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"Henry's Bicycle": Cycling and Figurations of Exposure in "The Papers"

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This article takes its title from an episode in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), Hemingway's novel about a group of American expatriates living in Paris. Bill Gorton is chaffing his friend, the journalist Jake Barnes, about the ruinous effects of expatriation upon a writer: "Nobody that ever left their country ever wrote anything worth printing. Not even in the newspapers" (100). In the course of the conversation, Gorton alludes to Barnes's impotence—the result of an old war wound—as "the sort of thing that can't be spoken of . . . a mystery. Like Henry's bicycle" (101).

As Fred Crawford and Bruce Morton note, the fact that James was a cyclist may have been communicated by Ford Madox Ford (whose gossip Hemingway enjoyed) or else prompted by the publication of *The Letters of Henry James* by Scribner's in 1920, in which James mentions taking up the bicycle in the 1890s (*HJL* 108). Barnes's ambiguous war wound more directly invokes the "mystery" surrounding the youthful injury James sustained putting out a fire in West Stables, Newport, in October 1861.[1] No bicycle was involved in the accident that prevented the author enlisting in the Civil War and, posthumously, gave rise to rumors of his castration.[2] James referred to his injury as an "obscure hurt" whose "interest" he deemed "inexhaustible," even while he declined to "place it . . . on exhibition" (*NS* 277).

In Hemingway's novel, this sense of exposure is doubly registered, both in its reference to an embarrassing physical injury and in the context of Gorton and Barnes's conversation about what is "worth printing. . . . in the newspapers." The remark itself would be associated with unsavory media attention, for the reference to "Henry James's bicycle"—as it originally read—was found too risqué by Hemingway's publisher, who advised the author to remove it (Houston 35). In response, Hemingway invoked his journalistic privilege:

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> To me, Henry James is as historical a name as Byron, Keats, or any other great writer about whose life, personal and literary, books have been written. I do not believe the reference is sneering, or if it is, it is not the writer who is sneering as the writer does not appear in the book. (*Selected* 209)

The relation between the bicycle and authorial visibility is the central focus of this essay, which asks how and why these subjects come to be linked in James's own writing, as well as by other authors writing about James. I begin by exploring reactions to the bicycle's emergence in the late nineteenth century, when the vehicle's own faddish celebrity and association with print media lent itself to debates about the new role and accessibility of public figures. Due to its exercising—and revelation—of the body, cycling also featured prominently in what might be called the literatures of exposure, such as the detective story, the romantic comedy, and especially the illustrated newspaper. In his journalistic tale, "The Papers" (1903), James draws upon the bicycle's associations with physical and media exposure to dramatize anxieties about the revelation of the author. As I argue, the bicycle's unique attachment to the physical "figure" makes it a troubling metaphoric resource in the tale, reflexively drawing attention to the celebrity's "eagerness to figure," to the authorial work of "figuring" in which the journalists themselves are constantly engaged, and to the creation of the author *as* a public figure.

The connection between "Henry's bicycle" and the bicycle itself has largely been ignored, with critics apparently heeding Hemingway's own dismissal of the allusion as a "non-sequitur" (*Selected* 209). Yet Gorton and Barnes's exchange, which emphasizes James's effeminacy and places the cyclist-author, as Eric Haralson notes, squarely amidst their "gender-switching patter" (195), suggests a particularity about this vehicle, hinting at the sexual ambiguities conferred by the bicycle. The reference is, moreover, only one of several posthumous (and typically indecorous) portrayals of James as a cyclist that employ the bicycle to foreground anxieties of authorial exposure. The bicycle's residual connotations with exposure, I will finally suggest, continue to inform figurations of James as a cyclist, troping the author's own notorious aversion to publicity.

Henry James learned to ride a bicycle at Torquay, in the summer of 1895, on a "battered Humber" (*LAB* 35). It was the year, according to *The Complete Cyclist* (1897), when "cycling became fashionable as well as popular" and even "ladies" took to the wheel (Robinson 33). By this time, the Safety bicycle had established itself against the Ordinary, or Penny Farthing, whose high front wheel had discouraged many from attempting to ride. The pneumatic and—from 1891—detachable tire had also contributed to the popular adoption of the hobby (Herlihy 251–52). As H. G. Wells would record, "the bicycle was the swiftest thing upon the roads in those days, there were as yet no automobiles and the cyclist had a lordliness, a sense of masterful adventure" (*Experiment* 543). In 1896, writing from the house in Playden, Sussex, which he had taken for the summer, James exclaims in a letter to Arthur Christopher Benson:

> *Anch' io son' pittore*—I too have a bicycle. I've taken to it but very recently—but it seems to give me a glimpse of the courts of heaven. . . . This little old-world corner of Sussex is lovely and sympathetic . . . and the way one gets *at* it is really a joy. But I needn't preach at the converted. (*LAB* 35)

From 1896, as Edel reports, James "had begun to use the bicycle whenever he was in the country" (*Life* 232). In September, presumably more confident on wheels, he urged Benson to "bring your bicycle in your train" so that James "could take [him on] a charming ride" (*LAB* 37). The following August, James visited his cousin Ellen Hunter (née Temple) and her three daughters in Dunwich for a holiday whose "afternoon 'spin[s]'" and stops for "lemonade" and beer at "old red inn[s]" would be recorded in his essay "Old Suffolk" (1897) (*EH* 311). James wrote to Gosse that "I have . . . only, as the goal of excursions, inn-parlors, in all directions to which I vulgarly bicycle and where I partake of . . . buns and . . . jam" (*SL* 158). Meanwhile, he reported to his brother, William:

> I have done, with great pleasure and profit, a good deal of the bicycle; for which this region offers every inducement that can be offered without roads. We are miles and miles from a good one—which is partly indeed why we are quaint and curious. (William James 18–19)

James's inclination toward "sympathetic" and remote "corner[s]"—those "miles from" anywhere—bespeaks a desire for privacy: a "quaint" and "old-world" setting in which to try out a new-fangled form of exercise. His discovery of the bicycle coincided with his withdrawal from the public eye and in particular from the excruciatingly public condemnation of *Guy Domville*, which had opened on 5 January 1895 at the St. James's Theatre. Subsequent depictions of this episode of James's life, whether biographical or fictional, mention his cycling habits in the context of a humiliated seclusion, describing how he retreated to write tales that "showed a state that he himself called 'embarrassment,'" wanting only "to be left alone" and "to ride his bicycle" (*The Treacherous Years* 136–37).[3] David Lodge's fictional *Author, Author!* (2004) goes so far as to conflate the indignity James suffered as a dramatist with his theatrical exposure as a cyclist. The novel, whose title recalls James being ushered onstage at *Guy Domville* only to be jeered by his audience, invents episodes in which a bruised and corpulent James falls spectacularly from his bicycle (303). The cover of one edition (Secker and Warburg) shows the author taking a bow, while the figure of the cyclist is displayed on its frontispiece, skirting merrily across the page.

Lodge's descriptions of James cycling—emphasizing the disjunction of a lofty mind from an awkward or incompetent body—point to the split perspectives irresistibly promoted by the bicycle. The joke was much exploited in James's day, with the literary cyclist coming a cropper as he "ride[s] haughtily along, [his] face turned heavenward . . . plotting a novel" (Burgin 26). Ford Madox Ford claimed to have witnessed James meet with such a bicycle accident whilst on a stroll with Stephen Crane, the pair ducking "behind a large bush on the roadside" to avoid letting "the great man see that we had witnessed his downfall":

> Usually, I imagine, one would laugh if one saw a nice old gentleman knocked off his bicycle and sitting in the road, but Crane uttered exclamations of intense concern as if he were witnessing a catastrophe of the most terrible importance. . . . That was a great tribute to James! (22)

The bicycle's ignominious appearance in this (probably apocryphal) episode makes for a dubious "tribute to James," one that derives its *frisson* from the fact that it is "the Master," and not just any cyclist, "sitting in the road." Yet Ford's assumption that "one would laugh" at the spectacle of "nice old gentle[men]" knocked off their bicycles also takes for granted the tremendous culture of embarrassment surrounding the bicycle in the nineteenth century, which featured women, novices, and middle-aged men as particular victims. James implies a recognition of this culture when, on two separate occasions, he refers to his cycling habits by enjoining his correspondent not to laugh at him, writing jocularly to Frances Rollins Morse in 1895 that "I too—deride me not—do it: I have no courage, here, to be a glaring exception" (*FRM*). And the following year, to W. E. Norris, insisting that "I must (deride me not) be somewhere where I can, without disaster, bicycle" (*HJL* 28).

The opportunities cycling provided for derision and disaster (for riding, and *de*-riding) were a feature even of practical handbooks like *The Complete Cyclist*, which devoted entire chapters to "The Humors of Cycling" (Robinson). The hapless novice attempting to master his machine also proved a considerable selling point for Wells's novel, *The Wheels of Chance* (1895), whose hero's bruised shins and misadventures were based upon the author's own. In his autobiography, Wells recalled having "learnt to ride my bicycle upon sandy tracks with none but God to help me." Nonetheless, Wells was able to recoup his private indignity as commercial gain: "After a fall one day, I wrote down a description of my legs, which became the opening chapter" (*Experiment* 543). The link between physical and narrative exposure is made explicit in the novel, as the narrator's peek at "the Remarkable Condition" of "this Young Man's Legs"—a patchwork of welts into which the cyclist lovingly rubs arnica every evening—is prefaced by his excuse that "[l]iterature is revelation," and "[m]odern literature is indecorous revelation. It is the duty of the earnest author to tell you what you would not have seen—even at the cost of a few blushes" (*Wheels* 5).[4]

The bicycle's associations with exposure earned it a frequent place in the detective story, another genre that catered to the thrills of "revelation." Bodies and bicycles are disclosed with equal rigor in "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist" (1903), in which Sherlock Holmes instantly identifies the bicycling habits of a young woman by studying her heels and fingertips (Doyle 136). Romantic comedies likewise adopted the vehicle with alacrity, as authors appealed to the gender boundaries blurred by the bicycle for a source of nervous humor and fascination, depicting cross-dressing cyclists revealing their ankles and identities to the sound of convulsive laughter.[5]

As Ford's published anecdote or Wells's lucrative self-parody suggests, the modern author intent on satisfying his public may himself be subject to "indecorous revelation." The bicycle's fame coincided with—and benefited from—the rise of the illustrated newspaper and personal interview, which created new expectations concerning the visibility of public figures. An interview "At Home" with Wells included both a sketch of the author—wearing a deerstalker and clutching a Jack Russell—and the assurance that "the most charming of [the author's various] homes was 'Heatherlea' in Worcester Park, where . . . he and Mrs. Wells . . . might often be met cycling on their tandem in the country lanes" ("Mr. H. G. Wells" 216).

Though for James the countryside represented a retreat ("so pleasant for me has provinciality—with books and a bicycle!—become!" [qtd. in *The Treacherous Years* 152]), he was only one of a cluster of writers who lived and cycled around

Sussex at the turn of the century, including H. G. Wells at Sandgate, Stephen Crane at Brede House, Joseph Conrad at Postling, and Ford Madox Ford (then Hueffer) at Aldington. Cycling extracted such authors from their studies, making them newly accessible and blurring the boundaries between professional and personal celebrity.

It is not incidental that of James's fictions the bicycle appears with most emphasis in "The Papers," a tale that takes the newspaper world as its subject.[6] The bicycle owed its most sustained endorsement to the illustrated newspapers. By the 1880s, the sport had generated "a proliferation of cycling journals and magazines," including *The Wheeler, The Hub,* and *Bicycling News*, individually devoted to the bicycle's use and celebrity (Anderson 105). In fiction, the bicycle retained strong links with the newspaper or periodical. It is part of the cant of Wells's Jessie Milton, the runaway cyclist in *The Wheels of Chance*, that she wants "to obtain a position as a Journalist" (192), while Hoopdriver—who displays a talent for sketching—imagines himself as "[o]ne of them *Punch* men" (97). Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men on the Bummel* (1900) likewise intersperses anecdotes about bicycling misadventures with hilarious tidbits from the author's experiences as a pressman. The same year saw the publication of Lacy Hillier's *The Potterer's Club* (1900), a "cycling novel" whose author was both co-editor of *Cycling* and a retired racing champion himself.

At the height of its popularity, the bicycle was virtually synonymous with media attention, with newspapers even accused of having "manufactured their cycling celebrities wholesale" (Raife 127) (one columnist offered the example of a "prominent actress [who] confessed . . . that two firms of portrait takers had asked her to favor them with sittings as a cyclist, when they knew perfectly well that she did not ride" [127]). A 1900 issue of *Cycling* conducted an imaginary interview with the bicycle itself, anthropomorphized into a peeved—and rather Jamesian—celebrity:

> "I suppose you're another of them?" asked the bicycle, in a tired voice, as the attendant turned away.
>
> "Another—?" I repeated, somewhat at a loss.
>
> "Another expert. This dreadful place seems to be overrun with them."
>
> "No, indeed," I hastened to explain. "I am only a humble seeker after knowledge—a mere picker up of shells upon the vast sea shore of mechanics."
>
> "Well, I don't like that any better," the bicycle complained. "It sounds too much like a piece out of a paper—and I cannot stand the papers."
>
> "Still, I'm sure they're all very interested in you and your relations," I ventured to remark.
>
> "Ah! we've been too good to them—we've made ourselves too cheap, as the saying is," mused the bicycle, regretfully.
>
> "Why, half of them couldn't have existed without us, and what thanks have we had for it? We're death-traps, and indecent exhibitions, and we encourage women to be unwomanly, and goodness only knows what else besides. . . ."
>
> "One of the penalties of being famous," I murmured. (Hippolyta 445)

"The penalties of being famous" are ominously threatened throughout "The Papers," a darkly comic detective story in which two Fleet Street journalists and cyclists,

Howard Bight and Maud Blandy, endeavor to track down the vanished celebrity—Sir A. B. C. Beadel-Muffet—whom they suspect has been quite literally hunted to death by the press. The visibility of bodies and bicycles is a prevalent concern of the tale, as the cyclist's trousered legs and jutting elbows are prominent in connection with an impatience to *be* prominent: "the eagerness to figure" (*PA* 317), whether as a journalist or as a subject for interview.[7] The would-be famous playwright, Mortimer Marshal, appeals to Maud as one who "saw a possible 'leg up' in every bush" (343), while one journalist offers to give the other the insider scoop on Beadel-Muffet's whereabouts because "it *would* be for you—only judge!—a leg up" (401). Maud's efforts to establish media interest in Marshal meanwhile constitute "uphill work," as she complains to Bight, "we seem to get no for'arder," but only to "stick fast" (338).

Maud's journalistic endeavors particularly implicate her own demonstrably "mannish" (349) and "sailor-hatted" (348) figure, drawing attention to the New Woman's conspicuous appearance in the papers and to her immodest associations with both physical exercise and professional ambition. A meaningless-yet-personal detail recorded in an interview "At Home"—Marshal's nine "machines for stretching trousers" (358)—thus instantly becomes a comment on her masculine pretensions to success in the workplace: "You want to wear *all* the trousers?" Howard inquires ironically (363). Maud's figure betrays her liminal positioning as both agent and inscribed feature of "The Papers," whose very pages had featured her sailor hat and cyclist's body as a familiar caricature:

> Maud Blandy drank beer . . . and she smoked cigarettes when privacy permitted, though she drew the line at this in the right place, just as she flattered herself she knew how to draw it, journalistically, where other delicacies were concerned. She was fairly a product of the day. . . . she was really herself, so far at least as her great preoccupation went, an edition, an "extra special," coming out at the loud hours and living its life, amid the roar of vehicles, the hustle of pavements, the shriek of newsboys. . . . Maud was a shocker, in short, in petticoats, and alike for the thoroughfare, the club, the suburban train and the humble home. . . . This was one of the reasons, in an age of "emancipations," of her intense actuality . . . the felicity of her having about her naturally so much of the young bachelor that she was saved the disfigurement of any marked straddling or elbowing. (313–14)

Spared the "disfigurement of . . . straddling," Maud both embodies and ironically transcends the attitude of the New Woman, self-consciously astride her bicycle. At the same time, the narrator's assurance that Maud exercises the same discretion "journalistically" as she does regarding her "bachelor"-like body and habits—"she drew the line in the right place"—acknowledges the tale's conflation of physical with media exposure. The narrator steers between issuing a statement of Maud's authenticity—"she was really herself"—and characterizing her as a mass-produced type: "an edition." Meanwhile, the scare quotes surrounding the "age of 'emancipations,'" and the sketchy, *Punch*-like allusions to the female "product of the day"—a mixture of "beer," "petticoats," and "cigarettes"—summarize the woman who, like the newspaper itself, was now equally visible in "train," "thoroughfare," and "humble home."

By the 1890s, publications such as *The Lady Cyclist* and *The Wheelwoman* saw the newspaper's accommodation of the female cyclist as reader and contributor as opposed to object of ridicule. In 1895, as *Cycling* magazine included a "ladies only" section, *Hearth and Home* responded to the "claim" of "the bicycling woman" by "offering [its] readers a Special Cycling Number" and "arranging that the interests of women on wheels shall be catered for each week . . . by writers of practical experience" ("Omnia" 808). Patricia Marks has drawn attention to the ambivalent agency of the female cyclist in print, noting how the illustrated newspaper both humored her efforts to establish herself and assured the New Woman a publicity that secured, and even validated, her position:

> In the hue and cry that followed the determined figure in bloomers, the popular press was among the loudest. . . . She cavorted through the pages of *Life*, *Puck*, *Punch*, and *Truth* perched on bicycles and smoking cigarettes; she looked learned in judges' wigs and academic gowns and athletic in riding pants and football helmets. (2)

James was not indifferent to the cultural changes wrought by the bicycle, exclaiming, in 1895, at the "social evolution it's producing!" (*FRM*). In the same year, the *Penny Illustrated* approved the bicycle for female journalists and secretaries, designating cycling as a sport accessible to (and associated with) "hard-working typists . . . who recognized the bicycle as a grand means to gain fresh air and lots of healthy exercise" ("Rage" 17). On moving to Rye, it was Mary Weld who supplied the "pressing want"—as James wrote to his brother—of "some sound, sane, irreproachable young type-writing and bicycling 'secretary-companion'" (*HJL* 75). James's conjunction of "type-writing and bicycling" would be echoed by Miss Petherbridge of the Secretarial Bureau, who advised Weld that the author was "disposed to be extremely friendly and . . . you ought to have a very pleasant time. . . . P.S. Your bicycle would be very nice there" (qtd. in Hyde 148).

There is nothing to suggest that James found Mary Weld anything other than "irreproachable," though he apparently communicated, and she acutely registered, his unease at certain categories of the modern professional woman. An anecdote from Weld's diary relates how, "while walking together down the steep hill of Mermaid Street, they passed a short-haired girl" of "a decidedly masculine appearance." As James voiced his dismay at the apparition, and enjoined her not to emulate it—"Glory in your femininity, Miss Weld!"—his secretary became "painfully conscious that her sailor hat was rather like the one the girl was wearing" and immediately resolved to change it: "According to her . . . nothing distressed him more than a woman trying to look like a man" (Hyde 155).

It was to Mary Weld that James dictated "The Papers," in which he portrayed another "mannish" and "sailor-hatted" female writer and cyclist. The conditions of production here suggest Maud Blandy's own vertiginous position as both writer for, and inscribed feature of, "The Papers." Cycling and literary production coincide in the tale's transcription, recounted in Weld's diary, and framed by bicycling excursions.

> 16 October Thursday
> Finish "The Beast in the Jungle." Back to "The Papers"—

> 24 October Friday
> Cycle Icklesham + Pett with H.J. Glorious day.
> November 4 Tuesday
> "The Papers" cont:
> November 13 Thursday
> Lovely day cycle Winchelsea—Lane—Udimore Rd with Mr. James. Finish "The Papers."

This context for the tale's production indicates its own reflexive interest in the relationship between authorship and cycling, as mediated by the conspicuous figure of the female journalist or typist. As Jakob Stougaard-Nielson argues, James's cycling excursions with his amanuensis also betoken his interest in newly industrialized forms of literary production: "[t]he modern image of the productive author also came with modern mechanical prostheses such as the bicycle and the typewriter" (225). James's "type-writing and bicycling secretary companion" thus becomes an "essential 'lever' in the machinery of authorship" (9), signaling "the promotion of a specific type of author figure" to which "the author's body became integral"(7).

For James, the female journalist on her bicycle bears at once a threatening and a sympathetic resemblance to this figure. Maud Blandy is herself a type of disgruntled author, experiencing in relation to dramatist Mortimer Marshal "a sharper envy . . . than any her literary conscience . . . had yet had to reckon with" (*PA* 328). Whether through her own pretensions to authorship or her involvement in the production of other authors, the female cyclist signals the dual exposition of the writer's person (his body) and his craft. Such exposure was anathema to James's own conception of the author, whose "manner is his secret" and whose method "he cannot disclose" (*AF* 385). The scantily-clad New Woman on her bicycle becomes a figure for the vulgar unveiling of the Muse. As one commentator from *Hearth and Home* testily complained, objecting that the "vigorously-working legs" of the "knickerbockered sister" destroyed a "delicate illusionment": "We do not all want to see 'how it's done.' There is always a greater fascination in what is suggested than in what is revealed" ("Omnia" 808).

James's tale describes a culture of surveillance that corresponds to the newspaper's strategies of dissemination and advertisement, drawing attention to the bicycle as a mobile technology associated with, and at the service of, the Papers. Both their bicycles and their status as journalists allow Howard and Maud "the freedom of the town," according to which they enjoy a sense of "range," and "sometimes went, on excursions that they groaned at as professional, far afield from the Strand" (313). It is in an effort to escape their profession, however, that the pair cycle into Richmond Park:

> The air was full, as from afar, of the grand indifference of spring, . . . and they had bicycled side by side out to Richmond Park as with the impulse to meet it on its way. They kept a Saturday, when possible, sacred to the Suburbs as distinguished from the Papers—when possible being largely when Maud could achieve the use of the somewhat fatigued family machine. Many sisters contended for it, under whose flushed pressure it might have been seen spinning in many different directions. Superficially, at Richmond, our young couple rested—found a quiet corner to lounge deep in the Park, with their machines propped by one side of a great tree

> and their associated backs sustained by another. But agitation, finer than the finest scorching, was in the air for them; it was made sharp, rather abruptly, by a vivid outbreak from Maud. (344)

Maud's "vivid outbreak" is both an admission of flagging career prospects and a protest against her invisibility. Lacking both Howard's "luck" and his "ferocity," she has been unable to secure any interviews of interest and "could scarce have said . . . what, for a good while, she had really lived on" (345). The use of bicycle slang—an "agitation, finer than the finest scorching"—resonates with Howard's repeated injunction to Maud to "sit tight," as the pair continue to discuss the efficacy of staying in or "getting out of" the Papers.[8]

> "My advice to you," he added in the same breath, "is to sit tight. . . .—!"
>
> She waited a moment. "You're sick of everything and you're getting out of it. . . . Why am I to sit tight when you sit so loose?"
>
> "Because what you want will come—can't help coming. Then, in time, you'll also get out of it. But then you'll have had it, as I have, and the good of it.". . .
>
> "Where's the fun," she asked again, "of learning to despise people?"
>
> "You'll see when it comes. It will all be upon you, it will change for you any day. Sit tight, sit tight." (346–47)

The strategy of "sitting tight" recalls James's analogy of the novelist's "close seat" to that of a rider during a hunt: "[T]he competent novelist—that is, the novelist with the real seat—presses his subject . . . as hard as the keen fox-hunter presses the game that has been started for his day with the hounds" (*EH* 286). The allusion has resonance in the context of Howard and Maud's return to their favorite topic, the search for Beadle-Muffet, for which the pair quickly resorts to a common fund of hunting and gaming metaphors. Journalists who cycle, as opposed to cycling journalists, Howard and Maud nevertheless persistently trope their profession as a cruel variety of "sport." The word is reinforced by numerous figurative allusions to athletics—golf, fishing, cycling, hare-coursing, racing, hunting, and ballooning—that the journalists employ to refer to "the terrific forces of publicity" (*PA* 359). James himself strongly associated "the sporting passion" with media attention; indeed when Howard foresees the public give chase after Beadel-Muffet, and anticipates "larks" (337), he recalls James's own description of the Derby in "Two Excursions" (1905): "Every one is prepared for 'larks'" (*EH* 173). The author had been astounded by the publicity the event attracted, "the space allotted to sporting intelligence" (170) in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and the extent to which "the newspapers" were "filled for weeks" (169). For James, the principal attraction is the spectacle of the crowd rather than the race itself, the opportunity it presented to "look out for illustrations" (170).

For the journalists of "The Papers," "sport" is also invariably associated with spectatorship, and—implicitly—with authorship. As Howard exclaims to Maud, "We're wonderful, you know, you and I together—we *see*. And what we see always takes place. . . . [I]t's high sport" (332). Early on in the tale, Howard and Maud discuss the potential for Beadel-Muffet's situation to form the subject of "a short story," "a novel," or "a pl[a]y" (324). In the Park, renewing the prospect of taking

up such "imaginative work," Howard echoes Conrad's famous authorial imperative by remarking that "[t]his job has made me . . . *see*. It has given me the loveliest tips" (347).[9] To allow Beadel-Muffet to disappear discreetly, on the other hand, would be to "lose something very handsome—his struggle, all in vain, with his fate. Noble sport, the sight of it all" (348).

> He turned a little, to rest on his elbow, and, cycling suburban young man as he was, he might have been, outstretched under his tree, melancholy Jacques looking off into a forest glade, even as sailor-hatted Maud, in—for elegance—a new cotton blouse and a long-limbed angular attitude, might have prosefully suggested the mannish Rosalind. (348–49)

The authorial privileges of figuring and spectatorship are wrested from Howard and Maud. Self-conscious references to Jacques and Rosalind—figures "prosefully suggested"—cast the journalists in roles familiar from cycling literature. "[S]ailor-hatted" Maud once more assumes the type of the New Woman. "Rosalind" is also frequently invoked by cross-dressing heroines on bicycles (for the unchaperoned female cyclist, like her Shakespearean counterpart, considered her disguise a form of protection as well as mischief).[10] Meanwhile, Howard's attitude of relaxed spectatorship—"looking off" as if at "the sight of" "sport"—belies his own scrutiny as an object for narrative attention. The fact that Bight also assumes a representative category and pose, "cycling suburban young man as he was," suggests that the extensive ambit of the Papers reaches into even Richmond Park, where couples like Maud and Howard embody stylized forms of fashionable exercise. The scene closes with Maud's admission that:

> ". . . I'm potentially the Papers still. . . . And then I'm other things."
> "I see."
> "I'm so awfully attractive," said Maud Blandy. She got up with this and, shaking out her frock, looked at her resting bicycle, looked at the distances possibly still to be gained. Her companion paused, but at last also rose, and by that time she was awaiting him, a little gaunt and still not quite cool, as an illustration of her last remark. He stood there watching her, and she followed this remark up. "I do, you know, really pity him."
> It had almost a feminine fineness, and their eyes continued to meet. "Oh, you'll work it!" And the young man went to his machine. (351)

Standing elegantly beside her bicycle, Maud makes "an illustration": the fashionable woman posing by her bicycle. Here however, the cyclist's languid figure is undercut by evident strain, "gaunt" and "still not quite cool" from over-exercise. Her fatigue associates itself both with cycling—the use of that "fatigued family machine"—and with journalism, as Howard's exclamation "Oh, you'll work it!" directly before going "to his machine" emphasizes a word used by the narrator in reference only to the bicycle, the trouser press, and the "machine" at the disposal of "The Papers": the telegraph.[11] The extent to which the bicycle really represented a form of leisure—as recreational, but also exhausting exercise—was also a popular question. James's vignette of the "resting bicycle" in Richmond Park invokes a typically disingenuous cycling poster, not unlike that satirized in *Three Men on the Bummel*:

> [M]aybe the "Britain's Best" or the "Camberwell Eureka" stands leaning against a gate; maybe it is tired. It has worked hard all the afternoon, carrying these young people. Mercifully minded, they have dismounted, to give the machine a rest. They sit upon the grass beneath the shade of graceful boughs. . . . A stream flows by their feet. All is rest and peace. (Jerome 227–28)

As the advertisement obscures the work required of the body by the bicycle, so the tableau of the journalists relaxing with their "machines" attempts to conceal a strenuous industry. The Park is pointedly—as well as geographically—"distinguished from the Papers," yet the journalists' recreational cycling is consistently associated with work. Maud's "fatigued family machine" for which "many sisters [had] contended" suggests initiatives like those arranged by *The Wheelwoman*, which "urged" readers "to donate their old machines to working girls' clubs" (Herlihy 274). While novels like *The Wheels of Chance* represented the bicycle as an escape from or avoidance of the drudgery of work, "The Papers" links even recreational cycling to professional "success." Indeed, Maud credits the day in the Park with having "started all abruptly, a turn of the tide of her luck," one that she pointedly discounts as being "in the least . . . in the young man's having spoken to her of marriage," but "rather . . . the throb of a happy thought that had come to her while she cycled home to Kilburnia in the darkness," which "had made her . . . tired as she was, put on speed" (351–52). As Howard's relish for spectatorship is countered by Maud's disdainful glance at her own "awfully attractive" but extenuated working body, her rebuke of Howard's cruelty—"You've . . . like everyone else, for that matter, all over the place—'sport' on the brain"—is met sharply by her companion: "'Well', he demanded, 'what is sport but success? What is success but sport?'" (350).

Howard's conjunction of "sport" with "success" anticipates Hemingway's reference to "Henry's bicycle," which rhetorically links the failure of the professional writer to that of the athlete. Drawing attention to sport as a crucial source of metaphor for authors in the late nineteenth century, Bill Brown has shown how "the problems and possibilities of the recreational assume pivotal importance in the way Americans conceive and experience their . . . public selves" (4). Brown cites James as a figure significantly excluded from this experience, noting the author's dismayed reaction to the Harvard football stadium, on returning to America in 1904, as "a portent of the more *roaring*, more reported and excursionized scene" (qtd. in Brown 2). This scene strongly resembles the dystopian world of "The Papers," a tale that represents the modern author's simultaneous reliance upon, and exposure by, the media as a kind of crisis.

The bicycle's connection with a Jamesian aversion to publicity is made more explicit in a much later incarnation of the author in which the vehicle makes another cameo appearance. In Cynthia Ozick's "Unfortunate Interview with Henry James" (2005), an "American lady from that magazine"—as she is introduced by James's manservant—enters Lamb House to find "James's bicycle, precariously lodged against an umbrella stand in the central hall" (16). At the same time, the author himself emerges, confessing that "I discover myself increasingly perplexed by the ever-accelerating extrusions of advanced women." With a "feminine brashness" worthy of Henrietta Stackpole, the interviewer chides James for his descriptions of

"peppy American journalist[s]," for throwing his personal "papers into the fire," and for his seeming efforts "to inhibit my line of questioning," to which the author frostily replies, "Madam, I do not inhibit. I merely decline to exhibit." After ineffectually confronting a cagey James over his treatment of "the women in your life" (17), "the homoerotic question" (16), and other matters humiliatingly personal, the interviewer "wordlessly departs" (17). Indeed, the last words are spoken by Burgess Noakes, who "considerately" urges their visitor to "[m]ind the Master's bicycle don't strike you in the shins."

In this encounter, the awkwardly positioned bicycle seems a conspicuous trope for the "accelerating extrusions of advanced women," and particularly press women. Yet the vehicle belongs to James, and it is his interviewer, and not her retiring and fusty subject, who must avoid tripping over it. More than a mere biographical detail, the vehicle is also instrumental: a domestic item both defensively withholding entry and aggressively poised to "strike." Ironically re-appropriated as a figure *for* the Jamesian, "the Master's bicycle" bars the way to Jamesian mysteries, to the Jamesian domicile, and to James himself.

NOTES

[1]This is the date given by Edel, though his chronology has been questioned by Hoffman and Hoffman. James had found himself "[j]ammed into the acute angle between two high fences" trying to "get a quasi-extemporized old [fire] engine to work" (*NS* 277).

[2]Haralson traces the origins of the "James-as-castrato legend" (196), prevalent throughout the 1920s and 30s, to Van Wyck Brooks's mention of James's accident in *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* (1925). The bicycle as agent seems to have been Hemingway's addition (Haralson 194–200).

[3]The four tales that James wrote in 1895 were published under the title *Embarrassments* in 1896.

[4]Simon James notes "the undermining presence of the body" in the cycling narrative in his essay on Wells's novel: "Fin-de-Cycle: Romance and the Real in *The Wheels of Chance*" (42).

[5]See, for example, Wheeler's *Wheels: A Bicycle Romance* (1896) about two American sisters, Helena and Georgiana, who assume male disguise to go on a cycling tour of Europe and encounter a "Mr. and Mrs. Browne"—both male cyclists in disguise—with hilarious results.

[6]The bicycle also appears in *The Awkward Age* (1899), both literally—when Mitchy inquires of Nanda if she "came on a bicycle"—and figuratively, as he declares to Mrs. Brook, "Pride's only for use when wit breaks down—it's the train the cyclist takes when his tire's deflated" (99, 66). In *The Outcry* (1911), Hugh Crimble is introduced as "a young man . . . with the ends of his trousers clipped together as for cycling" (38–39) and also sports a "cycling-cap" (109).

[7]The word "prominent"—whose literal sense of jutting or extruding aptly describes the "angular attitude[s]" (348) of certain characters—resounds throughout the tale. It is used by Maud to refer to her efforts with Marshal ("to make him prominent; and . . . to remain prominent" [338]) and by Howard with regard to Beadel-Muffet's "special sort of prominence" (333). Beadel-Muffet's disappearance is also headlined as that of the "Prominent Public Man!" (368).

[8]A *scorcher* is "one who motors or cycles furiously" (*OED*). *Scorching* was an activity associated with the early image of the speeding cyclist as an antisocial "cad on castors," but it also appeared in the high-speed chase of the detective novel.

[9]In his preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897), Conrad wrote that his purpose was "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel . . . before all, to make you *see*" (xiv).

[10]See, for example, "A Coast and a Capture: A Bicycling Story," by Leeds, in which Josephine Howard dons her brother's cycling costume and takes off on his bicycle. She anticipates her critics, arguing that "some of the most charming heroines in fiction, whom no one has ever thought of criticizing, have done the self-same thing. Take, for instance, Miss Helen Mar and Consuelo and Rosalind—doesn't everyone admire them, and are they not considered three very fascinating ladies?" (86).

[11]Stougaard-Nielson emphasizes this word's significance in drawing attention to "the importance of two 'machines' that are usually regarded as the outermost exterior of literature and writing . . . : the author's body and his typewriter" (220). As Simon James points out, the word "machine" functions similarly in *The Wheels of Chance*, indicating at once the economic fact of the draper's assistant being "caught in a machine" that is his trade and his literal entanglements with his bicycle (41).

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