



PROJECT MUSE®

Poynton: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity

Jennie A. Kassanoff

The Henry James Review, Volume 38, Number 1, Winter 2017, pp. 71-86 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/hjr.2017.0008>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/648956>

Poynton: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity

By Jennie A. Kassanoff,
Barnard College

Henry James put great stock in intelligence, and, like vengeful nerds everywhere, he was not above taking the odd potshot at the beautiful athlete endowed with a distinctly ordinary mind. Consider the philistine *arriviste* Mona Brigstock in *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897). As Mona concludes her initial visit to Poynton, the exquisite estate entailed to Owen Gereth, the young heir's recently widowed mother flings a trashy "female magazine" at her potential daughter-in-law (57). Despite the dismissive lob, Mona dexterously leaps and snags the publication in mid-air:

Mrs. Gereth, delivering herself from the doorstep, had tossed the periodical higher in air than was absolutely needful—tossed it toward the carriage the retreating party was about to enter. Mona, from the force of habit, the reflex action of the custom of sport, had popped out, with a little spring, a long arm and intercepted the missile as easily as she would have caused a tennis-ball to rebound from a racket. "Good catch!" Owen had cried, so genuinely pleased that practically no notice was taken of his mother's impressive remarks.

Drawing on William James's Lamarckian distinction between the habitual act ("mere sensation is a sufficient guide") and the "strictly voluntary act" (a higher-order cognitive function guided by "the upper regions of brain and mind"), Henry makes Mona's "reflex action" less a sign of ability than of *disability* (*Principles* 115–16).¹ To seize a projectile in mid-air, like a spontaneous tennis return, requires "mere sensation"—not "the upper regions of brain and mind" associated with Mrs. Gereth's "impressive remarks."² In contrast to Owen's clever mother, who grows "white and wan" after only a brief walk (*SP* 107), Mona's is the mindless vigor of a dumb jock.

If his autobiographies are any guide, James had reason to resent the Monas of the world. A famously indoor man for whom “contemplation [took] so much the place of action,” James counted himself among those “whose faculty for application is all and only in their imagination and their sensibility” (*AU* 17, 8). He would repeatedly portray himself as a young nerd whose “only form of riot or revel” was “that of the visiting mind” (16). Next to the rugged schoolmates of his New York childhood, for example, who demonstrate a “common, . . . baffling, mastery . . . of a hundred handy arts and devices,” the young Henry is an “individual dunce”—a kind of “commercial traveler who has lost the key to his packed case of samples and can but pass for a fool while other exhibitions go forward” (128, 8). He is particularly outmatched by his versatile older brother who can stoutly declare, “*I play with boys who curse and swear!*” (147). In the sensitive mind of his retiring younger sibling, William is a fleet track star who effortlessly sprints ahead: “he had gained such an advance of me in his sixteen months’ experience of the world before mine began that I never for all the time of childhood and youth in the least caught up with him or overtook him” (7–8).

If such autobiographical self-deprecation is suspiciously labored (James, after all, was a devoted bicyclist), it nonetheless reveals what Henry James saw as the inverse relationship between brain and brawn, mind and body.³ Just as those who revere intelligence find Mona Brigstock “brutally ignorant” (*SP* 50), so the commercial travelers who prize handiness dismiss the future author as an impractical “dunce.”⁴ For a writer who pursued the elusive game of popular approval, this verdict could only be discouraging, yet it would haunt his legacy, particularly among his modernist heirs. Virginia Woolf would argue that James wove an intellectual chrysalis around his characters—a “cocoon, spun from the finest shades of meaning, which a society, completely unoccupied by the business of getting a living, has time to spin round and about itself” (275). Regardless of its cause (“a feeling of timidity or prudery or . . . a lack of imaginative audacity”), this aloof fortification against the everyday was, for Woolf, suffocating: “a writer of greater depth or natural spirits would have taken the risk which his material imposes, [and] let his sails blow full” (276). Likewise, Wyndham Lewis would see in James’s late writings the over-compensating output of an “intelligence-snob” (143). According to Lewis, James’s upbringing in the culturally “deseretic” United States had deprived him of Europe’s salutary and “sensuous interpretation of values,” creating a disability “as concrete—and regrettable—as a serious and crippling accident in boyhood would have been” (143, 153).⁵ Such provincial and ascetic origins had turned James’s mind “all . . . inwards instead of outwards,” making “the products of the intellect . . . grow thinner and more shadowy, the very eyesight itself . . . become impaired,” and the work “at best an affair of abstract notation” (152–53).

If James would have balked at such post-mortems, his own writings nonetheless prefigure the terms of such modernist critiques. The “sensuous” experience that, for both Woolf and Lewis, was a healthful deterrent to “crippling” incapacities of the mind was for James the limited brain’s predictable casing. Indeed, inasmuch as Mona is all body and no brain (“[t]all, straight . . . fair” and “long-limbed,” she stands “without a look in her eye or any perceptible intention of any sort in any other feature” [*SP* 39]), she personifies the relationship between embodied advantage and cognitive limitation, a pairing that underscores the delicate body’s correlation with the vigorous mind. If nineteenth-century authorities like the neurologist George M.

Beard offered “evidence” supporting a relationship between the advanced intellect and the vulnerable body, they also essentialized the preeminence of the “brain-working classes” over their “muscle-working” peers (195). James clearly took this hierarchy to heart. Consider this remarkable passage from his 1909 preface to *The Princess Casamassima*:

[T]he figures in any picture, the agents in any drama, are interesting only in proportion as they feel their respective situation. . . . There are degrees of feeling—the muffled, the faint, the just sufficient, the barely intelligent, as we may say; and the acute, the intense, the complete, in a word—the power to be finely aware and richly responsible. It is those moved in this latter fashion who “get most” out of all that happens to them and who in so doing enable us, as readers of their record, as participators by a fond attention, also to get most. Their being finely aware—as Hamlet and Lear, say, are finely aware—*makes* absolutely the intensity of their adventure, gives the maximum of sense to what befalls them. We care, our curiosity and our sympathy care, comparatively little for what happens to the stupid, the coarse and the blind; care for it, and for the effects of it, at the most as helping to precipitate what happens to the more deeply wondering, to the really sentient. Hamlet and Lear are surrounded, amid their complications, by the stupid and the blind, who minister in all sorts of ways to their recorded fate. (AN 62)

Elaborating the dichotomous relationship between the brilliant and the intellectually bereft, James describes what it means to be “finely aware and richly responsible” by invoking the stigmatized status of “the stupid, the coarse and the blind.” He simultaneously invents and invokes an enlightened readership (who else, after all, would be reading a preface to his New York Edition?) by deploying the insider’s logic of “cognitive privilege” (Osteen 5). In such exclusive and rarified company, James can admit what, to him, seems patently admissible: that “we care . . . comparatively little” for the intellectually or perceptually limited, and when we do, it is only insofar as such subjects minister to the “more deeply wondering, . . . the really sentient.” The intellectually challenged thus serve as stumbling blocks before the insightful. They are not full personages in and of themselves (James elsewhere describes them as “but the halves of men and women” [EL 1314]); rather, theirs is a “subordinate, comparative, illustrative value—that appeal of the witless which is often so penetrating” (AN 66–67). Indeed, only through characters “subject to fine intensification and wide enlargement” can readers “of healthy intellect” (EL 1313) “get the best there is of it.” By contrast, the more a story “falls within the scope of a denser and duller, a more vulgar and more shallow capacity,” the more “we get a picture dim and meager” (AN 66, 67).

James’s framework, however, exposes what it purports to conceal. In fact, his realism is limned by an anxiety that precisely the opposite will occur: that “the stupid, the coarse and the blind” will abandon their service to those who purport to be their intellectual superiors and instead spread a scourge of cognitive disability by going rogue as freelance vectors of democratic contagion. This animating fear has been obliquely acknowledged by critics of literary realism. George Levine, for instance, points out that realism is menaced by the possibility that the world it seeks to repre-

sent is “merely monstrous and mechanical, beyond the control of human meaning” (22). The urge to police and regulate such meaning, in turn, forces the realist author to confront a specter of his own making—what Levine calls “the monstrous possibility of the unnamable.” This language of monstrosity suggests that the “unnamable” is precisely a site of narrative disability, what Avital Ronell has called “the core recalcitration against which any writing breaks open” (14). To the extent that the realist narrator emulates the diagnostician, evaluating, treating, and even quarantining “the sick subject,” it is only with the advent of modernist characters like Jake Barnes, Septimus Smith, and Benjy Compson that the novel ultimately relinquishes its remedial posture, allowing “the pathological perspective . . . [to] be cultivated for its own sake” (Rothfield 160). To defend against this threat, nineteenth-century realists patrolled the porous borders of the novel, buttressing “the self’s clean and proper body” (Kristeva 73). Indeed, Julia Kristeva’s observation that “defilement rites” are pivotal in “societies *without writing*” prompts her to theorize that such “cathartic rites function like a ‘writing of the real,’” marking the formative boundary between the ego and what Erving Goffman famously called “the spoiled identity” (Kristeva 74).⁶ If the urge to differentiate the spoiled identity from “the acute, the intense, [and] the complete” is realism’s founding gesture, then Amy Kaplan’s assertion that “to call oneself a realist means to make a claim not only for *the cognitive value of fiction* but for one’s own cultural authority both to possess and to dispense access to the real” alerts us not only to the role of ableist and cognitive privilege in realist practice but also to its fortifications against cognition’s debased other: stupidity (13, emphasis mine). Indeed, despite William James’s contention that the “real world” was “multitudinous beyond imagination, tangled, muddy, painful and perplexed,” belying “intellectualist” efforts to reduce it to something “simple, clean and noble” (*Pragmatism* 21, 22), Henry James insistently fortified the stylized “art of the novel” against the disabled threat of “loose, baggy monsters” (AN 84).⁷

In what follows, I discuss the complex role of disability in Jamesian realism by paying particular attention to “spoiled identity” in *The Spoils of Poynton*. In doing so, I hope to build on the observations of critics like R. P. Blackmur, Ross Labrie, J. A. Ward, Avital Ronell, and Mark McGurl, each of whom has alluded to the ways that “the fine intelligence . . . at the heart of James’s work” (AN xix) operates in dialogue with the “underdeveloped consciousness” (Labrie 424) characteristic of James’s “less perceptive characters” (Ward 67). In particular, I pursue Ronell’s tantalizing suggestion that stupidity acts as a vampire in novels like *The Sacred Fount* (1901) inasmuch as it “can zap your girlfriend, finish off your lover, blunt your teacher” (10). Not only do I see this image of Stokeresque monstrosity as further evidence of James’s anxious discourse of disability, but I also see cognitive and somatic difference as a formative preoccupation in the late nineteenth century. Here, I build on McGurl’s assertion that James’s desire to “distinguish the intelligent from the stupid” formed a response to Gilded Age mass culture and the erosion of class privilege (75). What McGurl calls James’s “meritocratic essentialism”—the privileging of intellectual labor over its “dialectical foil . . . [the] naive, stupid, low, primitive, childish, uneducated” (197n22, 9)—was an all-purpose antidote in a nation transformed by cultural democratization on the one hand and diminishing open lands on the other. Armed with the 1905 Binet-Simon scale, progressive reformers increasingly cultivated what JoAnne Brown has called the “secular faith that human intelligence itself was a natural resource as

fecund as land or labor” (44). Brainpower seemed to be the renewable resource that would fuel the “engine of progressivism.” For his part, James envisioned a utopian future in which intelligence would heal international divides, enabling “some eventual sublime consensus of the educated” to “abridge old rigours of separation” (*LB* x).

Underwriting such eugenic forecasts, however, was a late-nineteenth-century fear of embodied difference and cognitive deficiency. I argue that the compromised mind is the constitutive other of Jamesian realism. Raised in a family where somatic disability often signaled intellectual distinction, James was both fearful and dismissive of the incompetent mind housed in the otherwise competent body. He was not alone: the late nineteenth century was preoccupied with the specter of intellectual incompetence and disabled contagion. As Walt Whitman famously fretted in 1871, the United States itself was becoming “a vast and more and more thoroughly-appointed body” whose “highly-deceptive superficial popular intellectuality” was “an almost complete failure” (12). In response, James explicitly theorized a form of realist inoculation designed to immunize and protect the increasingly unsovereign body human and body politic against the differential possibilities of cognitive limitation. In this respect, disability informs *The Spoils of Poynton*, a novel in which a clever aesthete attempts to outwit the stupidities of generational succession. As James discovers, the fantasy of cognitive sovereignty is inescapably tracked by differences it seeks to control.

Disability played a formative role in a family whose patriarch, Henry James Sr., walked with the assistance of a prosthetic limb.⁸ As a boy, Henry Sr. had tried to stamp out a fire ignited in a failed hot-air balloon experiment. His turpentine-soaked pant leg caught fire, resulting in months of excruciating pain, gangrene, and, ultimately, amputation above the knee (Habegger 66). Like William Dean Howells, those who knew him as an adult would recall the elder James’s “sensitive hand gripping the stick on which he rested his weight to ease it from the artificial limb he wore” (qtd. in Edel 37). For their part, James’s eldest sons William and Henry Jr. increasingly saw their father’s disability as a sign of his intellectual singularity. In his 1887 essay on the experience of a phantom limb, for example, William theorized that bodily distress evidenced higher brain function. Trauma, he argued, played “a great part in all of our neural and mental processes, especially the higher ones” (“Consciousness”).⁹ Alluding to his father’s accident, William noticed that, absent the somatic input “which . . . puts prompt bounds to too great eccentricity,” an amputee’s brain allowed sensory eccentricities to “luxuriate un-rebuked.” If this accounted for Henry Sr.’s intense sensation of his missing appendage—a feeling “every whit as distinct as his feeling of the foot which remained”—it also clarified the father’s propensity to luxuriate un-rebuked in other intellectual eccentricities as well—what Henry Sr.’s biographer Alfred Habegger has called the “injudicious and sometimes scandalous opinions” of a “blocked and monomaniacal hierophant” (4, 3). By turns Calvinist, Transcendentalist, Swedenborgian, and Fourierist, Henry Sr. was a gifted raconteur whose peripatetic ideas remained “fundamentally aloof from the core of action” (Edel 38). Under his tutelage, his children were to do the same, pursuing “the universal by avoiding entrapment in the particular” (Habegger 345). An idiosyncratic and nomadic education resulted. As Henry Jr. would later recall, “we wholesomely breathed inconsistency and ate and drank contradictions” (*AU* 124).

Henry Jr. saw the circumstances that “lamed [his father] for life” not only as the source of a “grave disability, which it took a strong constitution to carry” (351), but

also, like William, as the galvanizing source of intellectual acuity. To bear a lifelong somatic burden, Henry Jr. decided, one had to seek solace in a life of the mind. As his father had told the young Jameses, “we had all only to *be* with more intelligence and faith . . . in order to work off, in the happiest manner, the many-sided ugliness of life” (371). It “was a process that might go on, blessedly, in the quietest of all quiet ways. *That* wouldn’t be blood and fire and tears, or would be none of these things stupidly precipitated.” Ugly accidents like the conflagration that had forced the amputation of Henry Sr.’s leg were “stupidly precipitated”—a traumatic amalgam of “blood and fire and tears.” “Intelligence and faith,” by contrast, were acts of will and conscience, reassertions of mind over matter. Thus in 1876, when he began to serialize *The American* in the *Atlantic Monthly*, James worried that an unexpected accident might prevent him from completing his as-yet-unfinished novel: “what would happen if anything should ‘happen,’ if one should break one’s arm by an accident or make a long illness or suffer, in body, fortune, any other visitation involving a loss of time” (AN 20)? Only mental fortitude and renewed confidence could fill the void: “one would pull through, . . . with opportunity enough, grave interruption never yet had descended.” By following his father’s example, the “many-sided ugliness of life” could be redeemed by the multi-faceted brain.

If Henry Sr.’s disability explained “the limits of his material action” and the narrow compass of his “doing and enjoying” (AU 351), his embodied difference also served as an important precedent. As Henry Jr.’s biographers have noted, the controversial injury that exempted the young author from the Civil War uncannily mirrored the circumstances of his father’s childhood trauma. Like the elder James, Henry Jr. was summoned to a fire—a “shabby conflagration” in Newport—sometime near the beginning of the Civil War (415). Like his father, he tried to extinguish the fire and, like his father, he suffered “a horrid even if an obscure hurt” (415; Edel 181). The family doctor’s failure to corroborate the injury, together with James’s own opacity about its source, has puzzled many a critic. An embarrassed Henry Jr. seems to have anticipated as much, realizing that “to have trumped up a lameness at such a juncture could be made to pass in no light for graceful” (AU 415). Nevertheless, he was excused from military service on the basis of his disability (Habegger 431). Like William, whose three-month enlistment came to an abrupt conclusion due to his delicate health, Henry Jr. would only know the war “in a more indirect and muffled fashion” (AU 382). The “absurdly strenuous” younger Jameses, Garth Wilkinson (“Wilkie”) (“the act of reading was inhuman and repugnant to him”) (458) and Robertson (“the Rough Rob, with his rude, untutored ways” [qtd. in Maher 23]) would fight for the Union cause. In a family for whom intellectual acumen inversely tracked bodily fortitude, “the sons with the most intellectual promise” stayed at home, while their juniors were deployed and injured (24).¹⁰

From this perspective, the James family seems to have contributed to an emerging cult of intelligence in the late nineteenth century, one that devalued the comparatively benighted. “Stupidity,” today a term of hackneyed aspersion, formed in the late nineteenth century an essential part of an ever-growing vocabulary of cognitive disability. While “idiocy,” for example, was a state of “[m]ental deficiency or extreme stupidity,” “imbecility” was a “milder form [of] idiocy” (Fish 29, 30). To this taxonomy was eventually added the term “moron”—a “feeble-minded” person who had a permanent mental age between eight and twelve (Trent 162). James found such terms both familiar

and functional. In an 1865 book review of Anthony Trollope's *Miss Mackenzie*, for example, he excoriated the popular Victorian novelist for unleashing a "company of imbeciles" on the unsuspecting reader (*EL* 1314). If "prison discipline makes men idiots," James continued, Trollope's readers would find themselves incarcerated in a textual penitentiary that "perceptibly weakens the mind" (1313).¹¹ Trollope's next novel was just as insulting: "'The Belton Estate' is a *stupid* book," James exploded, "and in a much deeper sense than that of being simply dull. . . . It is essentially, organically, consistently stupid; stupid in direct proportion to its strength. It is without a single idea. It is utterly incompetent . . ." (1325–26).

While such acid pronouncements evince the hyperbolic workings of a wicked pen, they also reveal what James saw as the continuities between mass culture, intellectual erosion, and social degeneration. Like many postbellum intellectuals, he felt himself to be living in an era of decline that was increasingly dominated by "a submerged and blinded and deafened generation, a generation so smothered in quantity and number that discrimination, under the gasp, has neither air to breathe nor room to turn around" (*AU* 251). The power to make fine distinctions—social, intellectual, or aesthetic—had been choked, he felt, by an epidemic of cognitive and sensory disability that had inured Americans to their significance.¹² Perhaps recalling his brother William's speculation that the "mental material" of famously deaf-blind people like Laura Bridgman and Helen Keller was "of the deadliest insipidity" (*Collected* 457), James appealed to images of asphyxiation and incarceration to mark the social consequences of widespread cognitive disability.

The association was a telling one. By the late nineteenth century, people with cognitive disabilities, once integrated into homes and communities, were increasingly segregated and institutionalized. As dangerous contaminants to the body politic, the so-called feeble-minded were now "gluttonous enem[ies] of the state, the undisciplined opposite of the republican ideal" (Richards 71). As the influential degenerationist Max Nordau cautioned in 1898, "We stand now in the midst of a severe mental epidemic; of a sort of black death of degeneration and hysteria" (537).¹³ Early eugenicists declared that the unmonitored heterosexual reproduction of the mentally disabled was spreading an "epidemic" of hereditary feeble-mindedness. In his wildly popular exposé of rural white degeneration, *The Jukes: A Record and Study of the Relations of Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity* (1877), the amateur social scientist Richard L. Dugdale warned that "disease in the parent [would] produce idiocy in the child" (55). A "moral idiot" could be the reproductive result of anything from "[e]xcess of passions" and "want of alimentary nutrition to the brain" to the failure "to furnish properly organized experience of the right relations of human beings to each other" (55–56). Progressive-era reformers like Josephine Shaw Lowell seized on such evidence to lobby vigorously for the "eugenic institutionalization" of feeble-minded women who might otherwise breed a contagion of disability (Rafter 235). Addressing the National Conference of Charities and Correction in 1879, Lowell warned that unless New York confined its feeble-minded population to specialized institutions, the state would "suffer a moral leprosy to spread and taint her future generations" (qtd. in Rafter 239).

Yet as his mind-imprisoning experience of reading Trollope suggests, James regarded such institutions as a potential source of, not an answer to, the circumstances that "[make] men idiots." Rejecting Lowell's logic of quarantine, James instead

elaborated a strategy of immunity through the logic of inoculation. As the *New York Sun* explained to its readers in 1905, James's "intricate literary constructions . . . are developed after the germ theory" ("Personal" 90). The origin story to *The Spoils of Poynton* is a case in point. On Christmas Eve 1893, the author found himself at a London dinner party seated next to one Isabel Anstruther-Thomson, a young aristocrat who regaled him with the story of a mother-son inheritance dispute. James recalled that he "instantly became aware with my 'sense for the subject,' of the prick of inoculation: the *whole* of the virus . . . being infused by that single touch" (SP 25). Drawing on the findings of the French microbiologist and chemist Louis Pasteur, who had famously developed a vaccine for rabies in 1885, James imagines himself wincing under the jab of an injection in which the "mere disjointed and lacerated lump of life" has been distilled into a serum and "washed free of awkward accretions" (23). The delicate procedure requires needle-like precision, for "[t]his fineness it is that communicates the virus of suggestion, anything more than the minimum of which spoils the operation." The unknowing Anstruther-Thomson, however, "complacently and benightedly" plows on, leaving James to suffer in silence: "I began to hear of action taken, on the beautiful ground, by our engaged adversaries, tipped each, from that instant, with the light of the highest distinction. I saw clumsy Life again at her stupid work" (25). "[C]lumsy [l]ife" is here a feminine fool who, like James's blithe dinner companion, drops "unwitting . . . a mere floating particle in the stream of talk" (23). Like the Pasteurian surgeon Joseph Lister, who had toured the United States in 1876 to introduce antiseptic agents designed to prevent the kind of infection that had cost Henry Sr. his leg (see *Garipey*), James recognizes this "floating particle" for what it is: a germ of resistance. He therefore bides his time and patiently awaits the opportunity to marshal "the primary laws for a saving selection" and impose scientific order on an otherwise stupid narrative that, like Life, is "all inclusion and confusion" (SP 24).

That the inoculation in question was a rabies vaccine is significant. A feared disease whose lurid reputation outstripped its actual incidence, hydrophobia was alleged to turn "man into beast, uncontrollable and dangerous" (Kete 91). Victims were said to resemble feral animals, frothing at the mouth as they committed primal acts of violence—all the while retaining a horrifying "conscious[ness] of their monstrosity" (92). If such atavistic reports inspired naturalists like Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Frank Norris, then they were the stuff of realist nightmare for James. For a writer whose representative bogey was a beast in the jungle, vaccination represented a fantasized solution to clumsy Life's rabid bite. His was realist defilement rite of the highest order, a pasteurizing narrative strategy intended to stop the chaotic transmission of disability.¹⁴ Thus in his preface to *The Spoils of Poynton*, James assumes the role of a smug pediatrician who condescends to Anstruther-Thomson's parental ignorance. The story may be "the perfect little workable thing, but she'll strangle it in the cradle, even while she pretends, all so cheerily, to rock it; wherefore I'll stay her hand while yet there's time" (25). Dividing the hygienic from the pathogenic, and the normal from the noxious, James purports to save his "little workable thing" from maternal incompetence.

The Spoils of Poynton proceeds with this inoculative mission, contrasting a curatorial investment in objects of "saving selection" with the rabid indeterminacies of procreative succession. The novel centers on the formative tension between the aesthetic and genealogical productions of Adela Gereth. As Sean O'Toole has recently

argued, the novel displaces “the object and site of desire away from the physical (gendered) body and onto a shared aesthetic of the inanimate” (45). James contrasts Poynton’s beautiful spoils—the gatherings of a “whole life” devoted to “completeness and perfection” (*SP* 66)—with the spoiled identities of Mona, Owen, and their “submerged and blinded and deafened generation” (*AU* 251). Procreation is, at best, a capricious force: while the vacuous Mona is the predictable daughter of a mother described as “a born [fool]”—a woman “as stupid as an owl”¹⁵ whose mind “strayed and bleated like an unbranded sheep” (173, 150)—Owen, a sporty young man with “neither wit nor tact nor inspiration,” is the distinctly surprising offspring of the clever Mrs. Gereth (59). For all the barnyard scorn that Mrs. Gereth lavishes on her Waterbath counterpart (“If a cow should try to calculate, that’s the kind of happy thought she’d have” [173]), Poynton’s dowager is also the mother of a simple child. “Poor Owen,” she decides, is a “jackass” and a “blockhead” who obeys nothing but “dumb instinct” (61, 183, 186, 60).¹⁶ He is evidence of life’s “stupid work” and heterosexuality’s “profligate tendency of variability” (Scheiber 61). Owen is therefore described with insistent appeals to the rhetoric of disability (*SP* 61). He is, for example, a “happy youth” with “no more sense for a motive than a deaf man for a tune,” a man who, unlike the novel’s “wiseheads” (46), has no theory of mind, for “there were lots of things, especially in people’s minds, that a fellow didn’t understand” (39). The young heir in fact moves through life “with a frank dread of people’s minds: there were explanations he would have been almost as shy of receiving as of giving” (61). If such “slow cerebration” makes him seem “pointlessly active and pleasantly dull” (54, 39), it also explains his categorical failure of his mother’s austere test: “[she] had only one question about persons: were they clever or stupid?” (126).

Owen finds his perfect match in the “belligerently blank” Mona, whose “obscurely active” ignorance is likewise likened to sensory disability (51, 50). As Mrs. Gereth’s astute young friend Fleda Vetch observes, Mona “doesn’t look with her eyes; she looks with her ears. In her own way she had taken it in; she knew, she felt when it had been touched” (206). Like a person with blindness whose remaining senses grow more acute in vision’s absence, Mona can hear and feel what she cannot see. Mona is the obvious scion of Waterbath, a house whose “imbecilities of decoration” only magnify the estate’s “ugliness and stupidity” (35). “It was an ugliness fundamental and systematic, the result of the abnormal nature of the Brigstocks, from whose composition the principle of taste had been extravagantly omitted” (37). While trying to escape Waterbath, Mrs. Gereth discovers a kindred spirit in the equally fastidious Fleda with whom she bonds in a shared ecstasy of revulsion. For both friends, Waterbath’s tawdriness is a sign of the Brigstocks’ “abnormal nature”—their deviation, that is, from the intelligence that expands in such exquisite amplitude at Poynton.

Fleda’s appreciation of Poynton underscores her penetrating intellect. Unlike Mona, who is blind and beautiful, the “slim, pale” and plain Fleda “almost demoniacally both sees and feels, while the others but feel without seeing” (36, 31). In his preface, James takes considerable pains to emphasize Fleda’s “superior display of ‘mind’”: “[f]rom beginning to end, . . . appreciation, even to that of the very whole, lives in Fleda” in contrast to whom “every one else shows for comparatively stupid, the tangle, the drama, the tragedy and comedy of those who appreciate consisting so much of their relation with those who don’t” (31). According to this taxonomy of intelligence, Fleda is the “free spirit” who makes “fools . . . interesting by contrast.”

While “free spirit” may seem an odd characterization of the novel’s overthinking “flurried bundle of petticoats,” James insists that Fleda is free precisely *because* she thinks. Like her obscurely hurt creator, she is “the spectator of life”—“always much tormented, and by no means always triumphant, . . . heroic, ironic, pathetic or whatever, and . . . ‘successful,’ only through having remained free” (31, 32). Disengaged from the “comparatively stupid” transactions of property, kinship, and succession, the ascetic Fleda represents valuing without owning, thinking without doing, and loving without issue. She comprehends the value of the spoils because she can contemplate them from afar:

That they might have been, that they might still be hers, that they were perhaps already another’s, were ideas that had too little to say to her. They were nobody’s at all—too proud, unlike base animals and humans, to be reducible to anything so narrow. It was Poynton that was theirs; they had simply recovered their own. (194)

If, at the center of *Spoils*, is “a passionate same-sex bond . . . mediated by the material world of objects,” as O’Toole has persuasively shown (37), then Fleda’s queer rejection of ownership—here the “narrow” purview of “base animals and humans”—is the organizing basis of her inoculated imagination. Her intellectual superiority, that is, stems precisely from her immunity to the other characters’ atavistic concerns. Unlike the Brigstocks *and* the Gereths, Fleda’s “only treasure was her subtle mind” (*SP* 42).

In this respect, Mrs. Gereth is not Fleda’s intellectual equal. Unlike the novel’s James-manqué, “the elder woman . . . is at the best a ‘false’ character, floundering as she does in the dust of disproportionate passion” (33). As James explains in his preface,

She is a *figure*, oh definitely—which is a very different matter; for you may be a figure with all the blinding, with all the hampering passion in life, and may have the grand air in what shall yet prove to the finer view (which Fleda again, *e.g.*, could at any time strike off) but a perfect rage of awkwardness. Mrs. Gereth was, obviously, with her pride and her pluck, of an admirable fine paste; but she was not intelligent; was only clever, and therefore would have been no use to us at all as centre of our subject—compared with Fleda, who is only intelligent, not distinctively able. (33)

The “disproportionate passion” that “blinds” and “hampers” Mrs. Gereth to Fleda’s “finer view” is both the source and manifestation of the dowager’s cognitive limitations. Here again the rhetoric of disability indexes intellectual encumbrance. Like James’s dinner companion, who cannot extricate her story from the “mere disjointed and lacerated lump of life,” Mrs. Gereth is only “clever” and capable, not “intelligent” and free. She thus has more in common with the Brigstocks than she cares to admit. Indeed, after mocking the “strange excrescences and . . . nondescript conveniences” that “might have been prizes for the blind” at Waterbath, Mrs. Gereth boasts a familiarity with her own collection that is so intense that “[b]lindfold, in the dark, with the brush of a finger, I could tell one [object] from another” (37, 53). While sightlessness in the latter instance signals connoisseurship, it also manifests “the blinding, . . . hampering passion” that, according to James, hobbles Mrs. Gereth’s

intellect. Unlike Fleda, who is “intelligent, not distinctively able” and can therefore “keep the act uncommitted,” her widowed friend has the pluck and pride of a clever doer, not the untethered mind of a free thinker (99).

For her part, Mrs. Gereth cannot fathom Fleda’s dispassionate approach. Whereas the iconoclastic younger woman can “worship . . . even in the desert,” the literalist Mrs. Gereth idolatrously keeps “things in the house that we almost starved for! They were our religion, they were our life, they were *us!*” (194, 53). The dowager’s fantasized one-to-one correspondence of person to thing (“they were *us!*”), and thing to god (“[t]hey were our religion”), evidences a literalism with no facility for synecdoche. Hers is the all-or-nothing logic of pre-Listerian amputation, not the metonymic practice of the micro-bacterial inoculant or the localized antiseptic. It is not surprising, then, that Mrs. Gereth is not immune to the contagion of “ugliness and stupidity” that encircles Poynton:

The great drawback of Mrs. Gereth’s situation was that, thanks to the rare perfection of Poynton, she was condemned to wince wherever she turned. She had lived for a quarter of a century in such warm closeness with the beautiful that, as she frankly admitted, life had become for her a true fool’s paradise. She couldn’t leave her own house without peril of exposure. (41)

Mrs. Gereth has no resistance to contaminations from which she “secretly suffer[s]” (35). Her insistence that, rather than leave her own priceless archive “to a woman ignorant and vulgar[,] I think I’d deface them with my own hands” (53) is therefore of a piece with her conviction that she “must either take everything or nothing” (64): both declarations are consistent with the pre-Pasteur logic of hygiene. As Bruno Latour has noted, before bacteriology, the war against disease had to be total: “Since anything might cause illness, it was necessary to act upon everything at once” (20). Such a totalizing strategy was necessarily doomed to fail, for “[h]owever much they might take precautions against everything and observe everywhere, disease returned” (21). In this sense, Mrs. Gereth’s fantasies of quarantine and annihilation replicate the failure implicit in pre-Pasteur paranoia (29).

It is Fleda who recognizes these flaws in Mrs. Gereth’s logic and who tells her so: “You simplify far too much. . . . The tangle of life is much more intricate than you’ve ever, I think, felt it to be. You slash into it . . . with a great pair of shears; you nip at it as if you were one of the Fates!” (SP 186). Mrs. Gereth’s all-or-nothing approach obeys an obsessive conception of hygiene that demands the wholesale amputation of the infected limb from the healthy body. She cannot abide hybridity and mixture. In fact, her eyes dilate in horror at the very possibility that Waterbath’s “abominations . . . would inevitably mix up with [her collection]” (45). “Better Waterbath at once, in its cynical sameness,” she concludes, “than the ignominy of such a mixture!” (66). This fear of heterogeneity is, of course, a fear of disabling contamination. For all its fantasied (imm)unity, Poynton cannot withstand the logic disability of which it is a part. As the product of what Derrida calls “consignation”—both “the act of assigning residence” and the “*gathering together of signs*”—Poynton “aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration” (10).¹⁷ Mrs. Gereth’s compulsive collection is therefore defenseless against the contagion of what Derrida famously calls “archive fever”—the

cognitive forgetfulness that both constitutes and corrupts the archive's obsessive quest for epistemological closure. Indeed, far from being an unalloyed whole, Poynton has *itself* been formed by Mrs. Gereth's "great pair of shears": it is the result of "cutting and division" that, in the words of Mark Graham, "amputat[es] things from the relations between people, places, materials, and history that have produced them in order to create discrete objects" (300). Every object at Poynton—of which Fleda's admired "Maltese cross" is a representative piece—has been excised from its original "people, places, materials, and history." As the product of a lifetime's imperial plundering and commercial despoliation of "every corner of Europe," Poynton is at once the locus of division and its feverish suppression (*SP* 42). The collection cannot, therefore, be "good and true and pure" (54); instead, as the amalgamated "record of a life . . . written in great syllables of colour and form, the tongues of other countries and the hands of rare artists" (47–48), Poynton must be a prostheticized body whose borrowings of foreign "tongues" and "hands" render it a site of curated hybridity.

It is thus in rhetorically significant terms that Mrs. Gereth summons Fleda to Ricks, the former dwelling of a maiden aunt whose modest cottage now houses the looted entirety of Poynton:

Everything [in the cottage] was even yet upside down; nevertheless, in the sense of having passed the threshold of Poynton for the last time, the amputation, as she called it, had been performed. Her leg had come off—she had now begun to stump along with the lovely wooden substitute; she would stump for life, and what her young friend was to come and admire was the beauty of her movement and the noise she made about the house. (79)

In this sidelong reference to Henry Sr.'s childhood operation, the dowager's hyperbolic summons envisions a world predating Pasteur and Lister. As Fleda soon discovers, Mrs. Gereth's prosthetic stance has required the wholesale looting of Poynton. Rather than "stump[ing] along" on a "lovely wooden substitute," the widow has sought to salvage the limb itself. By moving everything to Ricks, she has followed the toxic dictates of pre-Listerian amputation rather than the titrating intelligence of vaccination or antiseptics. Despite her insistence that the objects have arrived at Ricks with "neither a scratch nor a nick" (83), their migration has disfigured Poynton and turned everything "into ugliness" (85).

While such images reinforce the limitations of Mrs. Gereth's cleverness, they also suggest that the locus of disability in the novel may be Poynton itself. When Fleda envisions "the great gaps" and "far-away empty sockets" now defacing her recollections of the Gereth estate, she beholds "a scandal of nakedness between high bleak walls"—signs of vulnerable embodiment and disfigurement that keep her awake "[i]n the watches of the night" (80, 81, 85).

[S]he saw Poynton dishonoured; she had cherished it as a happy whole, she reasoned, and the parts of it now around her seemed to suffer like chopped limbs. To lie there in the stillness was partly to listen for some soft low plaint from them. . . . Fleda tried to think of some of the things at Poynton still unappropriated, but her memory was a blank about them, and in the effort to focus the old combinations she saw again nothing but gaps and scars, a vacancy that gathered at moments into something worse. (85)

“[D]ishonoured” with “gaps and scars,” Poynton reifies its status as what Derrida calls a “prosthesis for so-called live memory” (16). That is, it incarnates its own ontological relationship to disability by materializing the gaps and scars of family and memory that constituted its hybrid composition in the first place. Poynton’s archival “will to memory”—its fantasized fortification against stupidity, disability, and mortality—ironically proliferates what Halberstam calls “the anarchic space of forgetting” (1217–19). The estate’s despoliation reifies the hybrid body that, from the outset, Poynton has always been. When, in her late-night vigil, Fleda hears the “soft low plaint” of Poynton’s “chopped limbs” and therefore experiences what William James called the “consciousness of lost limbs,” she demonstrates both the height of cognitive awareness and its threatened oblivion. Poynton’s amputation, in other words, yields a scary blankness that temporarily thwarts Fleda’s “effort to focus the old combinations.” For a time, she can remember neither what Mrs. Gereth’s avidity has omitted (as it turns out, nothing), nor even the composition of the unspoiled Poynton. Rather, she can only behold “a vacancy that gathered at moments into something worse.” At this moment, the text confronts the monstrosity it has labored so diligently to resist: the contagion of disability and realism’s vulnerability to the vacancy of stupidity. If Fleda’s memories return with the collection’s reinstatement (she once again requires “no catalogue to count them over; the array of them, miles away, was complete; each piece, in its turn, was perfect to her; she could have drawn up a catalogue from memory” [194]), the stupefying work of amnesia has been done: we have seen what lies on the nether side of the vaunted immunity that James purports to offer.

Like Henry Sr.’s body, Poynton is necessarily limited and supplemented by the prosthetic possibilities of the intelligent imagination. Unlike the literalist Mrs. Gereth, Fleda finds Poynton’s meaning less in the objects themselves than in the sensations they create and the representations they form in her remarkable mind. Poynton works like Pasteur’s vaccine, stimulating antibodies of cognition in the face of unavoidable disability. Inasmuch as the archive is always already a site of disability, Poynton fuels James’s fantasy of immunity by concentrating its own inadequacies in a literary inoculant designed to withstand the larger contagion of disability. The vaccine confers immunity in much the same way that, for James, the adroit intellect supplements the maladroit body: it works dialectically, distilling and purifying a bit of life’s “many-sided ugliness” in order to compensate through resistance. It is an epistemological project, however, invariably limned by the risk of bafflement and muddlement. As James anxiously reminded himself in his notebooks while writing *Poynton*, “If this climax of my little tale is confused and *embrouillé* it will be nothing; if it’s as crystalline as possible it will be worth doing” (SP 222).

In this sense, the closing fire that destroys Poynton is both crystalline and confused. Inasmuch as it serves as a defilement rite, as Eric Savoy has suggested, it neatly reduces everything, including the novel itself, to ash. At the time, however, the conflagration incarnates the oxygenated spread of oblivion and stupidity. In invoking the fiery circumstances that catalyzed both his father’s amputation and his own “obscure hurt,” James reproduces the ongoing negotiation between the prosthetic possibilities of realist intelligence and the stupidities of cultural forgetting and bodily limitation. As the French psychologist Henri Pieron warned at the turn of the twentieth century, living in an age of excess information was hazardous to one’s health: “one risks losing oneself—and one almost begins to wish for the ancient destructive

amnesias of the fire at the celebrated library of Alexandria” (qtd. in Matsuda 89). As modernity encroached, realism could not resist disability; it could only replicate and renew its creative force.

NOTES

I am grateful to Jessika Auerbach, Rita D. Jacobs, and Jane Thraikill for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this essay.

¹As Bill Brown has pointed out, for Lamarck, “the power of habits over actions is inversely proportional to the intelligence of the individual” (qtd. in Brown 61).

²On the aesthetic implications of this distinction, see Puckett.

³In an 1896 letter, James expressed his determination to lease a house “where I can, without disaster, bicycle” (*LHJ* 244). Thirty years later, in *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway dryly speculated that James’s bicycle was itself the cause of the “obscure hurt” (see Crawford and Morton 108).

⁴In *A Small Boy and Others*, James admits that “in a world of business,” “our consciousness was positively disfigured . . . of the actualities of ‘business,’” making the Jameses “for the ironic ‘smart’ gods of the American heaven, a lamentable case” (*AU* 35).

⁵Lewis wrongly asserted that James did not visit Europe until the age of twenty-seven. In fact, James was brought to Paris and London as an infant and returned to attend schools in Geneva, London, Paris, and Boulogne-sur-Mer between the ages of twelve and fifteen (*SL* xxvii).

⁶See the subtitle of Goffman’s influential disability analysis, *Stigma*.

⁷In her elegant study of the obsessive compulsions of naturalism, Fleissner hints at this relationship between realism and disability. She notes, for example, that by expanding “realism’s organizing gaze to include the tiniest details of daily, bodily life,” naturalism betrays “the will to order [that] results not so much in an even more totalizing vision of history, as in that vision’s breakdown” (10). By morphing into a state of neurosis, in other words, the realist text collapses into the vagaries of naturalist disability.

⁸As Edel points out, “The older sons suffered ill-health throughout their young manhood; the two younger boys went off to the Civil War and were physically broken by it and the daughter suffered a series of nervous breakdowns that left her a chronic invalid” (45).

⁹Elsewhere, William implies that the experience of phantom limb is itself the symptom of a refined mind inasmuch as the syndrome reveals the particular sensitivity of the advanced nervous system to unexpected stimuli. Unlike the “low brain” that “does few things, and in doing them perfectly forfeits all other use,” a “high brain may do many things, and may do each of them at a very slight hint. But its hair-trigger organization makes of it a happy-go-lucky, hit-or-miss affair” (*Principles* 140). The “stain” of Henry Sr.’s injury would increasingly persuade William of the continuity between “morbid” trauma and intellectual insight (Habegger 66). For Alice and Henry Jr., as for William, “illness is curiously linked with creativity” (Eakin 682).

¹⁰In his autobiographies, James emphasizes the frenzied, undisciplined activities of his two younger brothers. Bob, for example, was “[s]ingularly intelligent all round, yet with faculties that had early declined any consummation of acquaintance with such training as under a different sort of pressure he might have enjoyed” (*AU* 261). The “ever-sociable” Wilkie likewise kept his elder brothers “from all intellectual exercise,” living “with an immediacy that left me far in the lurch” (327, 258).

¹¹In this allusion to the nineteenth-century prison discipline debate, James implicitly criticizes the “Congregate” system practiced at New York’s brutal Auburn prison where prisoners were prohibited from speaking or making eye contact. Reformers like Howe, a solitary confinement supporter and early advocate for the education of people with cognitive disabilities, argued that such “moral isolation,” when paired with physical contact, led to intellectual deterioration and recidivism. Solitary confinement, he insisted, was more moral and more humane (see Howe and Barnes).

¹²The riotous discourse of stupidity is evident in the post-Civil War arguments of opponents to the Fifteenth Amendment, who warned that extending the vote to African American men would result in a nation ruled by ignorance and illiteracy. By the turn of the twentieth century, these arguments had gained such momentum that disfranchisement was the rule in the South.

¹³William James patently rejected Nordau’s degenerationist alarm: “The only sort of being . . . who can remain as the typical normal man, after all the individuals with degenerative symptoms have been rejected,” he remarked in 1895, “must be a perfect nullity” (“Degeneration” 405).

¹⁴The useless redundancies of imprisonment suggested by the name “Brigstock” in *Poynton*, like the totalizing approach of pre-Pasteur hygiene evident in names like “Waterbath,” underscore James’s rejection of quarantine and hygiene in favor of Pasteurian inoculation. On repetition, failure, and stupidity, see Halberstam 947–50.

¹⁵A common phrase in Victorian England, the simile “stupid as an owl” had its origins in colonial India where the owl, or “oolu,” was synonymous with an “idiot” or a “dunce” (see Foster).

¹⁶It is not surprising that Owen’s room is “the one monstrosity of Poynton,” a martial den of “tobacco-pots and bootjacks” with “such an array of arms of aggression and castigation that he himself had confessed to eighteen rifles and forty whips” (*SP* 72).

¹⁷Here, I am indebted to the work of Savoy, whose discussion of “archive fever” in *The Aspern Papers* stimulated my own thinking about *The Spoils of Poynton*.

WORKS BY HENRY JAMES

- AN—*The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*. Intro. Richard P. Blackmur. New York: Scribner's, 1934. Print.
 AU—*Autobiography: A Small Boy and Others, Notes of A Son and Brother, The Middle Years*. Ed. Frederick W. Dupee. New York: Criterion, 1956. Print.
 EL—*Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*. Ed. Leon Edel. New York: Library of America, 1984. Vol. 1 of *Literary Criticism*. Print.
 LB—*Lady Barbarina, The Siege of London, An International Episode and Other Tales*. London: Macmillan, 1922. *Project Gutenberg*. Web. 31 Mar. 2014.
 LHJ—*The Letters of Henry James*. Ed. Percy Lubbock. Vol. 1. New York: Scribner's, 1920. Web. 8 July 2015.
 SL—*Selected Letters*. Ed. Leon Edel. Cambridge: Belknap, 1987. Print.
 SP—*The Spoils of Poynton*. New York: Penguin, 1987. Print.

OTHER WORKS CITED

- Barnes, Harry Elmer. “The Rise of the Penitentiary in New York—A Review.” Rev. of *From Newgate to Dannemora: The Rise of the Penitentiary in New York, 1796–1848*, by Walter David Lewis. *New York History* 47.1 (1966): 74–82. Print.
 Beard, George M. *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences*. New York: Putnam's, 1881. Print.
 Brown, Bill. *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003. Print.
 Brown, JoAnne. *Definition of a Profession: The Authority of Metaphor in the History of Intelligence Testing, 1890–1930*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. Web. 14 July 2015.
 Crawford, Fred D., and Bruce Morton. “Hemingway and Brooks: The Mystery of ‘Henry’s Bicycle.’” *Studies in American Fiction* 6 (1978): 106–09. Web. 6 Nov. 2015.
 Derrida, Jacques. “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression.” *Diacritics* 25.2 (1995): 9–63. Web. 6 Nov. 2015.
 Dugdale, Richard L. *The Jukes: A Study of Crime, Pauperism, Disease, and Heredity*. 4th ed. New York: Putnam's, 1910. Web. 6 Nov. 2015.
 Eakin, John Paul. “Henry James’s ‘Obscure Hurt’: Can Autobiography Serve Biography?” *New Literary History* 19 (1988): 675–92. Print.
 Edel, Leon. *Henry James: The Untried Years, 1843–1870*. New York: Avon, 1953. Print.
 Fish, William B. “A Thesis on Idiocy.” *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*. Ed. Steven Noll and James W. Trent. New York: New York UP, 2004. 27–39. Print.
 Fleissner, Jennifer. *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004. Print.
 Foster, Peter. “A Wise Owl or a Foolish Oolu?” *Telegraph*. 9 Aug. 2007. Web. 22 July 2015.
 Garipey, Thomas P. “The Introduction and Acceptance of Listerian Antisepsis in the United States.” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 49 (1994): 167–206. Print.
 Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986. Print.
 Graham, Mark. “Sexual Things.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10.2 (2004): 299–303. Print.
 Habegger, Alfred. *The Father: A Life of Henry James, Sr.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994. Print.
 Halberstam, Judith. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke UP, 2011. Kindle Edition.
 Howe, S. G. *An Essay on Separate and Congregate Systems of Prison Discipline; Being a Report Made to the Boston Prison Discipline Society*. Boston: Tichnor, 1846. Web. 9 June 2015.
 James, William. *Collected Essays and Reviews*. New York: Longmans, 1920. 453–58. Print.
 ———. “The Consciousness of Lost Limbs.” *Proceedings of the American Society for Psychical Research* 1 (1887): 249–58. Web. 31 Mar. 2014.
 ———. “Degeneration and Genius.” *Collected Essays and Reviews*. New York: Longmans, 1920. 401–05. Print.
 ———. *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. New York: Longmans, 1907. Print.
 ———. *The Principles of Psychology*. Vol. 1. New York: Dover, 1950. Print.
 Kaplan, Amy. *The Social Construction of American Realism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988. Print.
 Kete, Kathleen. “La Rage and the Bourgeoisie: The Cultural Context of Rabies in the French Nineteenth Century.” *Representations* 22 (1988): 89–107. Print.
 Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
 Labrie, Ross. “The Morality of Consciousness in Henry James.” *Colby Library Quarterly* 9 (1971): 409–24. Print.
 Latour, Bruno. *The Pastuerization of France*. Trans. Alan Sheridan and John Law. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988. Print.

- Levine, George. *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981. Print.
- Lewis, Wyndham. *Men Without Art*. London: Cassell, 1934. Print.
- Maher, Jane. *Biography of Broken Fortunes: Wilkie and Bob, Brothers of William, Henry, and Alice James*. Hamden: Archon, 1986. Print.
- Matsuda, Matt K. *The Memory of the Modern*. New York: Oxford UP, 1996. Print.
- McGurl, Mark. *The Novel Art: Elevations of American Fiction after Henry James*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001. Print.
- Nordau, Max. *Degeneration*. London: William Heinemann, 1898. Web. 17 June 2015.
- Osteen, Mark. "Autism and Representation: A Comprehensive Introduction." *Autism and Representation*. Ed. Mark Osteen. New York: Routledge, 2008. 1–47. Print.
- O'Toole, Sean. "Queer Properties: Passion and Possession in *The Spoils of Poynton*." *Henry James Review* 33 (2012): 30–52. Print.
- "Personal Gossip About Authors." *Writer* 17 (1905): 88–91. Web. 27 July 2015.
- Puckett, Kent. "Stupid Sensations: Henry James, Good Form, and Reading Middlemarch without a Brain." *Henry James Review* 28.3 (2007): 292–98. Web. 6 Nov. 2015.
- Rafter, Nicole. "The Criminalization of Mental Retardation." *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*. Ed. Steven Noll and James W. Trent. New York: New York UP, 2004. 232–57. Print.
- Richards, Penny. "'Beside Her Sat Her Idiot Child': Families and Developmental Disability in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America." *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*. Ed. Steven Noll and James W. Trent. New York: New York UP, 2004. 65–84. Print.
- Ronell, Avital. *Stupidity*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2003. Print.
- Rothfield, Lawrence. *Vital Signs: Medical Realism in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. Print.
- Savoy, Eric. "Aspern's Archive." *Henry James Review* 31 (2010): 61–67. Print.
- Scheiber, Andrew. "The Origin of Texts: 'The Art of Fiction' as Evolutionary Manifesto." *Henry James Review* 33 (2012): 53–67. Print.
- Trent, James W., Jr. *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1994. Print.
- Ward, J. A. "Henry James and the Nature of Evil." *Twentieth Century Literature* 6.2 (1960): 65–69. Print.
- Whitman, Walt. *Democratic Vistas*. Ed. Ed Folsom. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2010. Print.
- Wolf, Virginia. "Phases of Fiction: Part II." *Bookman* (May 1929): 269–79. Print.