play, in the United States” (6). I have already mentioned that Stieglitz’s first major contribution to photography was his role as editor for *Camera Notes*. However, as Edward Steichen, Stieglitz’s future collaborator explained, other members of the Camera Club felt *Camera Notes* “should be devoted to the work of the members of the club and should not be concerned with the art of photographers elsewhere,” a sentiment that is obviously at odds with Stieglitz’s broader ambitions (Steichen 40). Given that he included



many of the core Camera Club contributors in future endeavors, and was weary of burning any bridges, his future confrontations with other members of the Club, according to Steichen's account, were cordial, even though his frustration with the club's close-minded policies would eventually lead to his resignation in May 1900 (*Camera Notes* 4:34).

Like Stieglitz, the Camera Club was initially only interested in pictorial photography that visually imitated other mediums like illustration and painting. Using *Camera Notes* as their mouthpiece, the Camera Club's founders boasted a growing membership of prominent photographers, including Stieglitz, F. Holland Day, Gertrude Kasebier, and French photographer Robert Demachy, all of whom were interested in "distancing themselves from the hobbyist snapshooters" who were familiar with the basic functions of George Eastman's pre-loaded Brownie cameras but were not as knowledgeable about the developing process or interested in actively contributing to the evolution of photography as fine art (*Camera Notes* 4:1). As John Tagg explains in *The Burden of Representation*, the prominence of portraiture, casual, and commercial photography threatened to squeeze the art photographer out of the market. Likewise, reproducibility of the image posed a similar threat to the originality of the artist's work. Pictorialism was a way to differentiate photographic art from these other forms until 'straight' unaltered photography and new modes of abstraction would ultimately become widely accepted by Stieglitz and his peers. Having in 1885 established the Camera Club's London counterpart, P.H. Emerson wrote an 1889 essay "A Photographic Vision," which is the first of several manifestos to lay the groundwork in defining photography as its own medium, explaining that even though, unlike the paint brush and palette, the camera was a mechanical device, its artistic agency came from the photographer's ability to choose and compose the captured image. The photograph therefore was close to the original moment captured, but its value was not dependent

on scarcity but a pure form of originality. In Emerson's own words, the photographer's intentional subjectivity, "selection, arrangement, and recording of certain facts, with the aim of giving aesthetic pleasure," is what makes a photographer an artist (Emerson 10). What makes the photograph a work of art is this mastery of isolating its unique impression, different from memory, with a nearly infinite plane of detail. Pictorialists defeat the indifference of the apparatus by liberally applying a soft-focus blur and physical distortion to the image. Through chemical experimentation, mechanical manipulations, selective composition, and technical skill, the photographer compensates for the eventual loss of objectivity, or photographic authenticity, making photography the art of time, or capturing an instance of light reflected off its subject thus making it overtly susceptible to nostalgia. As Emerson concludes, what differentiated photography from the fate of being pure documentary record was its ability to "appeal to the emotional side of man's nature," one's sentimentality and taste, not just "his intellectual side" (10).

After leaving the Camera Club, Stieglitz continued to edit *Camera Notes* until 1902, when in collaboration with Steichen, he began publishing *Camera Works*, announcing the formation of his Photo-Secession. Stieglitz's quarterly journal focused on the work of photographers whom the editors had baptized "Photo-Secessionists." As he brazenly proclaims in the third issue of *Camera Work*, the Secession's goal is to accomplish three key objectives: advance "photography as applied to pictorial expression," establish a membership of "Americans practicing or otherwise interested in the art," and organize what would later become the 291 Gallery for holding "exhibitions not necessarily limited to the production of the Photo-Secession or to American work." Thus, unlike the Camera Club, *Camera Work* served as the printed correlative for a much larger photographic ambassadorship, to organize and promote an

American photographic tradition as an equal participant among its European peers (*Camera Work* 3:1). As Steichen explained in his essay for the 1914 “special” issue of *Camera Work*, this new group represented “a psychological element of universal consequence that could [...] grip humanity at its very entrails” (“291” 66).<sup>18</sup> Prior to his separation from the Camera Club, Pictorialism was the emblematic mode of art photography in both Europe and the United States. Pictorialism’s artistic ambitions were pragmatic, focused on the emulation of paint on canvas, as a way of demonstrating the photograph’s viability as an alternative worthy of inclusion within the painterly pantheon of contemporary fine art. Ultimately, from Stieglitz’s perspective, Pictorialism had failed to differentiate itself as its own independent medium, instead relying on the traditions of the past to promote and define itself. As Nancy Armstrong argued in her book *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, “in 1904 Stieglitz was not alone in declaring pictorialism a failure,” having inspired many of his peers to follow suit, shifting their own method (251). This ideological shift “prompted a rash of manifestos urging photography to divorce itself from painting,” peppering the pages of *Camera Work*. These artists would begin to better define photography as its own independent medium (251).

*Camera Work* was unique in that instead of acting as a trade journal, its pages are almost entirely dedicated to photography. Even issues which featured works by Matisse and Picasso focus on the photograph as a medium for the reproduction of art. Each volume showcases one or two photographers’ work and is almost entirely hand printed by Stieglitz, intending to make every image to the same standards as what one might find in his 291 Fifth Avenue gallery. This meant the images in each issue were meant to be removed and displayed. For this reason, it is

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<sup>18</sup> Much of this July 1914 issue of *Camera Work* is dedicated to essays, poems, stories written by prominent Photo-Secessionists with evangelical fervor. Each entry is dedicated to answering the question, “What is ‘291’?”

nearly impossible to find a single complete issue for less than the cumulative collector's price of the included images. The Photochrome Engraving Company is given credit for printing the photogravures in each issue. According to Julian Thompson's essay "Stieglitz Portfolio and Other Published Photographs," it was originally the Hellochrome Company, which was founded by Stieglitz's Berlin roommates "Louis Schubart and Joseph Obermeyer" (Thompson 11). In 1903, when the Hellochrome company failed, Stieglitz intervened, introducing its staff to the photogravure process, allowing them to produce halftone images for each issue of *Camera Work*. This effectively eased any additional cost associated with having *Camera Work* produced by a third-party printer. The initial price of each issue was "four dollars a year" or "two dollars" per single issue, with "the right to increase the price of subscription without notice" conveniently reserved by the editorial board (*Camera Work* 1:1). They printed these first volumes in batches of 1000 issues, which would later drop to 500 by the end of its run in 1917 (Thompson 48). By 1914, *Camera Work* had become the most influential voice on photography, as indicated by the much higher subscription price of "eight dollars per year," single issues, and back issues being sold for four dollars and "upwards" (46:1). In comparison, issues of *Collier's Weekly* featuring Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw" in 1898 sold for ten cents, increasing to 15 cents by 1950. However, unlike *Collier's*, *Camera Work* was not an average periodical. It was conceived to "appeal to those who believed in photography as a medium of individual expression" and to "showcase photography's possibilities," and for this reason *Camera Work* is one of the most, if not the most, influential photographic periodicals ever printed (Thompson 42).

In the July 1903 issue of *Camera Work*, the Secession announced that it was accepting applications, with potential applicants being vaguely rejected "solely upon their avowed or notoriously active opposition or equally harmful apathy." Stieglitz's intent was to recruit

revolutionary photographers (3:1). In the first issue of *Camera Work*, Stieglitz offered this “apology” to his readers as a way of consecrating his curated content as a transcendent alternative to what he saw as philistine publications for a less refined audience:

Photography being in the main a process in monochrome, it is on subtle gradations in tone and value that its artistic beauty so frequently depends. It is, therefore, highly necessary that reproduction of photographic work must be made with exceptional care and discretion if the spirit of the originals is to be retained, though no reproduction can do full justice to the subtleties of some photographs. (1:15)

Of course, partially meant as a way of ensuring the quality of each print in *Camera Work*, this statement eased the mind of subscribers. However, more than anything, he is addressing an issue beyond a literal reproduction of the photograph, establishing the legitimacy of the authentic artist-authorized print. Rosalind Krauss, in her “Originality of the Avant-Garde” credits Rodin and recasting practice as a source of inspiration for this theory; Stieglitz and Steichen were in frequent contact with Rodin until his death in 1916. However, Krauss quotes Benjamin, who argues that “one can make any number of prints: to ask for an ‘authentic’ print makes no sense.” Reproducible art, according to Benjamin, should, in theory, defeat the hegemony enjoyed by those who control the original (qtd. in Krauss 153, “Work of Art” 25). While he never references *Camera Work* by name, Benjamin sees Stieglitz’s eventual success as a failure for the medium. In his posthumously published letter “Painting and Photography,” he cites Gisele Freund’s *La Photographie en France au dix-neuvième siècle*, “Photograph’s claim to be an art was raised precisely by those turning the photograph into a business,” or in his own words, “photography’s claim to be an art is contemporaneous with its emergence as a commodity” (“Painting and Photography” 303). Therefore, like any other commodity, its distribution is synonymous with its

control. *Camera Work*, simply put, was Stieglitz's and his circle's means of controlling the value and distribution of their chosen medium. From the perspective of the public, the snapshot and photographic art may not seem all that different; nonetheless, using the image to supplement real memory has the potential to give the photographer control of the way the world is represented beyond real experience, and like James's image text, the artist has a responsibility to abide by the "laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion" ("The Art of Fiction" 5). Who is saying that the same techniques used by these artists to alter the photograph might not be wielded in the service of *damnatio memoriae*, thus removing the detail of memory, if only artificial, from the public consciousness? Reproduction is a nostalgic trope in this context. For photography to function as fine art, the "spirit" or aura of this inherently reproducible medium must be kept intact. To accomplish this goal, *Camera Work* was produced with the utmost care: the images were "hand printed photogravure [s]" by Photochrome, and "Stieglitz himself often tipped in the photogravures, which were printed on fine Japan tissue" (AA 97). Aside from the images, the essays, exhibition reviews, and poetry were curated by Steichen and Stieglitz, including works by Sadakichi Hartmann,<sup>19</sup> George Bernard Shaw,<sup>20</sup> and Gertrude Stein. These often hagiographic, often hyperbolic essays are meant to both uplift the medium and provide readers with a certain aesthetic experience that was idiomatic of the featured images.

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<sup>19</sup> Hartman, Sadakichi. "Dawn-Flowers: To Maeterlinck." *Camera Work* 2 (1903), pp. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Shaw, George Bernard. "Bernard Shaw on Photography." *Camera Work* 37 (1912), pp. 37-41.

The “subject matter” of *Camera Work* and Stieglitz’s own photography idealized selectivity. As Abbot explains, the composition of both is selected to excite his viewers’ “imagination to the extent that [they] are forced to take it.” The image is a combination of the artists’ composition and patience, waiting for the perfect moment for the camera to capture (Abbot 183). In the fourth issue of *Camera Work*, Stieglitz uses the first in a series of images of New York City’s Flatiron Building to illustrate the effects of effective composition (See Fig. 3), as he will ultimately describe in his 1905 essay “Simplicity of Composition.” In his essay, he argues that selectivity is the key mode of artistic agency which differentiates photograph from painting. Limited by what light the lens can capture, there was a spectrum of selectivity between complete or fabricated, as seen in professional portraiture, or an absence of selectivity, as in snapshot photography. Art photography toed the line between these two extremes. “The problem that is presented,” he writes, “is one of elimination,” in which the artist isolates only the details that illustrate the “underlying idea” of a visual narrative (“Simplicity” 170).

His image of the Flatiron serves as a prime example of Stieglitz’s selectivity. The photograph, taken from the center of Madison Square Park, has three visible layers: the leafless tree in the foreground, the penultimate layer of trees, empty park benches, and finally, the titular Flatiron Building. While the Flatiron is the subject of this image, it is overshadowed by the depth of field from Stieglitz’s lens, keeping the tree in sharp focus. The building stands as an immovable colossus of modern man, always on the edge of our attention, standing in sharp



Fig. 3 Alfred Stieglitz. *The "Flat Iron."* Photogravure. Modernist Journal Project.

contrast with the longevity of nature as illustrated by the leafless branches of the trees. Depending on the viewers' reading of the image, nature and man are placed in opposition, both eventually overtaken by the photo's colossal subject, framed in the foreground. Stieglitz's own mysteriously vague philosophy of composition focuses on "direct and simple handling of light and shade and spacing" to create a "subtlety of which even the average photographer is conscious without being able to analyze why," all of which are present in his *Flatiron* (171). Unlike a painting, in which the subject, having a real-world counterpart or not, is entirely fabricated by the artist, in the absence of liberal post-production modification, the composition of a photograph is subordinate to the arrangement of objects in front of the lens. For this reason, Pictorialism lacks the ability to ever completely replicate the "composition and treatment" of the "modern painter," and Stieglitz considered the continual support of Pictorial traditions a detriment to the photographic medium (170). If the photograph contains a "slight error" of "light and shade or chiaroscuro," no amount of emulsion or pigment can change the base image, and the "whole composition falls to pieces" (170). The publication of *Camera Work* and the aforementioned *Flatiron* marked the beginning of a new modern photographic regime, one in which the *Flatiron* frequently served as a nostalgic correlative to mark the major stylistic shift of photographic art for the next 20 years; a wedge between key moments in which *Camera Work* announced the beginning of each iteration of the Photo-Secession.



In his book *Edward Steichen: The Early Years*, Joel Smith compares Steichen's, *The Flatiron—Evening*, to Stieglitz's previous photo, focusing on its less-than-academic composition, arguing that when compared with the "stripped down formal perfection" of Stieglitz's image, Steichen's possesses a more "baroque splendor" (Smith 24). Unlike the first *Flatiron*, Steichen's image (See Fig. 4) features many of the hallmarks of Pictorialism. In his image, framed in the background the building is given depth by its gradient field of view. The nearer section of the building is presented with a certain crispness that progressively fades into the titular foggy New York *Evening*. The foreground of the image is a static hodgepodge of black silhouettes of trees, carriages, and pedestrians moving towards the camera across the glistening rain drenched sidewalk, highlighting a frozen moment in an otherwise kinetic scene. As Smith suggests, the darkness of the night and the electric lights of the scene are potentially simulated during the artist's post-processing, explaining, in Steichen's image of the "Flatiron Building, one is transported to the taxi stand on Madison Square, where the evening lamps have just been lit. Or have they?" (23). He continues, the "varying states of murk and glimmer across multiple prints from the same negative suggest that "all of the light here has been at least touched by painterly fantasy" (23). Smith's presumption is based on a comparison of multiple images from the same negative. However, I do not think multiple samples of the same image are necessary to make the argument that the image is anything other than the artist's subjective view of a single



Fig. 4 Steichen, Edward. *The Flatiron-- Evening* (1904). Platinum Print. Alfred Stieglitz Collection.

moment, altered or not (24). As previously mentioned, the effect created here is emblematic of Steichen's earlier work: his 1902 *Self-Portrait with Brush and Palette* is one such example. In his *Self-Portrait*, to create the long bolt of light in the background, he has physically stripped emulsion from the negative. This is only one example of how Steichen's method differed from Stieglitz's, who was actively resisting the influence of Pictorialism in his own work.

Alternatively, Steichen's pictorialism was not a central philosophy defining his work but a tool to improve it. Because of this, his *Flatiron* is a visual contradiction: almost too real, impossibly immobile, but still populated by an abundance of naturally mobile scenery.

According to Stieglitz's included editorial commentary, Steichen's print was popular among non-photographic gallery patrons who were slowly gaining "a more comprehensive understanding and appreciation" for photography as an artistic medium (*Camera Work* 14:50). In a letter to Stieglitz from Steichen dated February 1909, he describes one of these gallery shows in Paris, complaining about the price that many of the works were selling for. In the letter he explains that photographic reproductions of works by John "Marin [?]" sell at 25 to 35 dollars, the [Alfred Henry] Maurer's at 30 dollars—and 20% of this is to go to the Secession," suggesting that photographic reproduction of art in these early years was much more profitable than original photographic works. For a collector who cannot purchase the original, photo reproduction was an acceptable replacement ("Steichen Letter February 1909" 4).<sup>21</sup> The price for "good prints" of original works, he continues, were "ridiculous, they ought to bring four times that amount."

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<sup>21</sup> When compared to the photographic reproduction of art that we are familiar with today, the images that Steichen is selling here are not trying to mask the fact they are photos of the original art. Similar to those seen in the 1912 special edition of *Camera Work*, they were lacking the scale and color of the original and more closely resembled reference images in a textbook than the scale reproductions of Dali's *Persistence of Memory* or Steinlen's *Le Chat Noir* one might find on the beer-stained walls of a university dorm.

These more popular images according to the letter, included portraits of “[Auguste] Rodin,” “[George Bernard] Shaw,” Rodin’s sculpture of Balzac, and Steichen’s image of the “Flat Iron” (8).

The third 1911 study of the Flatiron building was a 1904 image captured by Coburn (See Fig. 5). Coburn’s photograph uses an almost identical composition as Steichen and Stieglitz’s; the low lighting and soft focus of the actual building are the most notable features differentiating this image from the others. While Coburn was a peer of Steichen in that they both subscribed to the Photo-Secession ideology, they were far from colleagues. In fact, their relationship was frequently contemptuous, a fact



Fig. 5 Coburn, Alvin Langdon. *The Flat Iron Building* (1911). Platinum Print. MoMA.

that may have contributed to Steichen’s harsh criticism of Coburn’s image. Beyond mere criticism, in 1904 Steichen advocated the removal of Coburn’s work from the “American selections being shipped to the Linked Ring Salon” in London (Smith 24). Steichen’s primary complaint was related to the fact that Coburn had previously patriated to London that same year. He explained in a letter to Stieglitz that Coburn’s image *The Flat Iron Building* was “good if you want to show it to someone that knows it but in London it is simply a black mass—meaningless + badly composed” (24). Steichen’s comment brings up an interesting question, namely what exactly he means by “someone who knows it but in London,” since without going to New York the only way to “know” the building would be through photography and to a lesser extent,

illustration. Here he is distinguishing real experience and a prosthetic one. For someone in London, the only impression of the building would be the photographic image making it exactly as described “a black mass—meaningless” (224). Moreover, the Fuller Building, nicknamed the Flatiron because of its triangular shape, was frequently photographed at different angles to different effect. For example, in Irving Underhill’s 1903 photos, he has captured the building from its hypotenuse, creating the illusion that the structure is no thicker than its thinnest vertex, effectively removing any perspective of the park-facing curve or the horizontal incline of its sides. Similar images commissioned by the Detroit Publishing Company between 1901 and 1902 highlight the same vertex to opposite effect: these photographs highlight the parallel plane and base of the building, making it seem as if during its construction the Fuller company had intended to construct a single columned tower. Unlike the images being published by the Secession, both Underhill’s and the uncredited Detroit Publishing Company’s photographs were commercially produced and distributed to a mass audience. Steichen is possibly distinguishing between art photography and commercial images, pigeonholing Coburn’s contribution in the latter. It is hard to argue that Coburn’s image is of the same quality as Steichen’s more complex pigmented print; however, my personal judgement of quality is based on the more precise composition of Steichen’s image, whereas Coburn’s is more of an homage to Stieglitz’s initial contribution.

In terms of composition, the Flatiron is not the literal or figurative focus of Coburn’s image. Unlike the previous examples, Coburn’s photograph lacks the depth of field associated with a longer exposure, blurring both the background and foreground of the image, highlighting the movements of the pedestrians, carriages, and the Type 24 twin electric lamppost.<sup>22</sup> In

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<sup>22</sup> According to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and several websites maintained by lamp post enthusiasts, the light in Coburn’s image was installed in 1880, is one of the first mass-

contrast, Smith's description of Steichen's image suggests that his and Stieglitz's renderings show a greater mastery of the medium, even if they all share the same subject. Steichen's image, Smith explains, highlights the "Flatiron's status as a prismatic slab in the sky, cumulatively lending it the character of a mirage" (24). In pre-skyscraper New York, the building must have looked out of place towering above the lower tenement strata of the city, "the specter of a future unanticipated by the trees and cabmen on the ground" (Smith 24). As Smith continues, "the baroque splendor of Steichen's vision makes a vivid contrast with the stripped-down formal perfection of Stieglitz platinum rendering" (24). Without whatever vague quality that makes these first two images distinctly American, Coburn's image lacked the hopeful perspective, the industrial enthusiasm that Stieglitz associated with the character of American art (24).

While I am not sure how much Coburn was aware of Steichen's discontent with his work, there are several instances in which the two butted heads. As Coburn explains in his autobiography, their rivalry was strictly professional since, likely with the help of his mother and cousin F. Holland Day, he opened a competing studio space on Fifth Avenue in 1902, "not far from Steichen's studio at No. 291 Fifth Avenue," prior to Stieglitz's 1905 adoption of the space for the Photo-Secession (24). According to Kammen, Stieglitz's goal was to create an artistic culture different from any other in that it was not "sectional," borrowing from diverse European and American aesthetic traditions (Kammen 408). The first decade of *Camera Work* reflected these objectives, featuring primarily American photography with an exception made for notable European contributors. Moreover, Kammen continues, Stieglitz believed that "a nation could not achieve greatness without manifestations of national culture." The images of New York therefore focused on the increasingly modern iconography of a rapidly growing postindustrial skyline

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produced electric lamp posts, and is still standing on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Broadway, and East 23<sup>rd</sup> (Landmarks Preservation Commission 1). On a more interesting note, there are groups of lamp post enthusiasts.

(408). The distribution of these images in Europe was a sort of ontological folklore, a mythology of this national character; they added value of a particular “place, especially in terms of regionalism in art and literature” (408). American innovation was better suited to define the memory of a country than its own naturally created mythology (408). In his essay for the January 1, 1912, issue of *Camera Work*, “Modernity and Decadence,” Benjamin De Casseres defined this process: “in the eyes of orthodoxy each newborn thought is a bastard” fit to be thrown into the “latrine” to preserve tradition. Photography created a permanent record of these thoughts that was not as easily discarded (Casseres 17). In more hyperbolic terms, Smith describes the Flatiron as a “massive new principle of civilization that was America’s alone,” associating the building with the rapid vertical expansion of American ideals (Smith 24). By leaving America for London, Coburn had lost the privilege of identifying with the landmarks of his homeland on the same deep level as his nationalist peers. As Coburn explains in his autobiography, his patriation to England was in part motivated by a desire to be close to his ancestors’ traditional home. He “descended from Edward Colburn, an English farmer who was born in 1618” (Coburn 12). In 1916 he would follow the trail of “family tradition that he came from Devizes in Wiltshire,” hiring a genealogist and speaking with the local vicar who had often been “pestered by ancestor-hunting Americans in the past” (12). Coburn would ultimately trace his ancestors to Laycock, England (12). After visiting Laycock, he proudly notes that the “Abbey was the birthplace of Fox Talbot, the inventor of photography on paper” as if this alone serves to provide credibility for him in his chosen profession (12). Likewise, Coburn was also a distant cousin of F. Holland Day, who initially invited Steichen to show his work at the galleries of the Royal Photographic Society. Much of Coburn’s early exposure to photography was through Day, who brought him and his mother to many of these early exhibitions. As Smith explains, by bringing Coburn to

these events, Day introduced Steichen to one of his longest lasting photographic rivals, “Coburn—with a domineering mother for his perpetual shadow” (Smith 18). Ironically, had he not left America their rivalry would have become increasingly “poisonous” (18). As it was, Steichen often complained about Coburn frequently “figuring out what [he] had done,” replicating the process, and bringing it “to the public first.” The distance left Steichen to his own devices and helped Coburn develop the abstract kaleidoscope style that Ezra Pound described as photographic vortographs (Smith 18). It is no surprise that Steichen would be viciously critical of Coburn’s Flatiron homage. Art critics commonly lumped their work and styles together. For example, in 1912, according to Steichen’s autobiography *A Life in Photography*, George Bernard Shaw would write that “Steichen and Coburn are the two greatest photographers in the world” (qtd. in *Alvin Langdon Coburn* 14). Of course, Shaw, who served as Coburn’s host and introduced him to Henry James, is speaking from a nepotistic perspective (14). Ultimately, Steichen would outlive his competition, remaining an active member of the photographic community until his death in 1973 at 93. Coburn would eventually pass into obscurity and pass away shortly after the publication of his autobiography in 1966.

However, the larger implications of Steichen’s comment are much more relevant to my central argument than just a pure judgement of skill. Steichen seems to make a connection between national identity and historical tradition; the perceived lack of Americanness, in his mind, has disconnected the national oral tradition from Coburn’s image. Kracauer explains, “in order for history to present itself, the mere surface of coherence offered by the photograph must be destroyed,” suggesting that despite similarity to previous images, derivative works still lacks the narrative aura of the original from which it was derived (52). Coburn’s blurring of the background and obscure soft-focus of the foreground creates the illusion of painted art,

“sacrificing” the clarity of the image and effectively negating “the likeness achieved by the photograph,” but is still just a copy if the artist lacks an authentic historical connection to the object being indexed in the image (52).

Mike Weaver described photographic authenticity in the introduction of his biography *Alvin Langdon Coburn: Symbolist Photography 1882-1966*, explaining that these photographers understood their medium’s unique ability to

“abnegate reality,” meaning that the photographers’ view through their cameras’ lens is guided by external, a posteriori knowledge, personal sentimentality as related to the image (Weaver 9). One appeal of photographic art was its ability to



Fig. 6 Steichen, Edward. *Cascarets Ad* (1898). lithograph. Author's collection.

“manipulate reality, destroy perspective altogether and discard traditional genre subjects” (9).

Since, these images are simulacrum of reality, unnatural landscapes like the New York skyline were ideal subjects for the photograph, (9). At the turn of the century, the average consumer may have never seen a high-rise office building like the Flatiron, so the photographic image acted as a primary point of convergence between the real and artistic interpretation of the building in a way that a painting could not. As a photo, the high-rise benefits from photographic realism that makes it hard for the observer to dismiss its size as an artistic exaggeration. The high-rise was a major accomplishment of human engineering, and the photograph provides enough detail that its existence in the real world was difficult to dispute. As Krauss explained, this form of photographic authenticity demands a “special form of coherence that cannot be fraudulently breached.” Its aura or closeness to the real object points to the original “source of life” illustrated



within a controlled composition within the artist's deliberate frame of isolation ("Originality of the Avant Garde" 6). Therefore, neither Coburn's nor Steichen's homages of the Stieglitz image share the same original quality of imitation. According to Krauss, the artist must be "maneuvered" into the object. This collision, not the real object, represents artistic agency in photography.

The Photo-Secession, Smith explains, sought to cast away the many familiar tropes of "late-Victorian sentiments in a carapace of symbolist fatalism" or the clearly definable "narrative and symbolic cues" commonly used to illustrate authenticity in scientific and documentary photography (Smith 14).

Steichen and Stieglitz were less interested in the narrative relationship between sitter or setting, instead focusing on the composition of the image. Smith illustrates this using an 1898 photograph taken by Steichen for a Cascarets Candy Cathartic advertisement (See Fig. 6).<sup>23</sup>

A young woman is pictured in the advertisement lounging in a long white robe, and according to Smith, the composition of this

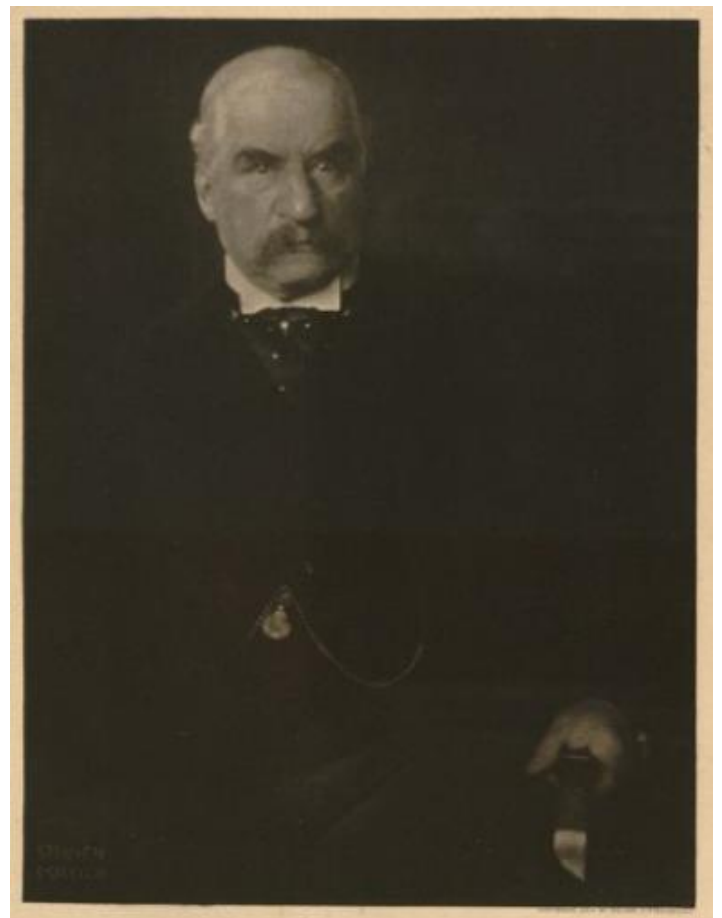


Fig. 7 Steichen, Edward. *J. Pierpont Morgan* (1903). Platinum Print. Alfred Stieglitz Collection.

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<sup>23</sup> Smith dates the first printing of this advertisement as the 19 August 1899 issue of *Collier's Weekly* using information from the General Research Division of the New York Public Library. However, this date is incorrect: the image first appears in the February 12, 1898, issues of *Collier's* on this issue's penultimate page, where the previous, February 5, 1898, issue includes the Cascaret advertisement sans Steichen's photo (author's personal collection).

image refers to Cabanel's *Birth of Venus*, with the cherubim chorus replaced by the word "Cascarets" in larger ornate script. Out of all his earlier work, possibly the most well-known of Steichen's photos is the portrait of John Pierpont Morgan that appeared in the 4 April 1906 special issue of *Camera Work*. In the image (See Fig. 7), Morgan looks at the camera with a perturbed look on his face, furiously clutching a large knife as if he is about to stab the photographer. While the pose in Steichen's image is striking, the treatment of Morgan's nose is noteworthy. As he explains in his autobiography, he was sent to photograph Morgan under the recommendation of Fedor Enche, whose painted portrait had previously failed to meet the standards of his robber baron client. Unlike Enche, Steichen discovered directing Morgan like any other client was pointless and allowed him to choose a position "of his own volition" (Steichen 52). After taking two images, Morgan "peeled off five \$100 bills" and passed them to Enche to give to Steichen (52). However, what Steichen failed to realize was that J.P. Morgan suffered from a disfiguring form of rosacea on his nose, leading him to decide if retouching the image would be appropriate. He ultimately portrayed Morgan as he would want to be seen by the public, with a blemish-free nose. Upon seeing Steichen's proofs of both versions of the image, Morgan ordered a dozen of the retouched image, and then according to Steichen, "he looked at the other that I had made for myself. He said, 'Terrible,' and tore it into shreds" (52). Afterwards, having saved the negative, Steichen made what he describes as "the best possible print," made an enlarged negative for the *Camera Work* edition, and after the portrait became a popular portrayal of Morgan, he refused to sell him additional copies (53). Stieglitz was far from the only mindful Secessionist when it came the portrayal and modification of their subjects.

In Steichen's case, the touchups done to Morgan's portrait left the popular public portrayal of his subject unaltered. Alternatively, fellow Secessionist Gertrude Kasebier's 1898 *Sioux Portraits*' lack of artistic interference avoided proliferating negative primitivist stereotypes previously prescribed to her subjects. By omitting any background accoutrements and instead favoring a formal photographic style of portraiture, her images illustrate her native American subjects in immaculate detail, in their own traditional garb as they existed in the present as opposed to some post-colonial past, avoiding the tropes used by artists like Karl Bodmer or Charles Graham as seen on the cover of the February 5, 1898, issue of *Colliers Weekly* (See Fig. 8). The lack of a fabricated setting prevented her subjects from being pigeonholed by disrespectful clichés indicative of a human menagerie.

Likely, while searching for an artist for his New York Edition, this lack of easily identifiable visual narrative attracted James to the Secessionists' brand of photography. By avoiding conventional modes of visual iconographic storytelling, Stieglitz and his peers could replicate the ambiguity of other symbolist artwork, specifically for Steichen, the sculptures of Auguste Rodin.

As Smith explains, Steichen's admiration could easily be called "the romance of Rodin," whose recast reproduction of his own work set an example for a "generation of young Paris artists"

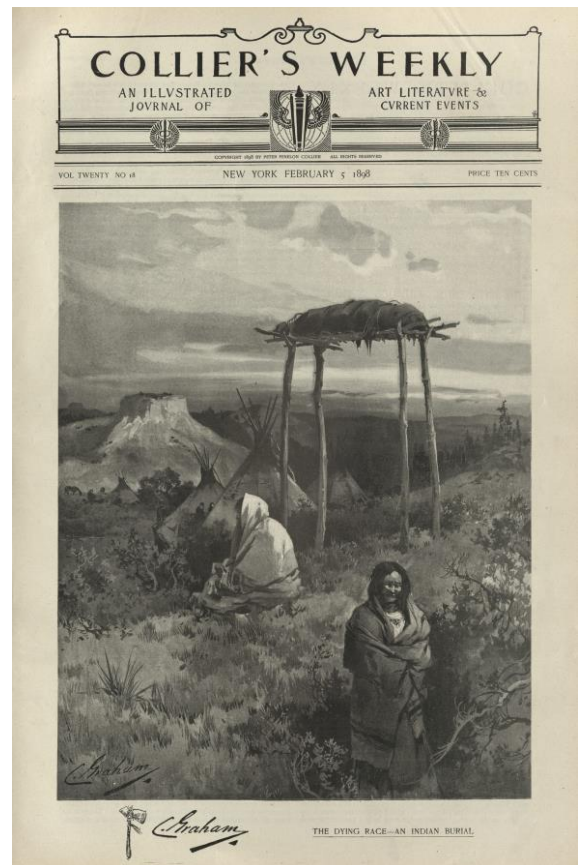


Fig. 8 Graham, Charles. *The Dying Race-- An Indian Burial*. Lithograph. Author's Collection.

including Steichen, who was in constant contact with him (16). Rodin himself would become a frequent subject for the Secessionists. His fondness for Steichen's work specifically provided Steichen with the privilege of being Rodin's "preferred photographic interpreter" (17). Most of Steichen's work, portraiture or otherwise, during this early period features visible brush strokes on the emulsion coated glass negatives, deep gouges in the photochemical, leaving room for contrasting highlights and overlapping imagery. For example, Steichen's first image of Rodin, in the April 4, 1903, issue of *Camera Work* (See Fig. 9), uses these techniques to give his photo a more ethereal tone. This portrait of



Fig. 9 Steichen, Edward. *Rodin* (1902). Carbon Print. Alfred Stieglitz Collection.

Rodin is in silhouette transposed over an imitation painting of his *Thinker* that Steichen used, according to Armstrong, to reflect "the enormous genius fomenting within" the sculptor's head (Armstrong 249).

The final interpretation of the Flatiron that appeared in *Camera Work* was emblematic of the moment in which photography won its independence and became its own medium. In the July 1, 1917, issue, Stieglitz introduced Paul Strand as the capstone of the project, writing, "For ten years Strand quietly had been studying constantly experimenting, keeping in close touch with all that is related to life in its fullest aspect" (*Camera Work* 49:36). Strand's work, he continues, is "rooted in the best traditions of photography," but instead of merely imitating the work of his predecessors, his style of straight photography relied on abstraction through contrasting light and a deliberate restriction of detail in his images. "His work is pure. It is direct. It does not rely upon

tricks of process” (*Camera Work* 49:36). Strand’s work is the evolutionary culmination of *Camera Work* that had begun skeptical of Pictorialism’s authenticity but eventually embraced the crisp focus and high contrast of straight photography. Strand’s images are reminiscent of the portraiture included in early issues by Kasebier. However, Strand’s images feature the discarded masses of America’s poor. His photography stands in sharp contrast with his peers. The reality illustrated by his images suggests a more candid composition. One of Strand’s more noteworthy images included in *Camera Work* is of a hooded woman with a large sign that reads “BLIND” hanging from her neck.<sup>24</sup> The sign, the woman’s sideways gaze, and her blinded right eye reaffirm her cardboard placard’s caption. However, the metallic badge which reads “Licensed Peddler” has the implications of a more detailed narrative, suggesting that this woman is possibly a veteran’s widow, according to John Gaber’s essay “Manhattan’s 14th Street Vendors’ Market.” Gaber explains the historical significance of this badge, commenting that on rare occasions “a licensed military veteran peddler will retail general merchandise products in the 14th Street vendors’ market” (Gaber 403n12). As Hambourg explains, Strand reiterates this ambiguous reading through careful use of a “shallow depth of field and the soft, overall definition” of his subject, leaving her viewers with feelings of “floating sadness and emptiness” (Hambourg 38). The complexity of Strand’s work, according to Stieglitz, derives from its simplicity of composition and close framing, letting the individual subjects alone inspire any of its many readings. In his words, Strand’s images are “devoid of Flim-flam; devoid of trickery and of ‘ism’,” “ism” here being *Camera Work*’s last passive jab at Pictorialism, whose practice he felt

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<sup>24</sup> Maria Morris Hambourg’s 1998 catalogue *Paul Strand Circa 1916* cites the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s print under the name *Blind* (Hambourg 164) In this final issue of *Camera work* the image is titled *Photograph—New York* (*Camera Work* 49:7).

was meant to “mystify an ignorant public, including the photographers themselves” (*Camera Work* 49:36).

Perhaps Strand’s photography in this final issue represented a point at which the founders of the Secession felt photography had finally reached “brutal directness,” in which the unnatural volume of detail was restricted to create something more indicative of a momentary flash of

memory (49:36). For his non-portrait images, his post-impressionist peers such as Cézanne, who were also frequently in attendance at 291 Gallery Exhibitions, inspired Strand. In these photographs Strand subverts the spaciousness of city skylines and landscapes, instead focusing on a single aspect of larger surroundings, or even simply the sharp contrast of shadows cast by everyday objects such as a collection of clay bowls or a picket fence.

According to Hambourg, early in his career “Strand was shadowing Stieglitz” as he began

favoring contributors of straight photography for

*Camera Works*. Having also “keyed to Cézanne’s watercolors and to Picasso,” Strand adopted his own hybrid of the two, remaking objects in a photographic “universe of hollows and volume” (33). Many of his early works focus on the way objects seemed to change and shift “as the sun moved across the sky,” creating deep shadows that changed the camera’s perspective of the object’s indication of the passage of time (33). In 1917, Strand made his contribution to the Secession’s long tradition of Flatiron building photos (See Fig. 10). However, unlike his



Fig. 10 Strand, Paul. *Untitled* (1917). Platinum Print. Alfred Stieglitz Collection.

predecessors', Strand does not appear to be concerned with the life around the building or even the city it occupies. Instead, his composition focuses on the abstract coalescence of architectural shapes in contrast with the abrupt curves of its facade. This contrast, returning to Hamburg, is mimetic of "old-world souls shipwrecked in modern midday America" (33). The window frames and brick in the image seem to stretch on infinitely beyond the edges of the photograph. By omitting other, now taller, buildings, aside from the shadows they have cast on the Flatiron, Strand's image shares the same contempt towards the scale of the city that James hinted at during his final years. Strand was too young at the time of the building's construction and did not share Steichen's, Stieglitz's, and Coburn's privileged perspective of its growth over time. Thus, his image is a fixed plane of brick and glass with no implied beginning or end beyond the edge of the photograph. This reading of the image puts these four images of the Flatiron into perspective. None of the images, as Kracauer leads us to believe, represent the history of the building; they are just snapshots of the structure that act as an index for an infinitely more complex oral tradition. As I argue, this is not much different from Stieglitz's, Strand's, Steichen's, and Coburn's readings of their own images. None are interested in capturing the literal history of the building, since these images are not sequential and do not even effectively capture passage of time in any way; the building is the same building in each image. Instead, they simply show the viewer that this building existed, exists, and may continue to exist in memoriam, and it is only a matter of coincidence that the building is recognizable as the same pictured in each image.

Alternatively, as I will discuss in the following chapter, while American artists like Steichen and Stieglitz were advancing photography as an independent artistic medium, things were not as copacetic outside of the gallery echo chamber. In Europe, specifically France, photographic reproduction was rapidly being adopted by ethnocentric police agencies and

bipartisan print journalism after the passage of the Press Law of 1881. As I show, the convenience of photographic reproduction helped 'popular' antisemitism proliferate after the arrest of Alfred Dreyfus in 1894 and in Proust's *In Search of Lost* inspires the narrator's contemptuous relationship to voluntary memory that he metaphorically associates with snapshot photography.



### Chapter 3: Photographic Memory in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*

If, according to Kracauer, a photograph contains an unmanageable amount of visual information, then perhaps Marcel Proust's 4,000-page bildungsroman *In Search of Lost Time* is the literary equivalent of a photograph. At the very least, the accoutrement of photography is an often-used motif throughout the entire novel, appearing as the narrator's frequent rumination on actual snapshots, serving as the correlative of voluntary memory, or illustrating the adult locum of maternal affection. Of course, I am not merely referring to the multiple moments where a photograph is directly referenced in the novel, but also how it acts as a red herring during the narrator's pursuit of involuntary memory. Not that Proust or his narrator have any ill will towards photography as an artistic medium. It just serves as a convenient stand-in for memory, one that can become retroactively problematic. Since Proust's novel is an exercise in remembering, "a layered structure of consciousness engaged in recollection," as Auerbach described the novel in his *Mimesis*, the photographic image, literal or otherwise, throws a wrench into the substrate in which these layers are suspended (Auerbach 542). As this chapter will show, the context of this rupture throughout the novel causes a variety of social and political problems. The first volume of the novel, *Swann's Way*, foreshadows this motif in its various iterations. Like the images from the narrator's magic lamp, the overture introduces the reader to the increasingly complex layers or thicknesses of ekphrastic layers of descriptive imagery, the snapshot being the basest of these modes. This "thickness" of imagery, as I argue, corresponds with the different layers of memory explored throughout the entire novel: involuntary memory, which is the narrator's ideal, and voluntary memory or habit, which lacks the subjective euphoria Proust's narrator experienced as a child. As an adult in the latter half of the text, the same characteristics

of the photograph and voluntary memory apply to the narrator's romantic partner who is used as a stand-in for his mother, thus leading to a long unfulfilling affair until her perceived death in *The Fugitive*. Finally, beginning in *The Guermantes Way*, Proust transposes his own memory of the Dreyfus Affair into the narrative as a way of illustrating how voluntary memory widens the ideological gap of his characters prescribed political sentimentality. This mirrors the real-world effects of prolific antisemitic propaganda during the long period of strife in France at the turn of the twentieth century. Beyond the pages of Proust's novel, the Dreyfus Affair marks the moment in which the intellectual emerged as the class responsible for mitigating these cognitive ruptures by bridging the barriers between creative labor and political activism. I contend that Proust's novel uses these and many other examples to illustrate how the modernization and proliferation of visual imagery poses an existential threat to the similitude of cultural memory with the opaque lens necessary for a productive critical reading of history.

Using Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time*, both the English language 2014 Norton edition edited by Susanna Lee, the 2003 Modern Library revised Scott Moncrieff translation, and to a lesser extent the 1987 Gallimard edition of the original French with manuscript notes edited by Jean-Yves Tadié, this chapter examines psychology and nostalgic sentimentality, thus expanding on William James's stream of consciousness in his 1890 *Principals of Psychology*, Marilyn M. Sach's *Marcel Proust in the Light of William James*, and Benjamin's absorption theory from "The Work of Art...". This section will look at critical works on Proust's novel, like Benjamin's "The Image of Proust," Gerard Genette's "Metonymy in Proust," Milton Miller's *Nostalgia: A Psychoanalytic Study of Marcel Proust*, Samuel Beckett's book *Proust*, Gilles Deleuze's "Proust and Signs," and Susan Stewart's *On Longing: Narratives of Miniature, the Gigantic, The Souvenir, The Collection*. Like the previous chapter, Kracauer's "Photography" is

indispensable to this chapter's discussion, as well as Benjamin's "Short History of Photography." For the historical context of this chapter, specifically my final discussion of Proust's role during Émile Zola's trial for his public protest of Alfred Dreyfus' conviction, I am using several essays from *The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth, and Justice*, including Norman Kleeblatt's essay "The Dreyfus Affair: A Visual Record," and Michael Marrus' "Popular Antisemitism." Finally, I use Guy Chapman's 1955 summary of the Dreyfus case, *The Dreyfus Case: A Reassessment*, and the 1972 revision, *The Dreyfus Trials*.

However, unlike Proust, James avoids detailed descriptions of his settings' physical accoutrements in his prose. Proust relies on visual metaphor, comparing setting and characters to extra-literary works of art. For example, in the overture of the first volume *Swann's Way*, the narrator's housekeeper Françoise differs from her idealized fictional peers from "*Le Miracle de Theophile* or *Les Quatres fils Aymon*," acting as the organized moral core of the narrator's household (*Swann's Way* 38).<sup>25</sup> The narrator's focus on these aesthetic analogies has not been limited to any single medium like theatre; they encompass the entire spectrum of art, including photography. This stylistic choice, as Gaskill argues, aims to traverse the "gap between" Proust and his narrator's "private experience and public expression," since these comparisons have real-world counterparts that serve as stand-ins for the expositional gaps within the text and reflect how significant art is in relation to the narrator's verisimilar impression of nostalgic memory

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<sup>25</sup> The first volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, "Du côté de chez Swann" was first translated to English in 1922 by C. K. Scott Moncrieff as *Remembrance of Things Past: Swann's Way*. Moncrieff's *Remembrance of Things Past*, taken from Shakespeare's Sonnet 30, according to Susanna Lee's editorial note in the 2014 Norton Edition, "elides 'search,' 'time,' and 'lost'" these three aspects of the literal French translation *In Search of Lost Time* that are thematically inseparable from both the text and my reading of it (Lee xx). It might also be important to note that Proust himself was no stranger to translation, having translated several works by John Ruskin to French, so it is likely he would have been aware of the thematic inconsistencies in Moncrieff's English title, but that is another topic for another researcher. From this point forward for the purposes of this chapter I will be using the contemporary English title and what seems to be the most used abbreviation, *In Search*.

(Gaskell 180). However, Proust diverges from his modernist peers such as Stein, Woolf, or Joyce, in that he is not “bending language against itself” but recapitulating the same rigorous stylistic tropes of his predecessors like James, Conrad, Flaubert, or Balzac.

It is important to note that most of the scholarly readings of Proust’s *Search*, including both Gilles Deleuze’s *Proust and Signs* and Sara Danius’ more recent *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics*, operate under the pretext that Proust’s nameless narrator is a simulacrum of his creator, referring to him as Marcel in their own work. While this reading is valid in that both the author and narrator have a lot in common—they both live a luxurious life, Proust as the son of the well-known epidemiologist Adrien Proust and the narrator as a result of his bourgeois family’s estate, and they share some biographical experiences—I do not believe Proust and his narrator are completely interchangeable.<sup>26</sup> While Proust and his narrator are two distinct entities, it is important to note that for real-world events included in the novel, the ideology of the two is mostly in agreement, the Dreyfus Affair being one of these key events. In 1898, after Émile Zola’s publication of *J’Accuse* had baited libel charges by the French government, Proust was part of the first group of intellectuals to come out publicly against Zola’s indictment and Dreyfus’ conviction. Alternatively, Proust’s narrator is not directly involved in the proceedings, but during his adventures (if you can call them that) he encounters the effects of groupthink, antisemitism, and the social ripples left in the Affair’s wake; the narrator is a surrogate for the author even though the text is not autobiographical. This becomes increasingly

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<sup>26</sup> Adrian Proust was best known for his research into the spread of cholera and neurasthenia, the latter being a neurological condition closely associated with rapid urbanization. According to Greg Daugherty’s 2015 *Smithsonian Magazine* essay “The Brief History of ‘Americanitis,’” neurasthenia was commonly associated with American urbanization and popularized by William James, who “became identified with the term” (Daugherty 2015). However, neurasthenia is never covered in James’s *Principles of Psychology*; instead, he describes the related condition neuralgia as a symptom for a range of psychological disorders.

clear when we consider the textual history that likely led readers to believe otherwise. One of the few times Proust gives the narrator a name occurs in the fifth volume of the novel, *The Captive*. In a non-diegetic aside the narrator gives himself the name of his creator, writing, “As soon as she was able to speak, she said: ‘My—’ or ‘My dearest—’ followed by my Christian name, which if we give the narrator the same name as the author of this book, would be ‘My Marcel,’ or ‘My dearest Marcel’” (*The Captive* 429). However, Jean-Yves Tadie’s note for the French Gallimard Edition, “Le paragraphe qui commence par ce mot [Ellie retrouvait la parole] n’apparaît que sur dactyle. [...] Le Feuillet du manuscrit correspondant à ce passage est déchiré,” suggests that this passage was torn out of Proust’s typed manuscript (*La Prisonnière* 1717n A, 1). According to Terence Kilmartin’s “A Note on the [1981] Translation,” the last three volumes of the novel, *The Captive*, *The Fugitive*, and *Time Regained* were published after Proust’s death in 1922. As Kilmartin explains, “the margins of proof and typescripts are covered with scribbled corrections and insertions.” Proust had even glued “interminable strips” to the typed galley proofs, further explaining the mentioned fragments that were removed (*Time Regained* ix). As Marilyn Sachs argues in her 2014 book *Marcel Proust in the Light of William James*, in a November 1919 letter to Paul Souday, Proust acknowledged the likelihood of being associated with his narrator, explaining that the “indeterminate and highly personal nature of the text” will lead the reader to “imagine that I am writing my life story, leaning on the arbitrary and accidental association of idea” (qtd. in Sachs 59). However, Sachs argues that this association results from being influenced by “the accepted literary techniques in the 1880s,” including the other French realists often cited by the narrator throughout the novel (Sachs 59).

During the overture, the narrator contemplates his bedtime routine in the same detail as the death of his lifelong mistress in the penultimate volume, *The Captive*. On its surface, Proust’s

bildungsroman follows his narrator's lifelong search to recapture the pleasure felt during a moment of euphoric nostalgia that he had experienced as a child, what Proust defines as involuntary memory. "Involuntary" is the key word here. Since the narrator cannot induce this sensation, and repetition or habit dulls the experience, he spends much of the novel pursuing new and often depraved social encounters to place himself in the opportune position to re-experience the euphoria of involuntary memory. From the opening of the novel, the photograph is used as a stand-in for this central theme. The photograph is a shortcut to voluntary memory; however, as he shows throughout the text, it lacks the connection to the time and place where involuntary memory is experienced. However, as I argue, the narrator does not have a contemptuous relationship with photography as an artistic medium; instead, his reference to it is a correlative for most of his less-successful social experiences, the most important of these being his intimate relationship with Albertine Bontemps, who until her perceived death fills the rift that time has made between himself and the intimacy of his mother during childhood. To reiterate Kracauer's thesis, Danus argues that photography ruptures "habitual modes of perception," creating nothing new like memory (Danus 109). For the narrator "painting, not photography" is the first medium he experiences with the ability to "defamiliarize the familiar and make the beholder look at the world anew" (109). This defamiliarization results from the painter's closeness to the finished work of art, a sentiment that continues past the overture and is a pervasive theme throughout the entire novel (109). In one sequence of *Time Regained*, the narrator equates his individual memories of Venice with Albertine to "snapshots" explaining:

The mere mention of [...] made Venice as boring to me as a photographic exhibition and I was conscious of no more taste or talent in visualizing what I had formerly seen than

yesterday in describing what I had observed with the meticulous and mournful eye. (*Time Regained* 253-4)

Of course, the narrator is not describing literal photography but a series of quick memories, including learning of Swann's death. Until this point, the narrator has spent his entire life searching for a way to recapture the same involuntary memory that he had experienced after tasting the madeleine and tea during the overture. The novel follows the path of this journey through three main stages: experimentation with romantic companionship, shallowness of high society, and loss. Proust dedicates the last volume of the novel to the narrator's process of remembering, remembering his life prior to the First World War. The narrator's epiphany in the text is that involuntary memory, unlike these "snapshots," is a process of interpretation and creation, being able to return to a childlike perspective. As he explains, "The notion of Time embodied, of years past but not separated from us, it was now my intention to emphasize as strong as possible my work," which, for the narrator, is writing (*Time Regained* 529).<sup>27</sup>

In his often-cited book *Proust*, playwright Samuel Beckett lays out *In Search's* central conflict as one in which Proust's characters are "victims and prisoners" of "predominating condition and circumstance—Time" (2). Time incorporated, as Beckett artfully describes it, is a sort of "cancer" whose primary attributes are "Memory and Habit," two "flying buttresses of the temple raised to commemorate the wisdom of the architect that is also the wisdom of all sages" (7). Habit, according to Beckett, is a mechanism of loss that Proust's narrator spends the novel mourning, whereas memory represents the pure experiences that he seeks to rediscover. In his book *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* Martin Hägglund reiterates these two

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<sup>27</sup> The French edition lacks capitalization on the word "Time" reading instead, "Si c'était cette notion du temps incorpore, des années passées non séparées de nous" (*Le Temps retrouvé* 623). However, the capital "Temps" is frequently used in the French text when the narrator refers to the "notion of time," or the Paris newspaper *Le Temps* (*Time Regained* 529).

classifications, defining habit and memory as the more clinical chronophobia, or the fear of passing of time, and chronophilia, or an obsession with the past; both are codependent, and both are symptoms of nostalgia. Instead of the various episodic experiences recapturing the sensation of memory for the narrator, according to Beckett, they “are absorbed feverishly by his consciousness at the extreme limit of [their] intensity” (Hägglund 11). Reacting to these experiences, his consciousness organizes itself “to avert the disaster, to create a new habit that will empty mystery of its threat—and of its beauty” (11). The experiences are thus archived into the narrator’s understanding of the past. The experience becomes an archival image, a snapshot with an overabundance of dulled data (11). “The man with a good memory” Beckett explains “does not remember anything because he does not forget anything,” including any technological supplement of memory like photography (Beckett 30). Everything becomes habit; thus, images are recalled without the experiential sensation associated with them. The narrator’s mother’s and grandmother’s description of artistic thickness, perhaps both women believe it has preserved the aesthetic experience of the painting within the photograph. This would also account for Stieglitz’s and *Camera Works*’ eventual shift from being dedicated to photographic art to a mix of art photography and photographic reproduction of art.

As Mary Bergstein contends in her book *In Looking Back One Learns to See: Marcel Proust and Photography*, Proust alludes to photography’s influence on Henri Bergson’s 1896 book *Matter and Memory*, and how it influences his narrator’s reading of the snapshot. Proust makes this abundantly clear during the fourth volume of the novel, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, when Proust’s narrator remembers being present for a conversation between Bergson and Émile Boutroux (*Sodom and Gomorrah* 521). As the narrator describes, the two philosophers’ discussion focused on the use of soporifics and their effect on waking memory “Soporifics taken



from time to time in moderate doses have no effect upon that solid memory of our everyday life which is firmly established within us” (qtd. in Bergstein 30). However, they concluded that sleeping pills have a noticeable effect on Bergson’s ability to quote Greek philosophy during his lectures. Bergson’s own writing draws from William James’s theoretical stream of consciousness, seeing experience as a “chain” of memory. However, Bergson’s chain is photographic, relating present experience to the images of memory: “The image is a present state, and its sole share in the past is the memory from which it arose” (Bergson 140). Read in terms of experience, whether mental or photographic, without the image, he continues, memory is “powerless as long as it remains without utility, is pure from all mixture of sensation, is without attachment to the present, and is, consequently, unextended” (140). Likewise, as Bergstein points out, in the second volume of the novel, *Within a Budding Grove*, the narrator compares memory to photographs that “interact unpredictably and have a power effect on lived experience” (Bergstein 12).<sup>28</sup> This relationship between the still image and memory further iterates the razor-thin difference between Hägglund’s chronophilia and chronophobia “To picture is not to remember,” writes Bergson (Bergson 135). Therefore, the photograph can satiate the negative effects of both, standing in for an image lost among a series of memories, or a way to recapitulate lost time as a sort of permanent artifact beyond the perceived lens of the mind.

Bergson’s theory confirms this:

Whenever we are trying to recover a recollection, to call up some period of our history, we become conscious of an act *sui generis* by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first, in the past in general, then, in a certain region

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<sup>28</sup> *A l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs.*

of the past—a work of adjustment, something like the focusing of a camera. (Bergson 134)

Proust's narrator is aware of this; in fact, I would argue a segment of his search requires a more effective way to come to terms with these images and the rapid modernization of memory. This mode of consciousness, according to Barthes's "Rhetoric of the Image," "establishes not only the consciousness of the *Being-there* of the thing" which, he notes, remains intact even in a reproduced image, but also "an awareness of *having-been-there*" ("Rhetoric of the Image" 278). In this way the photograph differs from other visual mediums. The consciousness of the photograph, Barthes continues, is "related to a pure spectatorial consciousness" in which every viewer shares a partition of the momentary experience, placing it in direct contradiction with the personal emotional experience of Proust's involuntary memory, which is viewed only by the viewer experiencing it (278).

As many of the previously mentioned scholars point out, the narrator's repetition of the term "involuntary memory" throughout the novel parallels Benjamin's term "optical unconscious," the involuntary process of interpretation made when viewing an image. In these images Benjamin explains, "swooping and rising, disrupting and isolating, stretching and compressing a sequence, enlarging or reducing an object" isolate visual space for the observer, and obscure or manipulate the external world ("Work of Art" 36). As he continues, the image proliferates the tensions between emotional life and memory, desensitizing the viewer to actual images of the present. Technology and, in these instances, photography, are the tools used by human beings to distance themselves from nature. This distance makes what would have been invisible visible, thus the optical unconscious, involuntary memory, or nostalgia represent the lost detail of the past. However, this detail never contributed to the experience that constructs

memory or, as Benjamin puts it, “aspects of reality captured by the film camera light outside the normal spectrum of sense impression” (38). This is information that is only useful to those remembering because it leaves space for the reinterpretation of the past through “psychosis, hallucination, and dreams,” or as Proust argues, artistic expression (38). Proust’s novel, all million words across seven volumes, personifies this detail, a textual photograph of his narrator’s life. However, the discursive aspects of his narrative have the same artistic thickness as the photos requested by the narrator’s mother. The narrator’s contemptuous relationship with photography recapitulates this, since he is bound by time, life, and death, the same way the limitation of textual art binds the novel.

Proust’s frequently cited overture introduces many of the motifs that are used throughout the entire novel.<sup>29</sup> The two most important moments of this section are the narrator’s introduction to involuntary memory after tasting a madeleine cake dipped into tea and his mother and grandmother’s designation of painted art as having “several ‘thicknesses or art’” when compared to photography. Painted art, as his mother explains, when photographed, negates the “commercial banality” of the photographic medium (*Swann’s Way* 53). Photography in *In Search* is a liminal space between emotional reality and memory. For much of this first volume, the narrator’s view of the outside from his family’s Combray home is illustrated to draw comparisons to Plato’s Allegory of the Cave. The titular Charles Swann, a family friend of the narrator’s mother, is the primary point of contact with the outside world. Every morsel of culture consumed by the narrator is provided by Swann in *Swann’s Way*, the narrator’s first love interest

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<sup>29</sup> In both the Modern Library edition of *Swann’s Way* and the French Gallimard edition this section is listed as Chapter 1. The Norton edition designates this section as the overture. This section of volume 1 is often focused on by the scholars I will be discussing, therefore I will use the overture designation. To avoid confusion my English citations of *Swann’s Way* and the remaining six volumes are from D.J. Enright’s revised translation in the Modern Language edition.

is Swann's daughter Gilberte, and in the third volume *The Guermantes Way*, Swann introduces the narrator to the French aristocracy, the Duchesse, Duke, Prince, and Princess of Guermantes. The first volume differs from its successors in that the narrator's mother and grandmother curate the images coming from Swann to Combray, since as he explains:

[Mother] could never make up her mind to purchase anything from which no intellectual profit was to be derived, and above all the profit which good things bestowed on use by teaching us to seek our pleasures elsewhere than in the barren satisfaction of worldly wealth (*Swann's Way* 53).

"Intellectual profit" is the key term here and indicative of the class pretensions of his family. It is important to note that the narrator's family wealth and social status gives him the freedom to move freely through French high society without being hindered by the stigma given to characters like Albertine, who lack the same socio-economic status. In *The Guermantes Way*, this gives him the freedom to discuss the antisemitic implications of the Dreyfus affair and the political power of members of the intelligentsia class, as well as the ability to comment on the privileged classes' perception of homosexual promiscuity, as in Albertine's public affection for Andrée. However, over the novel's entirety, the limits of his mother and grandmother's intellectual tutelage put aforementioned artistic descriptions of the world into contrast with reality outside of Combray. The difference between the various material arts and objects' intellectual profit depends on his authentic experience with these objects. The narrative itself serves to apply a "thickness of art" that the real world as experienced by the narrator lacks. This thickness, like Benjamin's aura, is our closeness to the narrator's written impressions of his real world. However, as Danius explains, "anyone who reads Proust's novel carefully will discover

how difficult it often to keep categories of art apart from those of technology,” since both are being used to supplement memory (Darius 94).

Again, much like the photographic image that Benjamin described in his “Short History of Photography” shatters that aura, from the focal point of the narrator this defeats his efforts to tame involuntary memory. For the reader, it places chronophilia-nostalgia and chronophobia-habit in sharp contrast, revealing that there is not much difference between the two. As the narrator explains, his mother would have liked “to have in [his] room photographs of ancient buildings or of beautiful places” and not mere documentary images of these places; instead, she insists that during his travels Swann should return with photographs of paintings of these same beautiful places and buildings (53). Here Proust uses ekphrasis by inserting extra-textual works of art and artists as both visual metaphors and to foreshadow later events in the novel. “Instead of photographs of Chartres Cathedral, of the fountains of Saint Cloud, or of Vesuvius,” his mother would request “photographs of ‘Chartres Cathedral’ after Corot, of the ‘Fountains of Saint-Cloud’ after Robert, and of ‘Vesuvius’ after Turner,” since they would be on a “stage higher in the scale of art” (54). Amusingly, these stages of art seem to increase with every generation of the narrator’s family. As he explains, his grandmother shares his mother’s sentiment but prefers the same works of art reproduced by older means of printing, namely lithography “preferring [...] old engravings [...] as to show us a masterpiece in a state in which we can no longer see it to-day” (54). Taken in context, the term “masterpiece” (“chef-d’oeuvre”) is connected to the lithograph or lithographer and the painting or painter but not the photograph and photographer even though none of the three forms, when preserved in a gallery, should change in quality over time, thus implying that neither woman considers photographic reproduction to be on the scale of art at all (54). In two of these three examples, Turner’s *Vesuvius in Eruption* and Robert’s *La*

*Cascade de Saint Cloud*, are both paintings of locations that would not have been accessible to the narrator. Robert's Saint-Cloud was partially demolished during the siege of Paris in 1870 and the ruins of Pompeii was only partially excavated when Turner's painting was completed. Like Combray, described in the novel as "a little town in a primitive painting," the settings pictured in lithograph, photograph, and painting would have also been works of fiction relative to the events in the novel (65).<sup>30</sup>

However, the nature of these insertions is not coincidental or as simple as they may seem. Like almost everything in this first section of the novel, these three photographs of paintings of places foreshadow future events in the novel. The narrator's mother is protecting her son from the corruption of the outside world; the narrator's mother and Albertine will both briefly live at Saint-Cloud, the social hangout of the nouveau riche Verdurins, poisoned by the landed wealth of the anti-Dreyfusard Guermantes. Like Saint-Cloud, the setting of Chartres Cathedral is the site of another major turning point in the novel; as a tourist destination, the Cathedral's reconstructed stained glass becomes the focal point in a discussion with Albertine concerning the legitimacy of the modernist interpretation of traditional art. Chartres is also "where the Prousts had lived for generations" and serves as the inspiration for the narrator's home, Combray (*Time Regained* v). The most poignant of the three paintings, *Vesuvius*, in the final volume *Time Regained* is used as a descriptive metaphor for the First World War's steady march towards Paris. At one point the narrator compares the clouds of dust and rumbling felt by Pompeians to the shadows and bombs cast by "German aeroplanes" (*Time Regained* 207).

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<sup>30</sup> The French is a bit different here: "*du moyen âge cernait çà et là d'un trait aussi parfaitement circulaire qu'une petite ville dans un tableau de primitive.*" The use of the term "tableau" as opposed to "peinture primitive" is possibly to make a comparison between a rudimentary landscape viewed through the eyes of a child and the more abstract works that would have been popular at the time of writing the novel (*A la recherche du temps perdu* 1:46).

Photography throughout the novel serves as a symptom of modernity, modernity that is often antagonistic with the ideal life of the narrator. Frequently, the mechanical realism of the photograph overshadows the importance of a living character. The overabundance of information in these images, if we return to Kracauer, not only supersedes the present experience, but interferes with the natural process of remembering. In *The Fugitive*, the narrator comments on mechanisms of this augmented memory, explaining that “memory has no power of invention, [...] it is powerless to desire anything else, let alone anything better, than what we have already possessed” (*The Fugitive* 748). We see this when he is ruminating on the photograph of his grandmother and in his inability to experience the emotional half of that captured memory (748). Second, he explains, memory is “spiritual, in the sense that reality cannot provide it with a state which it seeks,” suggesting that not only are we incapable of capturing these past moments, but we are incapable of accurate psychological re-creation using even the abundant information of a photograph (748). Even if the previous two mechanisms were possible, memory is incapable of resurrecting the dead person or moment, since the resurrection that memory facilitates “is not so much that of the need of love, in which it makes us believe” but the “need for the absent person” or the longing for uncapturable moment (748). The narrator defines memory as an amalgamation of the scene, its inhabitants, and their effect on the viewer. Thus, memory and photography, the scientific stand-in for memory, negates the latter from this equation, since memory is stationary, a phantom of experience. In the third volume of the novel, *The Guermantes Way*, the narrator has a brief mental breakdown when confronted with a photograph of his grandmother, remembering the captured moment but regretting having missed spending more time with his now-deceased grandmother, explaining:

I pictured her as she was when I was with her but eliminating my own presence and not taking into account the effect upon her of this elimination; now I had to free myself as quickly as possible, in her arms, from the phantom, [...] of a grandmother really separated from me, resigned, having [...] a definite age. (*The Guermantes Way* 183)

The narrator's description of this image in phantasmagoric terms, ghostly or in some alternative translations "phantom," is consistent with the inanimate, unnatural nature of these memory images. In the 1988 French Gallimard edition of *Le Côté de Guermantes*, Proust uses the phrase "Hélas, ce fantôme-la, ce fut lui que j'aperçus," literally translated as, "Alas, that ghost, it was him I saw." The masculine "lui" connects the image to the scene as opposed to the scenes' inhabitant, "ma grand-mère" (*A La Recherche* 2:438). Moncrieff's original English translation, "Alas, this phantom was just what I did see" makes the same differentiation as the literal translation, connecting the image with the setting. Alternatively, in the Penguin edition Mark Treharne translates this passage as "Alas, it was this ghostly image that I saw," suggesting that the memory, image, and scene are the same (*The Guermantes Way* Penguin 135). Quirks of the translation aside, the narrator's description of photography is not connected to the tastes of the author; instead, they serve as a stand-in for a more sweeping criticism of modernity and the narrator's inability to return to the Combray of his childhood.

As Hägglund explains, the narrator can recall the feelings for his grandmother, specifically that "he loved her but not how it felt" since we resign the image to the past. Hägglund argues that because the narrator no longer "needs her in the same way," the experience that he wants to recapture is unreconcilable with the present (Hägglund 21). "The basic structure of involuntary memory," the narrator explains, causes "a past self to be resuscitated" (21). However, as the term suggests, involuntary memory is not easily induced; instead, the narrator is



ultimately forced to forgo his quest for involuntary memory through a more productive reading of the past. This is only possible towards the end of the novel as the various markers of the past are gradually separated from his daily life (21). Without the habit that makes his memories authentic, at the conclusion of the novel the narrator is no longer driven by the desire to preserve the past. Instead, as Hägglund continues, “he desires to live on,” creating new experiences (25). The photograph becomes an archival tool, offering some level of closure to its viewer; closure in which the infinite detail of a moment is preserved, stored, and left in the past, a souvenir.

This fact is more obvious in the final volume of the novel, when the narrator’s social circle and home are left in disarray after the First World War sweeps across Europe, effectively erasing the monuments which mark the repeatability of habit. As Stewart explains, these objects are “the signs of the everyday, the effort to articulate difference through counting” or habit (Stewart 14). Nostalgia, Stewart continues, “is a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience” (23). With no object to mark the repetition and differences of everyday life, there is a lack of “fixity” (23). This comparison between involuntary and voluntary memory is first introduced during the overture during the sequence in which the narrator discusses his time spent with a magic lantern waiting for his mother’s kiss before bed. This lantern, as Danius argues, is the visual equivalent of involuntary memory discussed throughout the novel. The images it projects are neither photographic nor abstract but have a similar thickness of art as those described by his mother and grandmother. However, where the lantern images differ from involuntary memory is that they appear to the “waking mind” and as “moments of spontaneous retrospection are impossible to grasp one by one.” Moreover, the lantern “illustrates the essentially mobile nature of memory” (Danius 96). The lantern images also differ in that the narrator can easily recalled

them each at decreasing levels of detail. The narrator uses this example to show the fading impact that comes with repeated exposure, at first finding “plenty of charm in these bright projections,” fantastical images from the “Merovingian past” (*Swann’s Way* 11). Repeated viewings of these images, for the narrator, have an eventual “anaesthetic effect,” lessening their impact until he finds himself back in his room: “I would begin to think and feel very melancholy things” (11). Drawing obvious parallels to Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, the images are only a projection of one interpretation of an inaccessible past, a convenient replacement for the exterior world. According to Danius, “the shifting light” makes him “unable to recognize his room.” The fantasy of the images prevents the narrator from viewing the exterior world. This sequence establishes a model for reading the series of images presented to the narrator throughout the entire novel.

Until this point, photography in Proust’s work has been examined as an extended metaphor for voluntary memory. In this following section, voluntary memory takes the form of the narrator’s love interest, Albertine. In his 1956 book, *Nostalgia: A Psychoanalytic Study of Marcel Proust*, Milton L. Miller claims that Proust’s overture is better understood as a “retrospective” episode, where “through discourse on sleep” Proust merges the “dreamer” with the text (Miller 25). Miller’s discussion of the sleep discourse focuses on the narrator’s relationship with Albertine, the narrator’s romantic foil, throughout the novel. If photography is correlative for voluntary memory, Albertine is the romantic surrogate for the narrator’s voluntary memory of his mother during the novel’s overture. The narrator is first introduced to Albertine by Swann in *Within a Budding Grove* during a conversation concerning the Swanns’ acquaintances, the aptly named Bontemps, Albertine’s aunt, and uncle. As the narrator’s mother moves further into the background of the novel, Albertine emerges as a replacement, first while

the narrator is traveling with Swann, becoming a prominent part of his life. Towards the end of *Within a Budding Grove*, the narrator decides on the romantic pursuit of Albertine, writing:

I have said that Albertine had not seemed to me that day to the same as previous days to be the same as on previous days, and that each time I saw her she was to appear different. But I felt at that moment that certain modifications in the appearance, the importance, the stature of a person may also be due to the variability of certain states of consciousness interposed between that person and ourselves. (*Within a Budding Grove* 595)

The change to which the narrator is referring is not a change of Albertine but a change in his own maturity and setting; the passage of time causes this change. Therefore, each state of consciousness referenced here is an individual snapshot of time that he has spent in the present of Albertine. This state of consciousness he later refers to as a moment of retrospective pleasure, writing “but as far as the pleasure was concerned, I was naturally not conscious of it until sometime later,” suggesting that the pleasure of their meeting results from their absence in retrospect (617). Again, the narrator reiterates that the afterimage of this pleasure “is like a photograph” in which pleasure experienced “in the presence of a beloved object, is a negative, which we develop later, when we are back at home” (617). The narrator’s reference to Albertine as an object here serves two purposes: firstly, it establishes that his initial relationship to her is superficial, in the same way the pleasure of involuntary memory induced by the narrator’s madeleine during the overture of the novel is superficial. Second, here he is foreshadowing what will become of Albertine in the penultimate volume of the novel. This moment in the text serves to illustrate how Proust’s narrator is using Albertine as a replacement for his mother, whose presence in *Swann’s Way* was only felt during her absence: “those evenings on which Mamma stayed so short a time in my room were sweet indeed compared to those on which we had people

to dinner, and therefore she did not come at all.” An absence of habit and tradition here is the only thing making him desire repeated ritual (*Swann’s Way* 16).

However, like the immaterial snapshot of his grandmother, the narrator never gains access to the aura of Albertine, only seeing her as the photographic simulacra of his mother. Their relationship in subsequent volumes verges on the razor edge of abuse, as the titles of the fifth and sixth volumes suggest. That abuse restrains Albertine, and the embrace of her as simulacra torments the narrator. In fact, the title of Proust’s fourth volume, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, refers to this relationship. After watching Albertine dance with another woman, the narrator describes his jealousy as “the nostalgic, the hypocritical, sometimes the courageous exiles of Sodom” watching as the Gomorrahites rebuild their ruined homeland (*Sodom and Gomorrah* 339). Throughout the novel, the narrator’s inability to separate from Albertine keeps with this same biblical motif whereby his rejection of and return to Albertine arrests the passage of time, leaving him in the same childish emotional state seen in the novel’s overture, much to the chagrin of his lifelong housekeeper Françoise. This connection between Albertine and the narrator’s mother becomes explicit during an episode at the opening of *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Having declined an invitation to dinner with the Duchess of Guermantes, and mentally fatigued from the constant anti-Dreyfusard debate among France’s social elite, the narrator receives word that Albertine will pay a visit later that evening. This late-night visit irritates Françoise. The narrator expresses the same fetishistic anticipation as he had with his mother, explaining, “Albertine’s visit seeming to me now all the more desirable” (*Sodom and Gomorrah* 170). Moreover, this air of ambiguity is cleared while the frantic narrator writes a telegram to reject Albertine’s late-night visit, thinking to himself:

This terrible need of a person was something I had learned to know at Combray in the case of my mother to the point of wanting to die if she sent word to me by Françoise that she could not come upstairs. (179)

Interestingly, Françoise is a constant presence throughout the novel, serving as the narrator's governess and long-term housekeeper; she and her daughter accompany the narrator on his various exploits. Eventually, Françoise announces and scolds Albertine for her late arrival, and this unbearable anticipation for Albertine's arrival serves to further connect her with the narrator's mother in the overture. As a child, he had never dared to ask his mother for a second kiss goodnight for fear that she might "at once look displeased" (*Swann's Way* 15). On the other hand, Albertine provides him with an endless supply of this affectionate delicacy. After he asks, "Can I have a nice kiss?" she responds, "As many as you like." He explains, "You know it's a great pleasure to me," a response that should immediately call to mind his previous comparison of pleasure to the photograph (*Sodom and Gomorrah* 186). If we are to assume that this kiss is serving the same purpose as the overture's madeleine, then this repetition which the narrator refers to as habit will degrade the pleasure gained from the experience. As both Proust and later Samuel Beckett argue, voluntary memory is in direct opposition to the experience of involuntary memory since, as Beckett explains, voluntary memory has "no value as an instrument of evocation" since the image it brings to mind is too "far removed from the real as the myth of our imagination or the caricature furnished by direct perception" (Beckett 4). Thus, it lacks experiential euphoria experienced by the narrator as a child (4). Just as with the photograph of his grandmother, the feelings of pleasure felt for Albertine are ultimately subjugated to the realm of artificial reproductions that show a moment in time but never correspond to the same memory that they would have, if experienced in the presence of those who took part.

In the same way the absence of fixity liberates the narrator from the past, Albertine's death during the beginning of the novel's sixth volume, *The Fugitive*, allows him to reflect on the superficiality of their relationship. The narrator learns of Albertine's death after receiving two contrasting letters from her, one acknowledging his engagement with Andrée (Albertine's former lover) and a second one asking that he reconsider their previous engagement to each other. Reading these two letters under the pretense that their sender is deceased, the narrator contemplates how, like his grandmother year prior, memories of Albertine will shift to the segment of his memory reserved for the recall of vague moments divorced from their real-world counterpart, explaining "to be able to suppress suffering," she had to be absent "not only in Touraine" but also in his own mind (*The Fugitive* 56).<sup>31</sup>

The two letters, read "simultaneously with her death," Miller continues, represent "the real union with Albertine," the narrator, "and their mutual declaration of love" (Miller 84). After losing a loved one, according to the narrator, the experience of being in the "surroundings of the moment" with that person become the same as any other voluntary memory "appearing to us only in a succession of momentary flashes." These flashes, he argues, are like "single photographs" left behind in that person's absence (56). Like Albertine and the previous image of his grandmother, this "collection of moments" lacks the emotional linkages of involuntary memory (56). As Miller suggests, Albertine's death is the turning point of the novel, foreshadowing the moment in which he writes his biography. When the narrator learns that Albertine's death was misreported, he never attempts to reconcile the relationship, concluding that she has always been "a 'phantom,' not a well-defined person," and their relationship had always been a composite stand-in for the earlier romantic episodes that were made more real

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<sup>31</sup> Touraine is the province in France, southwest of Paris, where Albertine is living after leaving Proust's narrator.

because of the “indefiniteness of her outline” (Miller 83). In less cordial terms, he had been using her to replace the euphoria of involuntary memory that had always been just out of reach.<sup>32</sup>

The public response to Zola’s trial at the end of the Dreyfus affair is the moment in which our current understanding of the intellectual class is born. Henry James and his peers were producing similar works during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but unlike Proust, their novels had not been written as tools for social reform. One of the many factors that motivated Proust was the need to serve as an intellectual voice against French antisemitism. Proust considered himself to be the “first Dreyfusard,” according to Paul Read’s book *The Dreyfus Affair: The Scandal That Tore France in Two*. If we read *In Search of Lost Time* as a Dreyfusard text, it becomes a piece of counterpropaganda in the same way that the Photo-Secession hoped to dismantle the realist assumptions associated with documentary photography. Therefore, I am concluding this chapter by connecting Proust’s work to the Dreyfus affair to establish the moment of the twentieth century at which modernist literature becomes the genre of the intellectual class, with all the benefits and dangers of that class and its influence on the accepted cultural consciousness and mass memory. Ultimately, the next chapter will show how the birth of the intellectual leads to the of literary nostalgia (for good and bad) in the United States prior to the Second World War.

As I have previously mentioned, the Dreyfus Affair is a major point of discussion throughout *In Search*, specifically in the third volume, *The Guermentes Way*, which is almost

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<sup>32</sup> Here Miller describes this relationship using “Freud’s theories of ‘transference’” (Miller 83). Later arguing in his chapter “Proust’s Homosexuality: Probable Contributing Factors and How They are Unconsciously Expressed in His Work” that Albertine’s bisexuality in the novel is a “key which led back to the nostalgic past, always tempting and never fully satisfying,” suggesting obvious oedipal connotations between Proust and his mother (162). Moreover, Miller argues that Albertine was inspired by Alfred Agostinelli, Proust’s “intelligent, attractive chauffeur who took up aviation and was killed in an airplane accident” (163). These hypotheses, both of which tie the narrator to his creator, are certainly outdated and make some problematic assumptions concerning homosexuality.

entirely focused on the societal aftermath of Alfred Dreyfus's 1894 conviction for espionage and his subsequent 1906 reinstatement. The affair, according to Norman Kleeblatt's essay, "The Dreyfus Affair: A Visual Record," marked the moment that "writers, artists, and academicians" began being associated with "political activism." As he continues, our current understanding of the term "*Intellectual* [...]" has its roots in the France of the Affair" (Kleeblatt 2). In October 1894, the French military convicted Dreyfus as a way of concealing Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy's questionable correspondence with officials in the German military. Proust's novel is not concerned with the inner workings of the Dreyfus convictions; its focus, and its narrator's focus, is on the accusation that Dreyfus was targeted because he was of Jewish descent. According to Kleeblatt, because Dreyfus's conviction resulted from systematic antisemitic scapegoating, "opinion makers vis-à-vis the military, the church, the fallen monarchy, capitalism, and highly Jewish communities were polarized" into two distinct groups, "the Dreyfusards and the anti-Dreyfusards" (1). In Proust's novel, as Swann notes frequently, all anti-Dreyfusards are antisemitic (1). Throughout the novel, Proust, who himself was of Jewish descent and an outspoken Dreyfusard, uses the affair as a way of criticizing the members of the French *grands* with whom he and his narrator, because of their social status, are in proximity. In the novel, the Duke and Duchess of Guermantes are incapable of even considering Dreyfus' innocence because of the pervasive antisemitism of their social class, as Swann explains, "at the heart of all these people are anti-Semites" (*The Guermantes Way* 797). Swann, whose purpose is to guide the narrator through the politics of high society, remains unfazed by the Guermantes' anti-Dreyfusard ideology, whereas the narrator is aware of the superficiality of these flawed ideologies and identifies more with the intellectual class, including Émile Zola whose 13 January 1898 essay in *L'Aurore* titled "J'Accuse" became the first public "indictments of the military and



government” who had falsely convicted and imprisoned Dreyfus (Kleeblatt 1). Zola’s support would ultimately be the call to action for many of France’s artists and authors, including Proust. Zola’s popularity and involvement shined a light on the Dreyfus Affair for the rest of Europe and America.

It is important to comment on the role of criminal profiling during the initial trial, specifically the expert authority given to Alphonse Bertillon by the prosecution. Guy Chapman summarizes the affair in his 1955 book, *The Dreyfus Case: A Reassessment* as an illustration of “the influence of propaganda on history” (*Dreyfus Cases* 360). Chapman’s apologist conclusion criticizes both sides for using propaganda. However, the power of that propaganda is more clearly illustrated by Bertillon, who was selected as a graphologist during the trial (360).<sup>33</sup> The decision made by the prosecution was based on the perceived credibility of the Police Prefecture’s archive of anthropometric photography used to profile and convict suspected criminals. As Allan Sekula describes in his 1986 essay “The Body and the Archive,” the photograph “operated as the image of scientific truth,” yet Bertillon, Sekula continues, was aware of the flaws of the medium, specifically the risk of creating a flawed image of representative criminality (Sekula 40). Because Bertillon’s archive “combined photographic portraiture, anthropometric description, [...] within a comprehensive, statistically based filing system,” he was an easy choice for the defense’s expert witness (18). Armand du Paty, the initial

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<sup>33</sup> In his conclusion, Chapman argues that “Antisemitism appears to have played no part in the case,” explaining that “Nine-tenths of the literature of the case is Dreyfusard; the Dreyfusard view, with its crude blacks and whites, has passed into history. The anti-Dreyfusard versions, such as they are, are no less propagandist, but since their side was defeated, the writers have been ineffective. Both sides are distorted” (360). Chapman’s book was revised and republished in 1972 as *The Dreyfus Trials*, and in this version, due to additional research materials made public in the 1961 publication of *L’Affaire sans Dreyfus* by M. Marcel Thomas, his conclusion has been omitted and the term Dreyfusard has been replaced with Dreyfusists to denote individuals who “from the beginning suspected a judicial error” from those who “saw the case as an opportunity for political or personal advantage” (*Dreyfus Trials* xi).

military investigator, sent for Bertillon to confirm the presence of Dreyfus's handwriting on the correspondence in question. However, according to Chapman, Bertillon was unaware that these documents were the only evidence against Dreyfus and "set to work under the impression that he was dealing with secondary and supporting material" (*Dreyfus Case* 70). Leslie Derfler, in her book *The Dreyfus Affair*, counters the tone of Chapman's narrative, arguing that Bertillon, "a notorious anti-Semite" claimed that the difference between Dreyfus's handwriting and Mercier's on the *bordereau* resulted from "deliberate efforts made by the accused to alter the script" (Derfler 68). Even after "the court exploded in laughter," Bertillon's convoluted processes of analyzing blown-up photographs of the document was accepted as evidence (68). To account for his own lack of pretext, Bertillon came to the convoluted conclusion that Dreyfus had forged his own handwriting, making the handwriting on the *bordereau* appear as if his imagined author had attempted to forge Dreyfus's handwriting. While Proust was present at Zola's libel trial and heard the reframed testimony from Bertillon, his narrator never addresses Bertillon or his archive directly. However, in *The Fugitive*, the narrator, who cannot recognize Gilberte's handwriting, mistakenly discards the announcement of Gilberte and Robert's wedding, justifying the mistake by using a similarly convoluted analysis of Gilberte's handwriting, concluding "how many letters are actually read into a word by a careless person who knows what to expect, who sets out with the idea that the message is from a certain person?" (*The Fugitive* 890).

Until the peak of the Dreyfus affair, as Michael Marrus explained in his essay "Popular Antisemitism," "Denunciation of 'Jews' could be considered on the left simply a linguistic shorthand for populous leaning." The adoption of this sentiment by the upper crust of society in *In Search* explains Swann's seemingly apathetic response to the narrator's multiple inquiries (Marrus 57). As Marrus continues, the actual discriminatory practices of the antisemitism

movement in France were all but invisible to these social elite who were only aware of the "Mythical image of the Jew" (56). Multiple popular antisemitic periodicals such as Edouard Drumont's *La Libre parole* proliferated these degenerate caricatures, which according to Marrus had a "circulation of 200,000 by the time Alfred Dreyfus was arrested" in 1894 (54). Edouard Drumont proved to be one of the more septic proponents of this French antisemitism. For all intents and purposes his two-volume 1886 book *La France Juive: Essai d'histoire contemporaine* is responsible for the public's indoctrination into the anti-Dreyfusard ideology. Including *La Libre parole*, *La France Juive* inspired periodicals such as *Le Pierrot*, *Le Fiftre*, and *La Croix* to begin supporting the anti-Dreyfusard cause. According to Phillip Dennis Cate's essay "The Paris Cry: Graphic Artists and the Dreyfus Affair," after photo-printing made traditional lithography obsolete, it became less expensive to reproduce graphic art for a much larger audience. This new technological advancement paired with the 1881 Freedom of Press Law reduced government censorship, spurring the "proliferation of illustrated journals," and creating a wider marketplace for graphic artists such as Theophile-Alexandre Steinlen and Adolphe Willette, who was often employed by these newly distributed antisemitic publications (Cate 62).

According to Linda Nochlin, to understand these periodicals' parasitic effect, it is important to consider "the process of displacement and condensation taking place on the level of the political unconscious." Since the public was unaware of the news bias in these publications, these editors appealed to the "Enlightenment ideals of reason and truth and justice," making false claims of "scientific objectivity" and "intellectual distinction" that created a false sense of authority among readers, and eventually "achieved a social existence and took a collective form"

(Nochlin 108).<sup>34</sup> Drumont's *La France Juive* introduced the French public to the stereotypical visual image of the Jew "the well-known hooked nose, the blinking eyes, clenched teeth, projecting ears, [...] and the soft, velvety hand of a hypocrite and a traitor" (108). Photo-printed images such as Émile Courtet's *Les qualities du Juif d'après la methode de Gall* in the 23 December 1893 issue of *La Libre Parole* and Steinlen's *Cent's millions* printed in the 24 February 1894 issue of *La chambard socialiste* further cemented this visual myth in the public consciousness (qtd. in Nochlin 108). The collective myth of "The Jew" had a profound effect on even the most rational of minds. For example, Edgar Degas, according to Nochlin, went as far as breaking contact with his Dreyfusard family and friends including fellow impressionist Camille Pissarro and his photographic collaborator Daniel Halévy, who would explain that in the "autumn of 1897" after dinner, Degas silently stormed out of his home and never spoke with him or his family again (106). What Nochlin fails to mention in her essay is that for all intents and purposes Degas was having dinner at unofficial headquarters of the Dreyfusard movement. To put things in context, the Halévys, who were of Jewish descent, frequently acted as hosts for many prominent Dreyfusards, including Proust. Daniel Halévy and his father Ludovic Halévy's cousin Genevieve Straus are often cited as being probable inspirations for the narrator's friend Bloch in the novel and Swann's wife, Odette. As Ruth Harris explains in her book *Dreyfus: Politics, Emotion, and the Scandal of the Century*, after the publication of Zola's "J'Accuse," Genevieve, one of the "great *salonnières*," began hosting these Dreyfusards (285).

This same phenomenon is also visible in *The Guermantes Way* when the narrator is briefly distracted from his friend Bloch's polite attempt to break through the propagandized

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<sup>34</sup> I would hope my unspoken connection of this phenomenon to current events is obvious here. Nochlin uses the term "Dreamworks," inspired by Goya's "The sleep of reason produces monsters." She explains, "in the minds of nineteenth-century anti-Semites like Degas, secured in the knowledge that most of their more outrageous aggression-fantasies would be fulfilled on the level of text rather than in practice" (108).

perspective of M. de Norpois. The narrator notices how Mme. De Guermantes is trying to save face while speaking with an archivist at Mme. Villeparisis's salon, and he explains, "she dreaded what he would say were he to find out that she had asked to her house a Jew more or less affiliated to the 'Syndicate'" (*The Guermantes Way* 319).<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, Bloch, who is Jewish, cannot disentangle "M. de Norpois's own views" concerning the Dreyfus affair because Bloch has only read about the "officers whose names were appearing constantly in the newspaper at the time," while the Marquises has only read about "the politicians who were involved in the affair" (319). Proust's narrator interjects, further illustrating how Bloch and the Marquises are incapable of seeing each other's view on the affair from writing their own media echo chambers:

The Human mind, hovering perpetually between the two planes of experience and imagination, seeks to fathom the ideal life of the people it knows and to know the people whose life it has to imagine. (315)

In the novel, the Dreyfus Affair does not reap nearly as much havoc as it had in the real world, but it is still a constantly divisive presence, ideologically dividing the minds of these characters who are required by society to maintain their polite austerity. In Mme Straus's salon, however, an intellectual revolution was brewing that would lead to a series of anti-Dreyfusard riots. Afterwards in June 1898 she would write "I myself feel distressed. [...] nobody feels very cheerful" (qtd. in Harris 285). Immediately after Zola's essay, Mme Straus's son Jacques Bizet, Daniel Halévy, and Marcel published the first of several petitions, titled "Protestations" in the 14 January 1898 issue of *L'Aurore*; considering his anti-Dreyfusard sentiment, it is easy to see why Degas was upset (Read 236). These protests, taking the form of petitions signed by France's

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<sup>35</sup> *Le Syndicate*, as noted in the Modern Library edition, "was the term used by anti-Semites to describe the secret power of the Jews" (15n824). In more specific terms, according to Read, the myth of "The Syndicate" as a "secretive supernational Jewish lobby" was derived from the perceived power "exerted over governments by bankers such as the Rothschilds" (Read 11).

influential creatives are collectively referred to as the *Intellectual Manifesto*, and while it lacked the illustration and photography of Drumont's *La Libre parole*, "J'Accuse" and these petitions positioned *L'Aurore* as the Dreyfusard counterpart to Drumont's antisemitic propaganda paper. In his 23 January 1898 *L'Aurore* editorial, "A La Dérive" inspired by the diverse backgrounds of individuals signing the protest petition, Georges Clemenceau brands this group of activists as intellectuals, praising the number of people that had identified themselves even in the face of public ridicule (Clemenceau 1).<sup>36</sup> As Harris contends, while this was not the first use of the term "intellectuals" to describe similar groups "of differing disciplines and professions united by the common idea of defending justice" it is the moment in which this usage gained public notoriety (Harris 136).

In Proust's novel, this idea of being an intellectual, which *Time Regained* seems to suggest is the narrator's goal, is universally incompatible with voluntary memory, photographic or otherwise. In *The Fugitive*, after being informed of Albertine's death, the narrator laments using her as a way of accessing his mother's kiss and not engaging with her on an intellectual level. Being an intellectual is similarly connected to experience when the narrator considers the time he could have spent with his grandmother. Ultimately, in the final volume, the pursuits of the intellectual appear to require a complete disengagement with any false pretenses of the past; the ability to learn, the ability to complete the apprenticeship Deleuze had described comes with the realization that an obsession with habit, chronophilia-nostalgia limits our perspective of the future, thus preventing future intellectual pursuit.

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<sup>36</sup> Harris uses Venita Datta's *Birth of a National Icon* as a secondary source for this editorial. The digital facsimile published by the Bibliothèque nationale de France reads, "N'est-ce pas un signe, tous ces intellectuels, venus de tous les coins de l'horizon, que se groupent sur une idée et s'y tiennent inébranlables. Sans les menaces qu'on a répandues dans tous les établissements d'instruction publique, combien seraient venus qui n'osent manifester le trouble de leur conscience!"

Chapter 4: A Photographic Pastiche of Southern Sentimentality: The Creation of the Image Text  
in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*

Much in the same way my previous chapter established a definition of metaphorical photographic nostalgia as it appears in fiction, this final chapter examines Faulkner's 1929 novel *The Sound and the Fury* as a paradigmatic example of a literary snapshot in which the structure, theme, and setting create a literary snapshot of the depraved decay of a Southern aristocracy beholden to the redeemer myth of the Confederate Lost Cause. In his 1952 essay "The Creation of the Real in William Faulkner," Jean-Jacques Mayoux coins the term "the Faulknerian reality" to illustrate how the fictional settings of Jefferson, Mississippi, in his two novels *The Sound and the Fury* and his 1939 follow-up *Absalom, Absalom!* form "a sort of photography or photographic montage of the external world" in which his characters' similitude comes from their isolation in a fictional setting outside of which exists the real world beyond the pages of his fiction (Mayoux 172). Faulkner's fictional Jefferson is part of Yoknapatawpha County. In his "Introduction to *The Portable Faulkner*," Malcolm Cowley explains Faulkner founded his "mythical kingdom" based on his experiences in Oxford, Mississippi, and as a "parable or legend of all the Deep South" (Cowley 94). Like Proust, Faulkner's work illustrates the consequences of nostalgic myth supplementing the cultural memory of real events, specifically how nostalgia artificially stabilizes the unstable Lost Cause monomyth of the American post-bellum South. However, whereas Zola's and Proust's intellectualism was a reaction to the prosecution of Alfred Dreyfus, Faulkner's novel is progressive in the way it exposes the generational proliferation of an ideology that has already proven itself fatal to the culture in which it was conceived. Proust's novel is an intellectual call to action, whereas *The Sound the Fury* is the confirmation of defeat.

For this final section, I have again divided my research into three categories, primary sources, historical context, and theory. The textual history of *The Sound and the Fury* has been rigorously documented. Unlike Proust, who died before the final volume of his novel was published, Faulkner often spoke on the intended reading of his characters and frequently discussed *The Sound and the Fury*. The remnants of these discussions can include his two unpublished introductions and several of his letters concerning the novel, as well as the history of the Compson family, included as an appendix in the 1946 collection, *The Portable William Faulkner*. Beyond this, there are several volumes of letters and speeches that have been collected over the years. For this chapter, I specifically used James B. Meriwether's edition of *William Faulkner Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters*. Since this chapter spends a good deal of time comparing the fictional Jefferson, Mississippi, and its popular ideology to those of the real American South I have used essays by Cleanth Brooks and Richard King from Brooks's book *Faulkner and the Southern Renaissance* and essays by Hugh Kenner from *Faulkner, Modernism, and Film: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha*. Finally, for more historical context I have returned to Henry James's *American Scene* and *The Bostonians* as once again James serves as a good transatlantic perspective of the American South. For the theoretical perspective in this chapter, Jean-Paul Sartre's essay "Time in Faulkner: *The Sound and the Fury*" is a crucial point of comparison between Faulkner's novel and Proust's work from my previous chapter; specifically, Martine Darmon's translation from Frederick Hoffman and Olga Vickery's collection, *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*.

The novel follows the Compsons, a formerly wealthy family whose status has been in constant decline since the end of the American Civil War. Because of their closeness to the conflict and resulting period of Reconstruction, Faulkner's characters exist and are acted upon by



the Lost Cause myth of the post-bellum South. Quentin, Jason, Caddy, and Benjy Compson are in the process of being forgotten by time and thus the Confederate myth runs congruent with their prosperous history, which in the novel is quickly becoming a myth itself. As Mayoux explains, the only conflict in the novel is that of the Compsons with a world that has moved on, or as Mayoux explains, “for Faulkner the mystery is not thus resolved, but remains untouched” (Mayoux 172). To illustrate this insoluble relationship, *The Sound and the Fury* is divided into four distinct sections, the first three narrated from the point of view of the three male Compson children and a final section which follows their black servant Dilsey, told from the point of view of an unnamed narrator; all four of the sections of the novel are told from the perspective of their subject. Varying degrees of stylistic complexity define each section of the novel, beginning with Benjy’s chapter written in a stream-of-consciousness style like and inspired by the final chapter of Joyce’s *Ulysses*. These stylistic choices purposefully confuse any linear path through each section, never giving readers a true summary of events. Faulkner’s use of multiple perspectives subverts the norm of narrative storytelling, as the characters move between present events and memory; like any witness testimony, details are infused with the bias of the speaker. Faulkner, as Robert Alter explains in his 1975 book *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre*, *The Sound and the Fury*, shows how “invented imagery, fictional events of a re-imagined history” ultimately become indistinguishable from historical fact (Alter 154). Consciousness, he continues, is “a tireless maker of poetic constructs, and inventor of endless imagery.” However, in the novel, the consciousness of the Compson family, their potential for creative labor, is, particularly in Benjy’s case, locked behind a wall of absurdity (154). Moreover, in the case of Quentin Compson, the imagined histories of his homeland restrain the potential for a dynamic consciousness to the point of self-destruction.

Using these multiple points of view, as Mayoux explains, the Compson family seize “nothing but manifestations,” and these hints of the real world beyond the veil of consciousness resemble a “kind of a dream” (Mayoux 172). For the Compson family, who is locked into the endless repetitions of Southern nostalgia, these images are often a “nightmare” (172). This dream-like quality, as I will discuss in more detail, gives the novel the “effect of immediacy.” Faulkner focuses on style as opposed to immediate drama, since his image in contrast with reality is stand-in enough. As Mayoux continues, “in a dream, nothing can be questioned anymore” since the effect of the dream “grows upon us” (172). Similarly, Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* lacks dramatic immediacy, but it also lacks the dreamlike quality of Faulkner’s novel, instead focusing instead on the narrator’s search for and resulting access to involuntary memory, of course until that search is rendered inconsequential as the result of the First World War. Proust’s narrator’s story is a lifelong journey, whereas the Compson’s war has already been lost and their journey is at its conclusion in the novel’s opening; they have passed through the view of the dream and confront the world beyond the myth of nostalgia.

In his 1939, essay “Time in Faulkner,” Jean-Paul Sartre expands on this comparison between Faulkner and Proust’s novel, explaining that for Proust, “salvation lies in time itself, in the total recovery of the past” (Sartre 229). As I explained in my previous chapter, the driving force throughout the novel is not only the recovery of the past but also the annihilation of the narrator’s dependence on it. This dependence, as I have explained, takes many forms, the most important being the traditions of past generations pulling on the forward progress of the narrator’s creative drive (229). Alternatively, in *The Sound and the Fury*, Sartre continues, “the past is unfortunately never lost; it’s always there, almost as an obsession” (229). In fact, as he explains, time is almost entirely absent from the narrative. Proust’s narrator rejects the ease of a

snapshot, whereas all the Compsons have are snapshots, the “monstrous and recurring” memories of a dead and decaying south (229). As it was originally published, the novel only presupposes the Compson family history and their traditional closeness to Mississippi. For the later 1946 *Portable Faulkner* edition, their family history is added as an appendix. Aside from this, the misfortune of the family lacks a fixed chronology and resolves around Quentin Compson’s suicide; according to the later appendix, the Compson family ends a decade after they commit Benjy, with a single line. “And that was all. These others were not Compsons. They were black.” Of these servants, Frony, Luster, Dilsey: “They endure” (“Appendix” 236).

Quentin’s chapter is a point of focus for Sartre’s analysis. This chapter differs from the rest of the novel, taking place ten years prior to the bulk of the story, but like Benjy’s opening, the memories, denoted by italics (in the Norton edition), are written in a shifting present and past tense as if the narrator is remembering through action, recreating involuntary memory from his childhood as an adult. On the page, the distance between memory and the present shrinks the closer we are to the actual present, which Sartre explains is “the infinitesimal instant of death,” when the past and present appear to converge (231). We are with Quentin until the end. His memories shift and become an imagined future. The death scene takes place in one of these sequences, absent of punctuation, a stream-of-consciousness description:

*The same night then my face his face for an instant across the crashing when out of darkness two lighted windows in rigid fleeing crash gone his face and mine just I see saw did I see not goodbye the marquee empty of eating the road empty of darkness in silence the bridge arching into silence darkness sleep the water peaceful and swift not goodbye (The Sound and the Fury 107).*

Here, the convergence of time periods becomes obvious with the repetition of phrasing such as “*I see saw,*” “*His face my face,*” as if he is looking at an image of the scene and realizing that the subject of this snapshot is him. At one point his consciousness moves beyond images from his memory to the memories of the family afterwards: “*Father hasn’t moved he still sat beside her holding her hand the bellowing hammering away like no place for it in silence*” (107). Clearly, this lack of time in the novel is not coincidental or magical thinking on the part of Sartre. If the story, as Faulkner claimed in the two unpublished introductions to the novel, is an allusion to the atemporal nature of the Southern myth, Sartre’s European outsider is using the stylistic choices of the novel as an analogy for the “particular absurdity” of the metaphor, a stream of consciousness concerned with the metaphysics of a “world dying of old age” (Sartre 232).

As a way of understanding how inseparable the Lost Cause is from the Compsons, consider that for Quentin to enroll at Harvard, the Compsons must sell part of their plantation; to escape the South, they must further fragment the family. For this reason, Brooks explains, Quentin “would like to do away with time, locking himself into some past from which there would be no development and no progression,” a fact that is confirmed by his dialogue during his chapter of the novel (326). One such example, a perverse distortion of Maggie Verver dashing the golden bowl on the floor in James’s *The Golden Bowl*, Quentin smashes the crystal and tears the hands off his grandfather’s pocket watch. His father had given him the watch prior to leaving for Boston, explaining, “[I] give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it” (*The Sound and the Fury* 47). In simpler terms, the watch measures the passage of time, leaving Quentin to focus on life. By destroying the timepiece, he is thus rejecting that pretense. Afterwards, when Quentin takes the watch to a horologist’s shop, Faulkner reiterates the fact that

Quentin's act has pushed him past the point of no return. Not a single one of the dozens of watches in the store is set to the correct time, each "with the same assertive and contradictory assurance that [his] had, without any hands at all" (52). However, even in a state of ruin he can still feel its persistent tick: "time is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little wheels; only when the clock stops does time come to life" (52). Unlike Proust or even Fitzgerald's Gatsby, Quentin does not want to return to or remember a nostalgic moment in the past; he wants to stop the progression of time altogether.

While this section is not as abstract as the many examples in the final chapter of James Joyce's 1920 novel *Ulysses*, the beads of Quentin's consciousness in their totality form a fairly cognizant image. Had the thoughts of Proust's narrator been as fragmented as Quentin's and to a lesser extent Benjy's, they might have been an alternative way to illustrate involuntary memory in *In Search of Lost Time*. However, as they appear in Faulkner's novel, the chaos of these atemporal epiphanies is indicative of Quentin's psychological agony and the debilitating divergent state of Benjy's mind. In a passage from Benjy's chapter, Faulkner uses a similar form of narrative rift to show how memory is recalled through nostalgic stimuli, specifically, in this example, smell. More so than Quentin, Benjy epitomizes the childlike state that Proust's narrator idealizes in the final volume of the novel. Upon his introduction, Dilsey makes this abundantly clear, explaining he's "been three years old thirty years" (11). In contrast with Quentin's voluntary memory, Benjy's memory is almost entirely involuntary. His narration moves between the past and present, constantly being triggered by sign, smell, and sound. At the end of the chapter, being held by his sister Caddy, the smell of trees sends his consciousness to an early point of his childhood, during his grandmother's funeral. He remembers Caddy climbing a tree to spy inside the church during the funeral. Unlike Quentin and myself, Benjy uses proper

punctuation, but the temporal shift is no less jarring. “Caddie held me. She smelled like trees. *She smelled like trees. In the corner it was dark, but I could see the window*” (45). Being incapable of any real external expression, Benjy’s section is completely observations and, as Sartre explains, he is incapable of experiencing the passage of time and literally incapable of measuring it with clocks “for he does not understand them” (Sartre 226).

It is worth mentioning that in this section Faulkner appears to be paying homage to a comment, a metaphysical concept briefly discussed in Joseph Conrad’s 1907 novel *The Secret Agent* in which a similarly enfeebled character, Stevie, is blown up during a failed terrorist attack. In Conrad’s novel, while watching Stevie’s remains being shoveled out of the crater, the Chief Inspector wonders if the victim, who had “died instantaneously” and whose body was in an impossible “state of disintegration,” might have experienced the entirety of the “pangs of inconceivable agony” instantaneously, remembering having read in “popular publications of long and terrifying dreams dreamed in the instant of waking” (Conrad 99). Benjy’s atemporal narrative is Faulkner’s way of playing with the Chief Inspector’s theory. The origins of Quentin’s suicide are included in this passage as well. After pontificating on Stevie’s death, the Inspector shudders at the thought of a drowning man experiencing “ages of atrocious pain and mental torture” contained within the moment “his doomed head bobs up, streaming, for the last time” (99). Faulkner deals with this compression of time by weaving involuntary memory into Benjy’s observations, and Sartre suggests that Proust “really should have employed a technique” like this since his narrator’s madeleine moment is “the logical outcome of his metaphysic” (230). However, I would argue that because *In Search of Lost Time* follows real events such as the Dreyfus Affair so closely, and because the narrator is writing his memoirs well after these events, Proust’s novel demands a grounded sense of temporality, whereas Sartre suggests that

Proust, as a “classist and Frenchman” is being pedantically formal “to preserve at least the appearance of chronology” (230). However, in Faulkner’s text Benjy’s easy access to involuntary memory is made worthless by his inability to parse an overabundance of information, resulting in his frequent emotional tantrums. Alternatively, Proust’s narrator has the privilege of a voice, and the novel personifies an overabundance of information.

For this reason, Faulkner focuses the last silent image on Benjy, showing the result of his temporal atrophy from the perspective of Dilsey, an outside observer. Before being stopped and threatened by Jason, Luster, another one of the Compson’s black servants, “approached the square, where the confederate soldier gazed with empty eyes beneath his marble hand in the wind and weather” (*The Sound and the Fury* 191). Afterwards, turning in a direction that conflicts with Benjy’s routine, he begins “bellowing,” firmly gripping the broken stem of a flower (191). Afterwards, Benji is lulled into a memory by the sound of the horse’s hooves against the ground after Luster turns the carriage around and straightens the stem of his tightly held flower:

His eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, post to tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place. (191)

Like the stream-of-consciousness style in Quentin’s chapter, this final passage is also Joycean. The language and theme are reminiscent of the conclusion of the final story, “The Dead,” in his 1914 book, *Dubliners*. Joyce’s story, like Faulkner’s novel, focuses on what he called “the nightmare of history,” a repetitive condition from which both his Gabriel Conroy and Faulkner’s Compsons can never escape (qtd. Levine 2). At the end of “The Dead,” Gabriel, while lost in his own memory, watches the snow falling over his native Ireland, as the narrator explains:

His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. (“The Dead” 242)

Returning to the above passage we see the same style of word play used by Joyce, “faintly falling” is echoed through the similar simile when he writes “cornice and facade flowed smoothly.” By no means is it a great mystery that Faulkner’s work is influenced by Joyce’s; as McGurl points out, these stylistic similarities were apparent before the novel had been widely distributed. In her 1929 promotional pamphlet, *On William Faulkner “The Sound and the Fury,”* Evelyn Scott comments on this fact (McGurl 145). Scott describes Quentin’s section of the novel as being “inferior” to Benjy’s and praises of the portrayal of internal conflict using “free association” that she had previously seen in the works of Joyce (Scott 8). The *Sound and the Fury* is often called the American *Ulysses*, and scholars like Hugh Kenner, in his 1978 essay, “Faulkner and Joyce,” have specifically noted that aspects of the novel that borrow from Joyce are changed to suit the American vernacular, explaining, “the three ‘monologues’ that make up three quarters” of the novel use Joyce’s style “as a way to construct a book that is finally enacted only in the reader’s mind” suggesting that unlike Joyce, who uses the same convention to illustrate “inner speech,” Faulkner’s style is subordinate to the image-text (Kenner 29). Moreover, Faulkner has further differentiated himself from his Irish peer by supplying “more words than a silent mind would have framed,” further benefiting the reader’s mental image of events in the novel (29). In Benjy’s indirect narration in particular the addition of “more words” constructs an infinitely more eloquent consciousness than his external persona. As Kenner continues, “Benjy is more than a narrative convention”; his internal expression of “hurt and bewilderment are vividly projected for the reader to share” (29). Caddy and the rest of the



Compson family view Benjy as an animal to be caged. As if he was a rabid dog, in one scene of the novel we see Benjy attack several schoolgirls while lost in a memory triggered by the sound of their satchels bounding as they walk. As he explains, “They came on. I opened the gate, and they stopped, turning” (*The Sound and the Fury* 33). Using long strings of polysyndetic statements, he describes the shift into memory as being disorienting and describes the trigger the same way he had previously described the reflection of flames from the fireplace against the walls in his family home, “I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed, [...] and the bright shapes began to stop, and I tried to get out” (33). Faulkner’s phrasing here is plucked from the final chapter in Joyce’s *Ulysses*. In a similar fashion to Stieglitz imagining a mix of European and American art, as mentioned in my second chapter, Faulkner is doing the same thing, borrowing from contemporaneous European literary conventions only to morph them into something distinctly American.

In “The Dead,” Joyce describes the snow falling on several Irish locations such as the Bog of Allen and “the mutinous Shannon Waves” as a way of thematically connecting Gabriel to his native country. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner employs a similar strategy. If each of his characters portrays a side of the Southern consciousness, then we see Benjy’s connection with the immovable myths of Confederate heroes. In the previous passage, the connection to Benjy and the Confederate statue is explicit: both are stuck in similar snapshots of a single moment in time, the statue referring to the Southern myth and Benjy drowning in a childhood memory of himself and his brother watching the “muddy bottom of [Caddy’s] drawers” as she climbs a pear tree to peer through the church window as their family crumbles around them (24). As Scott notes, the novel differentiates itself from Joyce’s work because it lacks a “moral conclusion.” Instead, the moral is drawn in the same way that meaning is derived from life, “because, as fine

art, it is life organized to make revelation fuller” (Scott 10). Thus, the novel, like “all human experience,” like all of Benjy’s wordless thoughts, is as Quentin’s father explains, “*Reducto absurdum*,” romantic in its existential pointlessness (*The Sound and the Fury* 47).<sup>37</sup> Thus, Benjy serves as our introduction to the Compsons’ silent protest of forward progression, like the refusal of the South to accept history and move on, he is the “idiot” as the title suggests, “full of sound and fury signifying nothing;” or at least nothing that should apply to the present (Shakespeare 5.5.179)

In his unpublished introduction, Faulkner explained that while writing *The Sound and the Fury*, he rediscovered books he had read “ten years ago” and gained a deeper appreciation for them, “weighing and measuring each choice by the scale of the Jameses and Conrads and Balzacs” pulling the most information from his distinctly modernist peers (“Introduction” 219). However, in his own words, like Joyce, he sought to interpret them in the same local color as his earlier novels, writing “Quentin’s and Jason’s sections, trying to clarify Benjy’s” (224). The semi-congruent narrative styles of the Compson brothers’ chapters make sense when read in tandem. In comparison, the fourth and final section of the novel is the opposite of the previous three. This final section follows the family’s matron housekeeper Dilsey, who commands the many black servants seen throughout the novel. Dilsey’s chapter is temporally stable, written with a traditional narrative structure. This structure aligns with Dilsey’s role as both the figurative and literal caretaker of the Compson family, spending most of her time shielding the patriarch of the family, Jason Compson III, and his somatic wife Caroline from Jason’s rage and Benjy’s frequent tantrums. Dilsey’s section is also noteworthy as the only section not narrated from the first-person preterit. Instead, Faulkner uses a non-diegetic third-person narrator,

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<sup>37</sup> David Minter notes in the Norton Edition of the novel that this is a “corruption of the Latin phrase *reductio ad absurdum*,” reducing to an absurdity (*The Sound and the Fury* 47n2).

implying that the events are occurring in the past. If the final line of the 1939 appendix, “They endured” is any sign, the narrator is remembering events after the Compson family has completely decayed (“Appendix” 236).

Dilsey is also unique in that she is the only character in the novel who experiences the passage of time. Like the previous examples I have discussed, Dilsey, like Quentin, has a broken clock, specifically one that runs backwards. In Faulkner’s 1963 essay “Man, Time, and Eternity,” he explains that the clock is a recurrent metaphor throughout the entire novel, but Dilsey’s is the most important. Since she is not related to the family by blood, or, thematically more important, by race, she is not subject to the decay of either the Compson family or the South. “Dilsey knows how to interpret her backwards and defective kitchen clock” because as an outsider she can “make sense of the past, present, and future” (Brooks 325). Since the family does not perceive time, they cannot perceive Dilsey’s penchant for navigating it. Looking back at my previous chapter, it is natural to compare the racism of the Compson family to the French anti-Dreyfusards, specifically Degas, whose antisemitism, like every other form of bigotry, is a matter of choice. However, the Compsons differ from Proust’s narrator’s antisemitic acquaintances since they cannot freely question their system of beliefs with little to no consequence. For example, while in *The Guermantes Way* M. de Norpis is free to debate with Bloch even if his perspective never changes, the Compsons’ legacy of wealth is inseparable from slavery. Dilsey’s lower social status as a black woman results from slavery, and her inability to transcend that status is the result of living in a society deeply invested in the myth that one day the Confederacy will, sarcastically quoting a contemporaneous euphemism, reestablish that “peculiar institution.”

Dated June 2, 1910, Quentin's section is unlike the other three chapters of the novel which take place between April 6 and 8, 1928, suggesting that Quentin's suicide leads to the later portion of the Compson's degeneration. However, as Brooks explains, the suicide is just a symptom of the problem, which is only visible in contrast with the outside world. "The breakdown of the family" is thus "exhibited more poignantly and significantly in a society which is old-fashioned and in which the family is still the center," old-fashioned being contingent on the existence of the modern (Brooks 334). Thinking back on Kracauer's "Photography," old-fashioned like the photograph only captures "any one of a number of positions" in a "spatial continuum." Without the narrative tradition, it is simply different from the present; the narrative conveys the passage of time ("Photography" 53). Alternatively, real memory is malleable and "encompasses neither the entire spatial appearance of a state of affairs nor its entire temporal course." Old-fashioned for the Compson family depends on a single position, a false history that none of them have experienced (50). Similarly, Quentin, who is surrounded by black servants for his entire life, only realizes while at Harvard that the pejorative he has been using to address Luster, Dilsey, and T.P. for his entire life is an antiquated tradition, "a sort of obverse reflection of the white people [they] live among" (53). Because of this bigotry, neither Quentin nor Jason can see Dilsey as the foundation of their household, since as James concludes in the *American Scene*, "the negro had always been and could absolutely not fail to be intensely 'on the nerves' of the South," and therefore in their eyes she is not human enough to be considered an affectionate stand-in for absent parents (*The American Scene* 376). As Brooks notes, unlike Caddy or her brother, Dilsey "tried to take care of Benjy and to give girl Quentin the mothering she needs," thus standing in contrast with "Mrs. Compson's vanity and whining self-pity" (Brooks 335). In fact, Mrs. Compson is so self-absorbed that the prospect of Miss Quentin's suicide is met with a

complete lack of empathy. She blames the loss on the cursed family lineage as opposed to Jason's abuse, whining, "It's in the blood. Like uncle, like niece," and afterwards shifting Dilsey's focus away from Quentin to herself, "Or mother. I don't know which would be worse. I don't seem to care" (*The Sound and the Fury* 179).

Like Albertine in *In Search of Lost Time*, Caddy, the incestuous object of the Compson son's affection, acts as the personification of nostalgia, all three brothers constantly reminiscing on seeing her outside of the funeral as children. Sartre similarly draws a connection to Albertine, writing "the Albertine who appears is not the one we expected", her affection is just a snapshot of the narrator's mother's affection during the overture (Sartre 230). Thus, Sartre continues, this "interlude proves to be only a small inconsequential agitation, limited to an instant," whereas the Compson brothers differ from Proust's narrator in that their mother is emotionally absent, effectively depriving them of the same childhood affection, so instead Caddie is the perverse stand-in (230). To further highlight this point, Faulkner in his introduction breaks down his intended reading of these three relationships. Benjy never leaves the memory of Caddy in the tree: "for him all knowing must begin and end with that fierce, painting, paused and stooping wet figure which smelled like trees," and because he is perpetually three, he can never "grow up where grief of bereavement could be leavened with understanding" ("Introduction" 223). For Jason, that grief manifests as "rage." In the final chapter, living with Miss Quentin, Caddy's daughter, he steals the money sent by Caddy to support her daughter (223). Quentin, who we have already discussed, embraces "oblivion" (223). Finally, Faulkner concludes with Dilsey, writing, "There was Dilsey to be the future, to stand above the fallen ruins of the family" (223). It is worth mentioning, in terms of the bigotry in the Compson household, Benjy lacks the cognitive capacity to understand this dynamic. Benjy is only treated sympathetically by Dilsey,

T.P., and Luster; Caddy sees him as an animal, Quentin's self-absorption obscures his view, and Jason is biding his time before he can send Benjy to an asylum in Jackson. To ensure the destruction of the family, Faulkner castrates Benjy physically and psychologically, explaining, "he had to be an idiot so that, like Dilsey, he could be impervious to the future, though unlike her by refusing to accept it at all" (223). Ralph Ellison, in his essay "Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity," criticizes Faulkner's early work for distorting "Negro humanity to fit his personal versions of the southern myth," demonstrating that race plays an important role in the experience of nostalgia (Ellison 260). However, Faulkner, in *The Sound and the Fury*, appears to be aware of his dissonant effect on Dilsey's perspective in the final chapter of the novel. To some extent, the differences between Dilsey's chapter and the Compson's are a means of distancing the narrator from her psychological experience. The home Dilsey might be nostalgic for is certainly much different from the Compson's lost cause. For this reason, the narrator avoids simulating it.

Henry James came to a similar conclusion while touring the Southern states during his 1905 United States tour. In *The American Scene*, he refers to it as "a horrid heritage" in which nostalgia had imprisoned a population of human beings (*The American Scene* 374). At the train stations on his way to Richmond, James comments on his first encounter with "The Southern black" whose state of "ragged and rudimentary" debasement in a country where he should have possessed all the "rights as a man" left James "not a little decomposed" but "very much admonished" (*The American Scene* 375). This contrast is made even more visible during James's tour of the Confederate Museum, which was the home of Jefferson and Varina Davis during the Civil War. Within its walls, "The sorry objects" James explains, these "framed letters, orders, autographs, [...] faded portraits, faded worthies, primitive products of the camera, the crayon, the

brush” were displayed with “an almost comic ambiguity” and little frontal inscriptions provided by the Daughters of the Confederacy described the romantic legend of the Confederacy as if the war was never lost (386). As I discussed in my first chapter, James’s sympathetic prose here hides the personal contempt he had for the Southern myth; however, for James the post-bellum South is stubborn, not hopeless. In *The Bostonian*, when Basil Ransom, a veteran of the Confederate army, visits Harvard’s memorial for its students who fell while fighting for the North, he reconciles with the division and reunification of the Union while commenting, “he knew what memories it enshrined, and the worst that he should to suffer there” fully expecting to be ridiculed as a disgraced combatant (*The Bostonians* 248). Unlike the Southern men James met while touring Richmond, in what could be considered a bit of a romantic stretch of the imagination, Basil does not pay fanatic allegiance to the preservation of the Southern myth and unlike the Compsons he is more than “capable of being a generous foeman.” Seeing the memorial hall, he forgets “the whole question of sides and parties” and is overtaken by the emotion of seeing the monuments that “seemed an embodiment” of the memory of all the friends and enemies who were “the victims of defeat as well as the sons of triumph” (*The Bostonian* 248).

In *The Bostonian*, neither James nor Basil consider the plight of the individuals enslaved prior to the war; both ultimately flee the question. In *The Bostonians* Basil reestablishes his Mississippi legal practice in New York, and James makes it as far as St. Augustine, staying at the Hotel Ponce de Leon, afterwards stating in a February 1905, letter to Mary Cadwallader Jones, “Florida is a fearful fraud” (*The American Scene* 479). Unlike Faulkner, James writes from the perspective of an outside observer. In 1886 when he wrote *The Bostonians*, James had never been to the South, and his only connection, as I have previously discussed, were the descriptions

of the war from his brothers Wilky and Robertson; his understanding of slavery came from his father and his father's transcendentalist peers. The absurdity of the Southern image is a copy of a copy. His understanding of the scene sits on a foundation of contrasting impressions of this past reality and his experiences as a New Englander. On the other hand, Faulkner and his characters have been born into the Southern tradition.

Faulkner does not appear to share Stieglitz's and his peers' positive outlook for his brand of American art. To be more specific, he does not have much hope for new art to spring from the Southern consciousness, writing in his introduction, "art is no part of southern [*sic*] life. In the North it seems to be different" ("An Introduction" 220). Here he is associating art with forward movement, a figurative lifestyle marked by creative innovation. New York and to a lesser extent Chicago for Faulkner are ripe with youthful progressive ambition, in which "arrowing buildings rise out of it and because of it, to be torn down and arrowed again" (220). The South, he continues, "is dead, killed by the Civil War" (221). Outside the South however, like Stieglitz's photography, he hopes that the Southern consciousness abroad can use art, specifically the art of fiction, to find respite from the inevitable homesickness that Quentin failed to mediate, "because it is himself that the Southerner is writing about, not about his environment" (222). In his 1961 essay "The Irony of Southern History," C. Vann Woodward describes the Compsons' Southern mindset perfectly, explaining that their isolation makes them "blind to the evils and imperfection all around them, Southerners described what they saw as the ultimate in social perfection" (Woodward 199). Jason epitomizes this belief in social perfection. Saying he is blind to the evils of the Southern myth is an understatement; figuratively speaking, he has gouged his eyes out. *The Sound and the Fury*, crafted using the Art Novel styling of Faulkner's modernist peers, is certainly an antagonistic response to Jason's ideology.



In a 16 October 1927 letter to his publisher Horace Liveright, Faulkner explained the novel was “the damndest best book” he had written up that point (“Selected Letters” 208). Unlike his first, *Soldier’s Pay*, in 1926, it was the first of his novels to address the dying South and would contribute to his 1949 Nobel Prize “for his powerful and artistically unique contribution to the modern American novel” (NobelPrize.org 2022). It is also important to note that Faulkner wrote *The Sound and the Fury* less than a decade after Woodrow Wilson’s stint in the White House had legitimized the Southern myth. As a historian and president of Princeton University between 1902 and 1920, Wilson’s writing was influential enough to inspire other Lost Cause ideologue historians like Frederick Jackson Turner, who in the 1920 revision of his 1893 lecture, titled “The Frontier in American History” helped to diminish the role of slavery in American history, explaining that “when American History comes to be rightly viewed it will be seen that the slavery question is an incident” (Turner 24).<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Wilson inspired authors like Thomas Dixon, whose novel *The Clansman* D. W. Griffith adapted in 1925. In fact, in the original title credits for Griffith’s film, he quotes Wilson as saying:

The White men were roused by a mere instinct of self-preservation.... until at last there had sprung into existence a great Ku Klux Klan a veritable empire of the south to protect the Southern country. (Griffith 1915)<sup>39</sup>

In the 1920s, like James in 1905, Faulkner had understood the Southern Lost Cause as the endemic ideology of the Mississippi education system and would have seen its influence being carried across the entire country by Griffith’s film. Mildred Lewis Rutherford’s guide for choosing acceptable textbooks further embedded this ideology into the cultural memory.

*Measuring Rod to Test Text Books*, in which she proclaimed that “text-books in history and

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<sup>38</sup> Taken from his 1920, collection of the same name.

<sup>39</sup> This quote has been removed from many copies of Griffiths film available through streaming platforms.

literature” are “unjust to the South and her institutions,” further legitimized organizations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy and its efforts to inject their ideology into not only the history texts used in primary schools and universities but also American history in its totality (Rutherford 4). In her list of “facts of Confederate history” Rutherford contends that “Slaves were not ill-treated in the south” and that “the North was largely responsible for their presence in the South” (2, 10). Now, this “fact” is dispelled with very little research; however, once her objectives were accomplished, and the narrative was baked into the common history of the time, it would have taken a freight train to knock out of the minds of the Southern students like Quentin at Harvard. After the publication of his 1936 follow up of *The Sound and the Fury*, *Absalom, Absalom!* the Lost Cause was still actively infecting popular media with works like Victor Fleming’s 1939 adaptation of Margaret Mitchell’s 1936 novel *Gone with the Wind* or his peer Fitzgerald’s story “Diamond as Big as the Ritz,” and the eventual idealization of the Confederate Hero in westerns such as John Ford’s 1939 *Stagecoach*. Personally, growing up in southwest Virginia, I distinctly remember being taught this, and without Rutherford’s help I can even recount the taught justification for this fallacy: wealth disparity led to an increased reliance on slavery as the North rapidly began industrializing. While this is clearly not true, the nostalgia of that insidious thesis is still present in my own historical unconscious. For the Compsons, it is a way of life that Faulkner is clearly using as a correlative for the state of the Lost Cause he had seen before, during, and after writing the novel.

Rutherford’s myths point to a sort of fetishistic victimhood. The most prominent of her complaints about literature is that it never acknowledges that “the North was responsible for the war between states,” a myth that let the Lost Cause devotees see themselves as a separate oppressed nation, colonizers who had become the colonized. Thus, they used their great myth to

wash their hands of any wrongdoing, ideological or otherwise (8). This false belief in victimhood is the crux of the Compsons' decay and, as I have previously touched on, is personified by Mrs. Compsons' dismissive hypochondria. Since the family perceives itself as the victim of historical persecution, temporal immobility is the only recourse. As Quentin's father concludes before handing him the watch, the war had only revealed to "man his own folly and despair, and victory is the illusion of philosophers and fools" (*The Sound and Fury* 47). Perceiving himself as a victim of inescapable historical persecution, Quentin's end is the natural conclusion of a Southerner sent out beyond the border of their echo chamber. To further stress this, Faulkner's choice to set the novel in the fictional Jefferson, Mississippi, means that Quentin has, to some extent, exited the interiority of the novel itself. Thus, Jefferson is a snapshot of the South in the liminal space between the real in fiction, much in the same way as Kracauer read the photograph of his mother. The snapshot is chronologically distant from the person or place that it depicts, but never defines so that it sustains the illusion of realness. Ultimately, as Sartre explains, real consciousness is incompatible with this snapshot: "the nature of consciousness," he writes, "implies that it is projected into the future, we can understand what it is only by what it will become." Therefore, the fate of the Compsons' chronophilia is the same as its real-world nostalgic counterpart (Sartre 230). Benjy has been forgotten, lost in the image; Jason becomes the personification of Lost Cause oppression; and Quentin chooses death. Faulkner's work, like Proust's, represents the intellectual's endless fight against nostalgia. However, if we step into the present, it is obvious that for every step forward, prosthetic history, ironically, seems to become more sophisticated in its pursuit to stifle progress. In recent memory, the speed and availability of news media has amplified the same partisan bigotry experienced by Zola, Proust, and Dreyfus

## Conclusion: Back to the Future of Nostalgia: Snapshots of a Contemporary Cycle of Memory

One recent example that appeared in a 2019 Fox News article combined both a written textual image and photography to lead its audience to an isolationist view of current events. The article was titled “Caravan migrants begin to breach border as frustration with slow asylum process grows,” and the uncredited photographer took his image at a high angle as a way of highlighting the sheer mass of humanity crowded together on some unnamed Central American highway. In the photograph, the distance of the camera from the viewer shrouds each individual face, making it hard to focus on one among the hoard of many. Even though there is nothing visibly being breached in the photograph, and the term “caravan” calls to mind Depression-era circus trains filled with carny grifters, and when paired with the title of Lukas Mikelionis’ article, one can only imagine the fear felt by his audience, an audience who, upon scrolling past the image, must have quickly finished counting their money in anticipation of the South American invaders bursting through their Lavirotte-inspired doors and ripping the bills out of their cold trembling hands. A younger reader of the headline might feel a similar tinge of fear. For this reader there is something familiar about the image, the mass of people moving towards the border reminds him of his favorite movie, Zack Snyder’s 2004 remake of George A. Romero’s 1978 film *Dawn of the Dead*. When viewed at such a high angle, the river of people looks exactly like a hoard of zombies shambling to eat the brains right out from under the white lettering of his red baseball cap. Either way, the composition of this photograph is far from innocuous. Other outlets covered the same world events with photographic headers taken from the ground that show the individual faces of this group of people traveling towards the northern border. Likewise, in other articles, “reach the border” replaces “breach the border,” and “refugee” replaces “migrants.” The story is always the same, but the way it is told creates

radically different images in the minds of the readers. When the group of people are refugees, a reader might see one face and remember their long-passed grandmother or remember being in a similar situation in their youth. However, in every one of these cases, the reading of both the photograph and the text partially depends on the nostalgia of the audience, and as I have hopefully illustrated, without a responsible critical method of engaging with the medium for which it is influencing, that observational bias can have dire long-lasting consequences.

Returning to Alan Trachtenberg's essay, the titular phrase "Through a Glass, Darkly" refers to Ridley Scott's 1982 adaptation of Philip K. Dick's 1968 novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* in which artificial humans, androids in the novel or replicants in the film, with very short lives measure the passage of non-existent history using photographs. As Trachtenberg explains, "in the film version memory survives paradoxically only as a faint reminder of itself, a remembered need to a memory and thereby an individual identity." Nostalgia is the snapshot, as Hofer identified the relationship between homesickness and pain. The photograph is an image of home, a past that is both conceptually shared by everyone but whose appearance is diverse in its differences. Since everyone's individual differences conflict with one another, the narrative created by the image must also be in conflict. Thus, the overlapping of conflicting pasts and conflicting identities is the aberration of the glass that distorts our view.

The dust cover for the first 1929, North American publication of Faulkner's novel featured an uncredited black-and-white image of a blind, vaguely female body reminiscent of Theodor von Holst's 1931 illustrations for Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and William Blake's 1807 illustration *The Rout of the Rebel Angels*. The figure is pictured blindfolded, trying to escape the backwards pull of a dark amorphous phantom. In the context of the book, it is easy to connect this dark figure with the false history restraining the forward progression of the

Composers, but in the context of nostalgia and the role that unconscious effects of visual and textual modes of representation have on our understanding of the past, this phantom can be inserted into any of the four analogue examples I have presented in this dissertation: Henry James's increasingly experimental style of fiction in the *Golden Bowl* as a way of resisting the increasing influence of visual representation on his fictional ekphrasis; Alfred Stieglitz's push to legitimize photography as a medium for fine art while resisting the utilitarian pull of documentary photography and the painterly imitation of pictorialism; Proust's reconciliation with lost time and the rejection of metaphorical snapshots or voluntary memory; and finally the use of fiction by Faulkner to criticize the popular memory of the post-bellum South and its overreliance on the memories captured by the engineers of the Confederate Lost Cause monomyth. Nostalgia pulls us backward indefinitely. Therefore, in the context of nostalgia, there is no post-anything. Illbruck's book subheading, "An Unenlightened Disease" is poignant here. Nostalgia is anti-change, whereas over time memory changes. Memory becomes history, then myth. Nostalgia clings to myth as if it was an accurate representation of memory. Lyotard described postmodernism as, "incredulity towards the metanarrative," nostalgia prevents us from seeing a meta-narrative. The memories of the past that we take meaning from are easily mistaken for fact. To an anti-intellectual observer, the mythic past becomes a way of life. In this way, postmodernism has never existed; we are infinitely working our way to the crest of the same technological wave that the artists in this dissertation were riding at the turn of the 20th century with no end in sight. James's stylistic ingenuity promoted in "The Art of Fiction" was his response to the French realists he had grown up reading. Likewise, Proust's oeuvre was his response to both James and the earlier realists, and Faulkner's work was his response to European modernists like Joyce. Therefore, some portion of artistic inspiration is always

nostalgia for past traditions. Those past traditions are inspired by similar nostalgic myths and so on.

I suspect that the accompanying euphoria of involuntary memory is the same for everyone. However, gender does, in some way, change the nostalgic experience. Under a patriarchal hegemony, nostalgic histories alienate women in the same way as they do for anyone outside the standards of that hegemony. Therefore, it is fair to assume this social dissonance increased the distance between the individual experiencing nostalgia and their imagined home. In literature, this is possibly a question of focalization. For example, Virginia Woolf's works like *To the Light House*, and *Mrs. Dalloway* illustrate the experience of women after the first World War in a more elegiac tone than her male peers. This tone highlights the understated psychological experiences of Woolf's female characters. In her novels, these women occupy a world in which male peers frequently stifled their talents and ambitions. Specifically, in the first chapter of *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf substitutes cliché moments of heroic victory for mundane domestic tasks that pull her female characters through time into moments of deep introspection. In the novel, these moments have the same effect on Mrs. Ramsay as the madeleine cookie had on Proust's narrator. Alternatively, as I briefly discuss in my first chapter, Andreas Huyssen has suggested that male authors such as Flaubert can only imitate the female experience of nostalgia. Thus, their narratives are always based on the "masculine identification with women" or "imaginary femininity" (Huyssen 45). Proust comes the closest to illustrating the effect of gender on the nostalgic experience. Unfortunately, his narrator's imaginary heterosexuality and his portrayal of Albertine and her lover Andree act as a barrier between a true reflection of Proust's own experience.

Likewise, Henry James is often a focal point of discussion of the influence of sexuality on literary production. James's sexuality has been a point of contention in literary scholarship and is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is worth mentioning. During the last few years of Leon Edel's life, scholars such as Sheldon Novick, Colm Tóibín, and Kosofsky Sedgwick began questioning whether Edel had kept aspects of James's love life out of his biographies and transcribed letters. Sedgwick's 1990 book *Epistemology of the Closet* was one of the earliest studies that read James as a queer author. Novick's 1996, *Henry James: The Young Master* expanded on the Sedgwick's book, hinting that Edel had abused his access to the James family documents. Specifically, Novick criticizes Edel for concealing evidence of an intimate relation between James and sculpture Hendrik Anderson. After Edel's embargo ended on James's papers at Harvard, Susan E Gunter, and Steven H. Jobe published James's letters to Anderson in their 2000 collection *Dearly Beloved Friends: Henry James's Letters to Younger Men*. As Tóibín explains in his 2016 article for *The Guardian*, these later publications "removed James from the realm of the dead white males who wrote about posh people," bringing his work back into our contemporary consciousness (Tóibín 2016). Because of his propensity for burning his correspondents and foul papers, James's true feelings have been lost to time. However, there is a lot to learn from a well-framed responsible reading of the past, if only to defeat the restrictions of Edel's curated biographical narrative. Even in his letter James abstains from commenting on the sexuality of his peers, quoted in Phyllis Grosskurth's 1984, edition of *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, when asked about the arrest of Oscar Wilde for buggery described the event as a "very squalid tragedy, but still a tragedy" (qtd. in *A Life* 437). Later, after Wilde's conviction, in a letter to Edmund Gosse, he writes, "[Wilde] was never in the smallest of degree interesting to me—but this hideous human history has made him so—in a



manner” (437). His true intent in this quote is up to interpretation, but his use of the phrase “this hideous human history” suggests that history depends on some social choice outside that of Wilde’s or his own (437). While James’s feeling about sexuality is unclear, his views on the Dreyfus Affair are not.

In a 22 September 1898, letter to Mary Ward, his second amanuensis, Henry James describes himself as a Dreyfusard, writing that even isolated in his Lamb House Garden, he could not concentrate on his work, constantly reading newspaper articles on “l’ Affaire Dreyfus” a “bottomless & sinister affaire & in what a strange will it is grinding the poor dear French” (*A Life in Letters* 308). To further iterate the effects of the Affair’s polarizing effect, according to James’s biographer, in 1897 while waiting for the final renovations of his newly leased home (Lamb House), James spent several weeks in France with his friend and fellow novelist Paul Bourget, his wife Minnie, literary critic Eugène-Melchior De Vogué, and painter Charles Mengin. Bourget, according to Mengin, had been completely consumed by Drumont’s antisemitic propaganda, and the political atmosphere in the Bourget household was so intense that James would later pull Minnie aside and comment, “Suffocating, suffocating, I suffocate in the atmosphere. Poor Bourget—and such a talent, such an intelligence. He’s lost, he’s beyond saving” (qtd. in Edel 486). Later in an 1899 essay for the *North American Review* titled “The Present Literary Situation in France,” James would explain that Bourget’s “intelligence has not kept pace with his learning” and that he now only sees the world through “a glass darkly—with fatal frustration” (“The Present Literary” 448). While James never directly references the Dreyfus Affair in his essay he does ultimately conclude “of the novelists of the striking group originally fathered by the Second Empire, Émile Zola is the only one still happily erect” (450).

Zola, Proust, and their cohort of intellectual activists sought to figure out how to gain some level of agency over the past to break up the chronophilic tyranny of the image. After a long period of revolution, the Freedom of the Press act in 1881 illustrates how divided the upper crust of French culture was. This is one reason Proust equates the snapshot with voluntary memory. So, his group's ultimate rejection of the popular antisemitic stereotypes depends, to some extent, on the identification and rejection of these snapshots. In that example, an image is a tool for filtering out the failings of the past, even if, with James and, to a greater extent, Zola, it required financial or legal self-sacrifice. Alternatively, images like those taken by Civil War photographers, such as Mathew Brady, were popular purchases in the domestic and international markets. Even if those images were a novelty for some grim type of amusement, they still helped disseminate the visual horrors of war that strips the ideal-heroic perception of war, persuading soldiers, and governments to avoid conflict. The viewer risks being pulled back into the past by irresponsibly entertaining the idea that these images bear resemblance to the past.

Proust's narrator discovers this backwards drive in the final volume of *In Search of Lost Time*. His creative drive completely depends on returning to past moments of his youth. Voluntary memory taking the place of involuntary memory is the central conflict in the novel. Photography is a substitute medium for involuntary memory. To some extent, we develop all technology to reclaim that initial feeling of euphoria emblematic of a nostalgic experience. Photography lets us imagine past moments; film adds the passage of time to photography. Television divides those same experiences into bite-size chunks, and the internet has given the world access to customized cones of voluntary memory. Similarly, the photographic image overtakes the text, a euphoric echo chamber of visual information that offers us an easy path to prosthetic histories that corroborates our nostalgic sentimentalities. In the future, we will

continue to develop new mechanized methods of maintaining that euphoria ad infinitum. The mechanization of war is no different. In war, traditions are destroyed and preserved with ever increasingly advanced cudgels.

My examples do not stray too far into the present world, but they show how this repetition of history seems to be a self-fulfilling process, one in which our nostalgic desire to relive, re-experience, or recapture moments of the past leads us down a path of cobbled repetition that can either be responsibly studied or blindly followed. At the time of writing this dissertation, this path seems to be followed by many powerful men. Snapshots of the past in the hands of violent ideologies become intertwined. In a 12 July 2021, essay titled “On the Historical Unity of Russian and Ukrainians,” Russian President Vladimir Putin lays out his justification for the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, explaining that “Russians and Ukrainians were one people—a single whole” (Putin 2021). Reading Nestor’s *Primary Chronicle* as a historical fact, Putin has based his justification on his interpretation of Slavic history. His essay describes this lengthy history, beginning with the ninth-century Novgorod and ending in the present day. Putin sees himself as the modern incarnation of Oleg of Novgorod, creating the Rus empire after seizing power from the Norse rulers in Kyiv. Like the Southern Lost Cause myth described by Faulkner, Putin’s argument negates the ninety-nine years of inconvenient history after the Russian revolution in 1923, focusing instead on some early modern “kinship that has been transmitted from generation to generation” (2021). This kinship, like the popular antisemitism of the Dreyfus Affair as described in Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, is based on the pretense of nostalgic ethnocentrism that was hammered into his perspectival consciousness during the long period of the international political division of the Cold War. Like any other nostalgic myth, tradition has reared its head in Putin’s essay, invoking a “common faith [and]

shared cultural traditions” (2021). The technological innovations used to enforce his ideology are only different in their efficiency to end human life. Therefore, the nostalgic drive of this war does not differ from any of its predecessors.

Shortly after the invasion, Kenyan UN Ambassador Kimani accused Putin of rekindling the “embers of dead empires” arguing that, Putin should “look forward to” to a future “greatness” instead of “form[ing] nations that [look] ever backwards into history with dangerous nostalgia” (qtd. in Chappel 2022). Kimani’s use of the word “greatness” here is poignant, bringing us back to my introduction. Specifically, the current use of the phrase “make America great again.” In recent years, this phrase has reemerged as the shorthand for an anti-intellectual snapshot of a mythical America. Donald Trump’s use of the phrase, before, during, and after his presidency, points to an increasingly grotesque version of imagined history. This nostalgic ideation is being fueled by the dichotomized visual narrative presented by nostalgic images and text that has a real influence on our collective memory. Throughout this entire project, I never found a strong definition of what makes something American. Even Faulkner admits that the work of modernist European authors, such as Joyce, inspired his work. Specifically, Faulkner compares the American South to a graveyard where success and creativity are only possible after escaping the collective memory of its prosthetic-history. Faulkner’s work proves this. Much of his success came from international readers. In 1949, his European notoriety earned him the Nobel Prize in Literature. For Henry James, by the time *The Golden Bowl* publication, immigrating to England and literary experimentation cost him much of his American audience. Stieglitz understood how to navigate the art world and understood Americanism was a vague novelty that appealed to his New York and European buyers. Still, in these examples, the thing that makes art American or “America Great Again” is as vacuous as nostalgia. Ultimately, there

is nothing extraordinarily different between our current and the past moment of history I have discussed. This period of innovation is the earliest moment in which the mechanisms of memory share the most resemblance to the cultural divide we find ourselves in today. The 24-hour news cycle, biased algorithms of social media, and political newspeak lack a thickness of art much in the same way as the snapshot. This may not be the last time the past has pulled us towards oblivion, but it is just a matter of time, and in the end, nostalgia will be the catalyst that drags us backward in a cycle of succession that ends at the doorstep of some pothocentric home that we all share but can never remember.

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