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Mind, Media, and Techniques of Remediation in America, 1850-1910

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MIND, MEDIA, AND TECHNIQUES OF REMEDIATION IN AMERICA, 1850-1910

by

DOMINIQUE ZINO

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2014
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

MIND, MEDIA, AND TECHNIQUES OF REMEDIATION IN AMERICA, 1850-1910

by Dominique Zino

Adviser: Professor Joan Richardson

This dissertation describes the way a renewed interest in picturesque aesthetics engaged the imaginations of writers, visual artists, philosophers, landscape designers, and collectors during the second half of the nineteenth century, reinvigorating a mode of inquiry that sanctioned the act of composing representations—mental, visual, and verbal—as a suitable response to social, political, and philosophical problems. The chapters that follow describe the understanding of the relationship between language, visual representation, and feeling that picturesque aesthetics formalized alongside the surface discourse of picturesqueness that was circulating through everyday genres, such as illustrated viewbooks, by the second half of the century. This dynamic picturesque sensibility becomes a technique for “remediating” nineteenth-century American culture in two ways: first, it grafts a younger American tradition of art, architecture, and literature onto an established European tradition to overcome and surpass any perceived deficiencies in the newer American tradition; secondly, it encourages an engagement with visual literacy in order to inspire interest in what might otherwise be perceived as more common and less awe-inspiring cultural sources. By the turn of the century, picturesque aesthetics in America becomes a tool for crafting self-fulfilling prophecies on local and national scales.
There is absolutely no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening.

Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (1967)

We are like blind men exploring, not parts of an elephant, but the root system of a forest, the eddies of an estuary. The only certainty we have is that it is our monster; it is us.

Paul Shepherd, *Man in the Landscape* (1967)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I always read the acknowledgement pages of my books with a curiosity about where writers have been and who has influenced them and lent support. So it is great fun finally to get to write such a page or two myself.

My first round of thanks goes without question to my advisor, Joan Richardson, whose seminars on American Aesthetics I had the pleasure of participating in three separate times. Especially in the earliest classes, I often felt slightly stunned into silence. Joan’s method of reading across many materials with grace, breadth, and depth has left a profound impact on my emerging method as scholar and my understanding of what scholarship can accomplish. Duncan Faherty provided incisive comments on my dissertation prospectus in 2010. Since then he has alerted me to important opportunities to do research and share my work and supported me in securing those opportunities. The way he has transformed the American Studies program during my time at the Graduate Center makes me wish (just a little) that I could stay on for a few years more and take just a few more courses. Mary Ann Caws’s incredibly rich writing about art and literature is what initially drew me to the Graduate Center in 2006. To have her read this dissertation eight years later is a complete pleasure.

I also need to thank the staff at the American Antiquarian Society, where I spent a month doing research in 2011 and where I have subsequently returned multiple times for workshops and conferences. In particular, Paul Erickson, Director of Academic Programs, and Lauren Hewes, Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Graphic Arts, have lent resources, guidance, and support. Even closer to home, Jay Barksdale at the New York Public Library granted me continued access to the Wertheim Study where I completed much of the reading and writing for this project.
One of the most important things I learned in Graduate School was how to be a thoughtful colleague, while still being a rigorous one. This is modeled regularly by the excellent teachers and writers in the Graduate Center’s Composition and Rhetoric Community (GCCRC). Of the many members of that group who have influenced my attitude about how teaching and scholarship can nourish one another, I especially thank Benjamin Miller, who is one of the keenest and, just as importantly, one of the most generous thinkers I know, and Erica Kaufman, who is fearless as a poet and as a teacher in ways that I find inspiring. Amanda Licastro, Andrew Lucchesi, and Sean Molloy let me get good work done in what is really not my office anymore—eavesdropping on what they’re up to is endlessly informative. Finally, the composition and rhetoric faculty at CUNY, especially Sondra Perl, Jessica Yood, Mark McBeth, and Amy Wan, have informed my habit of thinking across literary studies, rhetoric, and writing studies and have lent much encouragement.

Having classmates who are also friends has been important. I have learned more than I can say here about how to find my own way to “do” graduate school (and how to finish) from a cadre of incredibly intelligent women, including but not limited to Jill Belli, Emily Stanback, Simone White, Anne Donlon, and Rowena Kennedy-Epstein.

Finally, moving on to this next stage of my scholarship and my career would not have been possible—or at least would have taken me much longer—had I not received support in all forms from my parents, Frances Zino and Michael Zino. This dissertation is dedicated to them.
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A Claude Lorrain Mirror, also called a Claude Glass, was used to mirror scenery, and gave the effect of a Claude Lorrain landscape painting. Used from late 18th century until about 1880. (See Oxford Dictionary under Claude.) This mirror used by Otis Norcross about 1860. Otis Norcross was the 19th Mayor of Boston and a third cousin to the poet Emily Dickinson. *Images taken by author, June 2011, courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.*
INTRODUCTION

1. ON BANALITY, IRRITATION, AND UNCERTAINTY: ANOTHER LOOK AT THE PICTURESQUE TRADITION

“Serious people do not linger long in a picturesque world.”
Sidney K. Robinson, Inquiry into the Picturesque (xiii)

Living in the world challenges us for many reasons. This project takes up two of them in particular: first, our media environments keep changing; secondly, we keep trying to make our media invisible in order to convince ourselves that we, finally, are interacting directly with a real world. We exist and resist through our media, in other words, as much as we resist the mediums themselves.¹ At its broadest level this project is about the difficulties of living in and through media at once. Or, to put it another way, it is about the relationship between aesthetics and morality. The picturesque—an aesthetic formulation that for a substantial length of time, from the late-eighteenth through the late-nineteenth century, exerted an identifiable influence on the way British and American citizens saw and reproduced their world—offers a case study for how media environments, or what media studies scholars call “media ecologies,” operate. Media environments consist of things, from malleable physical mediums to technologies to the structures that house our actions and interactions around media; they also include the rhetorical situations that lend media meaning and represent our reliance on media back to us. Artists and writers are especially conscious of the fact that when we use media we change our environment;

¹WJT Mitchell and Mark Hansen (2010) note that modern uses of the term medium fall into two categories, 1) “something that is intermediate between two degrees, amounts, qualities, or classes,” and 2) “a person or thing which acts as intermediary,” whether a token of exchange, a material used in artistic expression, a “channel of mass communication,” the “physical material...used for recording or reproducing data, images, or sound,” a “substance through which a force acts on objects at a distance or through which impressions are conveyed to the senses,” including “the substance in which an organ lives,” or a spiritualist who communicates with the dead. “As a term denoting the ‘pervading or enveloping substance’ in which human organisms live,” Mitchell and Hansen continue, “medium designates a minimal relationality, a minimal openness to alterity, a minimal environmental coupling (in the terminology of contemporary ethological cognitive science), that appears somehow central to our understanding of ourselves as ‘essentially’ prosthetic beings. Following the morphing of medium into the singular media, this minimal relationality comes into focus for itself: thus media studies can and should designate the study of our fundamental relationality, of the irreducible role of mediation in the history of human being” (xii).
that is not only an imperative, it is unavoidable. Without denying that “the picturesque,” as a dated aesthetic theory, may appear to a modern audience equal parts banal, irritating, and uncertain, I hope in this introduction to suggest what the picturesque might become when it is resituated within a media environment and then (to borrow a phrase that has already proven to bring mediums back from the dead) “torn up by the roots.”

In the second half of the eighteenth century, there were three major figures who contributed to the British debate over the content and status of picturesque aesthetics. William Gilpin (1724-1804), clergyman and author, demanded that viewers exert the same attentiveness and care they usually reserved only for paintings when they looked at outdoor scenes in nature; in theory, Gilpin claimed that nature was the “original” form from which any painted landscape derived its variety and interest. Uvedale Price (1747-1829), a gentleman farmer and Whig Parliamentarian, writing at a moment of widespread national attention to landscape design, reacted against formulations of picturesque beauty as simplistic, calling for a disruption of smooth, rounded curves with more varied, ragged, and complex lines; Price undermined a practice of observing nature for its own sake, insisting that it was most satisfying when it adhered to the rules of pictorial compositions. Price maintained an estate in Herefordshire, the same county where his rival in the debate over the picturesque, the classicist, philosopher, poet, and collector of paintings and antiques, Richard Payne Knight (1715-1824), owned land. Knight insisted that an aesthetic experience of the picturesque depended not upon natural or drawn forms solely but upon the association of forms with ideas. Challenging the looseness of Price’s equation of picturesqueness with complexity, Knight urged that the use of the term “picturesque” must refer to mental associations with specific landscape paintings or mental efforts to isolate a

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purely visual feature that could be depicted in a painting; for Knight, the picturesque and all
other artistic forms were best characterized in terms of the ways they produced and redirected
mental energy. Gilpin, Price, and Knight reached the apex of their debate over the picturesque
during the 1790s, a period critics now refer to as “the picturesque decade.” Thus, any abstract
theory of the picturesque that followed had its roots in some combination of the three modes
offered by Gilpin, Price, and Knight: an insistence on the primacy of the natural world, the idea
that nature could be perfected through the rules of pictorial compositions, and the conversion of
aesthetics from an experience oriented around visual products toward one oriented around
strenuous mental processes.3

“Obscure as this might appear to the modern reader peering into the dim past of the
discipline,” Timothy Costelloe has recently argued, “it was [the picturesque] more than any other
that contained the seeds, which would take root and, in the towering figure of William
Wordsworth, grow into the concerns that would define the age of Romanticism” (131). In A
Guide through the District of the Lakes, Wordsworth argues that picturesque taste must be
cultivated gradually in nations as well as individuals:

a vivid perception of natural scenery was neither inherent in mankind, nor a necessary
consequence of even a comprehensive education...a taste beyond [the ordinary varieties
of rural nature]...is not to be implanted at once; it must be gradually developed in both
nations and individuals. Rocks and mountains, torrents and widespread waters...cannot, in
their finer relations to the human mind, be comprehended, or even very imperfectly

3Timothy Costelloe (The British Aesthetic Tradition, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013) contends a
necessary fourth member of this group is Humphrey Repton, who coined the term “landscape gardener” and
ultimately had an extensive impact on the look of landed estates in Britain in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth
centuries. However, given that my project is not a work of art history and that my focus is on the way picturesque
aesthetics both reflects and constructs rhetorical situations, I find Price’s and Knight’s reworkings of Gilpin’s aims to
be most significant.
perceived, without processes of culture or opportunities of observation in some degree habitual. (38)

Wordsworth was already insisting upon sublimity as a superior descriptor of an experience of nature by the time Knight and Price were preparing to publish their essays on the picturesque in the 1790s, I want to retain and emphasize his observation that picturesque taste values nature not for its mimetic capacities but for the way it foregrounds opportunities for representation and mediation, a slate on which to construct “processes of culture” and “habits of observation.”4 By the mid-nineteenth century, however, John Ruskin had both complicated and empowered the picturesque as an aesthetic category, emphasizing its moral content. “Ruskin pushes the ‘picturesque’ to its conceptual limits,” Costelloe notes, displaying how it might range from a “‘surface’ picturesque — the aesthetic articulation from Gilpin to Wordsworth” to a higher, more noble form, expressed in the work of Turner (236). Ruskin, like those before him, insisted that the picturesque is a kind of amalgam of the sublime and the beautiful; yet in his version, picturesque elements had moral traits and outcomes: “characters” who evoke sublime qualities are placed into scenes that are beautiful so that “delicacy, health, vigor, and clarity are transformed aesthetically by what is rugged, ruined, weary, and confused.” One can hear in Ruskin’s Modern Painters (1843-1860) the enduring importance of Knight’s theory of association: the picturesque never achieves complete sublimity because it is “not inherent in the nature of the thing, [but] caused by something external to it; as the ruggedness of a cottage roof possesses something of a mountain aspect, not belonging to the cottage as such” (MP IV: 10 qtd. in Costelloe 238).

Foundational to any modern critical study of the picturesque, in either a British or

American context, is the methodology outlined by Martin Price (no relation to Uvedale) in “The Picturesque Moment” (1965). Rather than approaching the concept of picturesqueness from the perspective of visual forms, Price evaluates the picturesque as a “sensibility.” From this perspective, four aspects or tendencies of a picturesque mode of thought become significant: (1) the assertion of aesthetic appeal without a specific attempt to characterize it; (2) using landscape painting as a justification of and model for roughness and variety; (3) applying principles of perception to the creation of landscape and architectural design; and, (4) eventually, separating aesthetic elements from other values, an issue ultimately taken up by Ruskin when he insists on validating aesthetic experience through moral virtues. “The picturesque scene,” Price argues “promotes a certain intensity of awareness, and that intensity finally is given new grounds that are primarily moral” (260, 277). Following Price’s lead, this dissertation treats the picturesque as a matter of sensibility—what I will describe as a distributed awareness of the relationship between media and mental activity, rather than as a particular set of formal properties.

Following the initial formulation of the theory and discourse of the picturesque by British landowners, landscape designers, and writers in the 1790s, American writers, philosophers and artists inherit and extend the picturesque as a mode of aesthetic response. I am arguing, in other words, that the availability of picturesque theory and discourse in America initiates an aesthetic turn early in the nineteenth century in which the act of composing a representation—visual, verbal, and often both—is regarded as an appropriate and necessary response to changing national conditions.

While many insightful claims have been made about why and how picturesque aesthetics mattered to British cultural and political life, especially during the second half of the eighteenth
century, much less has been written about how the picturesque may have shaped the ways Americans responded to philosophical, social, and political circumstances throughout the nineteenth century. Very few texts treat the picturesque at length in an American context. One exception is John Conron’s *American Picturesque* (2000). Now out of print, it offers a thorough survey of the influence of picturesque ideals on nineteenth-century American art, literature, and culture. Conron calls the picturesque an “adaptable” aesthetic, one applicable to diverse geographical regions of the nation (from arctic to tropical to mid-western terrain) and through which the values of complexity, variety, and contrast become linked to burgeoning nationalism through a project of educating the sympathetic eye. Between 1820 and 1860, one-hundred-and-forty-five drawing books appear alongside critical histories, exhibition catalogs, and art dictionaries that transform the notion of the picturesque into a blueprint for accommodating change across modes of representation that range from judgments of fine art and the theatrical arts to studies of facial expressions to fashion. Holding together Conron’s survey of these various expressions of picturesqueness is the premise that the picturesque is part of a hermeneutical tradition in which epistemology leads to mysticism, producing in interpreters a “ladder of awarenesses” in which the highest rung is the “meaning of the world” as a grand, transcendental idea. In other words, a picturesque approach demands viewing a landscape physiognomically, assuming that an outward form is always tied to an ideal.

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6John Conron, *American Picturesque* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press: 2000): 8, 7, 8-9, 11, 12, 14, 20, 21. Though Conron does not address Oliver Wendell Holmes in his survey, which is more strictly about the correspondence between painterly and narrative traditions, Holmes’s famous claim in his writings of the stereograph and the stereoscope in 1859 that photography divorces form from matter—which I address in the following chapter on Emerson—should be read as informed by the epistemological values of a picturesque tradition.
Conron holds up Thoreau’s *Walden* as a representative example of a “picturesque narrative.” He usefully points to Thoreau’s engagement with Gilpin’s *Forest Scenery* over the course of six years, which was a longer time than he devoted to any other writer not of his own generation. While Gilpin’s books included descriptions of paintings he studied, they were dominated by descriptions of actual landscapes of Wales, Scotland, the Lake District, and New Forest in the author’s hometown of Hampshire. Conron argues that Thoreau’s study of Gilpin’s written descriptions influences the conversion of Thoreau’s journals from commonplace books into the “verbal sketchbooks” of *Walden*. He reads the narrative as displaying picturesque principles of construction, in particular the sequence of sketches that appear in “The Ponds,” “The Pond in Winter,” and “Spring” which, he says, “constitute the *summa* of American picturesque art in prose narrative.” To make this argument Conron uses the medium of the montage (which he equates to the leitmotif) to describe the way in which the sketchbooks find unity through the single dominant effect of “recurrent images of circles, flowing, and ascents,” akin to Emerson’s concentric circles (290-91, 302). Yet the problem of reading Thoreau’s verbal sketches, and the picturesque generally, from a purely formal or structural perspective is that such an analysis depends upon a tautological assumption: the way Thoreau’s verbal sketches gain coherence is supposedly by applying to them picturesque principles of composition—specifically hierarchization, gradation, and repetition—yet they *are* picturesque compositions because they already embody these principles. In Conron’s study, picturesqueness becomes so ubiquitous that it is difficult to identify any part of nineteenth-century American narrative form that would *not* qualify as picturesque.  

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8 In a different context, Virginia Jackson (*Dickinson’s Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading*, 2005) has argued that the overwhelming critical treatment of Emily Dickinson’s work as “lyric poetry” from the late nineteenth century to the
One of the most recent explications of the influence of picturesque theory on American social and political sensibilities is Christopher Hanlon’s *America’s England.* Hanlon has described the way in which the picturesque gaze Americans adapted from English theorists led them to see phenomenological experience and political theory on a continuum. For example, he cites an 1857 review of the architectural pattern book *Village and Farm Cottages*, printed by D. Appleton and Company (the same printers who would print William Cullen Bryant’s *Picturesque America* for the Philadelphia Centennial two decades later, which I describe in chapter two). Critiquing landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing’s emphasis on English models of landscape gardening, the reviewer calls such garden patterns “essentially aristocratic” and “hurtful” to the mind of a reader who possesses “an ambition to imitate the unattainable grandeur of foreign models.” Any national tendencies in landscape aesthetics should reflect the political and affective condition of the nation, the “Republican feeling” of America, the reviewer contends; such an aesthetic should strive to shape outdoor grounds that “harmonize with all adjacent scenery” in order to reflect a nation comprised of “all classes of people” united “in mutual understanding.”

British writers set a precedent for using political metaphors to discuss aesthetic matters, while also discussing politics through the language of landscape design, a tendency that persisted in antebellum America. Given the desire for unity in the face of deep social and political unrest and the desire for guides and manuals that would show Americans
how to perform that national unity and put it on display for one another, an American picturesque discourse becomes an objectified social resource by the middle of the century. My project builds on Hanlon’s by focusing on picturesque theory and discourse as a resource that the nation’s citizens reproduce variously through specific visual technologies, material interfaces, and genres as they operate within them.

One such interface was the picturesque viewbook—part gift-book and part domestic travel guide—in which the unique beauty of the American landscape was, as many of the guides’ subtitles prominently indicated, delineated “across pen and pencil,” or across text and image. Whereas the late eighteenth-century cult of picturesque taste intended to certify the character of travelling citizens who had the ability to recognize beauty in a picture, nineteenth-century users of picturesque visual and verbal rhetoric—namely publishers such as Appleton & Co.—capitalized on an awareness that picturesqueness was not located in a static display but in a set of viewing conditions that justified and extended this compositional method of looking. I have been arguing that those conditions—both political and phenomenological, rhetorical and material—are rooted in a will to believe in unity alongside an effort to maintain variation. Unlike Hanlon, I am not writing a narrative about cultural deference to England so much as a narrative about the genres of self-reflection that emerge as part of a media environment in which the picturesque had substantial power. Remembering Wordsworth’s language in *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*, the American picturesque stages its own “processes of culture” and habitual “opportunities of observation.” These are guided by a tendency to treat American progress as self-evident, a habit that coheres around an Emersonian discourse of transparency, which I will discuss in the chapter that follows.

Over the course of this project, I outline the ways an American aesthetic tradition frames
the effort of aesthetic experience that was first formalized during what Martin Price calls “the picturesque moment.” When, at the end of the eighteenth century, picturesque theorists assessed artists such as Michelangelo as dramatists rather than painters, they initiated a move away from the empirical treatment of art objects to the Romantic treatment of character. In an American context, this shift is crucial to the endurance of the forms and rhetoric of a picturesque tradition throughout the nineteenth century: it allowed for, even assumed, that an eclectic approach to form went hand in hand with an assessment of character. I call this habitual process, as it takes shape during the second half of the century, “remediation”—a kind of training that is delivered in various written and illustrated forms as a self-fulfilling prophecy of the “natural” character of individuals and of the nation as a whole. In other words, the concept of remediation offers a way to theorize how the picturesque successfully tied abstract aesthetic values to moral improvement to instill in nineteenth-century Americans a taste for their own depictions of progress.

This project is ambitious in its effort to situate the picturesque’s influence across the realms of historical relationships, genre systems, and material culture. In this densely-packed frame, the outlook offered by scholar and architect Sidney K. Robinson clears a path through the muddled studies of the picturesque by questioning whether visibility is the necessary mode through which the picturesque must be understood. “Visibility would appear to be the key to a category with such a name, but the Picturesque, rather than ratifying visibility, shows us how unreliable it ultimately is. The doubt that ‘what you may see may not be what you get’ initiates a search for the structure of power implicating the viewer as well as organizing the composition being viewed,” Robinson writes (xiv). In devising my own search for this structure, I will do three things in the remainder of this introduction. First, I will offer two ways that “pictures” or

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12Robinson explores two main features of picturesqueness: the mixture of human arrangements alongside nature’s patterns and accidents and the satisfaction of withholding a full use or display of available power.
“images” were used to describe entities beyond the realm of visibility in nineteenth-century America, specifically in relation to the mind and to language. Next, I will introduce the ideas that have led me to characterize the picturesque as a process of “remediation,” drawing influence from the fields of media studies and rhetorical genre studies. Lastly, I will outline the way the five chapters of this manuscript illustrate instances of what I call an “aesthetics of remediation,” reflecting the changing uses of and reactions to the picturesque during the second half of the nineteenth century.

2. BEYOND PICTURE: MIND AND LANGUAGE

Faith in Mind: The Picturesque and Theories of Mental Philosophy, 1790-1825

What the following chapters seek to demonstrate is that the persistence of the picturesque through the nineteenth century depends upon a belief in and an active effort to represent an animated thing called the “mind.” Late eighteenth-century picturesque sensibility placed a high value on the ideal of flexible playfulness derived, in part, from an interest in the way the mind formed an active sense of the world. Martin Price has described the appeal of a mental philosophy that offered a “picture” of the mind’s art:

An empirical philosophy had created a model of the mind constructing its universals out of sense experience, and the model lent itself to the kind of speculative physiological psychology one finds in David Hartley or Edmund Burke. The exploration of associative processes moves from the model-building of Locke, which shows a passing concern with pathological associative processes, to the recognition of the constructive force of emotions in the associative process, their fusion or coalescence of images, to build a structure of problematic epistemological value but great strength and appeal. The skeptical mind, aware of the need for reasonable common truths but aware as well of the
imaginative power of arbitrary structures and accidental associations, finds itself torn
between external nature and the mind’s art, between knowledge and power. (271)

Richard Payne Knight’s insistence that the picturesque should only refer to the process of mental
association, as when one sees a landscape that reminds one of a painting, emerges in concert with
the dominant theories of associationism that philosophers and aestheticians ascribed to during the
second half of the eighteenth century. Building on Gilpin’s definition of the picturesque as that
which is “capable of being illustrated by painting,” Knight claims a picturesque composition
does not provide a “true” representation of what the eye sees, “not, that is, individual elements,
but the ‘masses,’ which in visual experience compose the sweep of lawn, an entire tree, or a
whole human figure.” In An Analytic Inquiry into the Principles of Taste (1805), Knight insists
that the pleasure derived from the association-picturesque is derived through the habit of viewing
paintings (a premise that justifies his own extensive art collection). Artistic representations will
bring added pleasure to the process of seeing objects in nature “through an improved medium—
that of the feeling and discernment of the great artist.”

Among the associationists who were sympathetic to Knight’s observations was Dugald
Stewart (1753-1828), whose reflections on the picturesque shifted discussions of aesthetics from
a focus on an eighteenth-century notion of “taste” to the nineteenth century’s search for a
common feature, quality, or structure in the nature of the world or in human beings that might
provide a gateway to explaining aesthetic experience at large (Costelloe 131). Stewart realizes
that calling objects “beautiful” or “sublime” does not indicate that they all possess a single
common property; rather, such linguistic labels are transferred between objects that excite

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13*Analytic Inquiry* 2.2.24, Costelloe 156, 158. For a full discussion of the “association theorists,” see pp. 94-131 in
Costelloe. In his arrangement of an aesthetic tradition that extends from the “Age of Taste” to the “Age of
Romanticism” to the linguistic turn of the “Age of Analysis,” Costelloe offers a trajectory through which to
understand the way the writers and philosophers conceived of the changing aims and outcomes of aesthetic thought
from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries.
comparable sentiments in the mind. Stewart suggested that the oldest and most general meaning of the picturesque, for instance, was “that graphical power by which Poetry and Eloquence produce effects on the mind analogous to those of a picture.” In other words, playing out what Martin Price called the struggle of the skeptical mind between “external nature” and “the mind’s art,” theories of association compelled philosophers to imagine representations not of classes of objects but of imaginative activity. In *Essays on the Picturesque* (1810), Uvedale Price prompted readers to see pictures “as a set of experiments of the different ways in which trees, buildings, water, &c. may be disposed, grouped and accompanied, in the most beautiful and striking manner” (I:5). The picturesque mode prompts ekphrasis but also moves beyond the description of a literal visual thing in order to attempt to describe the nature of curiosity and interest itself.\(^\text{14}\)

Stewart’s *Philosophical Essays* (1810), which appeared five years after Knight’s *Analytic Inquiry*, classes Price’s and Gilpin’s notions of the picturesque under the “poetical sense,” which gives attention to “those parts of a picture where more is meant and suggested than meets the eye,” complaining that they had been led to give visible appearance more influence over our ideas than it deserved (*Philosophical Essays* 236, Costelloe 157n21). Building on Knight’s attention to the artistic representation of “masses,” Stewart argues that trains of thought did not expand across the association of individual properties but through the association of concrete objects as wholes. Only in the poetical sense, he argues, can the “picturesque” be opposed to the “beautiful” because the poetical picturesque “pleases as a sign of understood beauties in the case of originals which are displeasing immediately.” In short, what Stewart creates is a system that highlights the “Eye” and “Language” as parallel “channel[s] or organ[s]” for uniting impressions in the effort to give an account of “the general History of the Human Mind.” He understands

\(^{14}\)For a discussion of the way the picturesque can merge ekphrasis and scientific method, see Kendell Johnson’s account of Louis and Elizabeth Agassiz’s *Journey in Brazil* in “‘Dark Spot’ in the Picturesque: The Aesthetics of Polygenism and Henry James’s ‘A Landscape-Painter’” (*American Literature* 74.1, March 2002: 59-87).
physical properties as secondary to the poetical picturesque in the facilitation of mental association. As I will discuss in chapter one, Stweart’s eye/language parallel directly influences Emerson’s scientific method. Man is an agent of perception, Emerson held; through the work of the eyes, mind and matter are resolved through metaphor.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, Stewart’s poetical picturesque gives a name to the imaginative intrigue that the picturesque has held for Romantic poets and philosophers, as far as it turned their attention to “found objects” (the label W.J.T. Mitchell gives to picturesque ruins or idle beggars) that allowed them to access the workings of their own minds.\textsuperscript{16}

Stewart’s influence on the young Ralph Waldo Emerson is significant, especially between the years of 1822 and 1824 when Emerson is reading Stewart’s \textit{Dissertation: Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy}, which appeared in 1821. Stewart rejected Francis Bacon’s breakdown of knowledge (in which memory serves as a model for history, reason as a model for philosophy, and imagination as a model for poetry). He also rejected Locke’s taxonomy of knowledge (physics, ethics, and logic). In place of these, Stewart proposed two main divisions: \textit{matter and mind}, the “two most general heads which ought to form the groundwork of an Encyclopedial classification of the arts and sciences.”\textsuperscript{17}

Stewart also railed against David Hume—who doubts the existence of cause and effect, and, in fact, of a thing called “mind” altogether—turning away from Hume’s notion that the objects of our knowledge can be divided into two classes, \textit{sense impressions} and \textit{ideas}, or “copies of impressions.” Stewart

\textsuperscript{15}See Laura Walls (2003), 66-67 on Stewart’s influence on Emerson and her Chapter 6, “The Solar Eye of Science.”
\textsuperscript{16}For the above account of Stewart’s contribution, see Hipple 292-93. For more on the way picturesque tradition was extended through theories of association, see Caroline van Eck, “‘the splendid effects of architecture and its power to affect the mind’: the workings of Picturesque association” in \textit{Landscapes of Memory and Experience}, ed. Jan Birksted (New York: Spon Press/Taylor and Francis, 2000), 245-58.
\textsuperscript{17}As Emerson’s biographer, Robert Richardson, has crystallized, Stewart’s matter/mind division “shows how close Scottish Common Sense and German idealism are in their fundamentals” (30). For the influence of Scottish Common Sense philosophy, with its underpinnings in theories of associationism, on Emerson, see \textit{Emerson, The Mind on Fire} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 29-33.
charged that Hume’s skepticism “produce[d] in the reader a complete distrust of his own faculties”: “the necessary conclusion seems to be that we have no idea of connexion or power at all.” Robert Richardson has observed that, “To a great extent Emerson’s life and work—indeed, transcendentalism itself—constitutes a refutation of Hume. It is therefore important to recognize how fully Emerson and his contemporaries recognized the importance of nihilism in Hume …

Scottish Common Sense philosophy is itself a series of answers to Hume” (Stewart Dissertation 436, Richardson 31.) In its avoidance of both pure materialism (Gassendi, Diderot, Holbach, and la Mettrie) and pure idealism (Leibniz, Berkeley), Scottish Common Sense philosophy insisted on the reality of morality and affirmed the reality and importance of consciousness. “As all our knowledge of the material world rests ultimately on facts ascertained by observation,” Stewart wrote, “so all of our knowledge of the human mind rests ultimately in facts for which we have the evidence of our own consciousness.”

I begin chapter one with Emerson’s struggle with Hume in order to illustrate how he took up many of the concerns laid out by Stewart.

*The Moral Imperative of Picturesque Language*

Emerson inherits the close tie between mental philosophy and aesthetics, merging them even further through a rhetoric of “transparency” between mind and nature. The associationist conception of the work of the mind—particularly the idea that the mind perceives masses rather than individual features and tends to categorize objects not based on their essential qualities but based on the feelings they inspire—motivates various rhetorical moves in *Nature*. Take, for example, Emerson’s description of the eye as “the best of artists”: “By the mutual action of its

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18*Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* 8, Richardson 32. Stewart’s *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* was (along with Thomas Upham’s *Mental Philosophy*) one of the textbooks Dickinson studied most closely while at Amherst Academy. Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps took this matter/mind system as the starting point of her pedagogical approach in *Familiar Lectures on Botany*, which Emily Dickinson used at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary (1847-48) and probably encountered on her own even earlier.
structure and the laws of light, perspective is produced, which integrates every mass of objects, of what character soever, into a well colored and shaded globe, so that where the particular objects are mean and unaffectioning, the landscape which they compose is round and symmetrical” (15). The phenomenal world is subordinated to a mind that beholds “the whole circle of persons and things, of actions and events, of country and religion, not as painfully accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past, but as one vast picture, which God paints on the instant eternity, for the contemplation of the soul” (39). Emerson’s insistence that the beauty of a scene adds to the beauty of the acts of men, that we cannot “separate the man from the living picture,” points to an idealism at least partially derived from, and fully nourished by, the philosophical preoccupations of picturesque aesthetics. In short, Emerson furthered the precedent set by associationists like Stewart by presenting a model of a mind that corresponded with the powers of the eyes, which, as he saw it, were perfectly suited to perceive nature’s wholes.

Emerson’s theory of language, in particular, owes a debt to the way the associationists had already loosened the empirical bonds between objects and direct perceptions in order to imagine an active human consciousness. “As we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry; or all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols,” Emerson writes. “This immediate dependence of language upon nature, this conversion of an outward phenomenon into a type of somewhat in human life, never loses its power to affect us.” As Stewart realized about aesthetic labels such as “beautiful” and “sublime,” language “blend[s]...experience with the present action of the mind” (22). Throughout Nature, Emerson refers to beauty variously as “the perception of natural forms,” “the mark God sets

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19 All citations from Emerson throughout this manuscript refer to Essays and Lectures, Ed. Joel Porte. New York: Library of America: 1983.
upon virtue,” a means of “searching out the order of things as they stand in the mind of God,” and “a finer charm than skill in surfaces, in outlines, in rules of art can ever teach.” Emerson takes up the discourse of the picturesque even as he resists the artifices through which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century landscape designers defined it. Instead, for Emerson, the ideal fate of picturesque language is that it would offer a way back to an original state of transparency between mind, nature, and spirit. This “perfect sight” is generated through “the remedial force of spirit” (my emphasis): “If the Reason be stimulated to more earnest vision, outlines and surfaces become transparent, and are no longer seen; causes and spirits are seen through them” (45, 33).

Nature’s use of picturesque discourse at once defines and fulfills Emerson’s philosophical system; yet it also subjects that system, which is in various ways about the act of writing itself, to the force of remediation—an idea I will say more about shortly. Reading Emersonian discourse as implicated in broader discussions of remediation highlights language’s reliance on other systems of meaning, such as images; it also allows us to contextualize Emerson’s philosophical approach as part of an enduring desire to convert language into a medium that allows for increasingly more transparency.  

Even if mental, natural, and spiritual categories could be synthesized and made transparent through language, words would have a second nature that exerts itself every time language acknowledges that its images have no original in the outside world, or that it is

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20 Edward Cahill has observed that Emerson’s ideas of beauty and sublimity are “less opposites than synonyms. Divested of their formalism, they become twin signs of the Swedenborgian law of correspondence that connects the world to the spirit” (Nature 9, Liberty of the Imagination 229).

21 Ann Bermingham has noted the complications that befall the poet’s use of “picturesque language” in Wordsworth’s Lyrical Ballads, for even though the poet claims to give up his voice for “the language of real men,” the discourse of the impoverished inspires only more poetic shaping via “the higher, more synthetic, transformative consciousness.” “In the end the poems celebrate the sensibility of the poet, not the language of real men, and the poem’s egotism, their substitution of the ‘I’ of the poet for the naturalistic ‘eye’ of the text, becomes the sign of romantic genius” (Landscape and Power 263). Bermingham has also described the way an insistence on transparency was one “semiotic remed[y] to political discourse” embraced by both Jacobins and anti-Jacobins during the French Revolution: the idea of a “shared, natural language…could speak to both the anti-Jacobin fear of linguistic distortion and the more liberal Wordsworthian desire for a universal language of the heart” (Learning to Draw 261 n24).
“picturesque.” Emerson’s explication of picturesque language as a concept is closest to Gilpin’s version of the picturesque. Though Emerson, as far as I know, had not read Gilpin at the time he finished *Nature* (1836), he did read *Forest Scenery* when he returned from England in July of 1848 and prepared to give his lectures on “Representative Men”; he then moved on to Gilpin’s illustrated travelogues a year later. Gilpin theorized that the artist’s original sketch approached a mark of originality akin to the natural landscape: “His first sketch is the standard, to which, in the absence of nature, he must at least recur for his general ideas.” Just as Gilpin proposed that artists look at sketches as though they were nature, so Emerson gave this essential mediating status to language when it is used by the poet: the poet “unfixes the land and sea, makes them revolve around the axis of his primary thought, and disposes them anew.”

### 3. REMEDIATING THE PICTURESQUE

*The Practice of Remediation within Media Environments*

What I have been getting at in my discussion of remediation is that media forms (words and images, essays and sketches) are exchanged, revised, and repurposed in conversation with each other; moreover, the moral and aesthetic aspects of our media choices are constantly carried over, recontextualized, and reassessed. Remediation, Jay Bolter and Diane Gromala have described, is a way of defining the process of how something (a new invention or approach) “fits into the ecology of existing media forms.” “Remediation has been part of almost every design strategy of the modern era,” Bolter and Gromala argue, whether intentionally or unconsciously. Understanding remediation as a historical and philosophical process through picturesque aesthetics, I am arguing, will help us better to understand how the digital applications that have

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23 Three years later, in 1852, Emerson would read Ruskin alongside Gilpin’s travelogues as he thought and wrote primarily about aesthetics and America’s relationship to England. Images, Nelson Goodman reminds us, “[form] a social collective that has a parallel existence to the social life of their human hosts.”
become central components of our physical and mental lives offer opportunities for remediation, and thus offer a chance to be more conscious of how we use them.

Bolter and Gromala underline that the assumptions users bring to each new media artifact are embedded in cultural contexts. In the allegory of Plato’s cave, in which the prisoners are chained in place, unable to turn to see anything behind them, and staring at moving shadows on a wall, they are incapable of knowing that what they see are only shadows. This, the allegory goes, is the nature of the human condition for all but the Platonic philosopher who is able to walk outside the cave and see the world in the light of the sun. In most cases, however, the embodied, everyday world would still only be a poor reflection of the “real world,” the invisible world of forms. Platonic philosophy thus instituted a critical reversal in the dependency of a world of ideas on a world of the senses and culture. If a core Platonic belief is that the embodied world is a reflection of the invisible world, then many cyberspace enthusiasts, Bolter and Gromala argue, are still Platonists who believe that cyberspace is the new “home of the Mind,” a higher reality. In other words, digital technology cannot take us to a place that is purged of cultural assumptions; we bring those assumptions into cyberspace, “along with, and attached to, an image of our bodies.” The continuing role of aesthetics, then, is to sustain an awareness that will work against the erasure of such contexts.24

The term “remediation” has been appropriated by modern media scholars to describe the way in which newer technologies are built upon the expectations of previous technologies even as they attempt to make those older technologies obsolete. Marshall McLuhan argued that the content of a medium is another medium, with the medium of speech becoming the content of writing, and the medium of writing becoming the content of print, and print becoming the

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content of hypertext.25 While media studies scholars now find McLuhan’s claim, “the medium is the message,” to be hackneyed, it has opened up a broad range of approaches to studying the way media exist not through cause and effect relationships but within an environment.26 The picturesque tradition deserves more attention as an important aesthetic and philosophical benchmark because of the way it consciously figures nature as a medium. As I have described, for Gilpin, the medium of landscape paintings and sketches became the content of landscape gardens, which were styled to display artistic principles that would, after close study, lead gardeners to “improve” natural landscapes. His version of the picturesque reflects the dominant thought from the first quarter of the eighteenth century onward that representation affords a unique kind of pleasure that cannot be found through any actual scene in nature; represented landscapes are artifices, fictional wholes that do not match with originals.27 Just as picturesque landscape images were to inspire a sense of unity despite their variety and to be perceived as wholes, the visual technologies that followed them helped to maintain that expectation.

In the way they perpetuate the expectation that viewed scenes render a sense of unity through multiplicity that could ostensibly be seen in a glance or a “glimpse” (undercutting the true level of attention that needed to be exerted), many nineteenth-century visual aids remediate the most popular viewing technology of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, the Claude Glass. A Claude Glass, such as the one depicted opposite the first page of this

26Strate notes that media ecology extends far beyond McLuhan’s work. For example, it has its origins in studies of technology by Lewis Mumford, Jacques Ellul, and Peter Drucker; research on oral traditions, writing systems, and typography linked to Eric Havelock, Walter Ong, Jack Goody, Denise Schmandt-Besserat, Lucien LeFebre, Henri-Jean Martin, and Elizabeth Eisenstein; studies of media and culture by Harold Innis, Edward T. Hall, Edmund Carpenter, and James Carey; and investigations of symbolic form by Alfred Korzybski, Suzanne Langer, Dorothy Lee, and Neil Postman (130). In what we might call the second generation of media ecologists, the extensive bodies of work by N. Katherine Hayles and Lisa Gitelman offer key examples of how media environments shape our reception of literature.
27On the aesthetic premise that representations take on a unique beauty, which originated with Francis Hutcheson and persisted through Gilpin, see Costelloe, 21-19, 139-146.
introduction, was a hand-held convex, darkly tinted mirror that tourists often carried as they searched for landscape scenes that looked like paintings, or what they called “beauty spots,” while on picturesque tours. Ironically, viewers could only use the Claude Glass by turning their backs to a landscape to capture a scene in the rounded edges of the glass. The ubiquity of the Claude Glass influences the possible range of compositional aims of later viewing technology, such as the large-scale panorama, the stereoscope, and the zoopraxiscope. Collectively, these nineteenth-century technologies subsume a broader encounter between the individual and her environment within a localized body-instrument relationship, disguising the effort required to immerse oneself in such visual projections.

Most importantly for my own argument, these technologies establish what media studies scholars now call the “double logic of remediation”: rather than seeing media as media, we often imagine ourselves to be seeing through our mediums directly into the world. Bolter and Richard Grusin have called the use of increasingly more media “hypermediation,” as when a website offers a digital display that contains content from audio conversations, written documents, printed books, television, and films. Ironically, with all forms of media, the more we hypermediate, the more we heighten the desire for complete immediacy. What this project aims to show is that a double logic of remediation has both material and philosophical implications. The premise that picturesque representations are pleasurable and yet do not have corresponding “originals” in nature extends discourses of hypermediacy and immediacy into the realms of aesthetics and philosophy. In fact, I understand the early viewing situation of the Claude Glass,

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28 As the perceptual expectations of unified perceptions extend across space into time, the stereoscope places two nearly identical frames of a landscape at the exact distance from the face where the optical axes cross, merging the views into a three-dimensional image in order to immerse the viewer even further in the active experience of seeing; the zoopraxiscope projects onto a single point in space a series of frames that merge to make an image appear to move.

29 I owe this theorizing of body-instrument relationships to Ron Broglio’s Technologies of the Picturesque (2008) in which he argues that we use tools to create inscriptions, such as writings, drawings, paintings, and maps, which turn indescribable things into sensible and intelligible signs that can be represented on flat surfaces.
in which one turns away from the original in order to focus on its projection, as a trope for the more complex process of remediation that the rest of the project illustrates. Understanding media consumption as a remedial process forces us to think about the factors beyond specific technologies that shape our understanding of media environments and our range of possible responses within them.

As my opening epigraph suggests, my understanding of media ecology is also indebted to wide-ranging discussions of human ecology offered by Paul Shepard. Following the publication of the first edition of *Man in the Landscape* in 1967, Shepard describes having suffered the shock of wandering from ecology into the field of the history of art and encountering the work of McLuhan: “[T]he assumptions on which I was working were crushed by his insight that the pictorial image and the mathematical vision with which it is synonymous were alienating rather than unifying...McLuhan, contradicting generations of historians, made it clear that the sixteenth-century invention of *landskip*, ostensibly sympathetic to nature, was in fact the mask behind which Francis Bacon’s and Rene Descartes’s agendas for the domination of nature coopted a rising sentiment.” Shepard’s main realization between his book’s initial publication and its second edition in 1991—when the history of landscape art was already being rethought through texts such as W.J.T. Mitchell’s *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (1986)—is that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the treatments of landscape in “pictures, garden imagery, and language” were predominantly “diversions from real destruction.” What my own study seeks to

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30 *Man in the Landscape* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1967, 1991). Shepard, who was trained as a biologist, asks what is meant by an “esthetics of nature” and investigates how we define our relationship to nature and viewing natural scenes.

31 Shepard xxiv, xxv. Shepard laments the way the landscape became a “cultural icon” for intellectuals in the twentieth century in order to justify what he calls assumptions about “cultural relativism” (xxv). He points to the geographer David Lowenthal as a figure who argued for such relativism; to Lowenthal, Shepard writes, “I owe the horrifying realization that [the thesis that] the value and beauty of nature is but a form of taste […] had a strong appeal to intellectuals and educated people in general” (xxvi).

32 Those same lithographs of sublime mountains, imitations of beautiful pastorality, and all the yearning of the silly
do is to try to understand better the dance we do between proclaiming the “virtue” of nature and then turning around and making it into a “diversion.” This routine, as the following chapters show, is not unique to the twentieth (or the twenty-first) century. To me, Shepard’s fierce sense of irritation—of being caught in others’ acts of mediating the landscape as if they were some kind of “trap”—justifies why media ecologists should keep working to articulate how the perceived (and meaningful) virtues of nature relate to the fact that our experience of it is always mediated. In the middle ground between virtue and diversion, picturesque aesthetics has long been sitting pretty, so to speak.

Genre and Exigence: The Call for Response

One way this project seeks to contribute to the current study of media ecologies is to give more consideration to the intersections between definitions of “work” that refer to media and definitions of “work” that refer to genre. Decades ago Stanley Cavell urged that scholars generate a clearer understanding of the two ways we use the term medium as both a material and as a category of work. In both senses, something is being generated, Cavell writes. To remain aware of this means “resisting (by understanding) the temptation to think as a medium simply as a familiar material (for instance, sound, color, words), as if this were an unprejudicial observation rather than one of a number of ways of taking the material of a medium, and recognizing instead that only the art can define its media.” Art is a cycle of working as much as it is the production of a form. The earliest articulations of the picturesque as an aesthetic category were immediately confronted with questions of genre: what made “picturesque” scenes or

tourists with their cameras can also be seen as the bad performance of a true virtue. They were enacting the awkward indigenization of a ruling culture, like the paganizing of the Church as it absorbed new peoples; in this case a desire for wholeness subordinated to the destitution and seduction of the landscape arts by the control-growth-and-consuming mania of both Marxists and capitalists.” Ultimately, having survived what he calls “my McLuhan/Lowenthal trauma,” Shepard admits that he can still “glimpse the surviving virtue of the idea [of landscape]” (xxvi).

objects different from “beautiful” or “sublime” ones? Uvedale Price argued that the picturesque was somewhere between the beautiful and the sublime; he, like other theorists, made it familiar and acceptable by bringing it into relation with existing categories. When distinguishing the drama of the picturesque from other aesthetic effects, he compared picturesque compositions to mixed genres such as tragicomedy, insisting that “by its variety, its intricacy, its partial concealments, [the picturesque] excites that active curiosity which gives play to the mind, loosening those iron bonds, with which astonishment chains up its faculties.”

A full consideration of the picturesque landscape as a medium or a material, then, must also include a consideration of the way picturesque forms and discourse arise as part of a system of generic conventions, expectations, and effects.

This project is grounded in two main contentions of rhetorical genre studies: first, genre expectations operate across all types of communicative situations, not only in established literary scenarios; secondly, a sociorhetorical perspective implies that genres result from a fusion of form and situation to produce typified action. In rhetorical genre theory, classification itself is a type of action. A sociorhetorical view of genre, critics have recognized, is tied to the concept of exigence, “a form of social knowledge—a mutual construing of objects, events, interests, and purposes that not only links them but also makes them what they are: an objectified social need.”

34 See Martin Price “The Picturesque Moment” 277.

35 The foundational text in rhetorical genre studies is Carolyn Miller’s “Genre as Social Action” (Quarterly Journal of Speech 70 (1984): 151-167). While Miller acknowledges that there can be more than one way to classify discourse, she argues for using the term “genre” specifically to refer to a type of discourse classification that is 1) based in rhetorical practice; 2) part of an open rather than closed system; and 3) organized around situated actions. “Classifications and distinctions based on form and substance have told us much about sentimentalism, women’s liberation, and doctrinal movements, for example. But we do not gain much by calling all such classes ‘genres.’ The classification I am advocating is, in effect, ethnomethodological: it seeks to explicate the knowledge that practice creates. This approach insists that the ‘de facto’ genres, the types we have names for in everyday language, tell us something theoretically important about discourse. To consider as potential genres such homely discourse as the letter of recommendation, the user manual, the progress report, the ransom note, the lecture, and the white paper, as well as the eulogy, the apologia, the inaugural, the public proceeding, and the sermon, is not to trivialize the study of genres; it is to take seriously the rhetoric in which we are immersed and the situations in which we find ourselves” (155). Chapter two of this project investigates what I am calling the “parlor room history” as one such everyday genre.
Exigence is not the same thing as intention; rather, it “provides the rhetor with a socially recognizable way to make his or her intentions known. It provides an occasion, and thus a form, for making public our private versions of things.” Genre theorist Anis Bawarshi has explained that “[w]e rhetorically recognize and respond to particular situations through genres […] genres are how we socially construct these situations by defining and treating them as particular exigencies. A genre,” Bawarshi concludes, “is thus both the situation and the textual instantiation of that situation, the site at which the rhetorical and the social reproduce one another in specific kinds of texts.” By the 1830s Americans had begun to argue that their national landscape was eclectic and various, and thus picturesquely complex in shape and effect. “Picturesque agencies” bind the sublime and the beautiful into “an indissoluble chain,” Thomas Cole writes. I argue that picturesque discourse offers a way of investigating this rhetorical conception of genre as much as rhetorical genre theory provides a way of understanding how picturesque discourse was reproduced over the course of the nineteenth century. I approach a discussion of the picturesque, then, not by outlining one stable set of unified effects or conventions but by asking, how does picturesque form and rhetoric become a socially recognizable way to publicize a personalized conception? What occasions allow Americans to act on (or act out) a conception of picturesqueness? These questions are alluded to throughout the project, though taken up most directly in chapter two in my discussion of Edward Strahan’s viewbook *Picturesque Glimpses of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania* (1876).

Finally, the exigence of the picturesque situation in nineteenth-century America is also

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36Miller 158, my emphases. Mikhail Bahktin observed that in modernity genre is transformed from a “stylization of forms that have outlived themselves” to a much more flexible category (*Speech Genres* 318). The modern shift in perception of genre-making that Bahktin calls “the novelization of genre” has also influenced how I understand the exigence of the writing of picturesque histories in nineteenth-century America. Raymond Williams would call the picturesque “a structure of thought and feeling”; such structures, in turn, occasion genres.


38“Essay on American Scenery” (1835).
related to how social knowledge is obtained and disseminated. In the nineteenth century, the
ideal of achieving visual literacy held importance, as it does today, for interpreting, participating
in, and steering a society’s values. Many scholars have illustrated that there was a consensus
among nineteenth-century Americans that increased visual literacy was one key to enhancing the
quality of private and public life and re-inscribing American values.39 Keeping with my attention
to genre as a response to a social situation rather than a set of formal conventions, the
picturesque as part of an aesthetics of “remediation” gains an additional level of significance.
The picturesque “remediates” American culture on a national scale in two ways: first, it
encourages an engagement with visual literacy in order to further other modes of cultural
interpretation; secondly, it grafts a younger American tradition of art, architecture, and literature
onto the established tradition of the European picturesque to overcome and surpass any
perceived deficiencies in the newer American tradition. Through barrages of art texts, drawing
instruction books, and travel guides that appear in the nineteenth century, visual literacy becomes
woven into what Conron refers to as “the scenario of self-fulfillment,” “a necessary condition of
‘the upbringing of the single man’ (in Emerson’s phrase)—for like verbal literacy it both
stimulates and satisfies ‘a healthful thirst for knowledge.’” Moreover, if the aesthetic categories
of the beautiful and the sublime already offer ways to infuse beauty and vitality into American
surroundings, an investment in the picturesque signals a process of formal interest emerging
from more common and less awe-inspiring sources.40 If the occasion the picturesque presents, as
American art critic and collector James Jackson Jarves argues in The Art-Idea (1864), is an
opportunity “to infuse beauty by the aid of art into all objects” in an effort to resist “whatever
deforms and debases American life,” then the picturesque aesthetic can be used as a tool to craft

39 See Conron; also see Joshua Brown’s Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of
Gilded-Age America (University of California Press, 2006).
40 Conron, American Picturesque 15, 8.
self-fulfilling prophecies on individual and national scales.  

4. PICTURESQUE OBJECTIVITY AND THE PROBLEM OF CULTURAL REPRESENTATION

Totemic Rituals

The picturesque unlocks what W.J.T. Mitchell has called “the secret of the found object”: “it is hidden in plain sight, like Poe’s purloined letter. Once found, however, the found object should…become foundational. It may undergo an apotheosis, a transfiguration of the commonplace, a redemption by art.” Mitchell identifies the emergence of the found object as an aesthetic category “in the Romantic craze for the picturesque, and in its ethnographic pedigree in the concept of totemism.” Citing Raimonda Mondiano, Mitchell notes that the “poor things” that qualify as picturesque objects (typically the gypsy, the beggar, the rustic, or the ruin) “do not evoke envy or love, but offer an image of unenviable freedom from property and social bonds.”

Continuing to draw from Mondiano, Mitchell writes,

As ruins, “they are already sacrificed, they cannot be sacrificed again and can thus constitute an ideal safe from the threat of violence” (196). As “attractive” objects, they do not invite (or threaten) possession, except in the picturesque sketch or photograph. They occupy the world of denied or arrested desire, sufficiently gratified by the visual, picturesque experience. They thus play a crucial ideological role in eighteenth-century aesthetics in mediating a double desire to own and renounce property, to possess the countryside without real ownership, to shape the landscape while preserving the illusion of wilderness.

This “totemic attitude,” as Mitchell describes it, results in the treatment of objects not as individual entities but as arrays and arrangements of things. Part of the ritual of objectification of

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41 *Art-Idea* 316, my emphasis.
42 *What Do Pictures Want*, 114-117.
43 Mitchell 117, my emphasis.
the totem is restoring the totemic object to a family of things. “This is accomplished by raising
the objects up…into the dignity of the picture plane or…the vitrine that protects the relic,”
Mitchell writes.\textsuperscript{44} Across the next five chapters, I approach the picturesque as both a will to
unity and as a “ritual of objectification” that represents a persistence of the Romantic interest in
found objects within the increasingly industrialized, commodity-driven environment of
nineteenth-century America.

Each of the chapters that follows explores the overlaps and the distinctions between, on
the one hand, the modes of philosophical thought that picturesque aesthetics inaugurated, and, on
the other, the surface discourse of picturesqueness that circulated through everyday genres. In
this introduction, I have established picturesque aesthetics as a concept that engaged the
imaginations of philosophers, landscape designers, and artists at the turn of the nineteenth
century. The picturesque formalized a new mode of inquiry that sanctioned the act of composing
representations—mental, visual, verbal, and often all three—as a suitable philosophical response
and an acceptable basis for an aesthetic system. The way that various writers confront the need to
formulate an aesthetic system, I aim to show, also affects their generic choices, particularly the
ways they take up established disciplinary genres, such as philosophy, as well as the ways they
engage with the everyday genres of viewbooks or the art of letter writing.

The writers who figure most prominently in this study, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily
Dickinson, William James, and Henry James, as I understand them, are all dedicated to this
difficult work of articulating a “system of aesthetics.”\textsuperscript{45} Their representations of the active work

\textsuperscript{44} Mitchell 121, 123. “[The] ‘lifting up’ of found objects into the vertical dignity of the picture frame and the
picturesque elevation of the abject or impoverished figure are modern versions of the totemic ritual that operate not
like the fetishistic return of the repressed but like the moment of conception, naming, and seeing-as,” he adds.
\textsuperscript{45} That phrase is one I borrow from Dickinson (F95): “Butterflies from St. Domingo/ Cruising round the purple line –
of the mind offer a way into understanding philosophy and visual and material culture as parts of shared media environments. In chapter one, I revisit the way Emerson’s concept of “picturesque language” is in concert with established aesthetic ideas that linguistic classifications should reflect a process of mental activity back to the thinker. I describe how Emerson, in 1826, first encountered the work of both Sampson Reed and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (via James Marsh’s 1825 edition of “Aids to Reflection”), two thinkers who would become crucial to the conception of picturesque language over the course of his career. In chapters two and three, I present observations about authors’ particular manipulations of media as they reflect their broader aesthetic systems. Chapter two looks at the illustrated texts that emerge in anticipation of the American Centennial in 1876, exploring how the genre of the picturesque viewbook remediates previous genres of the gift-book and the home-book, taking advantage of an established comfort with picturesque conventions to justify its mode of narrating American progress. Chapter three explores Emily Dickinson’s knowledge of and uses for dried plant specimens as they allow her to form a notion of property—a concept intimately tied to the picturesque mode. In chapter four, I bring the work of William James into conversation with the early motion picture artists Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey to describe the ways in which photography and philosophy are both contending with the neat body/brain correspondence hypothesized by the scientific school known as the new psychologists. In the fifth and final chapter, I argue that Henry James’s conception of the novel emerges out of his previous experience with art criticism and travel writing, where, when observing landscape paintings and describing views of Europe, picturesque conventions dominated. I read The Ambassadors as presenting, both thematically and structurally, an opportunity for James to respond to and reshape those conventions. Ultimately, an “aesthetics of remediation” alludes to the fact that a cultural discourse of

/ Have a system of aesthetics –/ Far Superior to mine.”
transparency coexists alongside increasingly ubiquitous modes of technological mediation in nineteenth-century America; it describes both the process of change that American aesthetic systems are confronted with and the strategies they adopt in response.
CHAPTER 1

UNSETTLING EMMERSONIAN HORIZONS

The poet stands on the mountain, with the face of nature before him, calm and placid. *If we would enter into his views, we must go where he is. We must catch the direction of his eye, and yield ourselves up to the instinctive guidance of his will, that we may have a secret foretaste of his meaning—that we may be conscious of the image in its first conception—that we may perceive its beginnings and gradual growth, till at length it becomes distinctly depicted on the retina of the mind.*

Sampson Reed, *The Growth of the Mind* (66), my emphasis

Prelude – The Compensations of Calamity: An Emersonian Parable

“[W]e weave a yard of tape in all humility, and as well we can, long hereafter we shall see that it was no cotton tape at all, but some galaxy with which we braided, and that the threads were Time and Nature….The notions, ‘I am,’ and ‘This is mine,’ which influence mankind are but delusions of the mother of the world,” Emerson wrote in 1860. As this is a chapter about the use of visual signs and optical illusions to describe visionary experience, it seems fitting to begin with an instance of Emersonian lore—a moment whose veracity is uncertain, a blind-spot within an extensive, rather assured canon. While away in Cambridge at Divinity School, a twenty-one-year-old Waldo was afflicted by a plague: two thirds of the inhabitants of Boston had been wandering the streets with tuberculosis, which manifested itself in the body of the seminary student as a condition known as “uveitis,” a by-product of a more pervasive rheumatism, that led to the temporary loss of vision in one of his eyes. On the first of March, 1825, Waldo is sitting in his room—10 Divinity Hall—working out an essay assigned by his tutors at his desk: the essay will present a written proof of the Unitarian insistence on the singular nature of God. He has been reading Hume and is agitated that the “variety & uncertainty” of God’s plan should be used to disprove his unified existence. Why should a variety of effects imply a variety of causes, he

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46*The Conduct of Life*, “Illusions” (1860), *EL* 1121, 1123.
wonders. Beginning to feel what has become a familiar pressure in the balls of his eyes, he
presses ahead, drawing motivation from his reading of Alexander Pope, who insisted that men
have been placed into a world whose design they do not know: “All Chance, Direction which we
cannot see,” is the line Waldo selects (Essay on Man, I, 290). Filling nineteen pages and
approaching his twentieth, his hand reaching out ahead to get down one last objection before the
pain overtakes him, he saves the most significant point for last: according to Hume, given that
evil exists, the omnipotence of God must be questioned; a mixed world of good and evil cannot
come from an unmixed, pure deity; mixed phenomena cannot come from an unmixed cause; thus
there are grounds to doubt that God is omnipotent and good. Waldo contends, however, that evil
is always connected with good and an account of its purposefulness can always be found. His
evidence refers to the discomfort that accompanies his own sickly condition: “Thus the pain of
the eyes in watching is to warn us of the mischief that will accrue to the organ if we persist using
it. The pain of a fall is to teach us what care is necessary to keep that system sound which we
possess—and an infinity of the like instances.” His challenge to Hume’s skepticism, which will
persist over the next half-century, thus begins this way:

[I]f the object of this life be as we believe a discipline to exercise us to virtue, we have an
account of evil. For it may not be possible in the nature of things that virtue should exist
without discipline. The human mind cannot conceive – which is one not inconsiderable
presumption that the thing cannot exist – that virtue conferred could ever be as good &
great as Virtue acquired. A sufficient reason is furnished for all the toils, dangers, &
disasters of life when they are seen to be the seed[,] the occasion of all the manly[,] the
godlike virtues of zeal, intrepidity, fortitude, resignation—adjusted to engraft a moral
strength on the soul that could no otherwise be got. Lastly whilst we suppose God
omnipotent it does not entrench on his unity to suppose him sending evil as punishment any more than it casts a doubt on the unity of the human soul that sometimes it does good & sometimes evil. There is no doubt much metaphysical difficulty too hard & high for our faculties concerning the origin of evil. But the question is as perplexing to the Manichee as to his antagonist[,] Whether the soul that does a good action was created by the good principle or by the evil? If by the evil it follows that good may arise from the fountain of all evil. If it was created by the good principle it follows that evil may rise from the fountain of all good.  

And with those words, this final paradox left hanging in the air, Waldo goes blind.

What we see Emerson struggling with in 1825, eleven years before publishing *Nature*, is how to find goodness and affirmation in what Hume called “mixed principles.” I begin a discussion of the environment in which Emerson’s work evolved here because it points a way to a sustained correspondence between mental philosophy and picturesque aesthetics generally and to the ways Emerson read about and around these subjects in particular. In Hume’s conception of mental faculties, “[A]n impression first strikes upon the senses…Of this impression, there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea.”

The association of ideas, then, was first understood as the result of impressions that are copied and give rise to other impressions and ideas—thoughts as states that occur in succession. Such a metaphor corresponds nicely with a conception of thoughts as sketches or framed pictures. In

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this sense, a mechanistic model of the mind operating through the association of ideas offered a justification for Richard Payne Knight’s conception of picturesque beauty. During what contemporary critic Martin Price has called “the picturesque moment” of the 1790s, landscapes offer a vivid metaphor for conceiving of the work of the mind, one in which the “rules of mimic art [were] transferred/To things above all art” (Wordsworth *Prelude* 12:111-12). Moreover, the conceptual metaphor they offer enriches the source domain (the mind), so that the ideas about the mind take on the properties landscape images offer. Emerson registers the power of conceptual metaphor in his journal when he writes that if “the human mind cannot conceive” of a thing, that thing cannot exist. The dominant metaphor that supports understanding is that of the virtuous soul as seedling, a seedling that is nourished by the “toils, disasters, & dangers” that are “engraft[ed]” onto it. Increasingly, the engrafted nature of the single seedling acts as a microcosm for Emerson’s panoramic view of a vast landscape, a whole that is varied yet united.

Of course, Emerson was no painter. Nor was he an art critic, or even a collector of landscape art. What Emerson did find in the celebration of landscape vistas was a “mixed principle” that could support a new metaphor for mental activity. The conception of the mind not as an entity but as a “soulscape” would come to dominate nineteenth-century conceptions of the activity of consciousness. And yet the premonition of blindness that opens this chapter, an experience that stays with Emerson for the rest of his life (“leaving me my eyes,” as he writes in *Nature*), animates what I take to be a broader reality that the nineteenth-century American citizen-spectator, looking out at his own country, must contend with: the pretension towards wholeness and unity is consistently undercut by the acknowledgement that something is being

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hidden from view, that something is being withheld or misrepresented—the unity is not pure but a kind of “mixed principle.”

**Emersonian Transcendentalism and Its Aids to Reflection**

In March of 1825, as I have described, Emerson was struck with a series of headaches, which were likely the result of the rheumatic inflammation of his eyes. He underwent two operations in which his cornea was punctured by a cataract knife and he was forced to stop writing in the journal he had been keeping diligently for the last five years. His return to his journal in January of 1826 after this bout with eye trouble is triumphant, the tone nearly ecstatic: “I come with mended eyes to my ancient friend and consoler,” he writes. (That friend is Plato—and nearly twenty-five years later he will remember this moment of healing when he refers to Plato, the Philosopher, the first in his cadre of great men, as “a collyrium [sic] to clear out our eyes.”). At the moment that he expresses gratitude for the ability to see again without discomfort he also seeks to strike out against his own disability, to attempt to establish an existence beyond sight: “the moral & intellectual universe has not halted because the eye of the observer was closed…,” he insists (*J 57, EL* 626).

When Gustav Fechner’s meditations on vision appear this same year, 1825 to 1826, they reflect Emerson’s preoccupation with what Laura Walls has called “the solar eye.”

“Thus we may view our own eye as a creature of the sun on earth, a creature dwelling in and nurtured by the sun’s rays, and hence a creature structurally resembling its brothers on the sun…But the

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51 I borrow the term “citizen spectator” from Wendy Bellion’s *Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, & Visual Perception in Early National America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), hyphenating it to indicate the fact that amid the heavily illustrated culture of the mid-nineteenth century the bond between the positions of “citizen” and “spectator” was already well established.

52 Walls notes that in Plato’s version of this concept things are seen through the light of the eye, which falls upon analogous forms that display a “natural affinity.” The notion of the “solar eye” of science became central to Emerson’s late work, Walls argues. Just as light requires objects to illuminate, the mind thinks through things: “Work is eyes, & the artist informs himself in efforming matter” (*Walls* 200; *JMN* 13:448).
sun’s creatures, the higher beings I call angels, are eyes which have become autonomous, eyes of
the highest inner development which retain, nevertheless, the structure of the ideal eye. Light is
their element as ours is air.” Fechner’s autonomous eye bears a distinct resemblance to that
often quoted eye in Emerson (parodied in the cartoon by his friend, Christopher Cranch). As he
walks through the woods and across a bare common, “in snow puddles, at twilight, under a
clouded sky,” Emerson professes, “nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity,
(leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,—my head
bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a
transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through
me; I am part or particle of God.” “In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of
the horizon,” Emerson adds, “man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.”

Two ideas are worth special attention in the context in which I am revisiting
this iconic passage. First, the poetic rhythm of this verse seems to be, as Eric Wilson and others have noted, unsettled
by the parenthetical aside that precedes the glorious ascension of the transparent eyeball, the
phrase “leaving me my eyes.” Readers are uncertain whether we should interpret Emerson to
mean that any calamity or disgrace is endurable as long as he has his eyes
or whether his eyes
themselves are the disgrace and calamity. Secondly, being “uplifted into infinite space,” to “be
nothing” and “see all” yields a panoramic view that is not only a metaphor for an ideal visionary
experience but which is produced through real material conditions—particularly at the moment
Emerson is writing Nature. Emerson would have just been getting glimpses of the panoramania

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53 Fechner qtd. in Crary 142.
54 EL 10.
55 This section has been quoted so extensively that it represents what Bruno Latour has called an “iconoclasm” in Emerson studies. It has been employed for everything from characterizing Emerson’s transcendent prose, to illustrating his idealism, to criticizing Emerson for falling into the prototypical Descartian dilemma by reveling in the mind and forgetting about the body, and to pointing out, however unnecessarily, that Emersonian principles are based on a fantasy because a transparent eyeball is physiologically impossible.
that was sweeping cities like New York, Boston, and Charleston during the 1820s, 30s, and 40s, with huge stable and eventually moveable panoramas becoming travelling shows that moved up and down the eastern seaboard and gradually out west. (By the time he writes the lectures for The Conduct of Life two decades later Emerson characterizes “the theatre and panorama” as a common features to be found in town life.) Even in this ecstatic moment of “transparency,” in which Emerson, the mystic, hopes to be one with the very particles of light that makes vision possible, he is reflecting the rules of a broader “scopic regime.” He is reflecting a perspectival view that is not necessarily inherent to his idealism but rather one that is available and vibrant at this particular visual cultural moment, and which he appropriates for his own uses.56

1826 was an important year for Emerson. He regained full use of his sight. He returned to writing in his journal. He read Sampson Reed’s newly printed Observations on the Growth of the Mind, as well as James Marsh’s edition of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Aids to Reflection. The young people of Cambridge who read the works of Reed, Barbara Packer notes—as well as Madame de Stael, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and, through Coleridge, Kant— “delighted in a portrait of the individual mind and its relationship to nature that made ordinary perception seem revelatory and ordinary maturation Odyssean.”57 These thinkers served to provide a model that could counter Locke’s view of the dryly empirical nature of the mind. Their collective influence, particularly Coleridge’s distinction between Reason and Understanding, cascades through Emerson’s journals and letters, as in this letter to his brother Edward in May of 1843: “Reason is

56I borrow the term “scopic regime” from Martin Jay (“Scopic Regime’s of Modernity,” Vision and Visuality (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988). Jay and many others would categorize the perspective of the “transparent eyeball” under the label of Cartesian perspectivalism, which has been critiqued for its “privileging of an ahistorical, disinterested, disembodied subject entirely outside of the world”—or, in short, for its “‘high altitude’ thinking” (Jay 10). I am trying to ground such thinking—as well as a mode of critiquing it—in the media environments in which Emerson found himself.

57“The Transcendentalists” 357.
the highest faculty of the soul—what we meant often by the soul itself; it never reasons, never proves, it simply perceives; it is vision. The Understanding toils all the time, compares, contrives, adds, argues, near sighted but strong-sighted, dwelling in the present the expedient the customary.” Coleridge’s understanding of the picturesque is also passed down to Emerson. He takes it to mean not only Gilpin’s idea of applying Poussin’s principles to the determination of actual vistas outdoors but that, in a negative sense, whatever is like a picture cannot be a literal picture. The search for the picturesque is a search for a whole that can be felt: “Where the parts by their harmony produce an effect of the whole, but where there is no seen form of a whole producing or explaining the parts of it, where the parts only are seen and distinguished, but the whole is felt—the picturesque.”

A landscape view, according to Coleridge, must be converted into something that has meaning. The 1826 edition of Aids to Reflection was the text that “more than any other single volume catalyzed the synthesis between the new ideas Emerson was finding in Sampson Reed and the new importance of the old ideas he found in Plato, Plutarch, Montaigne, and the seventeenth century” (Mind on Fire 93). Whereas Hume and fellow Scottish philosopher Thomas Brown—briefly, a student of Dugald Stewart, and eventually his colleague—described human beings as being acted upon (“according to fixed law, by the motives which are present in the understanding”), Marsh highlighted the strain in Coleridge that underlines the individual’s capacity for self-determination or “reason,” a power higher than the senses and higher than the understanding, which depends wholly on input from the senses. Marsh finds language itself to be “a living power, consubstantial with the power of thought that gave birth to it, and answering and

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58 Coleridge added, “Where neither whole nor parts, but unity as boundless or endless allness—the sublime” (Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross, II: 309 qtd. in Price 280).
calling into action a corresponding energy in our minds” (*Mind on Fire* 93; Introduction to *Aids*, 52).

This is a notion that resonates through Reed as well, who understood the mind not as a passive receiver of stimuli but as a germ that develops by collecting things from its environment. Reading Reed re-shapes the nature of Emerson’s skepticism after what might have been a rather devastating encounter with Hume. Truth affects objects, Reed insists, and the mind has to be active not only in the stage of acquiring truths but in acclimating them to one’s own internal landscape. A man’s character is thus comprised of exercises of the understanding, originating in feelings and expressing themselves in actions. The relative conditions of the world, especially time, shroud the relationship we have to the Creator; yet, when we think of time, we ascribe effects to a force that has no real existence. Our conceptions of time and spaces are the effects of matter, though these conceptions are one of the most vivid we have. In order to operate within these relative conditions, we must become conscious of an image in its first conception, to will it into being—as when reading poetry, when the reader must think like an author, and preserve what feeling overflows that the words themselves cannot contain. This change in understanding images, both visual and verbal, corresponds with a change in modes of reasoning: syllogistic reasoning, what Reed calls “a mode of leading men blindfolded to a conclusion,” is a failed way of “binding” our observations. While Hume senses this in the Unitarian proof of miracles, he reacts by denying all cause and effect. Emerson finds, in Reed, a more useful route, a “highway” (*EL* 480). Imagination must evolve out of and then replace the paradigm of the logical syllogism: “Reason is beginning to learn the necessity of simply tracing the relations which exist between created things, and of not even touching what it examines, lest it disturb the arrangement in the cabinet of creation—and as, in the progress of moral improvement, the imagination (which is
called the creative power of man) shall coincide with the actively creative will of God, reason will be clothed with eloquence, as nature is with verdure” (EL 74). “The understanding is the eye, with simply the power of discerning the light,” but reason, Reed maintains, is “the eye whose powers have been enlarged by exercise and experience, which measures the distance of objects, compares their magnitudes, discerns their colors, and selects and arranges them according to the relation they bear to each other.” This is nothing short of a new scientific method: “To discover analogies in what was before chaotic is to approach God (creation)” (Observations 75).

The picturesque offered a mode of thought that allowed Emerson to inscribe disjointed scenes as wholes. Such imaginative stimulation also offered Emerson a unique symbol for his own conception of history. From early in his career, one of Emerson’s primary concerns as a reader was how to make the past less opaque and more “transparent” by creating metaphors for the shared work of active minds across millennia. As I have described, this work was aided by his reading Sampson Reed and, through James Marsh, Coleridge; it would also be spurred on by more literal visual aids to reflection that appeared in America just before mid-century, through which the receiver of history was increasingly bound to the position of a spectator. In the fall of 1837, Emerson begins labeling his entries with subheadings like “Expression” and “New Eyes.” He is captivated by the ways in which slightest curve of a line suggests a figure or object that might never have been seen otherwise and how, in this sense, “the addition of a little capacity of attention would turn a fool into a Shakespear [sic]” (J, Vol. IV, 321). The entry entitled “New Eyes” begins as follows: “What is, appears. Go out to walk with a painter and you shall see for the first time groups, colors, clouds and keepings, and shall have the pleasure of discovering resources in a hitherto barren ground, of finding as good as a new sense in such skill to use an old one.” Emerson calls this sensory experience the development of a “new-old sight,” a hybrid
that reflects the kind of self-reflexive habit of viewing that pervades picturesque aesthetics and American Romanticism. While on one hand the picturesque presents the possibility of a singular, unique view that can be picked out from a series as being “like a picture,” this kind of recognition is only made possible by the awareness that there is always a prior example of beauty in the mind. In this sense, repetition, the formulaic, becomes necessary to singularity.\(^{59}\) Gilpin himself explained that though nature was “great in design,” it was “unequal in composition.” It provides us with raw materials, “woods, rivers, lakes, trees, ground, and mountains: but leaves us to work them into pictures, as our fancy leads.” Gilpin found picturesque rules, in fact, to be more inviting and stimulating than nature itself: “the picture is not so much the ultimate end, as it is the medium, through which the ravishing scenes of nature are excised in the imagination.”\(^{60}\)

The picturesque, I am proposing, provided a concept that would serve Emerson and others as an aid to reflection on the “proper disposition of the whole” in the face of the realization of the instability of our visual access to reality. Its influence circulates not only through Gilpin’s treatises but through the use of a prosthesis, the Claude Glass, an instrument that would guarantee that an otherwise unruly landscape would be framed neatly within the edges of its convex lens, which curved in as the center rose out just slightly, seemingly pregnant with the unified image it presented. The Claude Glass is a rather unassuming mediator; it oscillates between surplus, adding a plentitude and “fullness” to vision, and prosthesis, like the camera obscura, serving as a composing aid that might, when held in hand, reach out to protect, or even take the place of, the eye. It draws attention to the eye’s innate “rounding, coordinating, pictorial powers” but also enhances them.\(^{61}\)

\(^{59}\) Rosalind Krauss qtd. in Batchen, *Burning With Desire* 75.
\(^{60}\) *Observations on the River Wye* qtd. in Batchen 75, 76, emphasis added.
\(^{61}\) Emerson, “Illusions” *EL* 1116. “Women, more than all, are the element and kingdom of illusion. Being fascinated, they fascinate. They see through Claude-Lorraines,” Emerson wrote (*EL* 1118).
As Malcolm Andrews and Arnaud Maillet have observed, the rise of picturesque aesthetics corresponded with a “rediscovery” of nature in England, with the notion of the spectator as walker, aided by his Claude Glass, and by a fascination with landscape painters such as Claude Lorrain, Salvator Rosa, Nicholas Poussin, and Gaspard Dughet. As their works became known to British collectors, museums, and other artists, they also circulated through an aristocratic social network that reached across continents and intellectual and scientific circles through the increasingly popular practice of the “Grand Tour.” The era of the Grand Tour, still in vogue though nearing its sunset as Emerson came of age in Concord, would encourage people to seek out the types of experiences represented in picturesque landscapes, concentrated in an emphasis on literally and figuratively “broadening their horizons” (Maillet 70, Oettermann 6, 12). The horizon line was a mathematical notion used by seamen, a “variable constant” needed to determine a ship’s position in open waters. For the overseas traveler, however, it became a way of fusing an abstraction with a particular sensory experience, that of the limits of sight. Thus the horizon was sought with the understanding that to be aware of a limit is to overcome and pass beyond it. To this end, the Claude Glass’s aim—to aid a viewer in discerning the “proper disposition of the whole”—was shared by another apparatus, one that relied upon a macrocosmic scale where the Glass used a microcosmic one: the panorama, originally patented under the title “la nature à coup d’oeil” (“Nature at a glance”) by the English painter Robert Barker in 1787.

Even Henry David Thoreau’s “Walking,” one of the nineteenth century’s most notable celebrations of man’s direct encounter with “wildness,” exemplifies the ways in which a view of the wild was mediated by the visual technologies of the period. In the two paragraphs that

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62 Upon marrying into the Poussin family, Dughet adopted the surname, becoming Gaspard Poussin, and is arguably the “Poussin” who is, more often than not, being referred to during the eighteenth century when the surname is used an example of picturesque style (See Andrews 1989, 26).
directly proceed the climax of Thoreau’s essay, he recalls visiting one of John Banvard’s panoramas of the Rhine. It was like a dream of the Middle Ages. I floated down its historic stream in something more than imagination, under bridges built by the Romans and repaired by later heroes, past cities and castles whose very names were music to my ears, and each of which was the subject of a legend. There were Ehrenbreitstein and Rolandseck and Coblentz, which I knew only in history. They were ruins that interested me chiefly. There seemed to come up from its waters and its vine clad hills and valleys a hushed music as of Crusaders departing for the Holy Land. I floated along under the spell of enchantment as if I had been transported to an heroic age and breathed an atmosphere of chivalry.

Soon after I went to see a panorama of the Mississippi, and as I worked my way up the river in the light of to-day, and saw the steamboats wooding up, counted the rising cities, gazed on the fresh ruins of Nauvoo, beheld the Indians moving west across the stream, and, as before I had looked up the Moselle, now looked up the Ohio and the Missouri and heard the legends of Dubuque and of Wenona’s Cliff,—still thinking more of the future than of the past or present,—I saw that this was a Rhine stream of a different kind; that the foundations of castles were yet to be laid, and the famous bridges were yet to be thrown over the river; and I felt that this was the heroic age itself, though we know it not, for the hero is commonly the simplest and obscurest of men. (WCD 273)

The panoramas place the Rhine and the Mississippi into the same consumable formats that, in turn, allow Thoreau to graft American history onto ancient history, and to cast the yeoman in the role of the epic hero. When Barker first patented the term “panorama” it was meant specifically

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63River panoramas were so popular that they made up an entire subgenre of panoramic displays on view in the United States; scenes from the Ohio, the Mississippi, and the Hudson Rivers, among other international bodies of water like the canals of Venice and the Rhine, were the most popular.
to describe the 360-degree paintings of landscapes or cityscapes (it was compared, in one report, to an “enormous peep show”); it made the experience of the horizon more permanently available to the public (Oettermann 12). The use of the word expanded quickly, having been introduced into every European language by the year 1800, either through exhibitions of the paintings themselves or through references to them in magazines and newspaper articles. By the start of the nineteenth century the term was used variously to imply a circular painting, a vista or overview seen from an elevated point, and an overview of a particular intellectual field or discipline. Much like the Claude Glass, the panorama became both a substitute for a direct impression of nature and a visual stimulant, a tool for teaching people how to see not quite nature itself but man’s place in history, for which the landscape acted as a backdrop that marked the passage of time, as is illustrated by Thoreau’s discussion of the influence of the Rhine panorama on his impression of the Mississippi. It presented the hope of approaching the power and the “as yet unconquered” vastness of open space while simultaneously demanding a viewer refrain from interfering with it directly: the panorama was a visualization of the concept of fate.64

Picturesque aesthetics, expressed and extended through apparatuses such as the Claude Glass and the panorama, dictated that whereas previously the landscape conditioned the painting, now the painting or panorama should be understood as conditioning one’s view of nature. In this context, the “picturesque decade” of the 1790s represents a moment at which the presence of a viewer’s desire that a painting should portray the landscape as a unified whole enters the cultural consciousness; it is a desire that hovers over the society into which Emerson is born and one which, I offer, he spends the entirety of his career reacting to, surveying, and analogizing in writing. By 1800, landscapes are recognized as human constructions rather than as scenes

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64Ibid. 6, 12. Oettermann argues that the pictorial panorama was, at least in one respect, “an apparatus for teaching and glorifying the bourgeois view of the world; it served as an instrument for liberating human vision and for limiting and ‘imprisoning’ it anew. As such it represents the first true visual ‘mass medium’” (7).
ordained by God. As an “order of knowledge” the natural world is no longer an immediate visionary experience but the result of a transfer of “associational memories” that originated elsewhere. As a practice, the distinction between representation and referent dissolved in the picturesque into “an endless circuit of representations and representations of representations.” In short, the viewer became both the subject and the object of the unifying powers of picturesqueness (Batchen 78).

_Seeing w/holes_

In the early nineteenth century, the most common way of describing the workings of the eye was to compare it to a camera obscura, explaining the way in which light passes through the pupil, as the image of the outside world is flipped and reflected point by point upon the retina. This paradigm is exemplified as early as 1637 in Descartes’s description of the analogy between the eye and the camera obscura: “Suppose a chamber is shut up from a single hole, and a glass lens is placed in front of that whole with a white sheet stretched at a certain distance behind it so the light coming from objects outside forms the images on the sheet. Now it is said that the room represents the eye; the hole the pupil; the lens the crystalline humour…” (Crary 47 qtd. Descartes 686-687). Leibniz, too, noted that the difference between the appearance of something in space for us, and its appearance for God, is the difference between perspective and the bird’s eye view—both visually and metaphysically “a view from above” (Crary 48). This analogy is developed and popularized with William Henry Fox Talbot’s _The Pencil of Nature_, which describes the pictures produced by the camera as a “much more sharp and correct” version of those produced by the eye. Referring to the third plate that appears near the end of the text,
“Articles of China,” which depicts thirty carefully and evenly spaced bowls, cups, statuettes, and vases in a china closet, Talbot observes,

The articles represented on this plate are numerous: but, however numerous the objects—however complicated the arrangement—the Camera depicts them all at once. It may be said to take a picture of whatever it sees. The object glass is the eye of the instrument—the sensitive paper may be compared to the retina. And the eye should not have too large a pupil: that is to say, the glass should be diminished by placing a screen or diaphragm before it, having a small circular hole, through which alone the rays of light may pass”

(no pg. numbers provided, emphasis in original).

The vantage point provided by Descartes’s camera obscura and Talbot’s camera was considered by classical science to be analogous to the eye of God: it was “objective” precisely because it corresponded to a view outside the body. It served as a cyclopean point of reference that offered what Jonathan Crary has called “the dream of the infallible eye.”

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While this model of perfect reproducibility has become synonymous with the ideological implications of the figure of Emerson’s transparent eyeball, few critics also register that Emerson’s era was one in which theories of binocular disparity, the mark of fallible human vision, were also circulating. In 1838, Charles Wheatstone published his “Contributions to the physiology of vision – Part the first. On some remarkable, and hitherto unobserved, phenomena of binocular vision” in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society. His research on binocular vision would lead to his patenting of a new invention, the stereoscope, that same year. Unlike the panorama and the Claude Glass, this was a tool that would play upon, rather than elide, the unalterable disparities crucial to the visual process. Wheatstone’s lasting contribution

65 Techniques of the Observer 48. The camera obscura is the commonly referenced technological counterpart to the paradigm of Cartesian perspectivalism.
to psychological optics, in short, is his substantiation of the notion that the “singleness” of vision can follow from the stimulation of non-corresponding retinal points; in other words, he capitalized on the fact that our entire experience of depth is determined by retinal dissimilarities. Whereas previous theories of vision presupposed a singular monocular field, reasoning that either we only see objects in space one eye at a time or that the eyes mimic each other as they work together to receive a projection of a visible object from its actual location, studies in binocular vision by Wheatstone, as well as his contemporary and rival inventor, Sir David Brewster, aimed “to quantify precisely the angular differential of the optical axis of each eye.” An awareness of binocular vision roots both the crucial disparity of perception and the skill of seeing in three dimensions within the observer himself.66

Coming to terms with binocularity is not only a physiological but a metaphysical drama that, I am suggesting, plays out across physiology and mental philosophy at the dawn of the Transcendentalist movement. When read with Wheatstone’s treatise in mind, Emerson’s Divinity School Address (1838) makes a similar move to foreground the disparities that exist within a singular Unitarian tradition. A crucial debate erupts when Humean skepticism is inserted into a Lockean system, and when the Unitarian belief that a few and simple “miracles” can be proven to substantiate the existence of God and save us from the “blindness” of enthusiasm is confronted with the notion of “Reason” as interpreted through the German idealists.67

Wheatstone’s research on binocular vision in the late 1830s, as it was replicated and furthered by Brewster, provided a physiological and phenomenological counterpart to the recognition that (in

66Wade 29, 31; Crary 119. Wheatstone also recalled in his treatise that back in 1832 (the year that Emerson feels especially undecided about his role as minister, leaves the ministry and sails for Europe) in a conversation with “Professor Necker of Geneva,” he first became aware of the change in apparent positioning that was possible when staring at the drawing of solid bodies, referring specifically to the diagram now famously known as “the Necker cube.”
67Packer 339, 355.
answer to Locke) the work of the mind is not all logic, or “understanding” but both reason and understanding, that logical syllogisms can no longer be enough to “prove” experience, and that contact with both idealism and empiricism would be required for belief to exist. Emerson had this to say to the 1838 graduating class at Harvard Divinity School:

Miracles, prophecy, poetry; the ideal life, the holy life, exist as ancient history merely; they are not in belief, nor in the aspiration of society; but, when suggested, seem ridiculous. Life is comic or pitiful, as soon as the high ends of being fade out of sight, and man becomes near-sighted, and can only attend to what addresses the senses […] To aim to convert a man by miracles, is a profanation of the soul. A true conversion, a true Christ, is now, as always, to be made, by the reception of beautiful sentiments. (EL 82)

The paradigm of the ubiquitously transparent eyeball has, two years after Nature, already become unhinged. Talk of “infinite space” and the circulating currents of the “Universal Being” has been scaled down entirely. As human nature continues to confront its own inescapable fallacies—its means and mediums for receiving “beautiful sentiments”—a new key word emerges: “compensation.”

the “remedial force that underlies all facts”

By 1840, it had been over four years since Emerson published Nature. He aspired to compose “with some pains Essays on various matters as a sort of apology to my country for my apparent idleness” (EL 1129). Given its third position in the first series of essays, following “History” and “Self-Reliance,” “Compensation” hardly receives much attention. The essay offers a more tempered, somber subject than the celebration of the American Adam that unfolds in the pieces that precede it. In fact, “Compensation” (1841) seems to try to reconcile the exuberance of
living with the difficulties of living subject to time. Emerson describes the “remedial force” of the spirit as that which prevents us from taking in only parts and discarding wholes, as when we part water with the palms of our hands and it “reunites” behind us (EL 291). The essay registers the nagging discomfort of a New England economy that was still feeling the financial effects of the Panic of 1837 and the awareness that Whigs and Democrats were at odds over how large a role the national government should play in remedying it. Emerson and his contemporaries were living in a nation that could not fully foresee the issues that would divide the country further still:

Life invests itself with inevitable conditions, which the unwise seek to dodge, which one and another brags that he does not know; that they do not touch him;—but the brag is on his lips, the conditions are in his soul. If he escapes them in one part, they attack him in a more vital part. If he has escaped them in form, and in the appearance, it is because he has resisted his life and fled from himself, and the retribution is so much depth. So signal is the failure of all attempts to make this separation of the good from the tax, that the experiment should not be tried,—since to try it is to be mad,—but for the circumstance, that when the disease began in the will, of rebellion and separation, the intellect is at once infected, so that the man ceases to see God whole in each object […] and thinks he can cut off that which he would have, from that which he would not have.

Emerson calls this the “moral aim” of the “in-working of the All,” concluding the passage with lines from the Confessions of St. Augustine: “certain penal blindnesses” fall upon those who have “unbridled desires” (EL 291, 292).

On Emerson Viewing History “Stereoscopically”
If we want to get away further still from the easy and rather dull depiction of Emerson reveling in an overpowering *ur*-sight detached from a process of thinking and writing, the place to turn is, as many have noted before me, to “Experience” (1844). Stanley Cavell makes use of this moment,

In the growth of the embryo, Sir Everard Home, I think, noticed that the evolution was not from one central point, but co-active from three or more points. Life has no memory. That which proceeds in succession might be remembered, but that which is coexistent or ejaculated from a deeper cause, as yet far from being conscious, knows not its own tendency. So it is with us, now skeptical, or without unity, because immersed in forms and effects all seeming to be of equal yet hostile value, and now religious, whilst in the reception of spiritual law. Bear with these distractions, with the coetaneous growth of the parts: they will one day be *members*, and obey one will.  

In the same way that this will to unity describes, as Cavell observes, “the fact and the action” of Emerson’s sentences, so it describes what drives the formulation of picturesque discourse more broadly. The passage builds into something like a fit of ecstasy, which thrusts Emerson out into the landscape: “I feel a new heart beating with the love of a new beauty. I am ready to die out of nature, and to be born again in this new yet unapproachable America I have found in the West” (*EL* 484-85).

Here the experience of “new beauty” is not an imprinting of sight upon eye but the creation of an original *feeling of resemblance* to the moral meaning christened thereafter. Earlier in the essay Emerson presented an image that recalls the picturesque tourist wandering over the mountain side with the dark lens of the Claude Glass held out before him: “Life is a train of

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68I was first alerted to Cavell’s assessment of this passage (*Transcendental Etudes* 127) as a moment that describes what it takes to read an Emersonian essay (“Bear with the coetaneous growth of the parts: they will one day…obey one will”) by Joan Richardson.
moods, like a string of beads, and, as we pass through them, they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus.” “Of what use is genius, if the organ is too convex or concave, and cannot find a focal distance within the actual horizon of human life?” By 1844, both the Claude Glass and the eye itself were marks of delusion and illusion for Emerson: we operate “obliquely,” he says. “Direct strokes [nature] never gave us the power to make; all our blows glance, all our hits are accidents. Our relations to each other are oblique and casual.” While it is indeed “very mortifying […] that some unfriendly excess or imbecility neutralizes the promise of genius,” if we approach life obliquely, looking with both eyes, we can stand in just a wide enough angle to the world to enable us to see.69

In a lecture he gave on April 13, 1859, entitled “Art and Criticism,” Emerson remarks on a book by Carlyle that has recently been published on Friedrich the Great, yet which, he regrets, has received little attention. He lauds Carlyle’s rhetorical style in which he drops all worry of convention and which produces more “character than intellect in every sentence.”

Carlyle, with his inimitable ways of saying the thing, is next best to the inventor of the thing, and I think of him when I read the famous inscription on the pyramid, “I King Saib built this pyramid. I, when I had built it, covered it with satin. Let him who cometh after me, and says he is equal to me, cover it with mats.” What he has said shall be proverb, nobody shall be able to say it otherwise. No book can no longer be tolerable in the old husky Neal-on-the-Puritans model. In short, I think the revolution wrought by Carlyle is precisely parallel to that going forward in picture, by the stereoscope. Until history is interesting, it is not yet written. (CW 298)

69EL 473-74. Wheatstone’s synopsis of the oblique angle of the visual field formed by the optic axes is as follows: “When an object, or a part of an object, thus appears in relief while the optic axes are directed to a single binocular point, it is easy to see that each point of the figure that appears single is seen at the intersection of the two lines of visual direction in which it is seen by each eye separately, whether these lines of visible direction terminate at corresponding points of the retinae or not” (Wheatstone qtd. in Wade 92).
In a letter to Carlyle himself on May 1st of that year, Emerson echoed the terms of the praise from his lecture: “I think you the true inventor of the stereoscope, as having exhibited that art in style, long before we had heard of it in drawing.” What should we take Emerson to mean when he talks about a “stereoscopic” style? If the stereoscope operates on the premise that dissimilar plane pictures can, when presented to the eye, reveal a three-dimensional solid figure, that variety can produce unity, to write and think “stereoscopically” is much like what Emerson is describing in the section on the growth of the embryo in “Experience.” A binocular principle of vision reveals that the eye is not immediately unified but that it gradually nourishes the “coetaneous growth of the parts: they will one day be members, and obey one will.” In this sense, what idealism can be found in the binocular visual paradigms of the mid-nineteenth century offered a model for thinking beyond individual perception and toward a collective reinterpretation of the relationship between viewers, technologies, and the making of spectator-citizens.

Two months after Emerson referenced the stereoscope in his “Art and Criticism” lecture, the first of Oliver Wendell Holmes’s triplet of essays on stereoscopic culture, “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph” (1859), appeared in the Atlantic Monthly. Worried that his era might take the “naturalness” of photography for granted, Holmes insists on turning his readers into something like witnesses in the midst of their own conversion experience. When describing the way a film is “shed” from a sitter’s face and retained on the plate of the daguerreotype (like a metallic shroud of Turin), Holmes raises stereoscopy into the mystical realm formerly dominated by religion, philosophy, and the literary and visual arts. For Holmes, poetry and photography—especially stereoscopic photography—had a shared aim: to lift the world and the life of today
into a spaceless and timeless ideal." Yet Holmes holds that even the most rudimentary photo, the daguerreotype, has succeeded where religion, philosophy, and poetry have fallen short: “[The Daguerreotype] has fixed the most fleeting of our illusions, that which the apostle and the philosopher and the poet have alike used as the type of instability and unreality” (1859 738). For Holmes, a belief in photography is infused with the romantic notion of negative capability, captured and literalized in “the negative” itself: “Form is henceforth divorced from matter. In fact, matter as a visible object is of no great use any longer, except as the mould on which form is shaped. Give us a few negatives of a thing worth seeing, taken from different points of view, and that is all we want of it.”

Through Holmes’s essays, the stereoscope and the stereograph become emblems of a moral drama. At multiple points, Holmes’s tone and diction bear a distinct resemblance to the tone of popular books of emblems and allegories circulating at mid-century:

Extremes meet. Every given point of the picture is as far from truth as a lie can be. But in travelling away from the pattern it has gone round a complete circle, and is at once as remote from Nature and as near it as possible...This negative is now to give birth to a positive,—this mass of contradictions to assert its hidden truth in a perfect harmonious affirmation of the realities of Nature. Behold the process!...Out of the perverse and totally depraved negative,—where it might almost seem as if some magic and diabolic power had wrenched all things from their properties, where the light of the eye was darkness, and the deepest blackness was gilded with the brightest glare,—is to come the true end of all this series of operations, a copy of Nature in all her sweet gradations and harmonies

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70 Oliver Wendell Holmes, public lecture on Civil War poetry (n.p.), qtd. in Bergland 134.
71 “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph” 747, 740-41. “Matter in large masses must always be fixed and dear; form is cheap and transportable,” he says later, fixing the stereoscope neatly within the framework of industrial capitalism. “We have got the fruit of creation now, and need not trouble ourselves with the core” (748).
and contrasts. (1859 740-41)

Holmes also distills the scientific details of Wheatstone’s discovery for a popular audience. To look through the stereoscope is to be implicated in the moral struggle, albeit one that is assured to turn out well:

We see something with the second eye which we did not see with the first...By means of these two different views of an object, the mind, as it were, *feels round it* and gets an idea of its solidity...Though, as we have seen, the two eyes look on two different pictures, we perceive but one picture...in order that they should run together, both the eye and the brain must be in a natural state...take two or three glasses more than temperance permits, and you see double; the eyes are right enough, probably, but the brain is in trouble, and does not report their telegraphic messages correctly. These exceptions illustrate the everyday truth, that, when we are in right condition, our two eyes see two somewhat different pictures, which our perception combines to form one picture, representing all objects in their dimensions, and not merely as surfaces.  

Holmes solidifies the stereoscope’s place in media history through the fusion of the phenomenological and the moral, a precedent set by Ruskin. Describing the stereoscopic view of the moon captured at the Cambridge Observatory in Boston, Holmes concludes, “the sphere rounds itself out so perfectly to the eye that it seems as if we could grasp it like an orange.”

72 Ibid 742, 743, emphasis in original. “Posterity might thenceforth inspect us,” Holmes continues, “not as a surface only, but in all our dimensions as an undisputed *solid* man of Boston.” He continues to use the stereoscope to underscore the rectitude of the culture of the Boston Brahmin in “Doings of the Sunbeam,” where he insists that a “whole class of facts...is forcing itself into notice with new strength of evidence.” In “Sun-painting and Sun Sculpture,” too, he observes that a doctored mark on a stereograph only floats above our three-dimensional view and doesn't interfere with it: “the impossibility of the stereograph’s perjuring itself is a curious illustration of the law of evidence” (“Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture, with a Stereoscopic Trip across the Atlantic” *Atlantic* 8 (July 1861): 13-29.

73 To end an essay entitled “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph” with a discussion of its ability to enhance the usefulness of the telescope, an already established and respected form of media, is a notable rhetorical move. If, as Robin Peel argues, “the findings of science and the new technologies [that bore them] appeared miraculous” to a
one hand, the stereoscope reinforced the two-way exchange between media and human experience, especially when contextualized within scientific findings in the fields of physiological optics throughout the 1850s that emphasized the deep instability of the binocular visual process. Emerson was demonstrating the potential of that instability by likening the work of writing history to the experience of seeing stereoscopically. Yet in the popular thought and rhetoric that sprung up around the photography—propelled by Holmes’s essays—the stereoscope “enacted a confidence in vision and in the transparency between the object and its representation.”\(^74\)

The reception of the stereoscope within a newly established photographic culture exemplifies the power of remediation in media environments: as new technologies develop, a pre-established conception of the transparency of the medium persists. The popular praise for the stereoscope overwrote research about binocular vision in order to retain the idealized mode of visualizing picturesque wholes.

Emerson read William Gilpin’s illustrated travelogues and his book *Forest Scenery* (1794) after returning from his second trip to England in the late 1840s.\(^75\) While Gilpin’s early writings on the picturesque—back in 1768—describe it as simply as “expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture,” by the time he writes *Forest Scenery*, this definition comes more in line with Romantic thought to account for its effects—both of the landscape on the viewer and the viewer on the landscape. For Gilpin, mediation was the central mid-century audience, the comparison masterfully reinforces Holmes’ lofty aims (Peel 34). Also, grasping a planetary body “like an orange” becomes a popular metaphor for describing the intimacy and tangibility of views of outer space seen through a telescope.

\(^{74}\)Schiavo 131. “Owing largely to questions invoked by Wheatstone’s stereoscope, the field [of physiological optics] was dominated by the investigation of depth perception, or how viewers understand the position of objects in relation to themselves. From 1850 to 1854, roughly a quarter of all writing on vision dealt with this question, a number that increased to nearly one third in the years following, during which time stereoscopic instruments provided central evidence. These findings, which emphasized the vagaries and subjectivity of vision, destabilized earlier notions of a fixed and objective relationship between the exterior world and its transparent, visual realization, and demanded a reinterpretation of fundamental concepts about the body’s role in perception” (116).

\(^{75}\)See Richardson’s *Emerson*: 466, 509.
notion that distinguished the beautiful from the picturesque: objects that please the eye in their natural state are “beautiful” while those that please through “some quality” when illustrated in a painting are “picturesque.” The picturesque is in fact reliant upon “a strategic maintenance of visual disjunctions” that resolve into a “combined idea” (Batchen 73). Four years later, Emerson would return to Gilpin’s work in the midst of delivering his lectures on “The Conduct of Life,” the final lecture of which was entitled, “Illusions.”

1850: Into the Cave of Illusions

In 1850, a year after returning from England, at age 47, Emerson made his first trip to the American west. At its furthest western point, America had gained ownership of California following the end of the Mexican-American War. San Francisco had been christened as a city, and the gold rush had begun. But Emerson did not go quite that far west on this trip. In May, he traveled to Cincinnati to lecture. While there, he ventured 35 miles north to Fort Ancient, which had been built by old Hopewell Indians in 500 AD. On a plateau 230 feet above the Little Miami River, the fort enclosed a total of one hundred acres in three connected sections; earlier settlers could not believe that savage Indians could have constructed such a structure, and so created a legend that an earlier race had built it. The fort reminded Emerson of Stonehenge. Before returning home, Emerson travelled as part of a group of seventeen people to see Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. Getting to Mammoth Cave required a significant trek: 315 miles down the Ohio River, 150 miles up the Green and Barren Rivers to Bowling Green, and 30 miles by stage coach to the mouth of the cave system, which the party could only explore with the help of reliable and experienced guides (R. Richardson 479).
Emerson spent 14 hours in the cave, walking 18 miles, as the guides illuminated portions of the walls and ceilings to point out geological formations and to create entertaining effects (R. Richardson 480). The record of this experience from his journal provided him with the opening anecdote for the essay “Illusions.” In the deepest part of the cave he recalled walking “six or eight black miles” with the touring group, from the mouth of the cavern to the innermost recess where tourists visit, where he came across

a niche or grotto made of one seamless stalactite, and called, I believe, Serena’s Bower. I lost the light of one day. I saw high domes and bottomless pits; heard the voice of unseen waterfalls; paddled three quarter of a mile into the deep Echo River, whose waters are peopled with blind fish; crossed the streams “Lethe” and “Styx;” plied with music and guns the echoes in these alarming galleries; saw every form of sculptured stalagmite and stalactite in the sculptured and fretted chambers,—icicle, orange-flower, acanthus, grapes, and snowball. We shot Bengal lights into the vaults and groins of the sparry cathedrals, and examined all the masterpieces which the four combined engineers, water, limestone, gravitation, and time, could make in the dark.

“But then I took notice, and still chiefly remember,” Emerson added, “that the best thing which the cave had to offer was an illusion.” He had entered a section called the “Star-Chamber,” and what appeared to be stars in the night sky were actually glistening shards of limestone on the cave ceiling:

I own, I did not like the cave so well for eking out its sublimities with this theatrical trick. But I have had many experiences like it, before and since; and we must content to be pleased without too curiously analyzing the occasions. Our conversation with Nature is not just what it seems. The cloud-rack, the sunrise and sunset glories, rainbows, and
northern lights are not quite so spheral as our childhood thought them; and the part our organization plays in them is too large. The senses interfere everywhere, and mix their own structure with all they report of. Once, we fancied the earth a plane, and stationary. In admiring the sunset, we do not yet deduct the rounding, coördinating powers of the eye. (*EL* 1116)

We might read this as Emerson’s own retelling of the Platonic parable of the cave: the philosopher steps outside and realizes he has only been seeing shadows. The experience provides a dramatic frame for his reflection on decades of writing and thinking about how to assess the value of sense perceptions (he might have called them “Half a transport – half a trouble”) (*Dickinson Fr795*). The senses do not dictate inner life, was his conviction, but “the inner life is revealed through the life of the senses.”\(^{76}\) He used the experience to make a point about illusions working as a great stimulator of the natural powers of the intellect, and thus a great equalizer among men:

The intellect is stimulated by the statement of truth in a trope, and the will by clothing the laws of life in illusions. But the unities of Truth and of Right are not broken by the disguise. There need never be any confusion in these. In a crowded life of many parts and performers, on a stage of nations, or in the obscurest hamlet in Maine or California, the same elements offer the same choices to each newcomer, and, according to his election, he fixes his fortune in absolute Nature. (*EL* 1123)

Mammoth Cave was, for a moment, the “new yet unapproachable America” he had found in the west.

Optical illusions persisted both inside and outside of the Star Chamber. Americans were hungry for them. By 1850, Mammoth Cave was already a major tourist destination. When the

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\(^{76}\)Richardson calls this Emerson’s “bedrock conviction” (*Mind on Fire* 195).
cave was depicted in a moving panorama by George Brewer—a recognition of its celebrity—the pamphlet accompanying the panorama referred to the display as a “great national production.”

The region around the cave also became part of a national spectacle—on a number of levels. The guides who led the crowds through the cave system were slaves owned by the cave’s proprietor or slaves who had been rented from slaveholders in other counties. Less than three years before Emerson’s visit to Mammoth Cave, local slave-runners had made it a habit to visit Bourbon County, Kentucky, about 180 miles from the cave system, to take enslaved men and women back with them to free territory in Cass County, Michigan. In August of 1847, a group of thirteen frustrated slaveholders joined together to retrieve their slaves rumored to be living among the Quakers in Cass County—operating under the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act still on the books, which guaranteed a slaveholder the right to recover lost property. The planters, possible friends of Senator Henry Clay (champion of what was soon to become the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act), were brought to trial in Cass County, where the court ruled against them. When they returned in 1849 to sue the slave-runners for the value of their property, the case was ultimately declared a mistrial. All other similar cases brought by Kentucky planters were dismissed; no one was compensated. The scenario infuriated southern slave holders and reinitiated calls to pass the new 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, which demanded that all runaway slaves be captured and returned to their owners.

If “pretensions of property [were] fading” inside Mammoth Cave, they were undeniably alive and unsettled outside of it. “Illusions” charges Americans with the task of either thinking

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77 Description of the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, the Niagara River and falls, and the falls in summer and winter; the prairies, or life in the west, Fairmount water works and scenes on the Schuykill: to illustrate Brewer’s panorama (Boston: J.M. Hewes and Co., 1850), 4.

78 EL 1121. Ironically, the enslaved tour guides who knew the cave system were in a unique position of authority in relation to the disoriented visitors. For more on how typical power relations were subverted inside Mammoth Cave, see Peter West’s “Trying the Dark: Mammoth Cave and the Racial Imagination, 1839-1869” (Southern Spaces, 9 February 2010: http://www.southernspaces.org/2010/trying-dark-mammoth-cave-and-racial-imagination-1839-
through visual spectacles or being thought by them. For Emerson, Mammoth Cave was a reminder of how visual tropes stimulated the intellect into a place of productive uncertainty. At the same time, the popular circulation of new visual technologies and materials also offered a pre-determined and self-assured path to “fixing” one’s fortune through celebrating every man’s access to a static image of nature’s absoluteness.

1869). The piece is illustrated with multiple engravings and stereographs of the cave system. For more on the raids by Kentucky slave owners, see Benjamin C. Wilson’s “Kentucky kidnappers, fugitives, and abolitionists in Antebellum Cass Country, Michigan” in Michigan History (Vol. 6.4, 1976): 339-58.
By the last third of the century, Americans were so familiar with their nation’s “picturesqueness” that it was a discourse onto which could be grafted an emergent set of values and a testing ground through which the many discomforts and stresses of the principle of “unity amid multiplicity” could be navigated (or, at times, avoided). The nation would have to display to itself the strength of its will to progress by replaying the growth it had experienced since its founding and tying that progress to a “natural” unity that harmonized the geographical, economic, and social variety of the nation, which is where picturesque language and principles proved malleable and useful. In this chapter, I offer a comparison of how picturesque discourse about American scenery (and, by association, American social and political ideals) was called upon before the Civil War versus after it. Whereas in England landowners adopted picturesque principles to create a rationale for safeguarding private property, in America—particularly during Reconstruction—adopting a picturesque sensibility on a national scale meant making an argument for the ways particular cities or regions were essential to composing a “picture” of the whole nation, as I will illustrate in the second half of this chapter through Edward Strahan’s viewbook, *A Century After: Picturesque Glimpses of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania* (1875). Moreover, what made the nineteenth-century American circulation of picturesque principles unique in comparison to their use in a late-eighteenth-century British setting was that American picturesqueness capitalized on the pedagogical potential of the nation’s illustrated print culture and innovations in visual technology in ways that were only beginning to be possible when Gilpin published *An Essay on the Picturesque* and *An Essay on Prints* (1768, 1802). While
during the first half of the century views of American scenery were once available only for those who could afford the financial expenses and personal risks of travel, the genre of picturesque viewbooks that began to flourish in the 1850s, and expanded further still in the 1870s, contained prints that subscribers could cut out and hang on their parlor walls. Thus both abstracted picturesque ideals and the tangible product of the picturesque viewbook were brought into circulation before the war and then called upon to animate and navigate the challenges of national state formation after it. From the early 1850s through the nation’s centennial in 1876, Americans progressed from taking pleasure in the representation of picturesque spaces to understanding their present and their past through what I call “picturesque time.”

**Armchair Tours, Moving Panoramas, and Dissolving Views in Antebellum America: Literary Technologies and the Adaptability of Picturesque Genres**

By the middle of the century, the picturesque, as a theory and a practice, had formalized the American viewer’s relationship to the landscape in a few significant ways. First, the attempt to extend the appealing notion of “picturesque beauty” to multiple regions of the nation—the Northeast, the South, and the West—placed both “untouched” territories and developed seaside towns into the same touring books. Increasingly, the aesthetic “fit” of man-made structures in regions previously overrun by nature came to be an accepted part of the landscape; emblems of industry were taken as “natural” objects. The guiding ethos expressed in the prefaces of viewbooks was that the depicted landscape was selected not only because of its varied and interesting surface features but because it had some underlying material significance; beneath overgrown forests might lie the coal beds and iron mines that kept cities fueled and supported the networks of railroads that were spreading across the country. While Gilpin had warned that convenience and beauty should not be confounded, that is precisely what the American picturesque ideal was able to achieve.
In popular picturesque discourse, usefulness and beauty were presented as derived from one mold. Moreover, American publishers had learned to capitalize on the pedagogical possibilities of a concept of picturesque taste: while the term picturesque referred largely to a set of surface features—and, even then, not always a consistent set—it summoned a viewer to understand his or her individual experiences of perception and discovery as part of the project of formulating a national self-image; if the individual knew “how to see,” he or she could contribute to cultivating a more refined taste for scenery on a national scale. Importantly, while the American engagement with picturesque aesthetics maintained roots in British debates about taste, by the time Americans were obsessing over their country’s landscape in the 1850s, the aesthetic legitimacy of the picturesque was already certified. Adding to a pre-established discourse the growing set of available illustrations, largely wood and steel engravings, that depicted American progress, the picturesque transformed from an aesthetic theory to a replicable method, offering the nation a way to understand its achievements as self-evident truths.

One precursor to the more elaborately illustrated viewbooks of the 1870s was the immensely popular *Home-Book of the Picturesque* (1852). The opening essay of that volume, “Mind and Scenery,” by the preacher E.L. Magoon, lays out a detailed religious and aesthetic treatise with the following aims: to demonstrate that “first…what is most abundant in nature is most ennobling in its effects”; “secondly, that the best minds are most influenced by natural excellence; and, “thirdly, how character, as stamped on literature, has ever been toned by the predominant characteristics of native scenery.” Magoon’s primary motive is to express the way a relationship with nature offers a connection with the nobility of classical antiquity and the way such a relationship provides a foundation for religious feeling; he leaves the discussion of American scenery and art, he says, to the other essays in the volume. Yet Magoon is unable to
illustrate the immediacy of the relationship between mind and nature, without assembling a
rhetoric filled with references to the landscapes of Claude and Gainsborough as well as with
comparisons to more popular visual media: “Our lower nature is first susceptible to impression;
and from this source, at a very early period, influences arise which, when once stereotyped upon
the soul, are ineffaceable forever.” “Happy they who are located in the true infant-school of God
and Nature; on whom this grand moving panorama sheds all its changing lights, and bestows all
its successive scenes.” “The magnificence thus poured on the mind naturally imbues its faculties,
and will be reproduced in living speech, or forever glow from a graphic pen” (Magoon 16, 2, 12,
36, with my emphasis). These media effects all work to enable a bird’s eye view, the transporting
of “our mind…if not our person, to other climes”:

But if we would behold at once combined the definite beauty, shapely vastness,
instantaneously recognized unity, and cheerful grandeur, most characteristic of the
scenery, literature, and art of an immortal land, let us for a moment glance at the
magnificent panorama, as seen from the lofty terrace through the golden-hued colonnades
of the Parthenon. Linger here a while till the eye becomes accustomed to the scene, and
imagination is able to refit the mutilated forms, and you will easily understand the spirit
of the old religion, and its consecrated works. (35)

In effect, Magoon offers a preliminary blessing (or, better, an omen) that the picturesque
depictions of America that will follow should be read as part of an extended, trans-historical
panorama. Magoon’s final sentences elide any reference to actual American landscapes in order
to celebrate a noble picturesque that paints America as a direct descendent of European virtues:
“The enthusiastic painter, Gainsborough, exclaimed on his death bed, —‘We are all going to
heaven, and Vandyke will be of the party.’ May the reader be imbued with something more
divine than mere taste, that he may survive anguish or ecstasy in the energies of faith; and, soaring amid the infinite glories of the universe, at each remove imbibing majestic charms of every hue and form, may he forever realize the high significance of our theme” (48). That theme is the way nature ennobles the mind. Yet it does not do so directly but by lingering before “a magnificent panorama” that lends imaginative power through the production of a visual prospect. In other words, the representation across the panorama that allows a viewer to recognize nature’s unity is part of the rhetoric and the imagined experience of “consecration.” Asking viewers to imagine themselves within the broader panorama invites them into what I will call picturesque time.

The essay that follows E.L. Magoon’s “Mind and Scenery” in Home-Book of the Picturesque is Susan Fenimore Cooper’s “A Dissolving View,” in which Cooper’s narrator muses on the glory of an American landscape infused with the hues and tints of October as autumnal impressions wash over her like a day-dream. Referring to a prospect as a “dissolving view” was a common tendency, usually denoting an effect that resembled the hazy painted atmospheres of Claudian vistas. In the essay, Cooper’s narrator reiterates what was generally accepted to be the appeal of the painted dissolving views that blurred boundaries between objects and the atmosphere: they revealed “the comparative relations which the different objects bear to each other…with a beautiful accuracy wanting in a clearer atmosphere” (80). When the Home-book was published, “dissolving views” also connoted the effect created when two or more magic lantern slides were either projected through a bi-unial lantern (with two lenses) or when they were moved back and forth across a dual lantern projector; one image transformed seamlessly into another, often a dayscape into a nightscape or, as Cooper enacts in her essay, a summer scene into an autumnal one. By the time Cooper was writing, these dissolving views
were already replacing the moving panorama as a popular form of entertainment. By reflecting on the comparative relations that such views illustrate, Cooper’s narrator suggests, we can also observe America’s “social spirit” and the way the presence of populated towns has transformed and improved the Edenic landscape of New England, “giv[ing] life and spirit to the garden.”

When one looks on such a scene through the haziness of autumn with the eye of a painter, she adds, one sees deeply into the picture, its brilliance amplified by the moral of the gentle and subtle “improving hand” of man. As with Magoon’s message, extolling the natural virtues of visual media such as dissolving views provided a visual template for the “naturalness” of a desired social or industrial change, remediating the reality of human interference and the human transformation of the landscape to make the process evoke interest and stand up to scrutiny as acceptably and appropriately “picturesque.”

Yet, interestingly, Cooper’s narrator also emphasizes both the immediacy and the fragility of the cultivated landscape. Modern culture is like “the grand Palace of Glass, now standing in London,” she says, referring to the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition: “in a few hours [it could] be utterly razed” (89). This sense that the labor that produced picturesque views had no staying power and the fear that it might be forgotten not long after one had caught a satisfying “glimpse” of it are unique features of the nineteenth-century American picturesque tradition. To live in picturesque time is to take in sweeping views of progress, but only briefly, “in glimpses,” in order to acclimate it with a previous pastoral ideal. “Look at our light suspension bridges,

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80 Cooperstown, for instance, illustrates the harmonious judgment and good sense that result when man is in the right relationship with nature, she insists. Too much ornamentation (“when [man] assumes the character of creator, and piles you up hills, pumps you up a river, scatters stones, or sprinkles cascades”) is unwelcome, yet “a winding road climbing the hill-side, the cheerful village on the bank of the stream, give a higher additional interest to the view” (Home-book 82).
81 One of the most significant studies on the way popular sentimental pastoralism operates as a response to the clash between nature and industrial culture is still Leo Marx’s The Machine in the Garden (Oxford: Oxford UP: 1964).
marvelous as they are, how soon they could be destroyed; look at our railways, at our ships and manufactories moved by steam; look at the marvelous electric telegraph, at the wonders Daguerre has showed us—look, in fact, at any of the most peculiar and remarkable works of the age, and see how speedily all traces of them could be removed,” Cooper’s narrator exclaims. The last holdout would be the art of printing, she says. Remove that and “the chief proofs that eastern civilization had once passed over this country would then be found in the mingled vegetation…ay, the very weeds of the old world” (90). Perched on a branch above the valley of Cooperstown, the narrator then waves a sprig of witch hazel and makes Cooperstown disappear, replacing it with an old feudal town. The difference between an American landscape and a European one, Cooper insists, is that there is “no blending of the old and the new” in America. “[T]here is nothing old among us…[W]e are the reverse of conservators…We are the borderers of civilization in America, but borderers of the nineteenth century, when all distances are lessened, whether moral or physical” (89). When tied to the rhetoric of spiritual consecration, Magoon’s panorama reinforces expectations of omnipotence and timelessness. Yet by invoking dissolving views to illustrate Cooperstown’s separation from the feudal towns of Europe, Cooper expresses uneasiness about the vulnerability that accompanies industrial progress even as she celebrates change. The inconsistencies in the treatment of picturesqueness across Magoon’s and Cooper’s respective essays are rooted in the visual technologies they select to present a “picture”

82 “In an earlier state of geological science than our own, the bending of a witch-hazel wand was sagely considered to be a better indication of the presence of precious metal than the mixture of quartz rock with granitic rock, or the character of silver-sand in the pan-ful; and amateur wizards, in those times of robust faith, did actually go plodding about with their harmless switches, alike over sandstone and limestone, igneous and sedimentary formations, rocks made of seashells and rocks made of slate, waiting until the hazel should twist and reveal the mine” (A Century After 51).

83 As Duncan Faherty has observed, the “ancient coins” and “feudal castles” of the civilization that appear in Cooperstown’s place indicate that the relationship between the imagined European town’s occupants and their environment is “predetermined”; “Unlike the less-ordered American scene, the social roles of European are always already fixed” (122). See “The Borderers of Civilization: Susan Fenimore Cooper’s View of American Development” in Susan Fenimore Cooper, New Essays on Rural Hours and Other Writings, Eds. Rochelle Johnson and Daniel Patterson. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 2001: 109-126.
of the passage of time: the all-encompassing view of Magoon’s panorama gives way in Cooper’s essay to other visual allusions (and illusions) that would describe the challenge of trying to offer a unified picture of a country that, by the second half of the century, seemed increasingly removed from the feudal nobility of the European picturesque ideal.

In the 1830s, a collection of steel engravings proposed as a series of ten sets by Asher Durand after paintings by himself, Cole, and other notable artists did not have enough support to justify making more than the first set. British artists who had created successful viewbooks at home crossed the Atlantic to recreate their projects with American scenes, but were also met with little success. By the 1850s, however, a canon of American publications of American scenery was beginning to form; many of them reproduced the works of leading landscape painters and reused plates from massive illustrated texts such as *Meyer’s Universum*, which included steel engravings of views from all over the world and met with successful sales in America and in Europe.84 These viewbooks were conglomerates of a few antecedent genres: the emblem book, which earlier in the century preached moral lessons through a combination of explications of bible verses and poetry illustrated by crude woodcuts, the advice manual, and the illustrated tour guide.85 When considering the picturesque viewbook as a genre in this chapter, I will evaluate it through the ways it displays the behavior of genre systems, which critics describe as structured through six particular tendencies.86

First, genres have *socially recognized purposes*: viewbooks explicated ideas about the characteristics of truth and beauty through art with the aim of fostering popular moral action. The

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85Faherty has noted that the rise of the picturesque home-book should be considered as part of the surge in advice manuals and conduct guides published in America in the 1830s, as these genres came to indicate “a cultural desire for instruction on matters of identity formation” (113). See also Karen Haltunan’s *Confidence Men and Painted Women*.
86Here I am following a structure for investigating genre systems outlined by JoAnne Yates and Wanda Orlikowski in “Genre Systems: Chronos and Kairos in Communicative Interaction” (2002).
artist and the publisher of the viewbook saw themselves as engaged in work of unique moral import.\textsuperscript{87} After the Civil War, I will argue, this publically recognized purpose expands to include the institutionalization of a narrative about American progress, interweaving a more explicit discussion of the practices of social life into observations about scenery. Secondly, the viewbook genre has certain norms for content and expectations about “uptake” (which genre theorist Anis Bawarshi defines as the “learned recognitions of significance that over time and in particular contexts become habitual”).\textsuperscript{88} For example, the typical subtitle that appeared on many viewbooks was that scenes were “delineated across pen and pencil;” the illustrated tour guide was already an established genre in Europe, and it shaped American audiences’ expectations that the domestic viewbook’s message would be delivered through both text and image.\textsuperscript{89} Beyond their display of hybrid image-textual narratives, American viewbooks often covered similar touring routes: Niagara Falls, the Alleghenies, and St. Augustine were common destinations. Thirdly, genres have recognizable features. In the nineteenth-century domestic viewbook, wood and steel engravings (rather than etchings or watercolour landscapes) were used generously. Earlier vistas of European landscapes presented through masses of light and shade seemed insufficient to render the level of detail desired and were replaced by engravings that could better

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\textsuperscript{87}Rainey 7, 26. “Unlike English travellers who did not expect their servants to share their response to scenery, Americans tended to believe that this appreciation could be taught and would benefit all, both culturally and spiritually,” Rainey explains (27).

\textsuperscript{88}Bawarshi, Anis. Taking up Language Differences in Composition. \textit{College English} 68.6 (2006): 653.

\textsuperscript{89}This phrase was first used in William Combe’s book-length verse satire, \textit{The Tour of the Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque} (1812): “I’ll make a TOUR—and then I’ll WRITE IT,” the doctor exclaims. “You well know what my pen can do, and I’ll employ a pencil too:--/I’ll ride and write, and sketch and print/And thus create a real mint;/I’ll prose it hear, I’ll verse it there, And picturesque it ev’ry where.” The truth beneath Combe’s parody was that the fullness of picturesque syntax and signification required that it operate across picture and text; in other words, the picturesque allegiance to multiplicity and variety applied not only to the visual grammar but to the multiplication of mediums, establishing a principle of form that would not let a viewer rest in a single picture or a single prose description merely. Thus, seeing “picturesquely” placed an intellectually strenuous demand on readers and viewers; it required a discipline that encouraged one to meditate on a scene until it became beautiful, a discipline, as one writer of a mid-19th century picturesque tourbook wrote, “that would lead into pleasure” (Combe 6-7, Hanlon 88). In short, the picturesque tourist was set up for an experience that was, as I will discuss in chapter five in relation to Louis Lambert Strether’s errand to Europe, “out of proportion with his adventures.”
show the characteristics of a particular locale. Fourthly, genres establish *expectations about participants* involved in types of communicative actions and interactions. The American viewbook was initially grounded in a popular belief in what Louis Agassiz had called “sermons in stones;” the production and consumption of viewbooks was motivated by discovering evidence of God, delivering the intangible imprint of divine creation through the literal imprint of the engravings, and allowing readers to experience the reverence such a discovery could create. Gradually, the argument from creation that overlapped with viewbook projects was replaced by a more vaguely romantic notion that such scenes would allow viewers to look beyond the surface of the sensible world and surrender to a divine intuition that ran deeper than reason (Rainey 91). Fifthly, genre systems shape and are subject to *locational expectations*. As I have mentioned, while the early treatments in the viewbooks of the 1850s gave little attention to the South and the West, after the devastation of the Civil War and with the rise of a railroad network, there was a demand to see the unfamiliar features of American scenery, especially the Southern region from which the rest of the nation had been detached. Artists were dispatched to territory that appeared to still be a wilderness, inhabited only by Native American tribes whom they feared might be violent; sometimes they were forced to take photographs of scenes and create drawings from them later because it was too dangerous to linger in an area. By the late 1870s, the incredible success of George Appleton and Company’s *Picturesque America* (1872)—a serialized subscription book, sales for which reached $2.4 million by 1880—also paved the way for international viewbooks by American artists and writers.90 Appleton and Company sent artists off to create prints for *Picturesque Europe* (1877) and *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai, and Egypt* (1881-83), stretching the locational boundaries of the genre to hold the interest of its

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90Beginning in 1870, it was published twice a month over the course of two years in forty-eight fascicles that could be bound in accordance with the subscriber’s personal taste (Rainey xv).
subscribers. Lastly, genres operate through *temporal expectations* (sequencing, as well as pacing or timing). Viewbooks treated readers as if they were actually on a “tour” of the landscape, though the tours were also posed as imaginary journeys in which the narrator asked the viewer to accompany him or her as they soared over diverse locales and landed in the middle of them in a series of pit stops. The picturesque had long been associated with an aesthetic mode that fostered curiosity and interest. However, establishing such curiosity through the two-dimensional engravings of the viewbook often relied upon explicitly connecting a present scene to the past through the narrative text, either because it resembled some ancient ruin or classical landscape or because historical events had taken place in that location that the editors felt could (or *should*) have an impact on their audience’s understanding of the gradual development of the nation. In what follows, I explore this last feature, the temporal expectations both enacted and shaped by the genre of the picturesque viewbook, in more depth.92

**In the Name of Progress**

Following the Civil War—when publication efforts, especially of expensive view books, had been brought to a near halt—picturesque visual rhetoric would be resurrected with a new sense of purpose: to aid in the process of forming a national state during Reconstruction by insisting upon the *natural* unity of the nation’s separate parts. As Eric Foner has written, the war “consolidated the national state while identifying that state, via emancipation, with the interests of humanity in general, and, more prosaically, with a coalition of diverse groups and classes.” Yet establishing a conception of a national state in the popular imagination also meant a necessary “clas[h] with cherished traditions of local autonomy and cultural diversity” (29-30).

Picturesque discourse and representation, then, served as what genre theorists call an “available

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91See Rainey 274-83 for a fuller range of publications that used *Picturesque America* as their model.
92Yates and Orlikowski 109, 110. Mikhail Bakhtin sees genre systems as “chronotopic,” or part of a space-time continuum.
“typification” for the political aims of Reconstruction, a trope that suggested the “natural variety” of the nation but that also belied the country’s confusion over exactly how much variety or heterogeneity was desired in the social and economic landscape of a single country.

These conditions had a direct impact on the way the nation’s robust industrial life was framed and put on display. On March 3, 1871, the United States Congress approved an act calling for “an Exhibition of American and Foreign Arts, Products, and Manufactures” to celebrate the upcoming centennial of American independence. The act created a representative body consisting of one delegate and one alternate from each state and territory, which would be responsible for the design of the exhibition and became known as the United States Centennial Commission (USCC). By its fifth meeting, the USCC had chosen the site for the exhibition fairgrounds in Philadelphia—the picturesque Fairmount Park—and provided Congress with building plans, as well as a plan for receiving and classifying the goods on display. Fairmount Park was, at the time, the largest public park in the country, occupying 2,740 acres on both sides of the Schuylkill River and its tributary, Wissahickon Creek. The topography of the ground was also significant because it allowed for the construction of more than one exhibition building. In total, the exhibition consisted of five main display buildings, seventeen state buildings, and nine foreign government buildings. The Centennial also inspired a counterculture: the tenderloin atmosphere of the “Centennial City” that appeared across from the Main Building on Elm Avenue. The Centennial City was a shantytown with makeshift establishments created out of wood and canvas—restaurants, small hotels, beer-gardens, ice-cream saloons, and small shows

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“sprung up as if by magic”; it was a breeding ground for the poverty-stricken, the homeless, the drunk, and otherwise incapacitated “pests and nuisances.”

Despite evidence to the contrary that visitors might find in Centennial City, J.S. Ingram, one of the chroniclers of the Centennial, insisted that, “Progress is the law of life and Exhibitions, at once the outcome and the forebears of that very progress, have experienced its influence and have in turn reacted on it.” The Centennial provided a diversion from government corruption, financial and mercantile collapse, and general industrial discontent. The USCC and its supporters also recognized a number of higher aims for the exhibition. William Biggler, a former governor and Senator from Pennsylvania, assured the commission that “the proposed gathering of the people together from all sections commingling and coming together with their hearts naturally open to the best impressions, cannot fail to have the happiest influence upon the relations existing between the States and the people” (Rydell 19). The government exhibition—a special display that had been created through an executive order from President Grant—was a veritable “multum in parvo,” the New York Times reported on March 29, 1876. “In this comparatively small building will be shown the grandeur and extent of those resources, which in spite of taxation and depression will sooner or later lift the nation from its slough of despond [following the Panic of 1873], and place it at the head of the phalanx of progress” (Rydell 33). All were invited and some manufacturers even paid for their workers and their families to attend. One of the most notable exhibits at the Centennial was a nine-foot-tall working model of George Washington’s tomb. Through automated controls, Washington would

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routinely “rise from the dead” as toy soldiers surrounding him kept guard and saluted. As Robert Rydell has noted, the exhibit displayed “less than subtly” that “America’s own glorious history…approved of America’s present state and its plans for greatness” (35).

An American citizenry that, for decades, had been educated about the exceptional scenery and natural resources their country had to offer, was well-primed to take in the lessons of an event like the Philadelphia Centennial. Picturesque viewbooks and memorial works took on a particularly significant educational function leading up to the celebration. The elaborately illustrated *Picturesque America* (1872, 1874), edited by William Cullen Bryant, had certified beyond dispute that America had scenery that qualified as “picturesque.” While the work was initially published in installments in *Appleton’s Journal*, one specially bound volume was created to be placed on display as part of the publishers’ exhibition in the Main Building (Rainey 277). “Ignoring the economic recession and growing social problems of the early 1870s while stressing links with the picturesque tradition and continuity rather than change, *Picturesque America* presented a wide range of reasons for celebrating American landscape—from finding ‘sermons in stones’ to anticipating the extraction and use of rich natural resources,” Sue Rainey notes (Rainey xiv-xv). The project was justified through the popular rhetoric of transparency across mind, art, and nature that had taken shape by mid-century and that turned morality and aesthetics into mirrored reflections of each other: “The world is becoming morally better, while it is becoming physically more beautiful and perfect,” *Appleton’s Journal* reported on December 18, 1869 (Rainey 567).

*A Century After*

In 1875, in anticipation of the fact that Philadelphia would serve as the site for the exhibition, Edward Strahan, a pseudonym for the art critic Earl Shinn, made his own contribution
to the domestic viewbook genre when he published *A Century After: Picturesque Glimpses of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania including Fairmount, the Wissahickon, and other romantic localities, with the cities and landscapes of the state. A Pictorial Representation of Scenery, Architecture, Life, Manners and Character* with the Philadelphia publishers Allen, Lane & Scott and J.W. Lauderbach. Shinn had been born in Philadelphia in the late 1830s to devout Quakers, Sarah Comfort and Earl Shinn, the secretary of the local Bricklayers’ Society. He used a pseudonym in order to avoid the tracing of his professional work back to his parents, who denounced the visual arts. Shinn helped to found the Philadelphia Sketch Club in 1860, an organization for local artists that later claimed prominent members such as Thomas Moran, Thomas Eakins, and Joseph Pennell (who illustrated Henry James’s *English Hours*). After Shinn’s parents died in 1866, he decided to move to Paris to study art, alongside Eakins and other young American talents. By 1871, upon returning to America and moving to New York, he began contributing regularly to *Lippincott’s Magazine*, the *Art Amateur*, and the *New York Evening Post*, submitting criticism and—even more frequently—anonymous puff pieces.

Despite the elaborate textual narrative Shinn wrote for *A Century After*, he identified his projects as art books and his title and approach to describing the scenery of scenic areas of Pennsylvania and Philadelphia marks the book as part of the domestic viewbook genre.96

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96 Two editions of *Picturesque Glimpses* were published by Allen, Lane & Scott and J.W. Lauderbach: the edition published in 1875 is a bound book while the 1895 edition, published nine years after Shinn’s death, is a pamphlet issued in 15 parts at the cost of 50 cents each. While I only have access to the third installment of the pamphlet—the section beginning with a tour of Fairmount Park and ending with a tour of Atlantic City—the internal contents and the pagination across the editions were identical. While the bound edition makes it impossible to ignore the prominence of the written history Shinn contributed and suggests an expectation that a reader will proceed through the book by both reading the textual narrative and looking at the pictures, the synopsis on the back of the pamphlet version aims to include the text as part of an overall “pictorial representation,” or, at best, an “entertaining” afterthought: “This imperial work, now being issued after years of careful preparation, will consist of abundant and MAGNIFICENT VIEWS completely illustrating Philadelphia and its surroundings, and the finest Scenery and most interesting Cities and Towns of Pennsylvania, with copious and entertaining descriptive letter-press [...] The publishers have the greatest gratification in thus inaugurating the ADEQUATE ILLUSTRATION OF AMERICAN METROPOLITAN LIFE [...] The Engravings, executed on wood, with the highest possible finish, are the most costly that have ever been made. They will be lavishly introduced through the text and printed in the
However, his selection of engravings (given the level of detail they display, they were probably steel engravings) also points to the way he was digressing from the pre-established norms of the genre as it was conceived by the Appleton firm and the *Picturesque America* circle of writers and artists. *Picturesque Glimpses* presents a historical retrospective of key events that took place around Pennsylvania from the Revolution through the Centennial. Shinn’s narrative localizes scenic views: the tour begins at Independence Hall (the site selected in 1682 for the nation’s first capital was, Shinn writes, “a picturesque bluff covered with pine-trees”), then brings the tourist deep into Pennsylvania for a more intimate view (places like, Lover’s Leap, in Fairmount Park, for example, are not for those “who like to ‘do’ the picturesque easily”) (9, 224). The tour balances this tendency to privatize the experience by drawing the explorer inward with moments in which it projects the state’s more notable locales and features to the nation, commenting on important military feats that have unfolded in areas such as Fairmount Park, Laurel Hill, and stretches of the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. As I will say more about shortly, Shinn’s book is also unique within the viewbook genre in its emphasis on local social life and commerce amid discussions of scenery and architecture. The implicit design of the book, with its visual emphasis on the uses of open, public space, reminds readers of the essential role that Pennsylvania, as an individual state, played in the rebuilding the nation. Pennsylvania is a whole unto itself, the tour suggests; it has made the progress celebrated at the Centennial possible.

As Pennsylvania’s main natural resources are iron and coal, it is “especially appropriate,” Shinn notes, that “the state which confers [on the nation] the real benefits of opulence,” is depicted alongside Philadelphia, “the City which created the ideal of Independence.” “These riches, discovered long after that Independence whose declaration is the pride of Philadelphia, most brilliant and careful manner, on heavy, extra-calendered, toned paper. The whole work will be a monument of American Art, Skill, and Thoroughness.” See Rainey on the way Appleton and Company also claimed *Picturesque America* as a “monument.”
came in like a dowry offered by Nature, expressly that the city, already most precious to the
nation from moral considerations, should be fitly furnished with material to maintain its
dignity.97 Shinn’s preface begins by announcing the pedagogical aims of the text in a way that
recalls Magoon’s “Mind and Scenery”: “This work explains its own plan, with the best
elocuence of pen and pencil; and, like the City and Region to which it is dedicated, is a self-
demonstrating Panorama” (7). As a post-bellum picturesque viewbook, *Picturesque Glimpses*
still celebrates the prophetic imaginings of an American Eden, yet with a clearly established—or
*remedial*—end: the views must frame the landscape in a way that justifies the industrial
productivity of the state and the nation. To offer a “picturesque glimpse,” in other words, meant
establishing a unit of space-time in which a viewer could begin to see a harmony in the
seemingly divergent celebrations of economic productivity and natural beauty. Shinn concludes
his preface by heralding the aims of the exhibition that would be unveiled the following year:

The metropolitan character and productive arts of Philadelphia; its patriotic position in
reviving the American commercial marine destroyed in the late war, by the equipment of
a fleet of European steamers; its importance as a nucleus of railways which connect the
whole country together; its world-famous colleges, whence have sprung Schools of Law
and Medicine that lead all others on the continent; these, with other features which give it
intellectual or physical importance, will be portrayed and described. Unique as this
Manufacturing Centre of a free Commonwealth is on the globe to-day or in all past time,
the moment has come to fix its image in the eyes of the people. With its almost complete
two centuries of existence and its hundred years of independence, it is now ready to

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97 *Century* 7. As William P. Blake, the primary architect for the Philadelphia Centennial, told the *New York Times*, the
exhibition displays should begin with untouched raw animal, vegetable, and mineral materials and progressing
through “objects that illustrat[e] the improvement of the physical, intellectual, and moral conditions of man”
(Gilberti).

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receive the homage of its children who love it, in the shape of a descriptive and pictorial portrait.” (8, my emphasis)

The possibility of “fixing an image” of unity amid multiplicity in order to present Philadelphia—hard hit by the Panic of 1873—as the central node in a broad network of progress, is testament to the visual and vernacular power the picturesque mode still possessed.98

Shinn observes that Philadelphia has the unique distinction of being surrounded by wildness even as it serves as a center of industry. He treats public parks like Fairmount as representative of the restorative virtues of nature, and thus stresses the importance of equal access to them. (“Men cannot be completely developed in cities,” he insists (109).) Between where the tour begins (in the crowded space of Independence Hall) and where it concludes (amid the crowds at the Centennial), it returns to the grounds of Fairmount Park four times. Shinn offers this justification for the repetition:

Fairmount Park is a text from which many fruitful discourses might be preached. It suggests the feeling which it stimulates,—love of nature, and which, if not indirectly the growth of the new world, is certainly not indigenous to the old world and the old time. The ancients do not appear to have cared for nature, or to have scrutinized it with observant eyes. They were familiar with its great facts,—day, night, the sky, the sea, the sun, moon, and stars,—but nothing else. They characterized them by the simplest adjectives—the bright day, the dark night, the blue sky, the gray sea. They saw what they could not help seeing, but no more. They noticed the obvious: the subtle, the poetic, the spiritual escaped them. They were not touched to fine issues […] natural description is of modern origin. (106-07)

98Shinn likely recognized that the city had much to prove to the rest of the country as well. It was a major Philadelphia investment firm, Jay Cooke and Co., which sparked the recent crisis when it declared bankruptcy on September 18, 1873.
Thus, picturesque time unfolds in and through language that, as Magoon suggested, “consecrates” both mind and scenery. The passage swells with Romantic enthusiasm as Shinn quotes lines from “Tintern Abbey,”

[The new world] bore the same relationship to the old world that a park does to a city: it was the park of the earth. The knowledge of this fact, which does not present itself at first as knowledge but as belief,—sensation that precedes thought,—the strange intelligence that gropes towards us in darkness and embraces us in light,— “Felt in the blood and felt along the heart”—the invisible presence of nature haunted the whole continent. Centuries have passed,—the woods have been felled, towns and cities have risen like exhalations, rivers and lakes are whitened with sails, the land is covered with a net-work of iron,—yet it has not vanished. Parks like Fairmount are not needed to teach us this, for, go where we will, the new world is a new world still.

The park is both outward scene and inner screen. It absorbs the “impressions” humans have left in their wake and harmonizes them with the cycles of nature. “Nature has done everything here and man nothing, or if anything, it was so long ago that nature has reclaimed it,” Shinn insists.

A happy curiosity possesses the least curious. Everything is worth studying. There is a glamour over familiar objects, even those in which the handiwork of man is strikingly conspicuous, such as the noble bridges which span the Schuylkill, and are as much a part of Fairmount as if the unseen forces of nature had stretched them from bank to bank. There are crowds there, perhaps,—on the Girard Avenue Bridge an endless procession of figures, and on the Connecting Bridge a smoky locomotive tearing across the long train of cars,—but somehow they do not disturb the sylvan beauty of the park. They do not people it, as they come and go; they merely add to the picturesqueness. They animate it as
figures do a landscape in which they are introduced. The scream of the locomotive is lost in the distance, like the cry of a gull on the shore, or the caw of a crow in the woods. (my emphasis)

The leveling of nature, human figures, and railroads tearing across bridges through the sweeping ideal of “curiosity” and through the “glamour” of “familiar objects” offers a prime example of the work of picturesque remediation. All elements in the scene will be resolved into a unified whole in keeping with the pre-determined ideal of industrial progress. Shinn continues,

The glimpse of the park—for it is little more which one catches as he is whirled across the bridge—is striking enough to be remembered by a lover of the picturesque. Before he is aware, the train in which he is seated is no longer on the solid earth, but, without having risen, is hurrying rapidly over it. The streets through which he is passing just now have disappeared, and he is above a beautiful river. He looks down a moment on its waters as they pursue their journey to the sea, and tries to forget, if he is timid and sensitive, the height at which he is. He lifts his eye and takes in at a glance the broad sweep of the landscape, the shining river and its wooded bank, the white clouds and the blue sky. He takes it all in as a bird might. (111)

Shinn’s images, including those on the book’s title page (Figure 3), are notable for the way they combine frames and superimpose views on each other (a process made possible by the improvement in wood engraving tools by the mid-1870s). Yet the narrative engrafts the element of time onto the picture. If Cooper’s “dissolving view” dramatized the jarring shift between industrial American town and feudal European landscape, Shinn has smoothed the transition between views through both his illustrations and his narrative. He still offers only a “glimpse” of progress but a glimpse in which land and industry are integrated into a unified whole.
Ruined Vistas

A convincing sense of integration was harder to achieve in sections of *A Century After* that focused on social life rather than landscape features. As much as Shinn’s book arose out of the antebellum genres of the home-book and the advice manual, it also registers what had become the central problem of Reconstruction, especially for Northern reformers: how could the nation reconcile the cherished value of “private property” with the ideal of political democracy? (Foner 519). Antebellum picturesque viewbooks avoided mixing representations of nature with discussions of capital, yet Shinn attempts to write across them. This leads to a few extended asides in the narrative that display Shinn’s narrator’s uncomfortable transition from using the principle of mixture to justify the marks of industry in nature to using it to justify the mixing of populations. In one of the earlier stops at Fairmount Park, when encountering a crowd strolling through the fairgrounds, the narrator adopts a Whitmanesque reverence for deeply-seated familiarity and kinship between people:

Let us say that the crowded drive is a picture, and that the noise of the rolling wheel is music, and get all the good we can out of them. There is something imposing in a multitude, something rhythmical and noble and magnificent,—like the unceasing flow of a great river, or the everlasting movement of the ocean. Not to consider it too curiously, however, there is another and better reason why we should be interested in a multitude, and that is because it consists of men and women like ourselves. ‘I am a man,’ the old philosopher reasoned, ‘and what relates to man relates to me.’ Poets like Byron deny this, but Shakespeare never. “One touch of nature makes the world kin.” It may be a noble action, a pathetic poem, the smile of a child, or it may be, as here, thousands of happy human beings. (112)
As for the wealthy townspeople in the crowd who are a class above the onlookers and armchair tourists, Shinn’s narrator discourages a reactionary critique, a derision for “Vanity Fair airing itself out.” “[T]he wiser way would be to admire [the scene], as one would a brilliant procession of which he was merely a spectator. We cannot all be what we would like to be, nor have what we would like to have, but we can abstain from sneering at those who are more fortunate than ourselves. We can do better than that—we can enjoy what they are, and do. We can make them minister to the sense of beauty as surely as pictures and music” (113). Such accommodations, however, disappear when one leaves Fairmount Park and enters downtown Philadelphia. The prior claim that nature “makes us all kin” is all but forgotten when Shinn’s narrator describes what he calls, conspicuously, the “black sheep” in the crowd:

We see them here in the warm and unfragrant months, of all ages, all colors, (for there is a sprinkling sometimes a shower, of disreputable whites among them,) all conditions, except prosperity, all characters, except good ones, all faiths, and all known infidelities. Old darkey women in the cellar-ways, young darkey children in everybody’s way, crawling on the narrow sidewalks, sitting and lying on the curbstones, standing in the streets, teasing the hens with swill-barrels, the goats that browse on the old truck, playing with dogs and dead mice, whistling, shouting, crying, mayhap; grown-up darkeys, a ton of St. Mary’s [Mary Magdalens], in cheap finery, with cheap luxury, Rose with a feather in her hat, Pompey with a Centennial cigar in his capacious mouth; old, grizzled darkies of both sexes; bad young darkies chucking white girls under the chin (white girls having pitchers of beer); darkeys in the door, on the cellar-door, on the coal-box, under the lamp-post, around the corner, laughing, whooping, cursing, blasphemying; darkeys, darkeys everywhere. Who feeds these black sheep? How do they pay for their bread, when they
have any, for the pigs feet and tripe, for their whisky, which they will have? There is an old-saying, that one-half that world doesn’t know how the other half live. It is the truth, but not the whole truth, for it should contain the cynical *addendum*—and don’t care either. (186)

The imaginative appeal of every romantic picturesque scene thrives off its ruins. Where cynicism is guarded against in the park or the garden, it is activated to ward off bad behavior and create what the narrator sees as necessary divisions in the city. “Neither you, nor we, could be happy in their places,” Shinn’s narrator declares (187).

![Figure 2. “But we must not forget the dilapidated colored ladies, who sit on our empty market-stalls, and sell, or try to sell, savory messes of tripe, dumplings, and other mysterious compounds…” (A Century After 159). Image taken by author.](image)

Despite *Picturesque Glimpses*’ repeated laments that human nature is not as developed in cities as it is in parks, or in the countryside, Shinn’s narrator adopts a discourse that attempts to include its discussion of markets as part of a class of “natural” events (an approach he will also take to describing fairs at the end of the tour). The chapter on marketry opens with a genesis narrative, “how marketry began…” He recalls fondly the order of Greek agoras, where “the sound of a bell” signaled the opening of the market and drew the crowds. Everyone visited the market—“Statesmen, poets, artists, wits, sophists, philosophers”—but they never brought it home with them. The ancient market was an orderly place, where fellow citizens (the *agoranomi*) could be trusted to see that the rules and regulations of the market were enforced (150-52). Such trust in the order of the marketplace is, by the modern era, a distant memory. In place of the reliable *agoranomi*, other, shiftier characters appear:
From the dusky purlieus which shelter the hot-corn woman, when she is at home, and which extend from Pine and Lombard to Shippen and Fitzwater streets, and from Fifth to Eighth streets, comes forth confidently [an] itinerant dealer in cereals—the hominy man. He may be seen almost any day, with his bags and his basket, trudging along cheerily with a blue-check apron, with a squirrel’s tail couchant at the side of his hat. What is it that he sings? Hark: “Hominy man come out this morning, with his sweet homini-i-i!”

But we must not forget the dilapidated colored ladies, who sit on our empty market-stalls, and sell, or try to sell, savory messes of tripe, dumplings, and other mysterious compounds, to the tune of “Peppery-pot, all hot!” Nor that learned body of industrious darkeys, the professors of carpet-shaking and white-washing! We have a Professor Roland, who condescends to beat the dust from our floor coverings; and a Professor Oliver, who is not above cleaning our walls. Roland and Oliver—knightly names.

_Arcades Sambo!_ (158-59)

The “old darkey women” and “the hominy man” are depicted with more life and careful attention than any others in the text. _The Nation_ was calling the freedman and the Northern poor a dangerous new “proletariat” that did not resemble “the population by which the Republic was founded, as if they belonged to a foreign nation” (_Nation_, April 9, 1874 in Foner 519). Yet to Shinn’s narrator they inspire neither fear nor dread, but something closer to a feeling of planned obsolescence. The disheveled fish seller, the old hominy man, and their contemporaries, reside distinctly outside of progress; unlike Wordsworth happening upon the old Cumberland beggar, there is not time to linger to ponder the state of things. There is only time for a “glimpse”! The tour returns to Fairmount once more as a kind of cleansing after this lurid look into “social life.”
Ultimately, the narrator attempts to resolve two very disparate pictures of American life in the book’s concluding chapter. Given that Shinn’s text is published as a prelude to the Centennial, written while Shinn is watching its buildings and grounds spring up in Fairmount Park, the narrator is self-conscious about participating in writing what will be a history of the event: “The history of the Centennial will be written when it is done, as it has been written any and every day since April and May, 1875, when the Main Building, Machinery Hall, and Horticultural Hall were begun … [I]t will be written by light pens as it has been written by strong and skillful hands, and we cannot help reading it” (343). Consequently, despite the social and economic disparities that face the nation, Shinn’s narrator stands behind Pennsylvania as a “nucleus” of national industrial development. For instance, he describes the way Philadelphia was roused into action directly after the war destroyed the North’s merchant marine forces to help restore commercial activity. (The city’s mechanics built four iron steamers, the “Pennsylvania,” the “Ohio,” the “Indiana,” and the “Illinois,” that could carry freight overseas that had arrived by the Pennsylvania Railroad from the South and the West, brought directly to wharves by the Penn Railroad, and shipped (168).) To watch the Centennial Exhibition go up in Fairmount Park is 1875 and write its story was both the fulfillment of that rebuilding process and a continued willing of such fulfillment. On the Centennial grounds, tourists were witnessing the apex of a civilization.

Though the Centennial Commission was asked to prolong the exhibition, they closed it on November 10th, 1876 and began to clear the fairground. After six months in which it had consumed the attention of the city and the nation, it was unbelievable that this immense display of progress should simply dissolve. In 1882, six years after the Exhibition closed, John Welsh,

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99 Only the Main Building was allowed to remain standing as a permanent exhibition; it opened on May 10, 1877 to much enthusiasm, called variously a “universal museum” and a “great school.” After it did not prove as lucrative...
the Chair of the Centennial Board of Finance, summed up the effects of the exhibition in a
*Memorial* to Congress, insisting that “the material result was in reality greatly short of the moral
influence which the United States gained by the Exhibition.” Treating the exposition as a kind of
set “moral compass” meant that it provided justification not only for present decisions but for
future social, economic, and political plans. Daniel J. Morrell, a representative from
Pennsylvania, one of the most successful iron manufacturers in the state, and the chairman of the
House Committee on Manufactures—who had guided the bill for the Centennial plan through
Congress in 1870—declared at the closing ceremony that “the full measure of our manhood will
go down to [posterity] untouched by the gnawing tooth of Time” (Rydell 36). The Centennial
thus crystallized for a nation a relationship to time that Shinn registers and extends through *A
Century After*. The popular picturesque glimpse could yield expansive views of American
accomplishment. But if one stared for too long, less savory elements crept into the frame of the
picture, and the tolls of time’s “gnawing tooth” on a population trying to lift itself out of
financial ruin bled into the view.

**Art Treasures**

In 1894, J.W. Buel, a popular author of illustrated books about man’s tumultuous
relationship with nature, published *Glimpses of America, A pictorial and descriptive history of
Our Country’s Scenic Marvels, Delineated by Pen and Camera*. Though Buel nods to
geographical landmarks in Europe and Asia, his preface claims for America the status of “the
most interesting, because the most diversified, country in the world” and “the center
of…unexamined interest.” “[A]s great telescopes have brought within our vision surprising
views of other worlds, the rings of Saturn, the seas of Mars, and the burnt-out craters of the
Moon,” Buel lauds, “so has inventive genius been active in delineating the physical features of
financially as the USCC had hoped, the building was sold and demolished in December 1881. See Giberti 182-90.
the earth...through the perfection of photography.” His viewbook recuperates the aims and the means of earlier illustrated armchair touring guides, with even crisper focus:

Travel is no longer necessary for the masses to behold the marvels of American scenery, for the camera has gathered them all and lays every inspiring scene upon even the poor man’s table, to minister to the delight of his family circle. But photography likewise blesses the traveler, for study of the picture establishes acquaintance with that which is represented, while accompanying description quickens his understanding and gives a more intelligent conception of the pictorial subject.\(^{100}\)

What Buel’s preface reveals—taken alongside Magoon, Cooper, and Shinn—is remediation’s double logic. The stronger our desire for immediacy, the more visual mediators we insert into a scenario, and the more we hypermediate our experience. My aim has been to show that such hypermediation occurs not only via technologies but through literary genres. The quest for “Contact!” with nature (as Thoreau exclaimed upon summiting Ktaadn) was, for the vast majority of Americans in the second half of the century, to be found in the perfection of the photograph or the “transparent” panoramic plan of the book. Educating Americans about the picturesque beauty of the nation, through both the specific context of scenic definition and the general description of broad cultural progress, becomes increasingly indecipherable from the technologies and mediums used to depict it. An aesthetics of remediation—the engrafting of new forms onto old virtues—offers a way of sustaining a belief in the “natural” relationship between landscape and industry while celebrating the robust character of American industriousness.

\(^{100}\) Buel 11. The full subtitle of Buel’s book is, *Photographs of the Picturesque Wonderlands of North America. From Regions of Perpetual Ice to Lands of Perennial Sunshine* (Philadelphia: Historical Publishing Company, 1894). The following credentials are listed next to his name on the title page: “…who, in a special photograph car and accompanied by a corps of accomplished Artists, visited every part of the United States and Canada, to picture and describe all the beautiful scenery found therein.” Buel’s trip up and down the eastern seaboard by railroad foreshadows the route of Henry James’s east coast tour by Pullman car a decade later as he records the observations that will become *The American Scene*. 
A Century After marked the beginning of a series of major publications for Shinn that propelled him into the center of the art world in the northeast. Some of his best-selling books focused on the lives of wealthy Americans, seeking to improve the taste of those Americans who could afford to collect art. Among his most elaborate works were The Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition (1876-78), Art Treasures of America (1879-83)—a richly illustrated three-volume edition that displayed a decade’s worth of research on the collections of the American nouveau-riche and attracted one thousand subscribers—and Mr. W.H. Vanderbilt’s House and Collection (1883-84), for which 50 subscribers shelled out $400 per set. In his introduction to Mr. Vanderbilt’s House, Shinn presents himself as capitalizing on a particular moment in American progress. He calls his volumes “a more perfect Pompeii,” offering an inside look into an American residence “seized at the moment when the nation began to have a taste of its own, an architecture, a connoisseurship, and a choice in the appliances of luxury, society, culture.”

[T]he unbidden guest to-day at Pompeii can hardly have a more curious feeling during his explorations than the reader of this work who,—whether at uncounted leagues of distance or at an incalculable remoteness of future time—shall turn its pages and become the guest of a nineteenth-century gentleman. The leave to make this unprecedented revelation comes from a free-hearted open generosity that feels there is nothing to conceal and believes there is something to instruct; and this leave, fortunately for the reader, comes at the right moment, prompt and opportune, when wealth is first consenting to act the Medicean part in America, to patronize the inventors, to create the arts, and to originate a form of civilization. The country, at this moment, is just beginning to be astonishing. Re-
cemented by the fortunate result of a civil war, endowed as with a diploma of rank by the promulgation of its century, it has begun to reinvent everything... (iv, my emphasis)

This is the antebellum rhetoric of transparency—the spirit in which “there is nothing to conceal and…something to instruct”—remediated for the Gilded Age. Shinn lauds private property through the language of public responsibility, a stance presented with a neatness that belies the class conflict that had dominated the political and economic setting of the nation during the previous decade. Shinn wrote so precisely about the contents of these collections because they fulfilled America’s prophetic relationship to its artwork and culture of collecting. His encyclopedic volumes were also tapping into another way in which nineteenth-century America capitalized on the picturesque tradition: objects came alive. They were totemic. One need not go out into nature to stare out at picturesque scenes if one could stand amid picturesque things, collect them, and—best—hold them in hand.
Figure 3. Title page for *A Century After* (1875 edition). “There are many little pictures in this great picture, which are perfect in themselves and which separate themselves in the eye of an artist from those which surround them. He has only to frame them for himself, so to speak,—a habit of the craft, common to all its followers. Something has been done for him and for us by the architecture of the railroad bridge, whose noble arches are the frames of magnificent landscapes. One need not be an architect to appreciate the beauty of open arches in structures like these, nor an artist to enjoy the effect they produce. The curving lines, emblems of grace and strength, and suggestions of the great arch above, delight the eye, and increase the value of whatever they enclose. The mind goes through them as through the gates of the city into a fair country beyond” (Shinn 12). *Image taken by author.*
CHAPTER 3—AN INTERLUDE

MAN IN THE LANDSCAPE, WOMAN IN THE GARDEN:
SOME SPECIMENS OF PROPERTY

I had some things that I called mine—
(Fr101) 1859

A Defense of Property

When William Gilpin described the picturesque in his *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty* (1792), he suggested that when nature failed to meet timeless standards for beauty, it was the responsibility of the picturesque artist to fix it. Such artistic interference usually tended toward a preference for asymmetry over symmetry, and for undulating and varied lines over smooth and monotonous curves. His prescription for picturesqueness balanced rule-bound directives with the ideal that landscapes presented unified wholes: “An extended plain is a simple object. It is the continuation only of one uniform idea. But the mere simplicity of the plain produces no beauty. Break the surface of it...add trees, rocks, and declivities; that is, give it roughness, and you give it also variety. Thus by enriching the parts of a united whole with roughness, you obtain the combined idea of simplicity, and variety; from whence results the picturesque” (28). Critiquing the smooth finish cast over English gardens by landscape artists such as Capability Brown, Gilpin chided,

Why does an elegant piece of garden-ground make no figure on canvas? The shape is pleasing; the combination of the objects, harmonious; and the winding of the walk in the very line of beauty. All this is true; but the smoothness of the whole, tho right, as it should be in nature, offends in picture. Turn the lawn into a piece of broken ground: plant rugged oaks instead of flowering shrubs: break the edges of the walk: give it the rudeness of a road: mark it with wheel-tracks; and scatter around a few stones, and brushwood; in
a word, instead of making the whole *smooth*, make it *rough*; and you also make it *picturesque*. All other ingredients of beauty it already possessed. (8)

The picturesque artist prioritizes harmony of composition over purity of form or originality of subject. His compositions—whether sketches or gardens—aim to reflect an *improved* version of nature back to a viewer; moreover, they aim not only to celebrate the underlying harmoniousness of a landscape but to train viewers to focus long enough on a landscape that they can see it “compose” itself, as a painter sees. Viewers thus become more invested spectators who can recognize the picturesque’s abstract principles at work and, as a result, claim some ownership in the value of the scene. Simultaneously, their perspectival advantage comes from remaining detached, from not placing themselves directly in the view. Picturesque spectators thus enter the ranks of people who can dictate a landscape’s value from afar. While Gilpin’s ultimate aim was to flood the mind with picturesque associations that went beyond the individual—a Romantic notion of self-improvement in which the tourist becomes a poet united with nature—landowners such as Price and Knight were more concerned with how rules for making pictures would have a tangible impact on national and local perceptions of personal property.101

Price’s *An Essay on the Picturesque* (1794), for example, purported to convey to his readers “the Use of Studying Pictures, for the purpose of Improving Real Landscape.” Conservative Whigs and Tories such as Price, who were contending with a pro-Jacobin celebration of revolutionary ideals, understood Jacobin sympathizers as threatening to impose abstract principles abruptly on a British Constitution that had been gradually evolving over centuries. By the 1790s conservative landowners were reclaiming the picturesque in order to redefine conceptions of liberty. Liberty, Price urged, can be expressed through the language of

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101Hanlon 74, 86. While Gilpin’s picturesque tours were widely praised, the illustrations he provided to accompany them received criticism from users of the guidebooks for being overly idealized (Bermingham 86).
individual variety; it must be re-stitched to a conception of personal property rather than a vague sense of the idea of freedom. While, as I have explained in my introduction, Price and Knight—both landowners and amateur gardeners—presented different theories of what constituted picturesque form, they were in agreement that the flaw of Brown’s singular plan for landscape designs was that it tried too hard to resemble Claudian vistas and panoramas and did not take into account the individual variety and peculiarity offered by the specific site. They were less concerned than Gilpin with the edifying powers of judging and collecting quality prints. They were worried about their personal property. The disappointing outcome of the Brownian style, they feared, would be that “all places [were made] alike; all equally tame and insipid” (1.342).

Price began recasting liberty through picturesque discourse in An Essay on the Picturesque. He considered the wide vistas of smooth open gardens and prospect landscapes to be a kind of enforced monotony analogous to the “leveling tendencies of democratic governments and institutions” (Bermingham 83). “[T]he love of seclusion and safety”—expressed in rustic breaks in the lay of the land and the encroaching of overgrown foliage on cleared spaces—“is not less natural to man than [the love] of liberty,” he insisted (Price 121).102 Price and Knight’s effort to define picturesqueness was also an effort the preserve old gardens, which they thought embodied the picturesque ideal, rather than to support the building of new gardens according to an abstracted “style.” Following his treatise on picturesque beauty, Price wrote Thoughts on the Defence of Property (1797), in which he argued that, “A good landscape is that in which all the parts are free and unconstrained, but in which, though some are prominent and highly illuminated, and others in shade and retirement, some rough, and others more smooth and polished, yet they are all necessary to the beauty, energy, effect, and harmony of the whole. I do not see how good government can be more exactly defined” (39). In fact, Price regretted

102See related discussion in Bermingham 83-86.
remaking his own father’s estate garden according to Brown’s principles, and anticipated how such “unfeeling” ideas might have consequences on a broader scale:

I doomed [my father’s garden] and all its embellishments, with which I had formed such an early connection, to sudden and total destruction; probably much upon the same idea, as many a man careless, unreflecting, unfeeling good-nature, thought it his duty to vote for demolishing towns, provinces, and their inhabitants, in America: like me (but how different the scale and interest!) they chose to admit it as a principle, that what ever obstructed the prevailing system, must be all thrown down, all laid prostrate; no medium, no conciliatory methods were to be tried, but whatever might follow, destruction must precede. (119-20)

While Price was referring to the damages sustained in American cities during the Revolution, he would have found an empathetic ear among the Southern planters two generations later who witnessed the decentralization of the plantation system and the liquidation of slave labor. Awareness of high picturesque conventions had been transmitted from England to the United States through the attention given to Gilpin’s Forest Scenery and to Ruskin’s Modern Painters—where Ruskin tried to recuperate what he called the empathy of the “noble” picturesque rather than the more shallow surface picturesque. Yet Price’s strident call to fellow landowners—“let not two such distinct ideas, as convenience and beauty, be confounded”—resonated on a popular level after the American Civil War as much as Ruskin’s idealism resonated among aesthetes (An Essay on the Picturesque 118). The Romantic notion that abstract laws of beauty brought one closer to nature, or to a “natural state,” was tested when real property disputes came into play during Reconstruction. Southern landowners saw the destruction of the slave system as an act akin to the chaos of “mob rule” during the French Revolution. Exactly
what type of freedom had been won after the war, for planters, for blacks, or for Northern manufacturers, was deeply uncertain. Between 1865 and 1866, the Freedmen’s Bureau situated itself in the middle of the Southern planters’ and freedmen’s respective investments in their own liberties by insisting that unity could be preserved and strengthened if the nation as a whole ascribed to the abstract ideology of free labor: “the mutual dependence of labor and capital.”

On the one hand, the assumption that Abraham Lincoln declared at the outset of the Civil War was that, unlike the slave laborer, the free laborer had the primary advantage of not being “fixed to that condition for life.” The supposed social mobility allowed by free labor returned all men to their “natural” states. Moreover, the Freedmen’s Bureau held that the social order that accompanied a free labor ideology “guaranteed the ambitious worker the opportunity for economic mobility, the ability to move from wage labor to independence through the acquisition of productive property.”

On the other hand, free labor principles, as the planters saw them, were forcing Southern landowners to rebuild their plantations and formally employ as workers the slaves they had owned.

In *The Fate of the Object*, Jon Erickson writes that “the art object’s position in our culture [i]s parallel to, and i[s] a reflection of, the condition of the human subject. It is continually responding to or resisting that state of objecthood which is created or coded to be ‘easily read’: the commodity” (x). In the making of what I have been calling “picturesque time”—an available (even aggressive) frame for national self-reflection that is most prominent in the decade

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103 Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988): 170, 171. In an ironic sense, the same rugged landscape features that Price had prized as a symbol of liberty, in opposition to the neat leveling of Brown’s gardens, became an unintended but recognizable feature of the dilapidated postwar South, where sugar plantations sat overgrown with weeds.
immediately prior to as well as the decade immediately after the Civil War—we are witnessing the processes by which objectification become popularized (even welcome). The deeper one gets into a popular notion of picturesque time, the more subjects and objects seem to invite “easy reading,” and the more efficiently the world can be “glimpsed,” organized by abstract rules that are assigned rather than felt. However, a popular, self-satisfied version of picturesque time and its more demanding counterpart exist at once and are always in competition. The prettier the picture, as popular picturesqueness would have it, the more we admire it without investigating it; the more efficiently we “fix” an approach to order and progress, the less attention we have to give to the picturesque’s original and more enduring preoccupation: the very personal investments and sacrifices property ownership demands.

To single out a landscape as picturesque is to make a claim on it, to hone in on its properties and in turn to isolate it as (fore)seen property. The landscape that had the single largest impact on the life of the poet Emily Dickinson sat right outside her window and was owned by her father. While she had no formal claim to a land deed, she tended her garden plot on her father’s land with a multi-faceted awareness of the meaning of proprietorship. Also, Dickinson, who was trained from a young age in the study of botany, understood her flower specimens as living objects that had a parallel life to her own. This interlude presents three environments in which relationships between subjects and objects are revealed through systems of objectification based around gardening and flowers. Weighing the real risks and benefits of objectification is central to the thought process that lends exigence to the picturesque mode and motivates a serious response in return.
To Tend a Garden: 1854-1866

Emily Dickinson, like Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, was an amateur gardener. And America, like Britain, was a nation that had a vexed relationship with its gardens.

Dickinson learned a lot about the implications of property ownership from observing her father, Edward, an attorney who had served his state as a member of the Whig party in the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1838 and 1839, in the state senate in 1842 and 1843, and in the 33rd National Congress in 1854-55. By the time of the National Whig Convention of 1852, Edward Dickinson was known among his colleagues as the man who had voted for Daniel Webster on 53 consecutive presidential ballots. Yet by the summer of 1854, Edward witnessed Webster’s dream for his country—that it should be united through common property interests across all men—fall to pieces on the legislature floor. With the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the future of slavery in the newly added American territories of Kansas and Nebraska would be left up to popular sovereignty.

Throughout his adult life, Edward Dickinson’s personal attachment to his own land reinforced his dogged Whig allegiances in his political career. When Emily was still an infant, her grandfather, Samuel Fowler Dickinson, had mortgaged the family’s home on Main Street (the “Homestead”) and used at least part of the money to finance the beginning of the construction of Amherst College. Samuel Dickinson fell further and further into debt, and it would be a nearly a quarter of a century until his son Edward would have enough money to repurchase the family home and move his wife and children back into it. In Amherst, it was the

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Hutchison 3. Coleman Hutchison, “Eastern Exiles: Dickinson, Whiggery, and War.” The Emily Dickinson Journal. Volume 13, No. 2 (2004): 1-26. Hutchison’s important reading of Dickinson focuses on a few sites of the poet’s “explicit Whiggery,” including the letter she wrote to Susan Gilbert on June 11, 1852: “Why can’t I be a Delegate to the great Whig Convention?—dont I know all about Daniel Webster, and the Tariff, and the Law? Then, Susie I could see you during a pause in the session—but I don’t like this country at all, and I shant stay here any longer! ‘Delenda est’ America, Massachusetts and all! open me carefully” (L94).
Dickinson family’s land ownership, not their wealth, that allowed them to maintain their place among the town’s rather small upper-middle class.¹⁰⁶ The family owned eleven acres of meadow south of Main Street and three acres north of Pleasant Street, where the Homestead stood next to The Evergreens, the residence built for Emily’s brother Austin and her sister-in-law Susan. The Dickinson’s property also displayed the influence of picturesque landscape architectural norms of the time, popularized by Frederick Law Olmstead. The lawn between the Homestead and The Evergreens was designed to highlight the informal distribution of trees and shrubs and to suggest rugged, natural growth. A mix of local and exotic specimens emphasized the landscape’s variety, and a few small cleared areas allowed family members to congregate for lawn tennis and badminton.¹⁰⁷ Emily was twenty-five the year her family returned to the Homestead. That same year, Edward built her a conservatory, a small, glass-paned room at the back of the house for her flowers that overlooked the gardens which lay on a downward slope on the east side of the home.

Dickinson commitment to her garden took shape alongside the struggles over property ownership that were unfolding around her, not only in her hometown and in the Massachusetts legislature but across the country. Notably, the Homestead Act of 1862 extended the possibility of property ownership to women. That same year, Benjamin F. Butler, then a Union General and later a Massachusetts Representative to the U.S. Congress (1867-75, 1877-79)—a man Edward Dickinson likely knew, or at least knew of—initiated a policy that would transform slaves on Louisiana sugar plantations into paid laborers. While legally the blacks he charged with tracks of

¹⁰⁷In fact, while serving as the Treasurer of Amherst College for over two decades (1873-1895), Emily’s brother Austin landscaped the College grounds and developed a close relationship with prominent landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. Vaux was the British-American architect who eventually co-designed New York’s Central Park with Olmsted. Austin also spearheaded efforts to drain and beautify the town common and to create a new style of park-like cemetery in Amherst after the fashion of Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge. “The Dickinson Properties: The Landscape,” The Emily Dickinson Museum, http://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/ed/node/83.
abandoned land were still slaves, Butler’s plan was one of the earliest formal moves in the
direction of free labor. The policy endured significant backlash from Southern planters, as well
as from the superintendents sent to Louisiana to oversee the transition, who thought the Union
Army was being used to patrol “vagrant” blacks rather than carry out the work of emancipation.
In 1864, in one last effort to chart a course for free labor, Butler’s policy was revised to allow
laborers to choose their employers and it required Louisiana planters to supply each laborer with
their own garden plot. The experiment in Louisiana was a rehearsal for two realities that came to
fruition in late-wartime and postwar Reconstruction: the formation of the Freedmen’s Bureau
and the lasting split within the Republican Party over the issue of productive property
ownership.108

In fact, an experiment like Butler’s was tried more than once. The other rehearsal for land
re-allotment during Reconstruction unfolded at Sea Islands, South Carolina, where the black
population outnumbered the white population four to one. When the U.S. Navy occupied Fort
Royal in Beaufort County, South Carolina in November of 1861, the owners of the cotton
plantations on the island abandoned their property and headed to the mainland, leaving behind
10,000 black slaves. These slaves had already been independently raising crops on the land and
selling them to their masters or to nearby towns; more so than anywhere else in the nation, they
had essentially been operating, unrecognized, as free laborers. When Northern abolitionists got
word of the situation at Sea Islands, they descended upon the area and tried to get the land
legally turned over to the slaves, but they had little political pull with federal lawmakers. The
land was eventually seized by Treasury officials, auctioned off for non-payment, and bought by
Boston investors and budding railroad tycoons (ironically, men much like Edward Dickinson).
Like the situation in Louisiana, what happened at Sea Islands suggested just how powerfully the

108 For this discussion see Foner 55-57.
notion of productive property was tied to individual and regional interests during the war; the distributed garden plots made visible just how small a piece of property might be needed to alter one’s sense of civic identity.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson—who, from late 1862 to 1864, led a federally organized black regiment in Beaufort County, the First South Carolina Volunteers—wrote about the war in his essays for the *Atlantic*, which were later collected in the anthology *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (1869). His description of the landscape of Sea Islands, especially its gardens, forms the centerpiece of the book:

Galloping through green lanes, miles of triumphal arches of wild roses,—roses pale and large and fragrant, mingled with great boughs of the wild cornel, fantastic masses, snowy surprises,—such were our rides, ranging from eight to fifteen and even twenty miles. Back to a later dinner with our various experiences, and perhaps specimens to match,—a thunder-snake, eight feet long; an armful of great white, scentless pond-lilies. After dinner, to the tangled gardens for rosebuds or early magnolias, whose cloying fragrance will always bring back to me the zest of those summer days.109

Galloping out into an open landscape, the eye of the picturesque artist (or tourist) finds vast lines, grouped shapes, and masses of light and shade. He finds broad vistas. Entering the tighter space of the garden plot, however, idealized picturesque views must contend with details and with individual specimens and objects. The viewer would have to be reminded how to navigate tight spaces. To just “glimpse” a small garden and its flowers would not be imaginatively satisfying. One had to labor in the garden to know it.

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Systems of Collection and Exchange: The Fascicle in the Herbarium, the Herbarium in the Fascicle

*I was reared in the garden, you know.*
Emily Dickinson to Louise Norcross, late April 1859 (L206)

In 1863, a year after Dickinson first made herself known to Higginson by responding to his “Letter to a Young Contributor” in the *Atlantic*, she encountered his first collection of essays, *Outdoor Papers* (1863). “It is still distinct as Paradise, the opening of your first book – It was Mansions – Nations – Kinsmen – too – to me ,” she wrote to him years later. “I had long heard of an Orchis before I found one, when a child, but the first clutch of the stem is as vivid now, as the Bog that bore it – so truthful is transport” (L458, Johnson 552). Dickinson and Higginson were both aware of the ways flower cycles marked the passage of time. In his “A Procession of Flowers,” one of the essays Dickinson was still remarking on a decade and a half she first read it, Higginson specifies the blooming seasons of plants, the short lives of lilies in late May and the extended six-week bloom of the Lupine into June. Even at war, especially given that he was stationed in lush Beaufort County, he was a careful observer of his botanical surroundings (*Outdoor Papers* 40). Dickinson’s conservatory contained many of the flowers Higginson remarked on in his essays: shrubs, climbing vines, annuals, perennials and bulbs. Dickinson’s poems and letters mention roses, lilacs, peonies, sweet williams, daisies, foxgloves, poppies, nasturtiums and zinnias, among other flowers. She sent Higginson’s wife flowers from her garden, enclosing a polypody to her in one letter in which she remarked, “I bring you a Fern from my own Forest – where I play every Day!” (L472, Johnson 561). In a letter to Susan, her brother Austin’s wife, near the end of 1876, Dickinson wrote,

Sue – this is the last flower –
To wane without disparagement
In a dissembling hue
That will not let the Eye decide
If it abide or no
Is Sunset’s – perhaps – only.

Emily

One reason flowers so deeply animated Dickinson’s poetry was seemingly because of the way they swung between brilliance, when in bloom, and fragility, when in an uncertain state between life and death. Another reason was that, as a young student, Emily was taught to understand the study of botany as the study of a correspondence between the mind and the material world. She learned this approach through Mrs. Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps, whose *Familiar lectures on botany, practical, elementary and physiological*, she read while at Amherst Academy in the early 1840s and a copy of which she owned. Phelp’s prefatory notes to the first edition (1815) read:

To Teachers: The Author indulges the hope that this book...may serve to interest and quicken the dull intellects of some pupils, to arrest the fugitive attention of others, and to relax the minds of the over-studious, by leading them all into paths *strewed with flowers*, and teaching them that these beautiful creations of the Almighty Power are designed, not merely to delight by their fragrance, color, and form, but to illustrate the most logical divisions of Science, the deepest principles of Physiology, and the benevolence of God.

The guiding principle of the lectures was that mind and matter are systems that have been designed to “fit” each other. Phelp’s first lecture makes that principle explicit: “The universe consists of matter and mind. By the faculties of mind with which God has endowed us, we are able to examine into the properties of the material objects by which we are surrounded,” the lecture begins.

The Deity has not only placed before us an almost infinite variety of objects, but has given to our minds the power of reducing them into classes, so as to form beautiful and regular systems, by which we can comprehend, under a few terms, the vast number of
individual things, which would, otherwise, present to our bewildered minds a confused
and indiscriminate mass. This power of the mind, so important in classification, is that of
discovering resemblances. We perceive two objects, we have an idea of their
resemblance, and we give a common name to both; other similar objects are then referred
to the same class or receive the same name. (2, my emphasis)

In her fifth lecture, Phelps offered precise directions to students to help them replicate the
process of preserving flowers in a herbarium:

Plants collected for analysis, may be preserved fresh many days, in a close tin box, by
occasionally sprinkling them with water; they may also be preserved by placing their
stems in water, but not as well by the latter, as the former method. While attending to the
science of Botany, you should keep specimens of all the plants you can procure. An
herbarium neatly arranged is beautiful, and may be rendered highly useful, by affording
an opportunity to compare many species together, and it likewise serves to fix in the
mind the characters of plants. It is a good method in collecting plants for an herbarium,
to have a portfolio, or a book in which they may be placed before the parts begin to wilt.
Specimens should be placed between the leaves of paper, either newspaper or any other
kind which is of a loose texture, and will easily absorb the moisture of the plants; a board
with a weight upon it should then be placed upon the paper containing them; the plants
should be taken out frequently at first; as often as once or twice a day, and the paper
dried, or the plants placed between other dry sheets of paper. Small plants may be dried
between the leaves of a book. Plants differ in the length of time required for drying as
they are more or less juicy […] When the specimens are dry, and a sufficient number
collected to commence an herbarium, a book should be procured, composed of blank
paper, (white paper gives the plants a more showy appearance.) A quarto size is more convenient than a folio. Upon the first page of each leaf should be fastened one or more of the dried specimens, either with glue or by means of cutting through the paper, and raising up loops under which the stems may be placed. By the sides of the plants should be written the class, order, generic, and specific name; also the place where found, and the season of the year. The colours of plants frequently change in drying; the blue, pale red, and white, often turn black, or lose their colour; yellow, scarlet, violet, and green, are more durable. An herbarium should be carefully guarded against moisture and insects; as a security against the latter, the plants may be brushed over with corrosive-sublimate. (30, my emphasis)

I include this passage at length because it gives a precise idea of exactly how Dickinson created her herbarium. She likely referred back many times to Phelps’s description between 1839 and 1846, when she was arranging her portfolio, following most of Phelp’s guidelines closely. She used white paper that give her plants a more “showy appearance” and labeled them by a number system that grouped them by genus and noted their specific Latin names. The sweet william (see figures 4a and 4b) was one flower that Dickinson saw in Phelp’s textbook that she was able to find in Amherst and secure in her herbarium. The sweet william was a fascicle, with “flowers on little stalks, variously inserted and sub-divided, collected into a close bundle, nearly level at the top” (84, my emphasis).

After 1844, rather than simply pressing, collecting, and exchanging her flowers, as was the Victorian custom, Dickinson began to distribute her specimens. MacGregor Jenkins, Dickinson’s neighbor when they were both children, recalled that, “Occasionally, Emily wound a verse around the stem of a flower sent a friend, perhaps part of the larger bouquet, suggesting
more than unity with it.” The study of flowers allowed the poet to animate multiple levels of her understanding of correspondences: the mind’s power to perceive resemblances between objects, the exchange of sentiments between people (for which the flowers were emblems), and the role of the flower as a transitional object between the present world and an absent, more heavenly one. Richard Sewall notes that through Dickinson’s herbarium, “Beauty became identified with truth, and the truth—hints of it, glimpses into it, the possibility of it—was transcendent…Blake saw “Heaven in a wild flower,” and so, *mutadis mutandis*, did she.” Yet even more literally, I am suggesting, the systematic way in which Dickinson came to understand the physical construction of a herbarium and its role in organizing thinking had a distinct impact on the way she later hand-stitched groupings of her poems into bundles, which she also called “fascicles.” The herbarium acted as an antecedent genre to her poetic “fascicles,” suggesting that she had learned her early lesson from Phelps well: “*This power of the mind, so important in classification, is that of discovering resemblances. We perceive two objects, we have an idea of*”

110Stephanie Tingley, “Women’s Culture and the Poetics of Dickinson’s Correspondence” in *Reading Emily Dickinson's Letters: Critical Essays*. Eds. Jane Donahue Eberwein and Cindy MacKenzie (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 74, my italics. The following poems, all sent with flowers, are especially ekphrastic in their tendency to point to the enclosed flower as the primary referent for the verse: 95 (“Flowers – Well – if anybody”), 98 (“South winds jostle them”), 226 (“I stole them from a bee”), 380 (“All the letters I can write”), 1543 (“The stem of a departed flower,” sent with the stem of a dead flower), 850 (“Defrauded I a Butterfly-”), and 1677 (“Their dappled Importunity”), which was sent to Todd the year before the poet’s death and which I read as containing undertones of her social critique of Todd’s commitment to etiquette.

111Tingley also notes that Dickinson’s adoption and personalization of the Victorian flower code reflects the Emersonian “doctrine of correspondence,” suggesting an epistolary exchange between an individual and nature and providing a writer with enigmatic, nonverbal texts to attempt to decipher. “According to his theory and Emily Dickinson’s practice,” Tingley writes, “writing is a kind of exchange between two individuals or two realms that links separate yet interconnected worlds and minds” (75).


113After discovering this use of the term fascicle in Phelps’s textbook, which is likely the first place Dickinson encountered it as a girl, I looked to see if other scholars attributed the generic use of the term to describe her later sewn packets of poems back to the vocabulary of botany. Surprisingly, I only located one scholar, Elizabeth Petrino, who makes this connection, which she attributes to the “floral rhetoric” generally: “The term ‘fascicle,’ which generally is the division of a book, derives from floral rhetoric, and the hand sewn packets that Dickinson made of fair copies of her poems are also termed fascicles, which are described by Hale’s floral dictionary as ‘flowers on little stalks variously inserted and subdivided, collected into a close bundle, level at the top’” (142). “*Silent Eloquence*: The Social Codification of Floral Metaphors in the Poems of Frances Sargent Osgood and Emily Dickinson.” *Legacy* 15.2 (1998): 139-57.
their resemblance, and we give a common name to both.” The fascicle of the herbarium and the fascicles of her manuscripts bore a common resemblance.

In 1890, upon preparing the first edition of Dickinson’s collected poems after her death, Higginson’s two prominent introductions to Dickinson’s work, the preface to the first edition and the announcement of the book in the Christian Union, characterized Dickinson’s work as “poetry of the portfolio,” which in turn motivated the title of the Christian Union announcement, “The Open Portfolio.” Higginson attributed the phrase to an early essay by Emerson in The Dial. This is the passage where Emerson describes the term “portfolio” in some depth:

Art is the noblest consolation of calamity. The poet is compensated for his defects in the street and in society, if in his chamber he has turned his mischance into noble numbers.

Is there not room then for a new department in poetry, namely, Verses of the Portfolio? We have fancied that we drew greater pleasure from some manuscript verses than from printed ones of equal talent. For there was herein the charm of character; they were confessions; and the faults, the imperfect parts, the fragmentary verses, the halting rhymes, had a worth beyond that of a high finish; for they testified that the writer was more man than artist, more earnest than vain; that the thought was too sweet and sacred to him, than that he should suffer his ears to hear or his eyes to see a superficial defect in the expression. (New Poetry,” The Dial, 1840)

Inspired by Emerson’s articulation of a new genre that seems to fit his own poet so well, Higginson riffs, “No weight nor mass nor beauty of execution can outweigh one grain or fragment of thought.”114 Yet what restoring Dickinson’s work to her first medium, the dried

114The phrase is Ruskin’s from Modern Painters. For Emerson, the portfolio poem has two similar strengths: “the fineness of perception; and…an absence of all conventional imagery…a bold use of that which the moment’s mood had made sacred to him, quite careless that it might be sacred to no other, and might even be slightly ludicrous to the first reader.”
Plants of the herbarium, makes clear is Dickinson did not see her versus as fragmentary at all. Remediating her work (in the way media studies scholars use the term to highlight how the aims of later forms are grafted onto the purposes of prior ones) reminds us that the poetic fragments, like the plant specimens, already belonged to a system of resemblances, even though the full system was not visible. Higginson and his companion editor, Mabel Loomis Todd, would have been well served by going back to Dickinson’ herbarium: the place where her poetry literally sat “torn up by the roots.” If Higginson had been thinking of her herbarium, or looking at it along with her manuscripts, he never makes mention of it in any written commentary on Dickinson. Or perhaps it did not occur to him that her poetic “genius” and her use of commonplace things would be so closely linked. “The study of Botany seems peculiarly adapted to females” Phelps had written; “the objects of its investigation are beautiful and delicate; its pursuits, leading to exercise in the open air, are conducive to health and cheerfulness. It is not a sedentary study which can be acquired in the library, but the objects of the science are scattered over the surface of the earth, along the banks of the winding brooks, on the borders of precipices, the sides of mountains, and the depths of the forest.” In the letter to Higginson that Dickinson sends in the summer of 1876, in which she includes “a Fern from her own Forest,” she signs off this way: “We thank thee Oh Father” for these strange Minds, that enamor us against thee.”

115 That phrase, repeated in reviews of Dickinson’s work over the course of the 1890s is Higginson’s from his preface to the first edition: “[her] words and phrases exhibit[t] an extraordinary vividness of descriptive and imaginative power, yet often set in a seemingly whimsical or even rugged frame…In many cases these verses will seem to the reader like poetry torn up by the roots, with rain and dew and earth still clinging to them, giving a freshness and a fragrance not otherwise to be conveyed.”

116 Phelps 14.
117 L 472 in Johnson 561.
Women’s Work: The Industry of Speculation

“I know not why shaded blues should be so beautiful in flowers, and yet avoided as distasteful in ladies’ fancy-work; but it is a mystery like that which long repudiated blue and green from all well-regulated costumes, while Nature yet evidently prefers it to any other combination in her wardrobe,” Higginson wrote in “The Procession of Flowers.” Even for men, it was difficult to call images of flowers to mind in the second half of the nineteenth century without thinking of the embroidered flower patterns that were so prevalent in women’s craftsmanship. It is no surprise then that when the designers of the Philadelphia Centennial decided, belatedly, that there should be a “Women’s Pavillion” at the exhibition, they filled it with specimens of needlework designs of flowers.

Emily Dickinson did not flock with the millions of visitors to see the Centennial Exhibition in 1876, though many of her friends and family attended. Austin visited earliest, in mid-October, with his son Ned; Austin caught a case of Malarial Fever that nearly killed him. Elizabeth and Josiah Holland visited in November. Helen Hunt Jackson also attended later that fall, writing to Dickinson that she was “enjoying this lovely New England country, very much” and that she regretted having to go to the city with her husband for the great “chore” of the Centennial. In the Centennial’s official guidebook, an elaborate system of signs were used to help visitors make their way through the massive numbers of people and displays around

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118 “Procession” 40.
119 Frank Leslie’s Centennial Register also describes decorative wax arts and wood carvings in the Women’s Pavilion that displayed flowers, such as a bed stand that had been carved with lilies and poppies on its posts and clusters of morning glories on its headboard. One highlight was etchings of flowers by Queens Victoria (Frank Leslie’s Historical Register of the United States Centennial exhibition, 1876 embellished with nearly eight hundred illustrations drawn expressly for this work by the most eminent artists in America; including illustrations and descriptions of all previous international exhibitions, and containing much useful information, and statistics of the foreign countries represented at the exposition; edited by Frank H. Norton. Philadelphia: Frank Leslie’s Publishing House, 1876: 156).
Fairmount Park. One way of classifying the buildings was to mark them with flags and banners; for example, those erected by the federal government and the American states carried a red flag; those that housed exhibits from foreign nations were marked by a white flag. All “miscellaneous structures,” the category that included the Women’s Pavilion, carried a green flag. Frank Leslie’s massive *Historical Register of the Centennial Exhibition* devotes only a few spare pages to the Women’s expo. Leslie describes a “very pleasing exhibition of wax flowers and fruits … on the eastern side of the building. Some representations of forest leaves are exquisitely natural. Near these are specimens of real flowers, preserved under glass, and seemingly as perfect as when they were culled; and a very attractive case from Florida, containing wreaths and crosses, composed of grass and lichens with red berries and pine cones interspersed.”

The pavilion also contained “labor-savings devices” invented by women, such as new types of looms and sewing machines. An annex to the Women’s Pavilion was the children’s garden or “Kindergarten.” “This idea involves a large, well-ventilated, well-lighted and pleasant room, opening upon a garden where should be combined a playground for general enjoyment, a large garden plot, and smaller plots for each child old enough to cultivate one,” Leslie reported. “Here the little ones can be taught to plant and cultivate flowers, useful vegetables, and even trees…Usually three to five hours are spent in such gardens” (158). Despite the fact that the Women’s Pavilion was often overlooked in favor of exhibits in the five main buildings, it was powered by the same central engine that powered the rest of the exhibits: the massive Corliss steam engine, weighing 56 tons and containing 40 miles of belts, ran everything at the Centennial “from saws and lathes to looms and sewing machines” (Wald 92).

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121 Leslie 156. The Pavilion was across the street from the Horticultural Hall, where the full set of plant specimens were housed.
In the spring of 1876, when Higginson was on a brief lecture tour, Dickinson wished him a “happy trip” and reminded him that “Labor might fatigue, though it is Action’s rest.” She included these verses in the letter:

The things we thought that we should do  
We other things have done  
But those peculiar industries  
Have never been begun –

The Lands we thought that we should seek  
When large enough to run  
By Speculation ceded  
To Speculation’s Son –

The Heaven, in which we hoped to pause  
When Discipline was done  
Untenable to Logic  
But possibly the one – (L549, Johnson 553-54)

Two years prior to this, in June, Edward Dickinson had traveled to Boston for a meeting at the Massachusetts State Legislature, collapsed while giving a speech, and died in his boardinghouse room soon after. The stressful atmosphere in the state house would likely have exhausted even the youngest and most robust politicians. The year had been filled with violent strikes by miners, factory workers, and textile workers and violent labor disputes on the railroads (Foner 515). It was perhaps a blessing in disguise that the conservative Dickinson did not live to see the Congress turn back over to a Democratic majority for the first time since 1860. The financial panic that consumed the country leading up to the Centennial was sparked by rampant speculative investment in railroads, which, outside of his loyalty to the Whig Party, was the other defining force in Edward Dickinson’s life. In 1853, Dickinson had been named the Director of the Amherst & Belchertown Rail Road and during the 1850s, Massachusetts was a leader in the nation in railway construction, and often compelled rural landowners to sell their property to
railroad owners for “the public good.” Just how complicated it was to be a railroad man and a proponent of private property was not lost on his daughter.

Dickinson invokes the impact of land speculation on her own plans in the poem she sends to Higginson, which registers a sense of multiple losses. She seemingly offers “Speculation” as both a metonym for landed property but also for her father, whose death would have ceded his property to his son and oldest child, Austin. Speculation, if taken in the context of her father’s Whig allegiances, also describes his party’s political conjectures over the possibility of a national free labor system based around common land ownership, a hope ceded to the Democrats who now controlled Congress amid a very uncertain future. Her use of the word “industries” registers the main catchphrase during the year of the Centennial,advertized broadly as a celebration of “the Grandeur of Industry” (Rydell 14). Moreover, the speaker’s relationship to land ownership is itself speculative, and subordinated to other “peculiar industries”—perhaps collecting specimens for her herbarium, or sewing paper fascicles together—the women’s work the Exhibition designers classed as “miscellaneous.”

Dickinson’s speaker seems to be looking back over her relationship with Higginson in these verses (her previous letter to him that spring references her fond memories of first picking up Outdoor Papers) but she also suggests that her mentor look back over his own career: the things we thought that we should do. She may also have been thinking of their unspoken agreement that the poems she had shared with him were private property. Earlier that year, Helen Hunt Jackson had written to Dickinson ask her to publish a few poems anonymously in an anthology of contemporary writing. She refused and wrote Higginson asking if he would back her decision and write to Jackson to corroborate her position. She reminds him that his opening lines from “Letter to a Young Contributor” have stayed with her (“Such being the Majesty of the

Art you presume to practice, you can at least take time before dishonoring it”) (Wineapple 208-09). Publishing itself is a “peculiar industry” to Dickinson; it is also a distraction from an ultimate reward, which cannot be plotted out logically. If we read across what Dickinson knew of her father’s party politics and his own struggles to hold onto his property—and if we see her through her own act of distributing property through sharing her home-grown specimens, in a garden at the edge of the Centennial’s flower culture—we come to know a Dickinson of the 1870s who is deeply uncertain about the values, financial and moral, of proprietorship.

Her letter to Higginson offers a system that presents an alternative to the extremes of property versus pauperism; better is a system that assesses labor next to action. (“Labor might fatigue, though it is Action’s rest” was the line that preceded the poem she sent him.) “Words and deeds are quite indifferent modes of the divine energy. Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words,” Emerson wrote in 1844, describing the identity of “the imperfect parts, the fragmentary verses” of the new form of “portfolio poetry” (EL 450). When one writes, one engages the action of the mind’s system. As a balancing force to that action, one also needs to labor, to work one’s garden plot, to clear a way that can later allow for action. Whatever relationship to things will allow for this exchange between labor and action opens the way to that most peculiar, speculative industry: “productive property.”
Figure 4a. Diagram of a fascicle from Mrs. Lincoln Phelps’s *Familiar lectures on botany, practical, elementary and physiological*, (84). *In public domain.*

“...Sciences never generate arts directly out of themselves. An intermediary inventive mind must make the application...”

William James, “Psychology and the Teaching Art,” Talks to Teachers (717)

In 1879, William James speculated about the motives that drive men to philosophize.

“The passion for parsimony, for economy of means in thought, is [...] the philosophic passion par excellence,” James observed, “and any character or aspect of the world’s phenomena which gathers up their diversity into simplicity will gratify that passion” (Writings 954). James called this the sentiment of rationality. Thus far, I have been proposing that the exigence of picturesqueness in America, particularly in the second half of the century, is that it provides the conditions for standardizing such a feeling. The American Centennial, both the literal exhibition and the supposed clarity of “glimpsed” time that developed around it, had capitalized on a mental passion for parsimony while sanctioning cultural extravagance. The activity of popular American picturesqueness that had evolved over the last half century tried to automate the idea of “interest” by guiding citizens to cultivate good taste and by uniting aesthetic and moral principles. The automation of interest was now being inscribed even more deeply through the work of Herbert Spencer and the new psychologists, who articulated the hope of evolutionary progress at the level of the individual body. Importantly, as of the 1880s, that body could be depicted in motion in a way that merged space and time even more fluidly than static images and imagined tours of viewbooks could. Isolated viewers were called upon to exert attention and remediate their “natural” capabilities through innovative forms of visual representation.
John Dewey’s “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy” serves as a fitting opening essay for the anthology in which it originally appeared: *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude* (1917). The Prefatory Note to *Creative Intelligence* (unsigned but presumably representing all eight of the volume’s contributors\(^{123}\)) points a reader to look for the essays’ collective emphases on three points: “the genuineness of the future”; “intelligence as the organ for determining the quality of that future to the extent that it is within human control”; and the existence of “a courageously inventive individual as the bearer of a creatively employed mind” (iii). “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy” is, if nothing else, a model of a “courageously inventive” writer at work. Dewey unapologetically pulls the rug out from under what he perceives to be the primary misunderstanding of a western philosophical canon from the Greeks through the British empiricists: the notion that knowledge is produced through a relationship between a knower and an object to be known.\(^{124}\) This “recovery project” does not call for the revival of philosophy as an academic discipline but for the rediscovery of a connection between philosophical descriptions of experience and the live implications, for social and physical beings in the world, of adopting those descriptions as beliefs. To demonstrate where traditional philosophy, in its turn toward epistemology, has gone awry, Dewey highlights philosophers’ misuse of a few key terms: “experience,” “adjustment,” and “connexion” [sic].

Traditional philosophical problems, Dewey charges, rest upon an abstracted conception of experience. These philosophical models understand experience as an issue of *knowledge*

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\(^{123}\) *Creative Intelligence* includes essays by Dewey, Addison Moore, Harold Chapman Brown, George Mead, Boyd Bode, Henry Waldgrave Stuart, James Hayden Tufts, and Horace Kallen, who organized the anthology, published it through the press where he held an appointment at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and wrote the concluding essay, “Value and Existence in Philosophy, Art, and Religion.” He saw himself as a philosophical descendent of William James, with whom he studied philosophy at Harvard in the early 1900s (Menand 389).

\(^{124}\) The penultimate sentence of the essay, for example, facilitates a full conversion from the kind of known/knower problems that predominate in western theology to a secular foundation for belief. Its tone echoes the belief in an ability to create a future that would seem to define the “pragmatic attitude”: “Faith in the power of intelligence to imagine a future which is the projection of the desirable in the present, and to invent the instrumentalities of its realization, is our salvation” (48).

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assessed by a subject in light of established precedents; that subject particularizes experience into quantifiable facts; the subject’s thoughts are considered entirely separate entities from experience itself. Yet “present conditions of science and social life,” Dewey urges, force us to see experience as an organism’s two-way exchange with an environment, changing it and being changed by it (what William James would later refer to as Dewey’s “biological approach”—a reconceptualization of experience that would form the basis of their shared sense of the value of pragmatic thinking). In a biological model, life becomes an experiment in which one cannot know the full extent of the connections that exist in one’s intercourse with an environment; change occurs through constant inference and reflection. What scholastic philosophy treats as “precedents” or “givens” are, instead, premises subject to variation. The notion of precedents, Dewey contends, is mired in scholastic philosophy’s understanding of connection as a “relation” in logic, a description of a state (e.g. a priori or a posteriori). Yet what we need to solve problems, he insists, are not relations in a formal, logical sense, not terms, but “adequate instrumentalities” for creative thinking about the habits and functions of the mind.125

I have taken the time to outline Dewey’s position because I would like to consider his essay as a kind of imagined future for the territory I cover in this chapter—a promising figment (as when one builds a castle out of grains of sand). This chapter will argue that networked processes of remediation—technological, material, and moral—create the need for a recovery of philosophy. To explain what I mean by this, I have rooted my discussion in a few key visual

125Dewey 40. It would be useful here to think back to my argument in chapter two on the problematic nature of the index as it has been used to pinpoint a sense of immediacy between an observer and a perceived thing. Peirce understood the index as the existential aspect of a sign (Barthes, Elements of Semiology, 36); similarly, most critics have interpreted photography’s evidential power to be a derivation of its “indexicality.” What the current chapter explores in relation to the use of visual evidence in the second half of the nineteenth century, and what the following chapter on The Ambassadors will continue to pursue, is that if we read the nineteenth century as an age that begins to take seriously the prospect of virtual realities, across philosophy, psychology, physiology, and visual culture, where conceptions of active minds begin to approach the vivacity of experience itself, the index loses its existential force.
notational systems that lie at the intersections of philosophy, aesthetics, and technics: Louis Agassiz’s photographic project in Brazil in 1865, Eadweard Muybridge’s method of “descriptive zoopraxography” in the 1890s, and Etienne-Jules Marey’s development of his graphical method in the late 1850s and early 60s. These systems illustrate the way a desire for an ordered and “transparent” teleology—a sense of immediacy—is explored through the hypermediacy of visual culture, with its focus on replicating the mediums and interfaces at hand. Exploring strategies of remediation—in other words, investigating the logics and rhetorics that justify users’ engagements with media—must become part of any attempt to recover the stakes of philosophical thinking in a period rife with technological change.

Dewey’s questions not only reflect how he imagined his generation continued to hold tight to a misunderstanding of philosophy’s territory and applications but also suggest a number of prescient questions for our own era and its continual surges of technological change. Do our instruments shape our teleologies or do our teleologies guide the way we use our instruments? (And how do users convince themselves that their technologies and teleologies are separate?) What are the uses of a philosophy, beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing into the present, that finds it impossible to tell the difference between ideas and tools? Finally, once we begin self-consciously to think our tools in line with our teleologies, what possibilities for creative invention—for surpassing teleological thinking altogether—arise? This chapter offers a narrative that reaches forward and back in time through these questions, moving between pockets of thought from the 1860s through the 1890s. The narrative is not a search for origins. Rather, it explores the reciprocal conceptualizations of mind and media in the second half of the nineteenth century as a way of remediating ongoing discussions about the relationships between philosophy, technology, and aesthetics.

126 Behind all of these models, Joan Richardson reminds me, is Peirce’s diagrammatic thinking.
The first section of the chapter will re-seed ground I covered in the introduction to remind us of the importance of picturesque aesthetics as an illustration of the double logic of remediation, considering ways in which picturesque expectations structure the reception of modern forms of photographic media. In the second section, I will turn to an 1878 essay by William James—one of his first publications—for its critique of what was at that point the reigning psychological theory of mind (Herbert Spencer’s correspondence theory). This essay will also allow us to enter broader intersections across philosophy, psychology, physiology, and visual culture in the second half of the century; reading them through the double logic of remediation that structures our encounters with media, I will illustrate, exposes latent assumptions across those fields. Finally, I will consider how the logic of pragmatism—as an “instrument” that permits a different relationship to mind and media than does the logic of the picturesque—allows us to read the methods of two of the most prolific chronophotographers of the nineteenth century, Etienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge.

Coercive Interests

The only objective theory of reality is coerciveness, in the long run, over thought. Objective facts, Spencer’s outward relations, are real only because they coerce sensation. Any interest which should be coercive on the same massive scale would be eodem jure real.

William James, “Spencer’s Definition of Mind,” 1878

In 1853, when William James was just eleven years old and his family was still living in New York City, he visited the New York Crystal Palace Exhibition (Myers 1140). In the exhibition catalogue for that year, compiled by Horace Greeley, daguerreotypes were given their own heading. When judged, they fell under the jurisdiction of “Jury F—Class X. Xa. Xb. Philosophical Instruments and Products resulting from their Use.” (They were grouped together
with “Maps and Charts, Horology, Surgical Instruments and Appliances.”) Greeley’s printed synopsis gives a sense of the respect the pictures inspired in the judges:

If there be any one department in the whole building which is peculiarly American, and in which the country shines preeminent, it is that of Daguerreotypes…the chemical and processes are, generally speaking, of a more sensitive character, and the apparatus is more convenient and suitable than that of Europe. Our little inventions come into play and aid in saving time and developing a good picture; at last, though perhaps not least, our people are readier in picking up processes and acquiring the mastery of the art than our trans-Atlantic rivals. Not that we understand the science better, but the details of art are acquired in a shorter time by us, while the enormous practice which our operators enjoy combines to render the daguerreotype a necessary contributor to the comforts of life.  

The prospect that the American mind was especially adaptable to new tools was clearly appealing to Greeley—and seemed to have impressed itself upon the judging body as well. The first name in the list of judges for the category is “Prof. Louis Agassiz, Cambridge.” Then age forty six, Agassiz was in the midst of delivering his Lowell lectures on “Natural Science” and held a dual appointment as a professor of geology and zoology at Harvard. The eleven-year-old James who roamed the Crystal Palace exhibition halls in 1853 could have had no idea of the extent Agassiz’s judgment—on issues that reached far beyond (yet never left behind) the daguerreotype’s possibilities—would influence the trajectory of his professional career.

While William James studied at Harvard’s Lawrence Scientific School (1861-1864), he enrolled in Agassiz’s lecture on natural history, which was derived from the Lowell lectures he

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127 Art and Industry as represented in the Exhibition at the Crystal Palace New York, 1853-4, showing the progress and state of the various useful and esthetic pursuits. Revised and edited by Horace Greeley. New York: Redfield, 1853, my emphasis.
delivered the previous decade. Among Agassiz’s achievements by 1861, he was the founder of Harvard’s Museum of Comparative Zoology, which opened in 1860; he was also lauded as one of the discoverers of the Ice Age. Agassiz’s explanation for the Ice Age exposed his deep-seated commitment to the idea of creation. Convinced that periods of creation followed periods of catastrophe, he was committed to providing evidence that there had been glacial action in the Southern Hemisphere as well as the Northern Hemisphere, illustrating that the Ice Age was actually part of a divine design that had set the stage for a new period of creation (Menand 119).

In 1865, Agassiz organized an expedition to collect proof of his theory. Though James had already quit Lawrence and entered the medical school, when he heard that Agassiz was recruiting students for the trip, he signed up. He would join a team that ultimately included six professional naturalists and six unpaid volunteers.

There are hints of James’s early fascination with Agassiz in a letter home to Cambridge in 1861, the year James decided to leave William Morris Hunt’s studio in Newport and abandon a career as a painter. On Christmas day, James wrote to his family,

I had a long talk with one of his [Agassiz’s] students the other night and saw for the first time how a naturalist could feel about his trade in the same way that an artist does about his. For instance, Agassiz would rather take wholly uninstructed people ‘for he has to unteach them all that they had learnt.’ He does not let them look into a book for a long while, what they learn they must learn for themselves, and be masters of it all. The consequence is that he makes naturalists of them, he does not merely cram them, and this student, (he had been there 2 years) said he felt ready to go anywhere in the world now with nothing but his note book and study out anything quite alone. He [Agassiz] must be a great teacher. (Correspondence 4, 63)
To James, Agassiz’s appeal was that he was more than a collector—he seemed to be a visionary. He saw “the whole picture” in a mass of facts. Agassiz’s expedition set off for Rio de Janeiro on April 1st, 1865; the group arrived in Brazil three weeks later.128

James’s career as a naturalist and a collector lasted eight months. In addition to finding himself plagued by a case of smallpox, which lead to a temporary period of blindness that made him virtually useless to the expedition, by December James’s skepticism of Agassiz’s methods began to outweigh his fascination with his professor’s vibrancy and gusto.129 James knew that, at least to Agassiz mind, the smoking gun for his ice age theory was a particular piece of visual evidence: “If he finds glacier marks on the mountains behind Rio, he will not need to go to the Andes, and maybe then not to the Amazon. Still, omnia exent in mysterium,” he wrote to his parents on his last night at sea before arriving in Brazil (Correspondence 4, 102).

Agassiz and his wife Elizabeth published the records Elizabeth kept during the trip in 1867 as A Journey in Brazil. The book is dedicated to the chief financial backer and namesake of the expedition, Nathaniel Thayer, “the friend who made it possible to give this journey the character of a scientific expedition.” Across sixteen chapters describing the geography, geology, natural resources, native population, and social culture of Brazil, first in Manaus and then further south in Rio de Janiero, one would never have guessed at the expedition’s original rationale.

Buried deep in chapter thirteen, reference to it receives but a single subheading: “Absence of

128By 1865, as Louis Menand has noted, Brazil was the only remaining nation in the Western Hemisphere that officially permitted slavery on state land (Metaphysical Club 133). One can guess that Agassiz expressed sympathy with this practice when he went to meet the Brazilian emperor.

129Preparing to set sail for Brazil earlier that spring, James remarked in another letter to his family that Agassiz devised projects “as if he had sherman’s [sic] army at his disposal instead of the 10 novices he really has” (Correspondence, vol. 4, 98-99). Early on, he began to recognize the degree to which Agassiz’s findings depended on his team of collectors—though, seemingly, the professor was less aware of their participation when it came to crediting his findings: “Agassiz is too happy for anything, I fear the gods are bent upon his ruin—Since we arrived at Para 14 days ago he has found 46 new species of fish, and a total number of fishes greater than the collection wh. Spix & Martius [two Germans, a naturalist and a botanist/physician who were in Brazil from 1817-20] made in the whole four years of their sojourn!” James wrote while traveling down the Xingu River. “The reason is that he gets everyone to help him.” James poked fun at the finding in a sketch in his journal, showing Agassiz at the head of a parade of natives waving a banner, “46,000,000 species.”
glacial marks.” In the body of the text, the point receives a few solitary sentences: “I shall be asked at once whether I have found here also the glacial inscriptions,—the furrows, striae, and polished surfaces so characteristic of the ground over which glaciers have travelled. I answer, not a trace of them; for the simple reason that there is not a natural rock-surface to be found throughout the whole Amazonian Valley.” This is, Agassiz reasons, because with the torrential rain and intense sun. The marks cannot be preserved on the rocks in the way they have been in colder climates. In his unswerving insistence on the completeness of science’s grand narrative, he embraces a total absence of visual evidence with the same intensity as if his theory had already bore itself out. In a footnote Agassiz insists that traveling even further south will yield the evidence he needs. “A survey of the more southern provinces of Brazil, extending to the temperate zone, where the combined effects of a tropical sun and of tropical rains must naturally be wanting, will, I trust, remove all the difficulties still attending this explanation. The glacial phenomena, with all their characteristic features, are already known to cover the southernmost parts of South America…The knowledge of these deposits [the clay he believed had been compressed by the pressure of glaciers] will definitely settle the question ; and either prove the correctness of my generalizations or show their absurdity. I feel no anxiety as to the result,” the note concludes. “I only long for a speedy removal of all doubts” (“Physical History of the Amazons” in Journey 427).

The trip did give him the opportunity to explore another theory, however. A central component of Agassiz’s theism was his belief in polygenism: different races were in fact different species, and formed a racial hierarchy that was not subject to change over time. He made a plan to photograph Brazil’s mixed race populations in order to prove that miscegenation, contrary to what he called the “normal state of the races,” would result in a loss of fertility and
the surfacing of atavistic traits. In short, he planned to show that miscegenation was
accompanied by the risk of continual degeneration for the Caucasians at the top of that
corner.\footnote{Machado 36, Menand 133. Maria Machado, in her pioneering bi-lingual edition of James’s collected letters, drawings, and diaries entries from Brazil, notes that one use of the Thayer expedition photos might have been to validate a plan to ship American blacks to tropical climates with which they were more “ecologically compatible”—a proposal Agassiz formulated when he was consulted by the National Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission.} Agassiz’s ideas were based largely on the method of one of the most prominent
American anthropologists of the first half of the century, Samuel Morton. Agassiz thought he
could do with photos what Morton had done with human skulls from archaeological digs: use
them to reveal an anthropological hierarchy.\footnote{See Menand 102. Morton’s skulls had been arranged in a descending order, by volume: “Caucasian, Mongolian, Malay, Native American, and Negro.” Marta Braun has observed that Muybridge’s Animal Locomotion is arranged in a similar sociological hierarchy, from animals, to women and children, to white male nudes.} Agassiz hired a professional photographer based
in Rio to take the photographs; by the end of the trip in 1867, three series of images existed. One
contained a group of all portraits; a second displayed studies of Africans (whom Agassiz thought
represented “pure” ethnic types) in which the sitters posed nude and were photographed from
front, back, and profile views; the third was a collection of photos that came out of the makeshift
studio of a student member of the expedition, Walter Hunnewell; it documented hybrid racial
types (Agassiz called them “half-breeds). The discussion of the photographs receives little
attention in the body of the text. Yet the photos clearly inform the elaborate verbal descriptions
Agassiz composes in Appendix V, “Permanence of Characteristics in Different Human Species.”
“What struck me at first view, in seeing Indians and Negroes together,” he says of looking across
the portraits, “was the marked difference in the relative proportions of the different parts of the
body.” What the missing photographs enable—and, in fact, strengthen, even in their absence—is
a precise verbal comparison of statures, torso shapes, and hair types. “A thorough study of the
different nations of cross-breeds inhabiting the Amazonian Valley would require years of
observation and patient examination,” Agassiz admits. “I was forced to be satisfied with such
data as I could gather alongside my other labors, and to limit myself in the study of the races to what I would call the natural history method; viz. the comparison of individuals of different kinds with one another, just as naturalists compare specimens of different species.” What Agassiz called the “natural history method” was placing new evidence into a predetermined set of classes of development—a classificatory system based in verbal description that overpowered the visual evidence itself.132

The paradigms that guided Agassiz’s understanding of natural history were based on a belief that the world mirrored the design of a supernatural mind: the evolution of races demonstrated the dominance of ideal or fixed categories over change reminiscent of time immemorial when God preordained the history of the world. The appearance of individual members of the native population, Agassiz believed, could tell the story of an entire race. Photography captured the persistence of identifiable characteristics, providing a perfect replication of traits he took as affirmation of his theories. “[A] whole class of facts is forcing itself into notice, with new strength of evidence,” Holmes had insisted when he wrote about the stereograph and the stereoscope (“Doings of the Sunbeam” 274). The irony was that the evidence did not dictate a new class of facts; it was fitted to an old one. In this sense, too, visual evidence was continuously subject to remediation.

132 Journey 529. Though he was comfortable offering detailed descriptions of the naked bodies—comparing, in just one example, the width of the breasts of Negro women and Indian women—he was shyer about describing “White” bodies, whose features he claimed it was unnecessary for him to recall to contrast what was observed about features of “the Indians and Negroes.”
Picturesque Problematics and Strategies of Remediation

Even when reference is made to a lens or a mirror, language is sometimes used which suggests that the writer’s naiveté is sufficiently gross to treat these physical factors as if they were engaged in perceiving the [object]…To regard the eye as primarily a knower, an observer, of things, is as crass as to assign that function to a camera.

“The Need for Recovery of Philosophy”

When we unearth the logic behind picturesque aesthetics, we begin to realize that it is deeply uncomfortable with the nature of the relationships between observer and observed, knower and known. Should the mediators that shape experience be exposed, treated as totally transparent, or ignored as if they do not exist at all? (Bruno Latour calls this predicament an “iconoclasm.”) I have been suggesting that the logic and rhetoric of the picturesque highlights a persistent and inescapable human need to invent avenues—in the form of prosthetic tools—for mediation between selves and their environments. For William Gilpin, “the high priest of the picturesque” and the coiner of the term “picturesque beauty,” no matter how many times one captured the natural world in a picture, nature itself remained an ideal that was “unapproachable”—to recall Emerson’s term:

The case is, the immensity of nature is beyond human comprehension. She works on a vast scale; and, no doubt, harmoniously, if her scheme could be comprehended. The artist, in the mean time, is confined to space. He lays down his little rules, therefore, which he calls the principles of picturesque beauty, merely to adapt such diminutive parts of nature’s surfaces to his own eye, as comes within its scope.\textsuperscript{133}

For Gilpin, the artist is “confined to space” while the whole of nature is seemingly extraspatial. As human beings continue to approach the “vast scale” of nature in the nineteenth century—especially through the avenues for research opened by the circulation of what Joan Richardson refers to as the “Darwinian information” at the end of the 1850s—the artist and the scientist alike

\textsuperscript{133}Tour of the Wye (1782) qtd. in Hussey 113
began to refuse to accept this confinement. What Gilpin acknowledged as “little rules” would morph into a desire for vast statistical schemas.

Media environments also have their own evolutionary tendencies. The law of remediation asserts itself. During the mid-nineteenth century the rise of photography did not subvert or alter picturesque compositions; it relied upon and sharpened them. By the 1850s, photographic panoramas had become an established genre, yet were still distinctly classical and premodern in their display of an overarching vantage point of a distant prospect, which repeated a point of view derived from the landscape paintings typified by Lorrain (Braun 120, Grundberg 9). In the United States, the genre of the photographic panorama flourished. Within this genre, panoramas of the city of San Francisco illustrated the picturesque ideal *par excellence* and began to constitute a category onto themselves. The height of San Francisco’s rolling hills allowed photographers a bird’s eye view of the city’s expanding population, new architectural ventures, and industrial growth. Between the early 1850s and the late 1870s, at least fifty panoramic views of the city were created (an impressive number given the elaborate task of setting up such a shot). The earliest photos, taken in 1851, were made from California Hill, all within about 100 meters of each other. When the *Daily Alta California* reviewed what was thought to be the first panorama from the hill, a five-plate daguerreotype by Sterling McIntyre, the reporter hesitated even to call it a “picture”—it was “nearly perfect” and “[could] not be disputed.” “[I]t carries with it evidence which God himself gives through the unerring light of the world’s great luminary. The people of Europe have never yet seen a picture of this, to them, most wonderful city. This will tell its own story, and with the sun testify to its truth.” As David Harris has

134 January 19 1851 qtd. in Harris 38. Interestingly, early lithographic panoramas emerge at the same time as the maps produced by the engineers of the Coast Survey. Rather than a view that looks out to the water, these maps present the inverse of that view, one that looks from the sea to the city. Harris’s text contains a copy of Joseph Britton’s 1852 *imagined* bird’s eye view of the city from the coast, “giv[ing] a sense of hierarchy to an otherwise
noted, this vantage point enabled a simultaneous view of the various elements that contributed to the development of the city: “the relationship of the harbour to the centre, the hilly topography that posed such a challenge to development, and the interdependent growth of separate commercial and residential districts.” In general, photographic panoramas had two primary assets: they offered a detailed topographic account of a cityscape and promoted a civic vision—functions which it is, in fact, difficult to separate. Panoramic accounts were artifacts that helped to concretize past views of the city in a Californian’s memory: “With the extensive immigration and increase of the inhabitants of this place, the outline of the city every few months must necessarily vary considerably, but with the fires to destroy the parts built and still further alter the appearance, it is almost impossible for a resident to recollect some of the quarters.” As symbols of a desire to preserve an unrecoverable past, they offered built-in spaces for reflection.\(^\text{135}\)

In June of 1877, Eadweard Muybridge—an English immigrant who had made a name for himself through his photographs of Yosemite Valley a decade earlier—began what was then the most ambitious attempt to photograph the city to date: an eleven-plate albumen print panorama. The following summer, he perfected his method and revised his frames into thirteen connected views, mounted on paper and backed by a single linen sheet. The full panorama stretched to more than 17 feet. Whereas earlier panoramas often captured the development of the city in 90 degree or 180 degree views, by the late 1870s the burgeoning city demanded a wider frame. Situated in the center of the city, rather than on the outskirts as earlier shots had been, Muybridge’s panorama encompassed a complete circular rotation; such views transformed the panorama into a genre that now distinctly broke from conventional prospect scenes that could be indifferent grid” (64).

\(^{135}\)Braun 20; Harris 38-42; Daily Herald, September 27, 1851, qtd. in Harris 42.
perceived by the unaided eye. Yet the 180-degree view was presented in a linear fashion to the public (the first and last plates had slightly overlapping scenes), allowing many viewers to forget that the scene itself was not one flat expanse taken simultaneously. In this sense, despite the rather jarring complications of constructing his visual field, Muybridge’s panorama permitted his audience to imagine the city as a unified whole. 360-degree photographic panoramas animated an old philosophical problem: there was a disjunction between the image seen by the artist and the image presented to a viewer. In the case of Muybridge’s San Francisco panorama, the linear presentation undermined the circular view. Even though the frames lined up spatially, the time lapse between when each frame was photographed disrupted the seamlessness of the presentation for the observant viewer: the different angles of the shadows in each frame reveal that the images could not have been photographed as a cohesive whole.

To capture San Francisco on this scale, Muybridge had an advantage that had not been available to his predecessors. He and fellow photographer Carleton Watkins (whom Muybridge viewed as his primary rival) received ample financial support from the tycoons who had backed the construction of the trans-continental railroad: Leland Stanford, David Colton, Charles Crocker, and Mark Hopkins. In fact, Muybridge and Watkins stood on the shoulders of these railroad moguls in more ways than one. All four businessmen had built new mansions along California Street, between Taylor and Stockton Streets, earlier that decade. The area came to be known as Nob Hill. In June of 1877, Muybridge lugged his camera, tripod, dozens of fragile glass plates, the coating and developing materials (a mix of gun powder and ether for coating, water, and a wash of silver nitrate to sensitize the plates), and a tent that would serve as a darkroom to Hopkins’ home. He ascended the unfinished turret on his roof—then the highest

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136 Twenty years later, Robert Louis Stevenson would call it “the hill of palaces.” “It is there that the millionaires are gathered together vying with each other in display” (Stevenson qtd in Braun 115).
point in the city—and set up shop. On July 22, 1877, after the publication of the first of Muybridge’s panoramas, the *Alta California* reported,

> Let us imagine a small ant wishing to get a comprehensive view of a painted Japanese dinner-plate. He would succeed if he could get a thimble upright in the middle of the plate, then climb to the top of the thimble and look by turns in every direction. The ant, in that hypothesis, occupies a position similar to that of the man in San Francisco, which represents the saucer, and the palatial dwelling of Mrs Mark Hopkins, on California Street, is the thimble…it may safely be said that the homes of more than a quarter of a million people within this saucer-like panorama, 50 miles long and 15 wide are distinctly visible from the corner of California and Mason streets, 381 feet above ordinary high tide. (qtd. In Harris 42, 49)

The picturesque panorama’s persistence in the mid-nineteenth century was grounded in a position of power represented not only in the height and stateliness of the camera’s point of view, then, but in the photographer’s direct access the most exclusive real estate in the city.\(^{138}\)

> The critics’ responses to Muybridge’s panoramas suggest that they were easily synthesized into the popular picturesque ethos of “educating the eye.”\(^{139}\)

\(^{137}\)Navigating this arrangement was perhaps less of a challenge to Muybridge than other photographers used to working out of an indoor studio, given that Muybridge began his career as a traveling photographer operating out of a canvas-covered stage coach. The coach was led by a horse and bore the photographer’s logo, a camera with wings set against a beaming sun, displaying his pseudonym, “Helios’ Flying Studio.” The same month Muybridge was working from the Hopkins’ home, Watkins was creating a six-part stereo panorama from Stanford’s grounds next door, and soon began a second from the roof of Charles Crocker’s house (Braun 121).

\(^{138}\)Ironically, as Rebecca Solnit has illustrated, at the same time that Muybridge captured his first 1877 panorama, the city was on the verge of chaos, a result of the wage cuts issued by the Central Pacific Railroad earlier that month. In the *Alta California* on July 22nd, the smaller headline about Muybridge’s panorama was overshadowed by news of the “Great Strike” sweeping the nation. Some protestors threatened to burn down the hundreds of Chinese laundries throughout San Francisco under the impression that low wages and job scarcity were a result of the influx of Chinese immigrants (*River of Shadows* 162-167). Of course, the unrest in the streets would hardly have been captured in the view from 381 feet atop Nob Hill.

\(^{139}\)One of the places this ethos is expressed is in Price’s *An Essay on the Picturesque*: “When an uninitiated person was shown a picture made up of objects in which these qualities predominated, he would at first be amazed by their ugliness. But gradually he might notice that they were selected for some quality or character; for the variety
picturesque scene create interest in a landscape that was previously uninteresting when passed by
in person, but studying landscapes that qualified as picturesque would train one to recognize
other examples of such scenes while traveling. Even the most seemingly rugged or wild terrain
was to be assessed in relation to the way scenes like it had been presented by the masters of
landscape painting. When the *Alta California* celebrated Muybridge’s photographic landscapes it
noted that “among the many wonderful features of our city, the panoramic character of the city
is not the least deserving of attention, though it has been overlooked, at least by people
generally, until Muybridge discovered and utilized its artistic value.” The photographic
panorama initiates a viewer to the city through a picturesque tradition, highlighting the
insufficiency of any single view and the image’s power to provoke the imagination.

Before creating his 360-degree panorama, Muybridge’s first shots of the city had been
published as a set of stereo cards in a series called *San Francisco Views*. They included at least
400 different shots. Even more intentionally than panoramas, stereo cards were understood as
educational aids, presenting the world in an easily “reproducible, consumable, and fundamentally
knowable” form. These few inch cards, which sold for $1.50 per dozen, highlighted features such
as shimmering bodies of water, sunsets, moonlight, and—that feature which Ruskin felt was the
central component of any landscape—clouds. (Helen Hunt Jackson was drawn to Muybridge’s
skies. She compared them to Turner’s—the highest possible praise.) The far-off views of the
stereo cards were framed with trees to direct a viewer’s eye, reminiscent of the curved, soft edges
created by the Claude Glass. Muybridge would have become well acquainted with all these

produced by sudden and irregular deviation, the strongly marked peculiarity of their appearance, the manner in
which the rugged and broken parts caught the light, and the contrast that such lights presented with deep shadows, or
for the rich and mellow tints produced by various stages of decay. Such objects as the person had previously passed
by without observing, *he might now begin to look at with increasing interest*, remembering how Ruysdael or
Teniers, Waterlo or Hobbema, Salvador or even Claude had treated, or might have treated, such a scene. *At length he
would scarcely be able to stir abroad without recognizing scenes and objects with which pictures had familiarized
him*” (14, italics added).

140 July 22, 1877 qtd. in Braun 124, italics added.
visual conventions during his earlier career as a bookseller when he sold panoramic images by one of the creators of the commercial panorama, Dewitt Baxter, engravings by Henry Payne, the creator of *Payne’s Universum, or the Pictorial World* (1844), as well as landscapes by a number of prominent photographers.¹⁴¹

Nearly a decade before creating his panorama of San Francisco, in February of 1868, Muybridge had traveled into the heart of Yosemite Valley; the San Francisco *Bulletin* described the photos he took there: “Across some of these falls, the arching iris is seen, colorless but suggestive, like the beauty of a dead face—the form is there, only the tint and play of nature are lacking. The cloud effects are caught with capital success. Around and across some of the granite peaks hang wreaths of vapor, transparent, and full of airy lightness.” Such effects were more often seen in oil painting, the San Francisco *Morning Call* observed, than in photographs (Braun 142, 143). The majesty of Yosemite Valley became comprehensible not because of the innate value of its exposure in a photograph but because it was presented in a digestible form—one that reified pictorial conventions and aesthetic arguments about what pictures should do that were already in place. Now overshadowed by his study of animal locomotion, which I will turn to next, the public approval of Muybridge’s picturesque landscape scenes, made the rest of his career possible.

¹⁴¹Braun 46, 34, 35-36. He was also familiar with the work of the Scottish photographer George Washington Wilson, the photomontage/morality play by Oscar Gustav Rejlander, *Two Ways of Life*, and the work of Henry Peach Robinson, who had absorbed Ruskin’s admiration for the Pre-Raphaelites. These landscape photographers often achieved their desired effects through combination prints generated by overlaying multiple negatives—darkroom revisions to which Muybridge was no stranger. “To achieve the effect of moonlight on water, he shot straight into the sun, creating a round, luminous sphere in an otherwise underexposed negative; for a crescent moon, he would paint over part of the sphere before printing. He would ink out parts of the composition that he felt interfered with his composition, making them disappear from the final print, and he would retouch counters or shapes that he felt should be emphasized” (Braun 38). Moreover, Braun’s observation that Muybridge had an innate knack for pictorial composition leads a viewer to understand how he was constantly thinking across media—the perspectival depth he achieved early on in his stereo cards by composing diagonals that led into the distance was a technique that carried over into his panoramas.
The Hope of a Science: Eadweard Muybridge’s Descriptive Zoopraxography and the Emergence of the “New Psychology”

The popularity of the panoramic landscape and its synthesis with traditional visual logics of picturesque landscape painting belies the depth of the dispute in which photographers such as Muybridge were embroiled by the late 1850s. The question posed in learned societies and journals across the country was, “Is photography a tool best suited to serve the arts or the sciences?” One place this question manifested itself was in a debate that unfurled as Muybridge was piecing together his first panorama of San Francisco in July of 1877. That summer, Leland Stanford recruited him to photograph one of his race horses, supposedly to settle an argument with a colleague about animal locomotion. The photograph was to provide an answer to the following question: do all four of a horse’s legs ever leave the ground at the same time as it runs? Muybridge went to Palo Alto to begin to photograph Stanford’s horse, Occident. While the prospect of capturing the animal in motion was widely praised once the press got wind of it, the quality of Muybridge’s original photograph was too poor to use for publication. It was however, enough to serve as the basis for a watercolor painting Muybridge commissioned by John Koch, who painted Occident by projecting the photographic negative onto a canvas, tracing its outlines, and filling in its details. The photograph itself provided “proof” that, in fact, all the horses legs did leave the ground at a particular point during its gait—not, as artists had depicted, with all four legs sprawled outward but when they bent inward and were gathered beneath the body. The irony of the discovery was that the only way to heighten the visibility of the finding was to turn to pre-photographic techniques via Koch’s watercolor depiction. Later that summer, the ‘Rambling Writer’ column of the San Francisco Post urged,

Let us look at this triumph of an art seemingly in its infancy. The driver, Mr. Tennant…is not driving a horse; he is sitting for his photograph. He is stiff, unnatural; he does not
encourage his horse; he would lean forward were he driving at the rate of 36 feet per second; he would be alive with movement and the ‘hie yar’ would, as it were, ring in our ears…Decidedly, Mr. Tennant, you were not driving Occident at the rate of 36 feet per second when you sat for that photo…And here’s the rub. Either that camera did lie, or Stanford has got the most extraordinary horse in the world…and he can make more money by exhibiting it than by trotting it.\(^{142}\)

However, a week later, the *Post’s* skepticism was overshadowed by a report in the San Francisco *Morning Call*, which took the image’s lack of intuitive accuracy as a substantiation of its authenticity. The picture, the *Call’s* reporter announced, “has more the appearance of a sudden stop from motion than the reverse…[but] had an artist [a painter] desired to exemplify speed, he would never have shown a horse in the attitude the photograph displays, and this is the best possible proof of its correctness.”\(^{143}\) The general public was itching to accept the idea that a photograph would solve a visual puzzle that had eluded artists up until this point. The prospect of photographic immediacy—an issue not only of the reduced time needed to capture and reproduce a picture but of the heightened sensations the picture might offer a viewer—produced a phantom image hovering behind the flawed material product Muybridge was able to offer the public eye; the “truth” he claimed about Occident was not immediately visible, but it might be in future attempts. Viewers were encouraged to see not only the photograph at hand but all the finer future replications of it that might be possible.

It is not an overstatement to say that faith in a logic of photographic immediacy not only supported but *shaped* the types of scientific inquiries that would arise from the 1860s through the

\(^{142}\) August 3, 1877 qtd in Braun 130. In fact, in perhaps one of the earliest cases of what we now call “photoshopping,” the driver’s face had been cut out from the photograph and attached to the watercolor of the horse after the rest of the scene had been painted by Koch.

\(^{143}\) 10 August 1877 qtd in Braun 131.
end of the century. Between his panoramic shots and his studies of animal locomotion, Muybridge became a household name by the late 1870s, beginning to give lectures on animal locomotion and the instrument he used to represent it, the zoopraxiscope—which, as Muybridge’s assistant Thomas Anschutz described it, “shows the object not as a continuous smear but shows one clear view every 2 to 3 inches of advance” (qtd. in Braun 184). In 1881, Muybridge travelled to Paris to give his first lecture outside the United States at the invitation of the famous physiologist Etienne-Jules Marey. Though his audience was relatively small, it included a number of pioneering minds in a variety of fields, among them the photographer Nadar (the pseudonym of Gaspard-Félix Tournachon), painter Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier, and physicist Hermann von Helmholtz.

A decade after that, in 1891, Muybridge found himself before an audience of 500 people in Berlin at the Urania Scientific Society, an association that aimed to make science accessible to the general public (Adam 19). His monograph, *Descriptive Zoopraxography* (1893), was created to further this purpose. Another secondary purpose seems to have been to use it to advertize the 781 photographic plates in his esteemed *Animal Locomotion* series (1887), the result of a study overseen by a professional board of faculty members from the University of Pennsylvania, which funded the project. Yet despite the constant reminders of the link to the *Animal Locomotion* project, the text of *Descriptive Zoopraxography* contains no photographs at all—not even lithographs of the photographs produced. The subtitle of Muybridge’s *Descriptive Zoopraxography* contains no photographs at all—not even lithographs of the photographs produced.145

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144 Among the members were the painter Thomas Eakins, neurologist Francis Decrum, anatomist Joseph Leidy, physiologist Harrison Allen, and engineer William Marks. The committee was chaired by University of Pennsylvania President William Pepper.

145 The only photo, in fact, appears next to the title page, where Muybridge placed a Whitmanesque self-portrait. (He looks a bit like the American bard in his later years, with his bushy white hair and ample beard.) Beneath the portrait is his signature, “Faithfully Yours, Eadweard Muybridge.” Also like Whitman, Muybridge was a rather shameless self-promoter. An extensive list of *Animal Locomotion* subscribers bookends *Descriptive Zoopraxography*. Before the body text, Muybridge presents ten pages of facsimilie of the signatures of the subscribers. On the first page alone are the signatures of some of the leading military and political figures of the latter half of the nineteenth-
Zoopraxography, “An Elementary Treatise in Animal Locomotion,” suggests a demand for distilling the ground-breaking contributions that Muybridge’s studies in animal locomotion would make to science and art for a popular audience. It offers instructions for how to use the fifty paper disks provided in the monograph, which, if deployed correctly, would provide “a semblance of the original movements of life.” This low-tech mode of using a handmade zoopraxiscope was more accessible than the motorized zoopraxiscope Muybridge used in his studio at the University of Pennsylvania (see figures 5 and 6).

To the end of Descriptive Zoopraxography, Muybridge adds an appendix of “Abbreviated Criticisms” that take up more a third of the whole text. They begin with an account from the Illustrated London News:

On Monday last, in the theatre of the ROYAL INSTITUTION, a select and representative audience assembled to witness a series of the most interesting demonstrations of Animal Locomotion given by Mr. Muybridge […] Mr. Muybridge exhibited a large number of photographs of horses galloping, leaping, etc. […] By the aid of an astonishing apparatus called a ZOOPRAXISCOPE, which may be briefly described as a magic lantern run mad (with method in the madness), the animals walked, cantered, ambled, galloped, and leaped over hurdles in a perfectly natural and lifelike manner. I am afraid that, had Muybridge exhibited his ZOOPRAXISCOPE three hundred years ago, he would have been burned as a wizard […] After the horses came dogs, deer, and wild bulls. Finally

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146 Users were instructed to cut out the paper disks from the booklet and to make thin long cutouts extending out from the center of the disk toward each of the images on the outside edge. When one pinned the disk on a handle so that it could spin and stood in front of a mirror, looking though the holes and staring at the reflection of the pictures, the images would appear to connect and depict locomotion fluidly.
man appeared (in instantaneous photography) on the scene, and ran, leaped, and turned back somersaults to admiration.147

The phrasing—“After the horses came dogs, deer, and wild bulls. Finally man appeared on the scene…”—suggests a kind of hybrid narrative that merges the story of Noah’s Ark with a creationist account of human evolution. Moreover, the excerpt validates the new media of the zoopraxiscope by remediating it through one of the most popular forms of mass media in the first half of the century, the magic lantern, just as the panoramic photograph had been validated through yet understood to surpass oil painting. Most of the accounts in the appendix take up some version of this remedial refrain: the zoopraxiscope was presented as the next step in the long-standing effort by human beings to depict animal locomotion. It took up the same theoretical problem but its apparatus was thought to offer “that rare desideratum,” as the Philadelphia Times stressed, “—something new” (10).148

Another excerpt Muybridge selects from the Illustrated London News about the lecture he gave at the Royal Society in 1882 describes—in language lifted from Muybridge’s lecture syllabus—the way the zoopraxiscope “afforded the spectator an opportunity of studying by synthesis, the facts of motion which are also demonstrated by analysis” (Appendix A, 9). This synthesis was not presented through the images themselves as much as it was through the processes of naming and categorizing motion that the images suggested. Muybridge, who lacked training in physiology or psychology, thought about representation primarily in mimetic terms: if presented with accurate models of movement, the human

147Zoopraxography 5-6. In attendance at this lecture, the account notes, were the Prince and Princess of Wales, Princess Victoria, Louise, and Maud, and the Duke of Edinburgh, as well as “Professors Huxley, Gladstone, and Tyndall”; “and last, not least, Lord Tennyson, poet laureate.”

148The dozens of excerpts Muybridge chooses for the appendix to Descriptive Zoopraxography aim to establish a few common points: the brilliance of those in attendance at Muybridge’s lectures, the instructional value of Muybridge’s studies for correcting our past misconceptions of animal positioning, the universal appeal of the studies—across nations and across artistic and scientific disciplines. Most noticeably, however, are the selections that give accounts of the roused, enthusiastic audience at Muybridge’s various lectures—in some cases following the audience’s initial disbelief of what they were seeing. There was “frequent and hearty applause” from his audiences, and multiple accounts note their “delight” at the moving pictures. According to London’s The Photographic News, Muybridge’s performance inspired “a warmth as hearty as it was spontaneous” and Dublin’s The Daily Express reported, “seldom have we seen so much genuine admiration and enthusiasm displayed as were evoked by Mr. Muybridge’s illustrations” (DZ 28, 19, 25, 29). The enthusiasm of the crowd had in it the note of religious fervor.
mind would mirror them—one simply needed to perfect the models. In his eyes, using his descriptive project as a counterpart to his photographic project strengthened the value of his photographic evidence.

Below the topic headings the syllabus reads, “After the various methods of locomotion have been demonstrated by analysis [by breaking down fluid gaits into individual movements], they will be demonstrated synthetically by the zoopraxiscope.” The first part of the pamphlet provides a detailed description of the complex set-up of the studio at the University of Pennsylvania where his experiments in animal locomotion took place and then offers descriptions and drawn diagrams and engravings of the apparatuses used.\footnote{The apparatus illustrations include “a lateral battery” of twenty four cameras, images of the portable electro-photographic expositors in front of each camera—consisting of a circulating rubber band that contained two apertures that would line up with the camera’s lens and each of which is connected through an independent wire and magnet to a central electric battery, an illustration of a photographic camera divided into twelve compartments, each with identical lenses of the same construction and focal length, and multiple shots of the exposing motor to which all of the independent circuits are connected; another diagram shows all of the connections in miniature between the rows of cameras and the exposing motor as they would have been arranged around a studio.} He also includes a reproduction of a chronographic record showing how he measured the time between photographic exposures using a chronograph, in which two parallel lines of vibrations are recorded, one recording the vibrations of a tuning fork at 100 vibrations per second, which were divided in tenths and calculated to 1/1,000 of a second, and the other line of vibrations indicating when the vibration was intensified at each photographic exposure; these chronographic records were kept to ensure that the exposures are taken at equal time intervals from each camera. Yet while he describes his instruments carefully in the body text of Descriptive Zoopraography, Muybridge admits that the technological apparatuses are not the “subject proper of this monograph” (26). Muybridge’s mode of analysis draws our attention away from the production and specificity of the visual evidence at hand and towards imagining the rules of motion they suggest.

The primary aim of Descriptive Zoopraography is to aid the lexicographer. Muybridge begins by defining the difference between the two primary “units” of animal locomotion: in a step, support is “transferred, wholly, or in part, from one member [of the body] to another”; in a stride, “all of the
supporting members of the body [are]…consecutively and regularly thrust in the direction of movement until they hold the same relative positions in respect to each other as they did at the commencement of the notation.” Forms of quadruped motion are described from the slowest to the fastest movements, with “the walk,” “the amble,” “the trot,” and “the rack,” identified as divided strides, and “the canter,” “the gallop,” and “the leap” as undivided strides. “A search through the dictionaries published at the time of writing, and accessible to the Author, fail to discover a correct definition of ‘the gallop.’ This motion is in America frequently miscalled ‘the run,’ and its execution ‘running,’ but no corresponding explanation of the word is given by any lexicographer” (42). Not one of these movements is illustrated with engravings of Muybridge’s photographs. Moreover, the illustrations of the animals in motion, all of which are simplistic black outlines underscored with a caption reading “Some Consecutive Phases of…”, do not receive nearly as much detail as the sketches of the apparatuses. In the zoopraxiscope circles included in the booklet “many of the original phases of movement are omitted on account of the optical law which in the construction of the zoopraxiscope requires that the number of illustrations must bear a certain relationship to the number of perforations through which they are viewed.”150 Despite his desire to publicize the 20,000 photographic plates that made up animal locomotion, from a pictorial standpoint the monograph was only a shadow of the original project. What the public audience reading Descriptive Zoopraxography would gain were clearer terms and definitions of movement that could be applied to explain the rules that govern motion—as a phenomenon that exists independently of human perception—not clearer pictures. Visual precision was sacrificed in order to articulate the way the zoopraxiscope expressed an “optical law.” The lines were clearly maintained between the knower (the viewer) and the known (the laws of optics and of locomotion). What Muybridge seemingly did not intend, but what Descriptive Zoopraxography suggests, is that language was a more pliable intermediary between knowers and laws than photographic evidence.

150 My italics. There are thirteen phases of movement displayed on each circle.
The zoologist and evolutionary biologist Ray Lankester, in his review of Muybridge’s lecture in *Nature* magazine, observes, “Many of the pictures have great—indeed, astonishing—beauty. The interest which they present from the scientific point of view is three-fold.” First, Lankester writes, “they are important as examples of a nearly perfect method of investigation by photographic and electrical appliances.” Secondly, “they have also a great value on account of the actual facts of natural history and physiology which they record.” Thirdly, he adds, they have “a quite distinct, and perhaps their most definite, interest in relation to psychology” *(DZ “Abbreviated Criticisms” 12, my emphasis).* If we consider the direction in which psychology was headed in the late 1880s and early 1890s when Muybridge was most active on the lecture circuit, we can see that his isolation of movement into individual stages cohered with the direction in which the “field” of psychology, as it began to distinguish itself from philosophy, was headed—and the train of thought was driven by “New Psychologists.” The predominant example of a new psychological conception of the relation between outward representation and inner sensation was Thomas Huxley’s steam-whistle analogy. “The consciousness of brutes would appear to be related to the mechanism of their body simply as a collateral product of its working, and to be as completely without any power of modifying that working, as the steam-whistle which accompanies the work of a locomotive engine is without influence upon its machinery.” Huxley continued, “[T]he argumentation which applies to brutes holds equally good of men;…all states of consciousness in us, as in them, are immediately caused by molecular changes of the

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151 In Appendix A, he lists the thirty nine international scientific institutions where he demonstrated zoopraxography. The list concludes, “And at all of the principal Institutions of Art, Science, and Education and Learning in the United States of America.”

152 Edward Reed contends that while it was unfolding there was little self-awareness that an entirely new discipline was being created, and characterizes the period from 1879 to 1900 as one of “considerable change, uncertainty, and transition within this section of the intellectual world.” “Contemporaries perceived a revival and transformation of branches of philosophy and physiology,” Reed notes, “not the emergence of a separate discipline.” William James transferred from physiology to the Philosophy Department at Harvard in the late 1870s, “teaching a mixture of empirical psychology, clinical psychology, and ‘purely philosophical’ courses” (Reed 184-86). I am offering that projects such as Muybridge’s stirred the imaginative possibilities of the arguments could be made about the nature of the mind in this emerging field.
brain-substance...[T]here is no proof that any state of consciousness is the cause of change in the motion of matter of the organism...We are conscious automata.”  

As the field of anatomy morphed into the field of physiology, a survey of bodily states began to encompass not only hypotheses about visible structures such as bones and muscles, but the inner workings of the circulatory and nervous systems and their connection to various organs, including the brain. Physiological psychologists, then, following the work of Alexander Bain in England—would have taken a two-fold interest in the prospect of an array of photographic depictions of bodies in motion: first, they seemed to illustrate a premise that reflected their understanding of the parallel between bodily states and consciousness. Isolated shots of minute changes in stance or gesture could contribute to a detailed physiological record that would then be mapped out in correspondence with changing “brain states.” This would contribute to the second, broader aim: to instill a scientific method into the study of the mind and thus separate it from the realm of philosophy.  

Nine years after his lecture before the Royal Society, as Muybridge found himself standing before a crowd of 500 people at the Urania Scientific Society, an organization recently created to share developments in scientific theory and technology with a public audience, William James was in the midst of abridging his highly regarded two-volume textbook *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) for a wider readership. A shorter one-volume version was to be created as part of Henry Holt’s “Briefer Course” series so that it could be read more widely as an introductory text; *Psychology: Briefer Course* was published about six months later. (James’s Harvard students called the briefer course “Jimmy,” and the longer version “James”). The text ends with a brief section, “Philosophy and Psychology,” in which James critiques what he called

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153 On the Hypothesis that Animals Are Automata, and Its History” *Fortnightly Review*, n.s. 16 (1874): 575, 577.  
154 See Bain’s first article in the *Westminster Review*, “Electrotype and Daguerreotype,” September 1840. Joan Richardson has reminded me that it was Alexander Bain who provided the definition of “belief” for the pragmatists; belief was a platform for action—that on which one was willing to act.  
155 For a primary account of Muybridge’s lectures, see reports printed in the periodical *La Nature* in 1878 and 1879.
the current “working hypothesis” in psychology at present, the notion that psychological “mind states” correspond to physiological “brain states.” James proceeds to disassemble this ultimate law of psycho-physics, as the new psychologists would have it, piece by piece. What do we mean when we say “states” of mind (or brain) James asks. How can we isolate such “states”? What minimum duration of existence qualifies as a “state”? The key problem of claiming such states as “vehicle[s] of knowledge,” James insisted, is that it assumes we have introspective access to the activity of thinking. Consciousness, James argued instead, seems less a correspondence between brain states and mind states than “the postulate…of a knower, as a correlate to all this known” (Writings 132). Dewey’s “Recovery” was still more than twenty-five years off—but it is anticipated in James’s conclusion to Briefer Course.

The philosophical aim of James’s use of physiological detail in the longer Principles, Gerald Myers has offered, was “to bring the human percipient and the external world as close together as possible. Physiological psychology, [James] believed, was destined to eliminate much of the psychological machinery that in earlier theories had served as an intermediary between the world and our cognition of it” (142). James initially tried to use physiology to show that all the categories of understanding could be contained in sensation, which was the immediate effect of bodily events. Yet he separates himself from the “dismal dilemma” of the “[Thomas] Brown, the Mills [John Stuart and James], and [Alexander] Bain,” as he calls it, particularly in “The Perception of Space” chapter in Principles. The Browns, Mills, and Bains of psychology, James argues, say that a perception of space cannot arise from elementary sensations in the body, or from a pre-existent idea of spatial extension. “[And yet] [t]he fact is that, at bottom, all these authors are really ‘psychical stimulists,’ or Kantists.” He accuses other prominent contributors to physiological psychology (also known as psycho-physics), Johann
Herbart, Hermann Lotze, and Wilhelm Wundt, of the same. “The space they speak of is a supersensational mental product. This position appears to me thoroughly mythological…” (Principles II 272, 273).

The essence of the Kantian contention is that there are not spaces, but Space—one infinite continuous Unit—and that our knowledge of this cannot be a piecemeal sensational affair, produced by summation and abstraction. To which the obvious reply is that, if any known thing bears on its front the appearance of piecemeal construction and abstraction, it is the very notion of the infinite unitary space of the world. It is a notion, if there ever was one; and no intuition. Most of us apprehend it in the barest symbolic abridgment: and if perchance we ever do try to make it more adequate, we just add one image of sensible extension to another until we are tired. (Principles II 275)

Material images of “a notion of sensible extension”—a teleological premise—were just what Muybridge’s lectures offered. Because movement is the “most immediate” of all our spatial sensations James urged that many researchers were led into the jaws of the “psychologist’s fallacy.” Here, simply being acquainted with space leads them to feel that they “know” it fully. The conditions of knowing, then, are attributed to a state of mind, “and all sorts of mythological processes are brought in to help” (281). James concluded Psychology: Briefer Course by underlining his skepticism about known “states” of mind,

[I]t is indeed strange to hear people talk of ‘the New Psychology’ and write ‘Histories of Psychology,’ when into the real elements and forces which the word covers not the first glimpse of clear insight exists. A string of raw facts; a little gossip and wrangle about opinions; a little classification and generalization on the mere descriptive level; a strong prejudice that we have states of mind, and that our brain conditions them: but not a single
law in the sense that physics shows us laws, not a single proposition from which any consequence can causally be deduced. We don’t even know the terms between which the elementary laws would obtain if we had them. This is no science, it is only the hope of a science. (432-33)

Muybridge’s project in *Descriptive Zoopraxography*—seen as a kind of phantom of the extended catalogue of photographs that comprised *Animal Locomotion*—is perched precisely on the fence of this discussion of what psychology would and could be. Depictions of animal locomotion were active participants in a hopeful science. What I have been attempting to demonstrate by explicating Muybridge’s brief monograph, which has received much less scholarly attention than *Animal Locomotion*, is that even as Muybridge’s visual presentations attempt to dispel illusions about the external depiction of movement, they cannot dispel the importance of language for providing a platform for thinking the categories of such movement and inviting relations across types of moving images. The very desire to boil mental action down to states, however erroneously that represents thinking itself, is what—as I mentioned at the start of this chapter—James called “the sentiment of rationality.” For James, a motive for a more robust psychology could be found in the recovery of philosophy and the value it placed on the feeling of thinking.

The concept of creative intelligence that formed the basis of the anthology Dewey Headlined in 1917 was one that William James was already beginning to formulate when he composed his two-volume *The Principles of Psychology* in 1890. The volumes incorporated his main takeaway from Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*: intelligence, acquired through minds, frees human beings from being complete captives to biology.156 Yet a broad misperception of Darwin’s findings meant that the more persistent takeaway from *Origin* was not freedom but

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156I am following here Louis Menand’s summary of what James distilled from his reading of Darwin (*Metaphysical Club* 146).
order: statistics could aggregate behavior to conform to predictable laws; nature would always coalesce back into a pre-established structure. An appearance of randomness, then, is just that—an *appearance*, an illusion that reminds an observer that he cannot grasp the full scale of the pattern at hand. In the 1870s, the field of experimental psychology in the United States was established based on a German model that took up these ideas of order and internal coherence, hoping to solve traditional philosophical problems using laboratory methods. Minds are unitary and select their object of attention, experimental psychologists said—what Kant called “apperception.” William Wundt, the leading German experimental psychologist (with whom James studied personally for a short time while in Germany) and author the two-volume textbook *Grundzüge des physiologischen Psychologie* (“Principles of Physiological Psychology”), argued that “psychological experience is compatible only with a monistic world view,” but one that that refuses to “dissolve[e] it into the contentless form of a simple monad that can attain complexity only through the miracle of supernatural aids.” The mind, Wundt said, had a primarily “subjective” character (based on Hegelian premises of spiritual oneness rather than, as Dewey would try to show, a conception of a thinking social organism): “[it is] an ordered unit of many elements…a mirror of the world.” James would later note in *Talks to Teachers* (1899) Wundt’s confession after thirty years of lab experience:

> I learned in the achievements of the sense of sight to apprehend creative mental synthesis…From my inquiry into time-relations, etc.,…I attained insight into the close union of all those psychic functions usually separated by artificial abstractions and names, such as ideation, feeling, will; and I saw the indivisibility and inner homogeneity, in all its phases, of the mental life. The chronometric study of association-processes finally showed me that the notion of distinct mental ‘images’ [reproducirten
Vorstellungen] was one of those numerous self-deceptions which are no sooner stamped
in a verbal term than they forthwith thrust non-existent fictions into the place of the
reality. I learned to understand an idea as a process no less melting or fleeting than an act
of feeling or of will, and I comprehend the older doctrine of association of ‘ideas’ to be
no longer tenable. (qtd. in James Writings 725 n1)

For James, who framed psychological problems at this crossroads of a desire for internal
coherence and a desire for freedom, the way we choose to describe the character of the mind
becomes an essential issue. Beliefs are not justified by the extent to which they align with reality.

Mirroring the world is not the reason for having a mind. Indeed what I have been suggesting
thus far is that the reasons we formulate for having minds shape our active understand of how
those minds work—whether one imagines the mind’s primary activity as mirroring, offering
snapshots of a psychological state, or as a stream-like projection into which separate states
necessarily dissolve. This, in turn, shapes the ways users imagine how our instruments
(technologies and the media forms they make possible), as well as “instrumentalities” (methods
for getting at philosophical premises) serve us. “The formula which proves to have the most
massive destiny will be the true one,” James argued in as early as 1878. “But this is a point
which can only be solved ambulando, and not by any a priori definition.” James’s ambulatory
critique insists that the formula which proves to have the most massive destiny will be the true
one, just as the kind of imaginings of animal locomotion Muybridge’s images inspired nationally
and internationally made them “true” despite all the flaws in the material evidence itself.

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157 For an overview of the philosophical models of mind that motivated varied psychological, anthropological, and
economic systems of thought in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Menand 146, 194-95, 199, 269-70,
299, 356.

158 Readers of James’s Pragmatism will remember the reappearance of a version of the ambulatory metaphor decades
later in “What Pragmatism Means,” a lecture James grounds in the following metaphysical problem: a man is
following a squirrel around a tree. Does the man go round the squirrel or not? It depends on what we mean by,
“going round,” James said. To figure out what the practical difference of our definition will be, we must turn away
from categories and toward consequences.
Nearly thirty years before Dewey’s “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy” (and thirteen years before James struck up a correspondence with Dewey), James published “Remarks on Spencer’s Definition of Mind as Correspondence” (1878) in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Herbert Spencer’s rule insisting upon the adjustment of inner to outer relations, of mind to brain, would find some of its strongest proponents among the new psychologists. “Mr. Spencer is on a search for origins—whatever exists just before intelligence. His theory is the search for mind as a “pure product,” James charges, an “absolute derivative from the non-mental.”

“If the embryologic line of appeal can alone teach us the genuine essences of things, if the polyp is to dictate our law of mind to us because he came first, where are we to stop?...To seek there for the reality...would reduce all thinking to nonentity.” Correspondence favors “the survival of the thinker,” Spencer says.

James thought that Spencer was attempting to “hoodwink teleology out of sight.” “The organism of thought, from the vague dawn of discomfort or ease in the polyp to the intellectual joy of Laplace among his formulas, is teleological through and through. Not a cognition occurs but feeling is there to comment on it, to stamp it as of greater or less worth,” he insisted. James was set on exposing the era’s foremost social Darwinist as a Platonist: “Spencer and Plato are *ejusdem farina* [of the same kind],” he concludes.

Almost two decades later, in “Great Men and their Environment,” collected as the seventh of ten essays in *The Will to Believe* (1897), James returns once more to his critique of Spencer’s relationship to his *philosophical instruments*—not only his tools but tools networked with teleologies: “The whole burden of Mr. Spencer’s book is to show the fatal way in which the

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159 "Mind as Correspondence" in Writings 1879-1899, 898. As Menand notes, even Darwin’s *Origin* doesn’t deal with the issue of “origins” at all; rather, he was observing the unpredictable persistence of variations (*Metaphysical Club* 279).

160 Ibid. 895. The is, at base, the real fear the picturesque inspires.
mind, supposed passive, is molded by its experiences of ‘outer relations.’” For the new psychologists, philosophy seemed to be the thing that kept getting in the way while everyone was trying to solve other problems.

Finally, in 1902, in his last of the twenty Gifford lectures that would be published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James clarifies why he has been “so bent on rehabilitating the element of feeling in religion and subordinating its intellectual part.”\(^1\) He insists that individuality is “founded in feeling”: “the recesses of feeling, the darker, blinder strata of character, are the only places in the world in which we can catch real fact in the making, and directly perceive how events happen, and how work is actually done.” Here, compacted into a rather remarkable two-sentence footnote in the published lecture, James attempts to draw feeling out of the corner to which Humean skepticism sequestered it: “Hume’s criticism has banished causation from the world of physical objects, and ‘Science’ is absolutely satisfied to define cause in terms of concomitant change—read Mach, Pearson, Ostwald. *The ‘original’ of the notion of causation is in our inner personal experience*, and only there can causes in the old-fashioned sense be directly observed and described” (my italics). By undoing the existence of an original idea outside the mind, James is pinpointing the place where traditional philosophy meets picturesque aesthetics—the point where, one might say, the optic nerves of these two trajectories cross to create a blind spot, that “darker, blinder strata of character.”

James goes on to bolster this central reconsideration, not only of Locke, Hume, and the British empiricists but of Kant’s insistence that the understanding of causation as an innate capacity of the mind, with the following example: “As in stereoscopic or kinetoscopic pictures seen outside the

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\(^1\)By this point he had published the widely popular two-volume textbook *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), throughout which he used “feeling” as a synonym for consciousness (Vol. I, 186). He had also finished its distilled introductory edition, *Psychology: Briefer Course* (1892), *The Will to Believe*, and *Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1897), *Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine* (1898), *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life’s Ideals* (1899), and some of the journal articles that will serve as the foundation for *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) and *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912, published posthumously). The year *Varieties* was published, James contributed the entries on “Pragmatic” and “Pragmatism” to E.M. Baldwin’s second edition of the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*. 
instrument, the third dimension, the movement, the vital element, are not there. We get a beautiful picture of an express train supposed to be moving, but where in the picture, as I have heard a friend say, is the energy or the fifty miles an hour? His question recalls the “Rambling Writer”’s critique of Muybridge’s photograph of the horse in motion in the San Francisco Post in 1878 (“he is stiff…we lack the ‘hie yar’ ring[ing] in our own ears); the outward fixed image does not cause in a viewer the feeling of movement. By the end of the nineteenth century, a sense of coherence across conceptions of the state of the mind of an individual viewer, the perception of the outside world, and the tools that tied one to the world were both groundbreaking and incredibly fragile. What James preserves by refusing to embrace a one-directional correspondence theory of mind—in which a mind is molded by an environment, or in which brain states “cause” mind states—is a logic that highlights the insufficiency of the immediacy of visual evidence. His continual cross-fertilization of philosophy and psychology voids the mirror paradigm that classified photography as a “philosophical tool” at mid-century. James was asking a different question: is it ever possible to see “outside the instrument”?

The Machinery of Knowing

Let me return once more to Dewey’s recovery effort as a refrain, a refrain which articulates the premise I have been assembling through my arguments across late nineteenth-century physiology, psychology, and photographic experimentation. “A confusion of logic with physiological psychology has bred hybrid epistemology,” Dewey argues, insisting that philosophy’s focus has been on the nature of knowledge rather than the methods of knowing. The

\footnote{Ibid. 395. Thomas Edison had just finished developing the kinetoscope when James delivered the Gifford lectures on “The Varieties of Religious Experience” in 1902. The device had a single peephole; when a viewer looked through it, the illusion of movement was produced by feeding a perforated film strip of sequential images over a light source with a high-speed shutter. The development of the kinetoscope also led Edison to the two major figures in early motion picture technology, Eadweard Muybridge and Jules-Étienne Marey. He probably attended Muybridge’s 1888 demonstration of the zoopraxiscope, which produced a sense of movement by projecting sequential images placed along the edge of a circular glass plate. He also subscribed to Animal Locomotion.}
irony in this confusion is that it renders “the technique of effective inquiry…irrelevant to the theory of knowing, and those physical events involved in the occurrence of data for knowing are treated as if they constituted the act of knowing” (37, The Middle Works X, my emphasis). This idea sets up one of the last of the questions arising from Dewey’s recovery effort that I offered up in opening this chapter: what are the uses of a philosophy that finds it impossible to distinguish between ideas and tools? To address this question, I will turn to the dream for photography that informed Muybridge’s work on animal locomotion. The fusion of data for knowing with the act of knowing was precisely Etienne-Jules Marey’s dream for the scientific method. It was incarnated in what he called his “graphical method,” which in turn served as the foundation for the early motion picture studies that inspired Muybridge and that ultimately led to the creation of cinematography.

When one recognizes the correspondences between photographic culture and the new psychologist’s intertwining of physiology and psychology in the 1860s, it is hardly a surprise to learn that the inventor of early motion picture images was a physiologist. Before Etienne-Jules Marey began what became his life’s work recording human movement, he spent in a private laboratory in Paris preparing for a physiology internship. His reading in mechanics and physics led him to see analogies between the mechanics of levers, pulleys, pumps, and pipes, and the operation of mechanical principles such as hydraulics and hydrodynamics within the human circulatory system (Braun 1992 11-12). His view that the “machinery of life” could be compared to the workings of inanimate machines put Marey at odds with France’s foremost physiologist, Claude Bernard. Rather, Marey’s stance was closer to that of the German psychologists who were his close acquaintances (especially Herman von Helmholtz) and rooted in the notion that
there was an “intelligible causality” behind all life processes.\textsuperscript{163} Even beyond the sense of determinism inherent in Agassiz’s belief in what I called physiognomic polygenism, Marey saw scientific history itself as deterministic; he would bank his career on the belief that physiology could become an exact science (Braun 12). In the early 1860s, he believed that “two obstacles” stood in the way of this happening: first, “the defective capacity of our senses for discovering truths;” and, secondly, “the insufficiency of language for expressing and transmitting those we have acquired.” “The aim of the scientific method,” Marey pointed out, “is to remove these obstacles.”\textsuperscript{164} Though he supported Muybridge’s studies of animal locomotion in the 1880s and 90s, it is unlikely that he would have been interested in Descriptive Zoopraxography. Rather than placing photography and lexicography in conversation, he hoped to invent a system of notation that would remove the need for language altogether—a notational system of pure signs. This he called his “graphical method.”

Marey believed in the intelligible causality underlying life processes, and these processes could be measured with increasing precision and reduced to numerical relations because they were rooted in physics and chemistry. The body was an analog and Marey’s early graphical method took the indexical rationale that was used to express faith in the photograph in the 1850s and 60s to a new level—it attempted to dissolve all intermediaries. The forces in nature that cause phenomena are not metaphysical or occult; they are law-based relations between observable magnitudes; understanding was rooted in presenting the relation across scientific laws, in accumulating “data for knowing.”\textsuperscript{165} Marey was working largely in the domain of

\textsuperscript{163} Helmholtz’s theories are an important foundation for James’s discussion of the perception of space, among other topics. The psychologist G. Stanley Hall also studied with him in 1878, immediately after receiving a Ph.D. in Psychology from Harvard—the first doctorate ever granted in the field by an American institution (Menand 270).

\textsuperscript{164} Le méthode graphique dans les sciences expérimentales et principalement en physiologie et en médecine 1878, qtd in Braun 1992 12-13, my emphasis.

\textsuperscript{165} His method was situated in a wider positivism that rejected metaphysics and believed science was an ideal form of knowledge. Following Auguste Comte, he asserted that individual phenomena are examples of a wider law; science
“invisible ephemera.” Human beings’ unaided senses are “baffled alike by objects too small or too large, too near or too remote, as well as by movements too slow or too rapid,” he wrote.\(^{166}\) In 1866, when Marey saw only scientific options as observing forms like a naturalist or being a physicist or chemist, he drew upon the principles of physical mechanics—matter in motion—to create his two-fold methodology: first, he would submit studied phenomena to measurement by machines; secondly, he would construct mechanical models to stimulate phenomena under investigation. Previous instruments, such as the stethoscope and manometer, could grasp overall movements but not the complexity of bodily systems. His instruments, Marey hoped, would become “indispensable intermediaries between mind and matter.” He called these instruments “graphic inscriptors.” First developed in physics, he introduced them into physiology in order to present not an outward picture of the body but a cipher of the body changing across the fluid passage of time.\(^{167}\)

Using graphs to depict change over time was not new but applying a graphic method to physiology was. “The sum of every kind of observation can thus be expressed by graphs…all kinds of statistics lend themselves to the use of this method…How is it possible not to anticipate with impatience the day when long and obscure descriptions will give place to satisfactory representations?” Marey asked.\(^{168}\) This desire to capture rapid movement by machine is perhaps the most formidable example—in its subtlety—of the double logic of remediation at work: on one hand, graphic inscriptors participated in a logic of hypermediation, multiplying media surfaces by transmitting responses through space to recording device onto recording surfaces and

\(^{166}\) Braun 1992 15.
\(^{167}\) “Natural History of Organized Bodies”; Braun 16.
\(^{168}\) Animal Mechanism 15; Braun 16.
then converting displacements into rectilinear motion; on the other hand, they offered immediacy by allowing for contact with the innermost parts of the body without interfering with their movement.

Marey’s portable sphygmograph translated the human pulse in real time, as well as recording phases of the heart’s actions, relations between cardiac contractions, and palpable heartbeats. Immediately gaining wide acceptance in clinical circles through his cardiographic trials between 1861 and 1863, Marey overcame the difficulty of transposing into words information received by touch in order to communicate it to others. The transmission of movement through space via sensitive drums called tambours marks the apex of his analytic method: bodily phenomena were, as Marey described it, “trac[ing] themselves.” Graphic inscriptors, Marey thought, were “destined to replace observer” and to “have their own domain where nothing can replace them.” They “are like new senses,” he insisted. Whereas movement in photographs could only be portrayed by showing a state of repose, Marey imagined his instruments moving with the body.

The difference between what Muybridge’s project became in the United States, seen against the influence of the new psychologists who were some of the most active subscribers to Animal Locomotion, and what drove Marey’s project in France during the last three decades of the century as he experimented with the practices that made cinematography possible, lies in their respective relationships to what critics have called “distributed cognition.” Ron Broglio, building on the work of Brian Rotman, offers one description of cognitive distribution: “Once

169 Brau 22. Marey imagined the zoetrope as part of this method, yet rather than basing it in artist’s drawing, his zoetrope was conceived out of his studies of horses wearing experimental shoes. These became bar drawings showing the length of time each hoof had been on ground, which Marey called “synoptical notations”—a “sort of music” produced by horse’s movements (28). In 1867, a decade before Muybridge photographed Stanford’s horse, Marey produced the first accurate representation of the average paces of a horse’s trot. By the early 70s, he was applying his graphical method to decipher the movement of insects’ wings.

170 See Edward Hutchens’s Cognition in the Wild (1995) for this coinage.
thought breaks the frame of the human mind and the human subject, as it does with tool use, identity begins to unravel,” “Thinking does not take place within the interiority of the subject; rather it occurs in the contact among user, surfaces, and environment.” The existence of computational prosthetics in the form of visual aids—whether panoramas, ethnographic portraits, zoopraxographic disks, or graphic indicators—are crucial to rethinking the possibility of ideas (and of language itself) as tools. What looking across these notational systems reveals is that visual aids are always in conversation with (and in Marey’s case in explicit competition with) verbal descriptions.

I have been asking over the course of this chapter how the tools we create for ourselves—the tools being both technological prosthetics and ideas—heed Dewey’s call in “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy” to “mov[e] away from dealing with the problems of philosophers” toward “a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men.” We must formulate discussions of modern visual cultural networks not abstractly (however tempting and entertaining it is to try) but through a lens of recovery—or, better, remediating and re-establishing lines of interest between subjects, environments, and tools. In these pages I have aimed to historicize that claim, sketching out a trajectory that illustrates, first, the ways

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171 Broglio, Technologies of the Picturesque (22).
172 What pragmatism offers the second half of the nineteenth century as a philosophical tool is a way of commenting on the inherent double logic of the hope for immediacy inherent across technological apparatuses, psychological methodologies, and philosophical theories of the era. My point has been that we must think of this period in the context of the morphing fields of psychology, philosophy, and visual culture and understand “what pragmatism means” as a function of changing relationships to technology, philosophy, and aesthetics as tools. Prosthetic apparatuses and the visual evidence they produce operate through beliefs that interact with philosophical systems; they become part of the networked truths that happen to an idea. Henri Bergson’s notion of duration is arguably the culmination of a concept of mind that could adapt to new conceptions of time, space, and motion. His extensive body of work attempts to undermine positivist science’s use of analysis, insisting that anything real is a unity that can be known through intuition. For Bergson, the camera’s halting of the ceaseless flow of time falsified the real. And yet, ironically, Marey’s experiments had a direct impact on Bergson’s thinking. He used Marey’s chronophotographs as an example of an unrealistic capture of reality: “The moving body is never really in any of the points;” he said of depictions of Marey’s bodies in motion, “the most we can say is that it passes through them” (Introduction to Metaphysics 41). Ironically, for all that Bergson did to cast it off, Marey’s work came to be understood as a visual representation of Bergson’s notion of time.
photographic technology began to encompass wider and newly partitioned segments of space (literally, remembering Muybridge’s 360-degree panoramas, and within philosophical terrain), and, secondly, how at the same time psychology and philosophy were trying to create a definition of a mind that could accommodate a changing sense of the scale and rate of experience.

**Living with Ghosts: Old Problems, Modern Instruments**

In May of 1892, the summer after William James revised his *Principles* into *Psychology: Briefer Course*, and two months after the death of his sister Alice, he took a sabbatical from the psychological laboratory he founded at Harvard—the first in the country—and sailed with his family to Switzerland. His brother Henry came to visit in August though did not get to see much of him. James had committed to a walking tour with F. W. H. Myers, one of the co-founders a decade earlier of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). When James returned to Cambridge in 1893, he was appointed President of the SPR. Four years later, when he published *The Will to Believe* (1897)—and, significantly, had his appointment changed from Professor of Psychology to Professor of Philosophy—the final essay of the volume was called “What Psychical Research Has Accomplished.” It was compiled over the course of about six years from 1890 to 1896 and delivered as a Presidential Address to the SPR. Reviewing the work of half dozen major contributors to the field of psychical research, James ended on a discussion of Myers.\(^{174}\)

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173 A reader might recall Figure 2 from chapter one, Casper David Friedrich’s *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818), as a depiction of the sublime experience that continually drew visitors to take walking tours through the Swiss Alps.  
174 The perceptual analogy James uses to describe Myers’s notion of the subliminal self is worth noting: “The ordinary consciousness Mr. Myers likens to the visible part of the solar spectrum; the total consciousness is like that spectrum prolonged by the inclusion of the ultra-red and ultra-violet rays. In the psychic spectrum the ‘ultra’ parts may embrace a far wider range, both of physiological and psychological activity, than is open to our ordinary consciousness and memory…[the phenomena of hallucination, hypnotism, automatism, double personality, and
Back in 1861, when William James attended Agassiz’s Lowell Institute lectures during his first term of Harvard, he listened to Agassiz criticize “philosopher-naturalists” who developed abstract theories without consulting nature. (Agassiz, of course, considered his method of fact-finding and classification *purely* inductive.) Darwin’s method, Agassiz told his earnest listeners, was totally speculative, nothing but a “phantom” of his imagination. Agassiz died in 1873. Were he still living (or, in the spirit of the work of psychical research, were it possible for him to commune with James from the grave), Agassiz might have found James’s remarks in his Presidential Address about the connections between Darwin’s and Myers’s thinking to be quite fitting—though for very different reasons than did James:

Mr. Myers uses that method of gradual approach which has performed such wonders in Darwin’s hands. When Darwin met a fact which seemed a poser to his theory, his regular custom […] was to fill in all round it with smaller facts, as a wagoner might heap dirt round a big rock in the road, and thus get his team over without upsetting. So Mr. Myers, starting from the most ordinary facts of inattentive consciousness, follows this clue through a long series which terminates in ghosts, and seeks to show that these are but extreme manifestations of a common truth—the truth that the invisible segments of our minds are susceptible, under rarely realized conditions, of acting and being acted upon by the invisible segments of other conscious lives. Agassiz would have been in full agreement: disparagingly, he too would have said that an

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mediumship as connected parts of one whole subject](692). James died fourteen years after giving this presidential Address to the SPR; that same year, 1910, marks the publication of the first infrared photograph—the materialization of a “subliminal” medium.

175 Croce 121. The lectures were published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1862, in the midst of Holmes’s three-part celebration of the stereoscope as “Nature’s original positive” (“Doings of the Sunbeam” 294). Neither Agassiz nor Holmes seemed to have considered the relationship between their idealism and their use of visual evidence.

176 “And your college professor, with a starched shirt and spectacles, would, if a stock of ideals were all alone by itself enough to render a life significant, be the most absolutely and deeply significant of men,” James added in a rather adorable aside.
argument such as Myers’ could only “terminate in ghosts.” But James recuperated what he thought to be the full merit of Myers’s notion of distributed consciousness: “This may not be ultimately true…but no one can deny that it is in good scientific form—for science always takes a known kind of phenomenon and tries to extend its range.” Thus we return to the questions of the nature of a scientific method and the suitability of photography as a tool for executing such a method. Treating photography remedi ally, tying it to conditions of knowing that preceded it (as Agassiz did with the portraits he collected in Brazil), gives feeling and interest to the art form. Scientists like Marey then tried to grapple with the feeling of indexicality photographs produced in order to extend the connection between bodies and instruments through the concept of “graphic inscriptors.”

All any human mind can do in its environment—as James and, later, Dewey, suggest—is to acknowledge and then sketch out a relationship between its ideals and its instruments. An ideal, James told the large audience of students who gathered for his lecture on “What Makes Life Significant” in 1899, has three primary qualities: it must be something one is aware of as an animated intellectual fact—it cannot be unconscious; it must be “novel” (in other words, able to sustain spontaneous variation); finally, it is relative to the life that produces it. “Education, enlarging as it does our horizon and perspective,” he went on, always acutely aware of his audience, “is a means of multiplying our ideals, of bringing new ones into view.”

This last point might have reminded listeners of the companion lecture that had proceeded this one, “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings.” That lecture was, essentially, a greatest hits record of Romantic idealisms, including citations from books three and four of Wordsworth’s The Prelude, Whitman’s “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” and Emerson’s Nature.

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177 “Psychical Research” 696.
178 Writings 875.
“And what is the result of all these considerations and quotations?” James asked:

…neither the whole of truth, nor the whole of good, is revealed to any single observer, although each observer gains a partiality of insight from the peculiar position in which he stands. Even prisons and sick-rooms have their special revelations. It is enough to ask of each of us that he should be faithful to his own opportunities and make the most of his own blessings, without presuming to regulate the rest of the vast field.\textsuperscript{179}

A reader of James’s \textit{Talks to Students} would have no choice but to dub him a Romantic. And yet, what I hope I have shown by widening the field of associations around his arguments is that James’s move toward pragmatism is a move to accept finally what I understand as the legacy of the picturesque ideal: the tools we create, prosthetic or philosophical, do not get us closer to the “original” idea we are seeking. They \textit{are} the idea. What makes James, Dewey, and the “pragmatic attitude” something other than Romantic is their assertion that a philosophical argument is an instrument that constantly \textit{remediates}—exposing our desire for transparency at the same time that it “windows” the world—and thus provides necessary opportunities to observe and adapt to the changing conditions of modern life.

\textsuperscript{179}On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings,” 860. In a sense, James withheld the other part of this belief that he shared with the researchers who listened to his SPR address, that “the invisible segments of our minds are susceptible…of acting and being acted upon by the invisible segments of other conscious lives,” though understanding the broader scope of his interests adds even more weight to the modifier in the talk’s title, “On a Certain Blindness…”.
Figure 5: “Boys Playing Leap-Frog,” Descriptive Zoopraxography, Appendix A, page 10. Image taken by author.

Figure 6: “Some Consecutive Phases of the Amble,” Descriptive Zoopraxography, page 31. Image taken by author.
Yet Another Set of Dissolving Views

If we reflect deeply on what we feel when we reflect on a Turner or a Corot, we shall find that, if we accept them and admire them, it is because we had already perceived something of which they show us. But we had perceived without seeing. It was for us a brilliant and vanishing vision, lost in the crowd of those visions, equally brilliant and vanishing, which became overcast in our ordinary experience like ‘dissolving views’ and which constitute, by their reciprocal interference, the pale and colorless vision of things that is habitually ours.

Henri Bergson, “The Creative Mind”

Half a century after the publication of Home-Book of the Picturesque, Henry James celebrated rural New England as it melted from summer into autumn in the opening book of The American Scene. Yet “New England: An Autumn Impression,” is notably skeptical about a conception of time that confines the spectator-citizen to a Pullman car and rushes man and his machine undaunted into the future. James mourns Americans’ “perpetual repudiation of the past,” their “ceaseless relegation of the previous…to one of the wan categories of misery.”

Docked at the port of Boston Harbor and preparing to disembark after twenty years in Europe, he braces himself for the rumbling force of “the working of democratic institutions.” The prospect casts a “monstrous,” looming shadow—the “will to grow…everywhere written large”—and yet, James concedes, profiting from the workings of the democratic machine is the primary reason “even the simplest soul [would] ever sail westward” (CTW 399-400, 401).

Curiosity is fairly fascinated by the sense of the immensity of the chance, and by the sense that the whole of the chance has been taken. It is rarely given to us to see a great game played as to the very end—and that was where, with his impression of nothing to prevent, of nothing anywhere around him, to prevent anything, the ancient contemplative
person, floating serenely in his medium, had yet occasionally to gasp before the assault of the quantity of illustration. The illustration might be, enormously, of something deficient, absent—in which case it was for the aching void to be (as an aching void) striking and interesting. As an explication or an implication the democratic intensity could always figure. (401-02)

Figuring American social and political life as an interesting but aching void in the opening moment of a scenic tour of the most iconic settings the eastern seaboard had to offer was an audacious move, to say the least. James presents a striking juxtaposition of aesthetic convention (the void as a prospect) and cultural critique (the void as the absence of culture relative to Europe). His image of the “aching void” is related to the fear that any writing of American history is an act of nostalgia. “Nostalgia,” Susan Stewart writes, “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…the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as felt lack” (On Longing 23). If Cooper offered her dissolving view as a moral—the fragile yet harmonious ideal of American development—James offers his own dissolving view as a method for viewing history.  

James’s stance on the habit of seeing American history as scenery and scenery as history can be illustrated further by his critique in 1878 of Hawthorne: “Hawthorne is perpetually looking for images which shall place themselves in picturesque correspondence with the spiritual facts with which he is concerned, and of course this search is the very essence of poetry. But in such a process, discretion is everything, and when the image becomes importunate it is in danger of seeming to stand for nothing more serious than itself.”

180 As Stewart notes, history itself is “a convention for the organization of experience in time” (6).

181 “Hawthorne” in Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature: American Writers; English Writers (New York: The
By way of comparison to both the importunate image and the aching void he encounters in America, we might take James’s famous illustration of Paris in Book Two of The Ambassadors: “It hung before him this morning, the vast bright Babylon, like some huge iridescent object, a jewel brilliant and hard, in which parts were not to be discriminated nor differences comfortably marked. It twinkled and trembled and melted together, and what seemed all surface one moment seemed all depth the next” (A 64). Both Louis Lambert Strether and Henry James bear the weight of the legacy of the American picturesqueness, that provocative void/wilderness turned importunate nuisance by the last third of the century, from which they both run away to Europe. Yet this is not to say that James does away with the concept of picturesqueness altogether—rather, he remediated it.

Civic identity and second sight

“If we had eyes to see it, a bit of stone from the city wall would certify us of the necessity that man must exist, as readily as the city. That identity makes us all one, and reduces to nothing great intervals on our customary scale.” Emerson, “Nature” (1836)

Writing across the genres of art criticism, travel literature, and fiction at once by the 1870s, James was thoroughly familiar with visual and verbal illustrations of the picturesque. For James’s travel essay on the ancient city of Chester in 1872, eventually collected in his full set of travel essays, English Hours (1905), the artist Joseph Pennell provided a charcoal sketch of the Chester row houses, along with 90 other illustrations for the collection. James’s own essay mentions the row houses but its central description is of the ancient wall that encloses the city, which is wide enough that tourists can walk side by side along its rim to take in views of the city and the surrounding countryside. With its “Roman substructure…laid by that race of master-
builders,” the ancient wall, James described, “enfolds the place in a continuous ring, which, passing through innumerable picturesque vicissitudes, often threatens to snap, but never fairly breaks the link” (CTW 54).

[I]t wanders through its adventurous circuit; now sloping, now bending, now broadening into a terrace, now narrowing into an alley, now swelling into an arch, now dipping into steps, now passing some thorn-screened garden, and now reminding you that it was once a more serious matter than all this by the extrusion of a rugged, ivy-smothered tower. Its final hoary humility is enhanced, to your mind, by the freedom by which you may approach it from any point in the town. Every few steps, as you go, you see some little court or alley boring toward it through the close-pressed houses. It is full of that delightful element of the crooked, the accidental, the unforeseen, which, to American eyes, accustomed to our eternal straight lines and right angles, is the striking feature of European street scenery. (CTW 56)

The landscape requires an American to observe the “amusing effect” of the arrangement at Chester and to see the way Chester’s citizens, in attempting to preserve the “pictorial value of the city,” end up “jumbling…their piety and their policy.” For James in 1872, Chester offers a distinct impression of picturesqueness as a “scale of thought” that merges aesthetic experience with civic engagement, an old piety with new cultural norms. In Chester’s crooked, ancient wall, James finds that the felt attachment to the past that has been voided by a popular picturesqueness in America is still alive in Europe.

When James begins work on The Ambassadors twenty-eight years after writing this portrait of Chester, he returns to the city as the site where Strether will explicate his mission in Europe: to save Chad Newsome, the son of his fiancé and patron, from the unsavory values of
Paris and the prying hands of a woman who wants to keep him there. Strether is to convince him to return home to take up a career in the family business.\(^{182}\) As Strether walks with Maria Gostrey along the ancient city wall a reader of James’s travel essays can recognize the clear resonances of the author’s 1872 impressions of wall’s varied and asymmetrical curves (precisely the kind Gilpin prized):

> The tortuous wall—girdle, long since snapped, of the little swollen city, half held in place by careful civic hands—wanders in narrow file between parapets smoothed by peaceful generations, pausing here and there for a dismantled gate or a bridged gap, with rises and drops, steps up and steps down, queer twists, queer contacts, peeps into homely streets and under the brows of gables, views of cathedral tower and waterside fields, of huddled English town and ordered English country. Too deep almost for words was the delight of these things to Strether; yet as deeply mixed with it were certain images of his inward picture. He had trod this walk in the far off time, at twenty five.

Strether’s recollection nearly matches the age that James himself was when he wrote his travel essay on Chester. Strether’s recognition of such a memory in *The Ambassadors* “instead of spoiling it, only enriched it for the present feeling and marked his renewal as a thing substantial enough to share” (A 24). Chester, in a sense, offers an image of the shape of the novel, with all its “queer twists and contacts.” It also offers an illustration of the logic of appreciation for picturesque scenes: seeing is most meaningful when it is a second sight, a re-visualization, as when one finds the image one has seen in a viewbook out in “the eye of nature.”

\(^{182}\)The business is never defined but James establishes that advertising is crucial to it, if it is not the business itself. When Chad attempts to explain to Strether the “great new force” of advertising, Strether asks whether it “[a]ffects… the sale of the object advertised.” “Yes—but affects it extraordinarily; really beyond what one had supposed,” Chad replies. “It’s an art like another, and infinite like all arts… In the hands, naturally, of a master. The right man must take hold. With the right man to work it c’est un monde (A 341).
Recognition scenes: Henry James and the legacy of the picturesque

What I am calling James’s remediation of picturesqueness has been recognized by a number of other critics, beginning with F.O. Matthiessen in 1944 and his commentary on James’s “recognition scenes.” What James chooses to “frame” in each book, Matthiessen says, acquires “an intensity to the degree that he could realize the multiple types of seeing in which he had striven to perfect himself, and could demonstrate that he had mastered ‘the art of reflection’ in both senses of the phrase—both as a projector of luminous surfaces of life, and as an interpreter of their significance.” Nowhere in the novel does the framing of a single scene collect more dramatic power than in Book Eleven, when Strether, looking out onto the river in the French countryside, remarks on the enduring “spell” of the picture before him: “[T]hough he had been alone all day, he had never yet so struck himself as engaged with others and in midstream of his drama. It might have passed for finished his drama, with its catastrophe all but reached: it had, however, none the less been vivid again for him as he thus gave it its fuller chance. He only had to be at least well out of it to feel it, oddly enough, still going on” (A 307). I will say more about these lines later. For now, let me just highlight that such a “recognition scene”—a moment that reveals James’s “extraordinary awareness of how art frames experience”—also points to, Matthiessen writes, a “curious reversal of order in the modern sensibility.” Art heightens the value of nature rather than nature validating the existence of art.183

In 1953, Dorothy Van Ghent (The English Novel: Form and Function) noted that what Matthiessen called James’s recognition scenes are not affirmations but crises. Strether’s discovery of Chad and Madame de Vionnet together on a small boat on the river forces him to confront that their relationship is more than platonic; moreover, it forces him to confront that the entire “theory” he had developed during his ambassadorial mission—“that the facts were

specifically none of his business, and were, over and above, so far as one had to do with them, intrinsically beautiful” (A 312)—had failed him. Building on Van Ghent, Nikola Bradbury noted in 1979 that “In The Ambassadors, as in a late Shakespeare romance, the ‘recognition scene’ crisis is a turning point: a stage in the action at which the intellectual and the moral consciousness of the observer come together in imaginative understanding.”\textsuperscript{184} As I have been demonstrating, the fusion of imaginative understanding and moral consciousness had been crucial to the exigence of picturesque imagery and discourse throughout the nineteenth century; such a fusion offered a motive for producing more and more picturesque scenes in order to mediate national crises and restore a hope of order.

More recently, Viola Hopkins Winner has described James’s immersion in picturesque rhetoric in his art criticism and travel literature, noting that his use of the term “picturesque” took three forms: he called on the word when he wanted to highlight the technical aspects of a painting, usually having to do with the treatment of light and the arrangement of objects in such a way that they seemed to merge into the atmosphere; he used it when a scene reminded him of a painting he had seen, probably a landscape painting of the Barbizon school or in the manner of Claude Lorrain; and he used it to signal a more vague recognition of something deeply felt but inexpressible (recuperating Coleridge’s use of the word).\textsuperscript{185} At this point I want to pick up on and also resituate Winner’s observations. Picturesqueness is not merely a condition of James’s individual vision: it is a cultural state, a state of things, a motive for James’s eschewing of what


\textsuperscript{185}Winner 33-35, 178 n19. “Did James see picturesque effects because [his exposure to] these paintings trained his eyes to see them, or was his response more or less independent, a result of an innate aesthetic sense?” Winner asks. “Undoubtedly, pictures influenced his perceptions of nature from the first. But it must also be kept in mind that while paintings led him to see certain aspects of nature, he was so peculiarly sensitive to the ingredients of the picturesque—color, light, texture, and tone—that he could scarcely not appreciate picturesque effects. It was a condition of his vision.”
he calls in the preface to *The Ambassadors* “the fluidity of self-revelation” in favor of laying out more discriminating “exhibitionial conditions” for his protagonist to meet (ultimately through his working out of the implications of various moral possibilities through conversations with Gostrey).

James Buzard’s readings of James’s travel literature show that, as a result of his experience as a travel writer, James is constantly coming to grips with the legacy of picturesqueness. (I would go as far as to say, adopting Maria Gostrey’s description of her own situation, that James “bear[s it] on his back” like “the huge load of [America’s] national consciousness” (A 26).) Buzard has cautioned that “we should be wary of suggesting that James simply ‘outgrew’ picturesqueness, leaving its allurements behind him as he focused on his fiction.” James’s experience with travel writing led him to understand a traveler’s desire to “packag[e] complex societies” into “essential, symbolic qualities” and “culturally marketable memories.”

Significantly, Buzard incorporates the packaging of picturesque impressions into the more general work of cultural redescription. During the period when James travelled most frequently, his *Wanderjare* (1869-79), a “prosaicist” response to collecting picturesque impressions was thriving; the prosaic attitude insisted that the picturesque tourist not overlook the day-to-day unfolding of the places one visited in favor of locating some “authentic” impression of Europe one had seen in a painting. Yet, as Buzard notes, such an attitude had two

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186 Buzard 210-12. I understand Buzard’s assessment of James’s travel writing and his attention to picturesque scenes in dialogue with the discussions of James’s “romantic imagination” that drove the scholarly investigation of James’s novels over three decades ago. Specifically, I read Buzard as wanting to make a claim about James’s use of images and symbols, as Charles Schug has written, “in the manner of a Romantic Image…embody[ing] contraries and join[ing] opposites together.” For more on James’s romantic imagination, see James Hocks’s *Henry James and Pragmatistic Thought* (University of North Carolina Press, 1974), Schug’s *The Romantic Genius of the Modern Novel* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979, and Daniel Mark Fogel’s *Henry James and the Structure of the Romantic Imagination* (Louisiana State University Press, 1981). Ultimately I aim to move beyond the claim that James’s romantic imagination adjoins opposing symbols in order to show, following WJT Mitchell’s assessment of the Romantic obsession with physicality, that he is trying to reconcile words with things, picturesque images with objects.
risks: first, the complete idealization of “the commoner,” and, secondly, an abandonment of historical association in favor of a fetishized present. In *The Ambassadors*, the achievement of simple pleasures—the “idea that would simplify” for which Strether is on the hunt—becomes a paradoxically (self-)involved task. In his travel writing in particular, James has a tendency of denying “the whole category of the Moral (or Political or Social)” in favor of “the superior category of the Aesthetic.” Ultimately Buzard asks, “What if the dichotomy of Prosaic ‘people’ (culture as ongoing ‘way of life’) and Picturesque ‘places and things’ (culture as objects) were itself the problem to be overcome in cultural representation?”

Finally, in his chapter on “Henry James and the Politics of Cultural Response,” Ross Posnock articulates what I mean when I describe James’s remediation of picturesqueness in his description of defamiliarization at work in *The American Scene*:

> [M]odernism insists on an obdurate difficulty expressed in formal innovation that refuses the familiar comforts of realist representation. Instead, defamiliarization—a making new by estranging the familiar—characterizes modernism’s project to reunify human sensibility, dissociated by the hegemony of positivist science. Paradoxically, the healing of the breach between thought and feeling is achieved through deliberate shock tactics of dissonance—what Brecht called alienation effects. Dissonance is a precious source of vitality in a world that Henry James, writing in 1907, pictures as a ‘great gray wash…causing color and outline to effectually run together.’ (Scene 445, Posnock 56)

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187 Buzard 208, 212. Curiously, after posing the issue about a form of writing that could accommodate the complexity of cultural representation, Buzard drops in an eight-line excerpt from *The Ambassadors*—the moment of Strether’s observation of Madame de Vionnet’s empire of things—prefacing the passage with, “It would be a form supple enough to consider…the difference between the ways two women—expatriate American and aristocratic Parisian—dwell among the artefacts [sic] that fill their rooms” (212). He goes back to his discussion of picturesque politics without another word about the excerpt or the novel. In this sense, my argument picks up where Buzard’s abruptly yet so usefully leaves off.
In his preface to *The Ambassadors* in 1909, James expresses the vitality of dissonance through his rejection of the “fluidity of self-revelation.” In the novel itself, dissonance and defamiliarization are achieved through an obsession with objects and a “hoarding” of treasures, both of which further reveal the legacy of the picturesque in this text.

**Found Objects and Arrested Desires**

The picturesque unlocks what W.J.T. Mitchell has called “the secret of the found object”: “it is hidden in plain sight, like Poe’s purloined letter. Once found, however, the found object should...become foundational. It may undergo an apotheosis, a transfiguration of the commonplace, a redemption by art.” Mitchell identifies the emergence of the found object as an aesthetic category “in the Romantic craze for the picturesque, and in its ethnographic pedigree in the concept of totemism.” Citing Raimonda Mondiano, Mitchell notes that the “poor things” that qualify as picturesque objects (typically the gypsy, the beggar, the rustic, or the ruin) “do not evoke envy or love, but offer an image of unenviable freedom from property and social bonds...[as] they are already sacrificed, they cannot be sacrificed again and can thus constitute an ideal safe from the threat of violence.” Mitchell adds,

As “attractive” objects, they do not invite (or threaten) possession, except in the picturesque sketch or photograph. They occupy the world of denied or arrested desire, sufficiently gratified by the visual, picturesque experience...They mediat[e] a double desire to own and renounce property, to possess the countryside without real ownership, to shape the landscape while preserving the illusion of wilderness. (114, 116-17, my emphasis)
We find Lambert Strether kneading a similar double desire when he first arrives in Europe in the second paragraph of the novel: “There was a detachment in his zeal and a curiosity in his indifference.” This is the moment immediately before he turns to stand face-to-face with Maria Gostrey, “a lady who met his eyes as with an intention suddenly determined, and whose features—not freshly young, not markedly fine, but on happy terms with each other—came back to him as from a recent vision.” Maria appears to have “no reserves about anything.” And as the two meet in the hotel garden in Liverpool, she takes on the role of the host: “It was almost as if she had been in possession and received him as a guest. Her acquaintance with the place presented her as a hostess.” She reminds Strether of the woman in the glass cage at the pier where he disembarked earlier that day—mirroring back to Strether his own state of being “encaged and provided for as The Ambassadors encages and provides” (A 18, 19; Art of the Novel 321). Strether both finds Maria Gostrey and is found by her. At the hotel he stirs in him the feeling of “an achieved possession of those vague qualities and quantities that collectively figured to him as an advantage snatched from lucky chances.” She primly strokes her smooth white gloves as she looks him over, Strether’s gaze draws our attention to the part of her body through which Gostrey will be both objectified and “lifted up” through her role as guide, passing visiting Americans “through her hands,” the hands that would “lead [Strether] forth into the world” (A 23) but also “send [him] back spent” (A 35). If Strether is in the position of the “poor thing” at the novel’s beginning, it is a position he projects onto Gostrey (and she accepts) by the novel’s end.

Gostrey’s status as a non-threatening found object is foreshadowed as early as the first book when, upon first meeting Strether in Liverpool, she tells him, “If what you’re afraid of is…my being seen to walk off with a gentleman who has to ask who I am—I assure you I don’t
in the least mind” (A 22). Yet, as I will show in what follows, she is also the liminal point of both Strether and James’s “interminable curiosity” (Posnock 223). “[I]n the fate of things,” Bill Brown writes, we find “a symptom of a pathological condition most familiarly known as modernity,” a cultural moment with “the character of things as things has been extinguished, or…objects have been struck dumb, or…the idea of respecting things no longer makes sense because they are vanishing.” In their articulations of their dependence on Gostrey as a thing to be extinguished, dissimulated and dissolved—Gostrey’s presence in the novel carries Romanticism’s legacy of picturesqueness into modernity. If, as Posnock proposes, Europe allows Strether to indulge “his latent mimetic capacity” as part of “a nexus of relations to others” neither Strether nor James can escape this “thing” that makes possible aesthetic behavior itself, “the ability to see more in things than they are.”

Book Third of The Ambassadors can be best distinguished from the other parts of the novel for the procession of objects that appear in it. Few critics have offered readings of the novel without commenting the description of the “empire of ‘things’” in Maria Gostrey’s home (A 80). Yet if we attend to the objects in the two installments of this third book as part of what Buzard identified as the problem of cultural representation, the dichotomy between examining culture as a prosaic “way of life” versus that of examining it as picturesque “things,” we have a model of how The Ambassadors expresses the relationships between people through the possession and arrangement of objects, not to mention allusions to holding them, grasping at them, or allowing them to be “passed through one’s hands.” These objects are themselves the “poor dear things” that foreshadow the series of slippages and the positions in which Strether,

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189Adeline Tintner, for one, argues that this empire is part of Strether’s larger effort to hold on to his identity by viewing Europe through “the charm of the museum.” See The Museum World of Henry James (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986: 108-12).
Marie de Vionnet, and Maria Gostrey eventually find themselves in Book Twelve.

Early in the Book Third, Strether is described variously a “fine-tooth comb” (A 74), a “humbug” (A 75) and a busy bee (A 76). This is also the moment when Strether acknowledges a shift from “know[ing] nothing and nobody” to a view that had “now taken a bound in the direction of every one and every thing.” The real “danger” of the scene is that Strether has opened himself to “being influenced in a sense counter to Mrs. Newsome’s own feelings” (A 75). Even time, at first objectified as “a bag of gold into which [Strether] constantly dipped for a handful,” transforms into a new object upon meeting Miss Barrace, who presents “the most baited and gilded of traps” (A 76). Barrace’s entire presence in the novel is synecdochic: she is a pair of “convex Parisian eyes” who reminds Strether than “we’re all looking at each other.” Her convex eyes have both visual range and tactile range, a virtual Midas’s touch: things become “gilded” when she looks at them through her long-handled tortoise-shell looking glass. Her insistence that everyone is looking at everyone else is precisely what disrupts Strether’s own economy of vision; amid these objects that he is “in the presence of new measures, other standards, a different scale of relations.” Even “the fundamental impropriety of Chad’s situation” is treated as an object encased in a vitrine, around which the four find themselves “cynically clustered” (A 78). It is through this introductory procession of objects that Strether realizes that Bilham and Barrace “didn’t think of things at all as he and Waymarsh thought” (A 77). The way James illustrates influence is through the composition and manipulation of objects.

When Bilham, Barrace, Strether, and Waymarsh find themselves smoking on a balcony after their meal together, for example, his involvement in the scenario is expressed through his handling of an expensive cigarette; Strether, unlike Waymarsh, was someone who picked things

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190 As a source for the bee, S.P. Rosenbaum offers in the Norton Critical Edition the line from Issac Watts’s hymn, “Against Idleness and Mischief”: “How doth the busy bee / Improve each shining hour” (A 76 n. 8).
up “lightly just when others has laid them heavily down.” James’s impulse to remediate is rooted in his re-composition of morals through things, things which are, like his protagonist, held in hand, “encaged and provided for.” The need to compose and arrange a scene in order to “see” this correspondence between characters and things is what Strether calls “the stern logic…of a relation to the irregular life” (A 79). The way in which objects in hand, generally, “pass”—literally pass between people and pass for them—is solidified over the course of Book Third. Titian’s The Man with the Glove—the painting of a sitter in the prime of his young adulthood, sophisticated and assured enough to pose leaning against a chair with one glove off and the other grasped in hand—offers a specter of Chad’s development since his arrival in Europe. Strether, Gostrey, and Bilham stand directly below it at the Louvre, at which point Strether realizes that “he had got his job in hand” (A 83).

In the scene that directly precedes the visit to the Louvre, Strether stands amid another “empire of things” in Gostrey’s home. The language of circuitry mingles with that of a part-sexual and part-sacred communion as Strether realizes the Gostrey is “charged with possession,” her accumulations glimmering into view when they catch the light from the windows; in this place where “the lust of the eyes and the pride of life had…their temple,” he recognizes that “the circle in which they stood together was warm with life” (A 80). When they sit with Waymarsh debating whether Bilham is intervening in Strether’s mission because of directions from Chad, they are in a box at the Théâtre de Comédie Française—a place, James wrote in 1872, that could offer “to an ingenuous American…an aesthetic education.” There he finds Gostrey to be a “priestess of the oracle” with “the light…in her eyes” as she reveals that, as Bilham is like many of the young American charges, albeit the best one, that she keeps as eye on during their time in

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Europe, she can see that he is doing Chad’s bidding. Chad’s “works his idea,” Gostrey says, through others. Even Strether admits, “Well, [I am] quote already in Chad’s hands, it would seem.” When Chad suddenly enters their box, Strether’s recognition of him, which is more immediate than it is for either Waymarsh or Gostrey, “with all her science” (A 90). Furthermore, as Strether mulls over and over the refinement of Chad’s character since he’s been in Europe, he notices the extreme disconnect of “the young man’s face and air…from any discerned, from any imaginable aspect of a New England female parent.” What Strether’s direct encounter with Chad brings on is a recognition of his own mental workings, “those frequent phenomena of mental reference with which all judgment in him was actually beset.” In is in the next proverbial breath that James reminds of Strether’s almost frantic communications with Woollett via telegraph, a machine whose quickness “rhymed” with his sense of urgency—this action was, Strether admits, part of “a fine fancy in him for keeping things straight, for the happy forestallment of error.” His “highest ingenuity was in keeping the sky of life clear” of “the clouds of explanation”—it was the Atlantic cable alone that kept pace with “the wild weed of delusion.”

In Book Third, Gostrey is the guide through “the maze he had but begun to tread,” “the blessing that had now become his need” without whom “he had lost himself” (A 80). By the end of the seventh book, Strether’s relationship with Maria has been permanently changed. Strether could “toddle alone.” The imagery here is consistent with the “liquefying” of women throughout the novel. Women are variously “absorbent” and “abysmal,” but ultimately figures whose value must be liquidated in order to safeguard the aesthetic development of Chad and Strether. It is women, especially Maria Gostrey, who present the primary impediment to the “fluidity of self-revelation” and who initiate a process of defamiliarization in this pair of ambassadors; no simple truth could be their compass and their helm (positivist science), instead they have to sink into the
abyss, which is precisely where Strether finds himself in the novel’s third book when he enters Gostrey’s “compact and crowded little chambers, almost dusky…with accumulations…It was the innermost nook of the shrine—as brown as a pirate’s cave” (A 79-80). Yet by Book Seventh, the order of influence has shifted, and she “fell into place as but one of his tributaries” (198).

Recognizing people as things

As I have been demonstrating, I take this question about the tension of cultural representation—the dichotomy between presenting a way of life versus focusing on objects and things—to be crucial to generating a reading of *The Ambassadors*. Furthermore, I believe that the writing of the novel made possible the kind of cultural critique that emerges in *The American Scene* and the *New York Edition* prefaces. Let me return, then, to James’s depiction of the labor of cultural representation in the final paragraph of Book Eleven, the moment when Strether reflects on what seeing Chad and Madame de Vionnet together on the river has meant for him:

It was the quantity of make-believe involved and so vividly exemplified that most disagreed with his spiritual stomach. He moved, however, from the consideration of that quantity—to say nothing of the conscientiousness of that organ—back to the other feature of the show, the deep, deep truth of the intimacy revealed. That was what, in his vain vigil, he oftenest reverted to: intimacy, at such a point, was *like* that—and what in the world else would one have wished it to be like? It was all very well for him to feel the pity of its being so much like lying; he almost blushed, in the dark, for the way he had dressed the possibility in vagueness, as a little girl might have dressed her doll … There was the element of the awkward all round, but Chad and Madame de Vionnet had at least the comfort that they could talk it over together. With whom could he talk of such
things?—unless indeed always, at almost any stage, with Maria? He foresaw that Miss Gostrey would come again into requisition on the morrow; though it wasn’t to be denied that he was already a little afraid of her “What on earth—that’s what I want to know—had you then supposed?” He recognized at last that he had really been trying all along to suppose nothing. Verily, verily, his labour had been lost. He found himself supposing innumerable and wonderful things. (A 315)

Strether’s awareness of Maria Gostrey in this moment is significant. Gostrey is the figure through whom Strether conceives of and articulate his intellectual and his aesthetic “labor.” Indeed the briskness of her clarity leaves him feeling both infantilized and emasculated. If Susan Fenimore Cooper resists thinks the celebration of “old things” is at best volatile and at worst banal, Maria Gostrey represents the inversion of the American expatriate’s attitude toward things later in the century. If Cooper soars above both history and culture, Gostrey hoards it in “the makings of a final nest” (A 79).

*The Ambassadors* creates picturesque scenes that demand two very different types of intellectual labor: the work of supposing everything, in which “truth spread[s] like a flood” and the work of supposing nothing, which can only happen by making possibility into a play thing, “making believe” without stakes, as a child dressing up her doll. Impressions do not substantiate ideals—they challenge them. As Kenneth Myers and Christopher Hanlon have helpfully pointed out, “the real achievement of the picturesque was not simply to make admiration of the landscape intellectually laborious but also to produce observers who were forgetful of their effort, who remain cognizant only of the desirable emotions [that result from that effort]” (Hanlon 88). James dramatizes that reality through Strether, who is obsessed with exerting labor without producing anything, “taking only his impressions.” The simplicity of truths that a naive Strether
imagines in Book Two “would be his compass and his helm” (A 61) points to James’s re-
economizing of picturesque value: the idea that simplifies is also that left floating on the surface
of things—the only moral act is to relinquish ideals for impressions. The invocation of
picturesqueness just after the turn of the century reinforces that there are no “natural” subjects,
only those formed in response to an audience; in James, picturesqueness becomes a self-
consciously rhetorical stance.

Before proceeding let me offer one aside to note that in my allusions to labor I am
brought back to how far we have come from Thoreau, who saw himself as “monarch” of all he
surveyed (Walden 388) and who also understood landscapes as topographical, marked by
surfaces and by depths. How far away we have moved with James, the aesthete and expatriate,
and yet how the iridescent jewel of Paris still resembles Thoreau’s description of Walden Pond
as a “perfect forest mirror.” Except that for Thoreau, whose encounter with Europe came
secondhand through letters from Emerson, the moral lesson was clear: one must sink, he wrote in
Walden, “through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and
appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York
and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion,
till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we call reality” (“Where I Lived and
What I Lived For” 400). It is out of this tradition of sinking and simplifying that James arrives.
The body of water before him is not a man-made pond but the “fathomless medium” of a new
generation of Americans for whom publicity and promotion stand as a “whole world.” In this
play of depths and surfaces, sinking and swimming, a third option emerges for James: one could
“walk on water” (A 324).
Liquid Solutions: “…an idea that would simplify”

“Women were thus endlessly absorbent, and to deal with them was to walk on water” (A 324).

Obscure as the picturesque might appear to the modern reader as she “peer[s] into the dim past” of aesthetics, writes Timothy Costelloe, it was the debates over the picturesque that held “the seeds, which would take root and…grow into the concerns that would define the age of Romanticism.”192 In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Dugald Stewart’s reflections on the picturesque shifted discussions of aesthetics from their focus on a notion of “taste” to the nineteenth-century’s search for some common trait or quality in the nature of things or in the structure of human beings—a commonality that would, in turn, allow for an understanding of the substance of aesthetic experience. As I discussed in chapter one, Emerson’s sense of the “radical correspondence” between mind and nature, was a robust articulation of and elaboration on Stewart’s premise.193 Stewart’s insight provided a frame for viewing the philosophical debates of the previous century and allowed him access to the debate over the significance of the picturesque, a debate that, Costelloe observes, “dominated the philosophical, literary, and popular imagination of his contemporaries” and marked the beginning of an era of Romantic aesthetic theorizing. Stewart suggested that aesthetic terms such as “beauty” and “sublimity” did not name a single common property but were used “transitively” to apply to characteristics that are physical, intellectual, and moral. Transitivity, Stewart said, unfolds through the principles of association, which presupposes some ideal pleasure guiding the association, even though it

192 Costelloe 128-135. In his arrangement of an aesthetic tradition that extends from the “Age of Taste” to the “Age of Romanticism” to the linguistic turn of the “Age of Analysis,” Costelloe offers a trajectory through which to understand the way the writers and philosophers conceived of the changing aims and outcomes of aesthetic thought from the 18th to the 20th centuries.
193 “Because of this radical correspondence between visible things and human thoughts,” Emerson writes in Nature, “savages, who have only what is necessary, converse in figures” (EL 22).
cannot account for the source of that pleasure. One example he offers for the association of an intellectual or moral quality with a physical characteristic is “Female Beauty,” or what he describes as the beauty of “Governing Intelligence” in the “Material Universe in general”: the concept of “beauty” is satisfying because it is used in concert with concepts that appeal to the understanding (such as order, fitness, utility, symmetry, variety, and simplicity); moreover, “conveyed through the medium of the eye,” Stewart emphasized, these concepts become “confounded” with our perception of an object’s physical qualities (Philosophical Essays 5:247, 249 qtd. in Costelloe 130). His idea that “‘beauty’ and sublimity’ are really epithets, tokens of language applied through the transitivity of sense or some such mechanism, and that the obscurity of this fact is a trick of the very medium through which philosophy proceeds” foreshadows the linguistic turn in aesthetic thought that emerges fully by the mid-twentieth century—a shift that Henry James treatment of language anticipates. Stewart’s idea that words are epithets applied transitively to various concepts is the central lesson of Strether’s aesthetic education in Paris: he visits hoping to confirm his encounter with Chad, and with Europe, through “Boston ‘really’s’”—to see how things really are—but, in the light of Paris, he finds only “what things resemble” (A 126).

In the 1860s, as James was just beginning to write his first tales, thinking about the picturesque was largely dominated not by theories of language but by Ruskin’s efforts to move away from assessing the picturesque as a formal aesthetic category in order to treat it as a moral theory. Ruskin understood the picturesque generally as a mode of sublimity—yet he distinguishes between “true” sublimity, which arose from actual qualities inherent in objects, and surface sublimity, which was not inherent in the nature of the thing, [but] caused by something external to it; as the ruggedness of a cottage roof possesses something of a mountain aspect, not
belonging to the cottage as such” (Modern Painters IV 10 qtd. in Costelloe 238). If the picturesque object has to be associated with something outside itself in order to lend it sublimity, such sublimity is “parasitical,” “engrafted,” and “dependent on the accidents, or on the least essential characters of the objects to which it belongs,” Ruskin insists (SLA 236, Costelloe 238). As a corrective, he aims to remediate the “surface picturesque” (described by Gilpin) through the higher virtues of the “Turnerian” picturesque, which emphasized a nostalgia for the pastoral that was filtered largely through his reading of Wordsworth. In The Poetry of Architecture (1837-38), Ruskin echoes Wordsworth’s Preface to A Guide through the Distract of the Lakes: a man of science, he writes, led by “rule and compass” cannot access a “science of feeling…a ministry to mind more than to eye” (PA 5 qtd. in Costelloe 237). Ruskin’s moral picturesque is perhaps most explicitly communicated in his discussion of the Gothic in The Stones of Venice II (1853), where he emphasizes that this moral picturesque demands a “Mental Power or Expression” that distinguishes it from the Claudian landscapes Gilpin held up as exemplars of the picturesque, which he saw as “surface” forms, sources of “merely outward delightfulness” (Modern Painters IV 15 qtd. in Costelloe 239). The high form of picturesqueness, expressed in a text such as The Poetry of Architecture, asserts that truly picturesque scenes are so because of their “unconscious projection” of distress: there is “no pity asked for, nor contempt feared” only “suffering, of poverty, or decay, nobly endured by unpretending strength of heart” (Modern Painters IV 15, 15-16 qtd. in Costelloe 239, 240). “For Ruskin, the essence of the Gothic is its ethos, that it is an aesthetic that conveys a whole way of ‘life,’ not only in the lines of its architectural features,” Costelloe notes, “but also in the virtues of freedom, invention, humanity, peace, and repose, all light and vivacity against the darkness and enervation of industrial Britain with its blighted landscape, Satanic mills, and moral degradation” (239). Ruskin’s “high” or moral picturesque
ultimately insists upon the intrinsic value of nature over and above man’s attempts to fix and “finish” it.

The conundrum that James inherits from Romantic aesthetics is precisely this struggle between a picturesqueness of enlivened surface features and one infused with moral values, a struggle communicated both in his approach to form and in his treatment of Strether’s particular aesthetic education. A sublimity dependent upon accidents—the rule of the surface picturesque—offers one way of reading Strether’s “impressions” of Europe. Yet, James’s entire art of fiction depends on the realization that there is no way to treat either surface or moral independently—rather than present one as a more authentic form of the other, they become utterly dependent on each other. In fact, perhaps nowhere in the novel is James’s fascination with the slippage between the surface picturesque and the high picturesque more evident than when Strether visits Madame de Vionnet for the final time. He must endure her disappointment and she appears all the more pitiful because she is helpless to change his choice to leave Paris. This is the moment of Strether’s fullest recognition, an undulating refrain: “it took women, it took women.” The verb turns over endlessly. Indeed, the process of making “one man”—Chad but also Strether—“so transcendently prized” and “ineffably adored” (A 324) did require the work of at least four women: Sarah Pocock, Mrs. Newsome, Miss Barrace, and especially Maria Gostrey. And yet this game of appearances makes each of them, as Strether realizes about Marie de Vionnet, “afraid for their lives.” The simultaneous sharpness and shallowness of Strether’s recognition of this fleeting fact is remarkable, and a little painful: “[I]t was like a chill in the air to him, it was almost appalling, that a creature so fine could be, by mysterious forces, a creature so exploited” (A 324). James keeps teasing us with Strether’s brushes between surface appearance and deep, almost transcendent, recognition.
This scene becomes central to the novel as a whole through three slippages between pronominal reference and intention that demonstrate the degree to which, for James, determining the “essence” of picturesque clarity demands turning to aspects of the object at hand that would seem much less essential. The context for the first slip is set when Strether realizes that Marie de Vionnet “had but made Chad who he was…She had made him better, she had made him best, she had made him anything one would; but it came to our friend with supreme queerness that he was none the less only Chad. Strether had the sense that he, a little, had made him too; his high appreciation had, as it were, consecrated her work” (A 324). The slip before the semi-colon rises then quickly becomes submerged again: Chad, in the end, was still just Chad—but he, Strether, in his own exploitation of the women who have helped him to “see,” was “none the less only Chad” as well. Marie’s frankness confirms the suggestion: “You don’t care what I think of you; but I happen to care what you think of me. And what you might…What you perhaps even did,” she tells Strether (A 325). “I didn’t think anything, I never think a step further than I’m actually obliged to,” he insists. Marie tries to absorb the full shock of his denial:

That’s perfectly false, I believe…except that you may, no doubt, often pull up when things become too ugly; or even, I’ll say to save you a protest, too beautiful. At any rate, even so far as it’s true, we’ve thrust on you appearances that you’ve had to take in and that have therefore made your obligation. Ugly or beautiful—it doesn’t matter what we call them—you were getting on without them, and that’s where we’re detestable. We bore you—that’s where we are. And we may well—for what we’ve cost you. All you can do now is not to think at all. And I who should have liked to seem to you—well, sublime!

(A 326)

Marie’s expression of his disappointment—precisely not sublime because she does not suffer
silently—sets up the second and third slips in the sequence, which confound the identity of the novel’s three central female characters: Maria Gostrey, Marie Vionnet, and Mrs. Newsome. While speaking to Gostrey of Marie’s beauty in the scene that follows their parting, Strether insists that she has “such variety and yet such harmony,” the ultimate mark of picturesqueness (A 332). Yet Gostrey reminds Strether that Marie had “believed you believed,” she tells him, “in her sublimity” (A 333). Gostrey tries to get from Strether whether he is talking about her physical beauty. When he doesn’t give her a straight answer, she offers an even broader interpretation: “If you mean...that she [Marie de Vionnet] was from the first for you the most charming woman in the world, nothing’s more simple,” Maria offers. But Strether replies that Marie’s virtue did not seem to him “a fixed quantity”: “it had more me—it has still—such elements of strangeness. Her greater age than his, her different world, traditions, association; her other opportunities, liabilities, standards” (A 333). Strether calls the whole situation “phantasmagoric,” which becomes a kind of trope for his refusal to take his own stake in it seriously. In fact, he confesses how much he feels the whole situation he has been drawn into was in fact “none of my business,” an admission that he associates with the fact that, all along, he was supposed to have been doing Mrs. Newsome’s bidding. Yet when Gostrey responds, “I wish she could hear you!” it becomes clear that she has been thinking of Marie de Vionnet. This slippage between the seemingly omniscient Mrs. Newsome and the more intimate tie to Marie de Vionnet in itself brings up the question of which alliance is the more “virtuous” one, not only for Chad but for Strether; it also prompts the next moment of confusion. When Strether shirks off the business of Chad and Marie’s affair, Maria realizes “how little his philosophy [of remaining uninvolved] could bring her personally” (A 333). As she tries to defend Vionnet, Gostrey seems to be speaking both on Vionnet’s behalf and in defense of her own right to Strether’s attention. “She
wouldn’t have done with you. She feels she has lost you—yet that she might have been better for you.” She even offers to tell Marie, her old schoolmate and rival for Strether’s affection, that her sublime virtue is intact in Strether’s eyes, “in short, offer[ing] herself for service to the end” (A 334). Yet Gostrey’s stake in Strether’s personal “philosophy” does not register with him. His refusal to have her pass along any message to Vionnet initiates the third and most provocative slippage. “Poor dear thing!” Gostrey exclaims. Yet Strether catches neither the reference to Vionnet nor the expression of solidarity. “Me?” he asks her. She clarifies, but when pressed she replies, getting the final word in this third installment of Book Twelve, “I’m sorry for us all!”

The importance of these slippages in the novel’s final book raises into relief James’s treatment of “corrective” moments generally—which he explicates through his prefaces. In the preface to The Ambassadors, James admits that successfully carrying out Gostrey’s role in the unfolding story was both his central accomplishment and his main source of anxiety: “Maria Gostrey is an enrolled, a direct, aid to lucidity; she is in fine, to tear off her mask, the most unmitigated and abandoned of ficelles [literally, a string or thread]. Half the dramatist’s art […] is in the use of ficelles; by which I mean in a deep dissimulation of his dependence on them […] with the seams and joints of Maria Gostrey’s ostensible connectedness taken particular care of, duly smoothed over, that is, and anxiously kept from showing as “pieced on;” this figure doubtless achieves, after a fashion, something of the dignity of a prime idea (12, 13, my emphasis). This is the author’s portrait of Gostrey as a found object that has undergone “an apotheosis, a transfiguration of the commonplace, a redemption by art.”
HENRY JAMES MET THE PHOTOGRAPHER ALVIN LANGDON IN APRIL OF 1905; BY OCTOBER OF 1906 HE WAS SENDING COBURN TO PARIS TO TAKE THE PHOTOGRAPHS THAT WOULD BE INCLUDED AS FRONTISPICES TO HIS COLLECTED WORKS IN THE NEW YORK EDITION. THE PHOTOGRAPHS WERE TO BE “OPTICAL SYMBOLS OR ECHOES...SMALL PICTURES OF OUR ‘SET’ STAGE WITH THE ACTORS LEFT OUT.” HE DIRECTED COBURN TO THE LUXEMBOURG GARDENS “TO LOOK FOR MY RIGHT GARDEN STATUE (COMPOSING WITH OTHER INTERESTING OBJECTS)—AGAINST WHICH MY CHAIR WAS TILTED BACK.”

He hoped for an “aspect of things or combinations of objects that might, by a latent virtue in it, speak of its connection with something in the book, and yet at the same time speak enough for its odd or interesting self” (23: xi; The Art of the Novel, 333). He believed that this distance, I believe, is what James both enacts and explores in The

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195 Ralph Bogardus’s Pictures and Texts: Henry James, A. L. Coburn, and New Ways of Seeing in Literary Culture remains the most detailed and widely cited account of James’s partnership with Coburn and their collaborative process for selecting the subjects for the frontispieces.
*Ambassadors*. Moreover, I see the frontispieces of the *New York Edition* as James’s attempt to extend the genre of the fictional narrative by inserting an additional critical (and technological) distance. In “voiding” the landscape of human markers, the frontispieces take James’s collected body of work out of historical time and demand the reader confront the experience of meaning unfolding in the present across image and text. In that sense, James aims to fulfill the truth of the novel that he calls for in “The Art of Fiction.” To recuperate that argument, by way of beginning to draw to a close, I offer Kenneth Burke’s sentence: “There are no forms of art which are not also forms of experience” (*Counterstatement* 143 qtd. in Stewart 13).

At the 2013 MLA Convention in Boston, Bethany Nowviskie, a self-proclaimed lapsed Victorian and book historian turned digital humanist, gave a talk that she titled, “Resistance in the Materials.” The phrase was taken from William Morris: “You can’t have art without resistance the materials,” Morris reportedly said in 1924 when complaining about the way the typewriter anesthetized the feeling of the hand for its work. Given that I was reading James when I read her talk second-hand on her public blog this led me to recall that James was able to avoid the typewriter entirely when composing his late work. He had the luxury of dictating his novels to his amanuensis, Theodora Bosanquet. But Henry James did confront a different type of resistance, one he famously articulated in his preface to *The Golden Bowl*, where he acknowledged his own “literary jealousy” for the work of the draughtsman. How is it possible, James reflects, given the “invidious distinction” he had insisted upon between the writer’s frame and the illustrator’s, that in the end he insisted upon making room for A.L. Coburn’s photographic frontispieces? In the end, the frontispieces altered his body of work more than any set of textual revisions for a particular story or novel in the *New York Edition*. They were the
most blatant evidence that he had come to see again, between 1906 and 1908, “the question of what a ‘subject’ what ‘character’, what a saving sense in things is and isn’t” (*Art of the Novel* 334). What James had to confront, even (or especially) at the apex of his career as a novelist, was the relationship between resistance and control, immediacy and interference, tested most pointedly in his concession to create the frontispieces and his demand that he have a direct hand in finding the right views.

J. Hillis Miller describes the way in which James’s directives to Coburn, held up as a ‘light’ to the city of London for Coburn’s illumination, “br[ought] into the open both something exposed in another way by the words of the book and something separate, something proper to itself.” The images James uses to describe the danger posed by the graphic arts to the written text are taken from gardening.¹⁹⁶ They offer a way back to the site of the picturesque ideal, that “ordered English garden,” as James calls it. This is Miller, making use of that site:

> Gardening is like illustration in that in both cases something comes into the light out of an obscure ground. The elucidation of the graphic would interfere with the free growth of the verbal illustration, shade it, stunt it. So it must be kept at a distance: “his [the author’s] own garden, however, remains one thing, and the garden he has prompted the cultivation of at other hands becomes quite another; which means that the frame of one’s own work no more provides place for such a plot than he expects flesh and fish to be served on the same platter” (23: x, *The Art of the Novel*, 332). A novel with pictures is like a garden growing two incompatible crops. It is a frame enclosing not only its own shapely design but also an alien parasitical plot, plot as garden and plot as artistic design or story […citing James…] “I, for one, should have looked much askance at the proposal, on the part of my associates in the whole business, to graft or ‘grow,’ at whatever point, a

¹⁹⁶ And, he adds, from eating.
picture by another hand on my own picture—this always being, to my sense, a lawless incident.” [Miller, again] ‘Graft’ and ‘graphic’ of course have the same root, Greek ‘graphein,’ to write. Grafting relates to the Greek concept through the pencil-like shape of sharpened shoot inserted under the bark of parent stock. A grafted tree producing both yellow and red apples is ‘lawless,’ a monster or lusus naturae. (Art of the Novel, 331-32; Miller, 139-140)

Dugald Stewart claimed that the oldest and most general meaning of the picturesque was “that graphical power by which Poetry and Eloquence produce effects on the mind analogous to those of a picture. By 1849, in The Seven Lamps of Architecture, Ruskin defined the picturesque as “parasitical” or “engrafted” because it exists as a reflection or shadow of a sublimity that is “dependent on the accidents, or on the least essential characters, of the objects to which it belongs” (qtd. in Costelloe 238). I take this looming figure of the parasitical picturesque to signal that we are never really free of a desire for picturesqueness, or the imposition of abstract values onto uncertain vistas and the coercion of interest. And yet sometimes the results of imposing it can be monstrous, and can produce monstrosities.

The act of making what we see picturesque, as I have been arguing, is remedial. It is the condition of grafting an external set of values onto present experience, sometimes with the intention of distinguishing those values from a prior tradition—or, alternatively, with the intention of integrating the past into a present that might otherwise feel unfamiliar and disjointed (as when Strether relishes in the possibility that the Lambinet painting he saw on Tremont Street could restore some feeling to the French countryside he sees in front of him…right before he is abruptly “cut” in the eye of nature).197 As I have suggested in relation to The Ambassadors, the

197 In “The Middle Years” (1893), James offered a similar account of the remedial properties of picturesqueness: “the downright pleasure of the illusion yet again created, the apparent transfer from the past to the present of the
way James makes the resistance to and control of objects—Gostrey as poor thing and Gostrey as *ficelle*—essential to his plot makes him a conscious user of the picturesque tradition. To my mind, Nowviskie’s topic for her talk, which was about what it means to be a “digital” humanist and to manipulate texts as things, ties our twenty-first century concerns back to a self-consciousness about our tools for making poor old things interesting that defines the picturesque mode.

When we give it the attention it deserves, more than a glimpse, we can recognize the picturesque as a refusal, against the odds, to be composed entirely by what James calls “the recording senses” and a refusal to be disconnected from the material evidence of a past. If the hope of integrating the rather overwhelming feeling of the present into a past is only “an illusion of freedom,” it is our illusion. “The only certainty we have it that it is *our* monster. It is us” (Shepherd xxvi).

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particular combination of things that did at its hour ever so directly operate and that isn’t after all then drained of virtue, wholly wasted and lost, for sensation, for participation in the act of life, in the attesting sights, sounds, smells, the illusion, as I say, of the recording senses” (11).
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**Henry James**


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