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Ethan Simonds

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By Ethan Simonds

Toward the end of Henry James's novella "The Beast in the Jungle," John Marcher confronts his companion May Bartram with an ominous question. "What do you regard," he asks her, "as the very worst that at this time of day can happen to me?" (245). At the root of his question is the desperate, ambiguous apprehension around which the plot of the story revolves: his paralyzing anticipation of "something rare and strange, possibly prodigious and terrible, that was sooner or later to happen to [him]" (*BJ* 228). James's articulation of Marcher's crisis is famously knotty and oblique, drifting into and out of hazy focus as the protagonist struggles in fits and starts to confront that which haunts him. This winding and suspenseful narration lends a sort of critical fertility to the text, an open theoretical space conducive to a number of readings.[1] At the same time, it tends to draw the eye of the reader inward, to evoke a drama of interiority, rather than one that unfolds into exteriority—toward the objects and sites and ghosts that proliferate in so many of James's novels and stories. In other words, unless we attend to the object world in "The Beast in the Jungle," we run the risk of eliding certain crucial dynamics at play in the text.

Reading with an eye for the object world, we see Marcher's angst manifest in a hermetic closedness to the outside, a model of (non)relation contrasted with the effortless openness of Bartram. She presents as a model of subjectivity that diffuses across and is interpenetrated by a network of human and nonhuman entities of varying scales and speeds—a subjectivity similar to the rhizomatic model articulated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In the course of the novella, this rhizomatic position plays out as an openness to the nonhuman world. More specifically, it initially manifests in an openness to the capacity of material objects to occupy nodes within networks of relation, to function and effuse in ways that radically exceed their object-forms. This notion of the excessiveness of the object, which derives from Bill Brown's thing theory, functions as a sort of undergirding to this essay. Brown locates this excess in the distinction between *object* and *thing*. The thingness of objects is "what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their

The Henry James Review 39 (2018): 37–51.

mere utilization as objects—their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence" ("Thing Theory" 5).

Ultimately, though, the crisis of relationality at play in the story comes to resonate in ways that totally exceed any specific relation of human-human or thing-human. What's at stake is not just a realization or feeling-out of the rhizomatic interpenetration of subject and thing but an openness to the outside tout court. In other words, the notion of the *thing* in "The Beast in the Jungle" does not just name an excessive effusion of the object but a kind of agent of that which is external, alien, and other to the human.

But to begin with objects, the task at hand is first to deploy a new materialism that understands the excess of the object in "The Beast in the Jungle" without sacrificing its materiality and, second, to do so without either lapsing into the discourse of the commodity fetish or privileging the human subject in its relation to the object (implicitly or explicitly). This latter concern is perhaps the subtlest and most crucial. Many scholars share Brown's commitment to the dissolution of "modernity's ontological distinction between human beings and nonhumans" (*Sense* 29). But despite the fact that many critics embrace this dissolution of the human/nonhuman divide, many nevertheless continue to understand those nonhuman entities only in terms of the human subjects that interact with them.[2] In that light, the chief focus of the ensuing pages will be a reevaluation not just of how we relate to objects but of how they relate to us and how they initiate us into relation with themselves. Ultimately, it will mean considering the ways in which object relations become ethical ones.[3]

Such a reevaluation follows the Spinozian-Bergsonian-Deleuzian trajectory traced by Jane Bennett, who posits a conception of the thing based in a "vital" materiality characterized by excess—her "vibrant matter" is "as much force as entity, as much energy as matter, as much intensity as extension" (20). Things and humans operate as co-actants—which is not to say they are equivalent. Though they both have effects in excess of their physical bodies, these effects don't abolish but rather "*transform* the divide between speaking subjects and mute objects into a set of differential tendencies and variable capabilities" (108). It's with this sort of vibrant materialism in mind that this essay approaches the things that populate "The Beast in the Jungle."

Within the first page of the story, we encounter an environment in which things present as something in excess of their object forms. Marcher and some of his acquaintances pay a visit to Weatherend, a fine house full of fine objects. Those objects function most pertinently as sites of attraction: James's language continually suggests that characters are somehow compelled or enraptured by them.[4] People "[bend] toward objects in out-of-the-way corners with their hands on their knees and their heads nodding quite as with the emphasis of an excited sense of smell," an image reproduced a few lines later when they are "compared to the movements of a dog sniffing a cupboard" (*BJ* 221).

In these moments, James's use of scent figures as a kind of representation of the excessive allure of the thing, the way it can't quite be pinned down to its form or position: the use of "smell" implies an experience of the object that exceeds the act of (in this case) seeing it. More than that, it locates the experience of the thing within the register of a sense capable of encountering excess. The sense of smell itself exceeds the parameters of scent: consider its relation to and impact on other senses, like taste, and nonsensory phenomena, like memory. The image of the sniffing dog further freights the sensory language, which is to say it does more than signal that the allure of the object activates a kind of instinctual, animal, corporeal drive. It also implies the surpassing of mere connotations of physical sensation, perhaps registering more pertinently as establishing the spatiality of the object as well as its seductive capacity—the sniffing dog is often orienting itself in space, which is to say it is negotiating presence, an orientation accomplished in physical relation to the object world. Smell is evocative, pervasive; it ebbs and flows, diffuses markers through space and time. This "sniffing" can thus be thought of as the process of tracking a signifier of the object that exceeds the object itself, such that we might understand the object's allure as excess, as diffusion through or permeation of the space it inhabits. Smell comes to stand precisely for the thingliness of the object as it effuses—touching, transforming, enfolding, and encountering a vibrant network of persons, places, and things.

James seems particularly concerned with this permeating allure insofar as it becomes part of the conjunctive function of the thing—"When they were two," he writes, "they either mingled their sounds of ecstasy or melted into silences of even deeper import" (*BJ* 221). On the one hand, we have here an approximation of what Brown describes as "the way that objects (a house, a statue, a cup) mediate the relations between characters who *are* characters precisely in their relations" (*Sense* 141).[5] But more than that, James seems in this passage to track the way the object places people in relation to itself *and to each other*, creating a kind of lateral union of people and thing.[6] James seems here to be articulating a perspective on the object world that anticipates Ian Hodder's notion of the fundamental entanglement of society—the way human culture is eminently material, such that things and humans are inextricably and irreducibly co-implicated in the production and evolution of that culture—of each other, so to speak. This sort of conjunctive operation of the thing calls to mind Bruno Latour's perhaps more extreme insistence that "the object, the real thing, the thing that acts, exists only provided that it *holds humans and nonhumans together, continuously*" (*Aramis* 213).

Strangely, Marcher himself seems almost to acknowledge this conjunctive capacity, the materiality of social relations, early on in the story. When he renews his acquaintance with Bartram—an occasion enabled by the "charm . . . in other things . . . old wainscoats, old tapestry, old gold, old color" (*BJ* 223)—he laments the lack of a single, conspicuous event that might have cemented their relationship. Given Marcher's fixation on singular, ordering, always-becoming events, this comes as no surprise. What is surprising is the way objects populate his regretful fantasies: "Marcher could only feel he ought to have rendered her some service—saved her from a capsized boat in the Bay or at least recovered her dressing-bag, filched from her cab in the streets of Naples by a lazzarone with a stiletto" (224). He regrets the pair is not "in possession of something or other that their actual show seemed to lack," and certainly what he means is that he regrets the lack of a singular, perhaps romantic act, a heroic intervention into a calamity. But the absence he laments, in his fantasy, is just as conspicuously an absence of *things*. The lack of conjunction between himself and Bartram is necessarily a lack of the objects that would instantiate their relation.

This interaction with Bartram adds weight to that earlier passage, in which "[w]hen [the guests] were two, they either mingled their sounds of ecstasy or melted into silences of even deeper import." Here we see the objects of Weatherend occupy positions of relation to humans in two primary ways, signaled by the distinction between *mingling* and *melting*. In the first case, the thing performs conjunctivity by facilitating a union of ecstatic noise, by acting as a conduit through which two distinct people can be joined by virtue of the similarity of their visceral, vocal responses (note that those responses are not *words* but *sounds*). If this "mingling" is predicated on vocalized sound, the object (presumably one of Weatherend's famous pictures, heirlooms, or works of art) is precluded because it is mute. To say objects like these are mute, though, is neither surprising nor interesting. What *is* striking about passages like these is not only the way they draw humans into physical proximity and conjunction with each other but also the way they initiate them into moments of silence that open up the possibility for the muted body to enter into a lateral relation with the object world.

The second case, though—in which pairs of guests "melted into silences"—stands out as creating space for a different sort of relation between the humans and the conjunctive object. Here the thing seems not only to be facilitating a kind of union between persons; the idea of melting into silence actually seems to allow for the possibility of the presence of the thing itself in the relation it has facilitated. Silent contemplation implies a sort of openness to possibilities of experience that exceed human-human interaction, at the very least the sort of museum-goer experience of the vibrancy of the inanimate. While "mingling" implies blending or perhaps a kind of involvement-with or participation-in, "melting" has connotations of liquification, of transformation into a different state. "Melting" implies the possibility for solid bodies to commingle, to hybridize and interpenetrate. Crucially, to melt is to dissolve in response to some force—heat, liquid, radiation, or (in this case) the pervasive allure of the object. To melt into silence is, in that sense, to dissolve into a nonverbal mode in which the thing itself can participate. It is to smelt the human and establish equivalence between bodies and things in their mutual silence and materiality.

In his New York Edition preface to "The Beast in the Jungle," James writes that Marcher is "ridden by the idea of what things may lead to, since they mostly always lead to human communities, wider or intenser, of experience" (*NT* x). This absence of human communities in "The Beast in the Jungle" necessarily means an absence of the objects that facilitate as well as populate those communities.[7] While the rest of the guests at Weatherend are initiated into unions by (and with) its things, Marcher instead "need[s] some straying apart to feel in a proper relation with them" (221). For Marcher, relationality is a matter of proximity. He can't empathize with and in fact disdains the other guests' fascination with the objects. James writes, "There were aspects of the occasion that gave it for Marcher much the air of the 'look round,' previous to a sale highly advertised." He can't rationalize their attraction to objects apart from acquisitive interest. For the others, the room is saturated with the conjunctive allure of the thing. For him, it's an air of appraisal. To fail to extricate objects from dynamics of capital is to fail to understand them in ways that exceed their circulation within human society based on their exchange value, an inability derived from a basic subordination of the nonhuman to the human: objects as no more than clusters of use- or exchange-values.

This lack of proximity to or engagement with the physical world reads as a crisis of attachment. John Plotz writes about James's characters as being in states of "semi-detachment . . . neither entirely removed from nor entirely immersed in their social and physical surroundings" (232–33). Marcher can be read along those lines as a character semi-detached from his environment—he can inhabit some sort of relation to things but only from a distance, impersonally. James underscores this kind of removal in his preface: "As each item of experience comes, with its possibilities, into view, he can but dismiss it under this sterilising habit of the failure to find it good enough and thence appropriate it" (*NT* x). He can't open himself to things as long as he is caught up in his expectation of "*the* thing." Even "the temples of gods and the sepulchres of kings" are "garish cheap and thin" compared to it (*BJ* 257, 229, 258). The immateriality of the always-becoming event for which he waits forces Marcher into a kind of liminal existence of his own in which he is only a spectator, a detached watcher of the world.

If Marcher represents a fundamentally immaterial existence, a mode of (non) relation predicated upon abstractions, then Bartram figures as the opposite. James introduces her by depicting her intimate familiarity with the things of the house—she's a vital part of the scene:

> She was not there on a brief visit, but was more or less a part of the establishment—almost a working, a remunerated part . . . to show the place and explain it, deal with the tiresome people, answer questions about the dates of the building, the styles of the furniture, the authorship of the pictures, the favourite haunts of the ghost. (222)

James is quick to amend his description of her, though, adding that her capacity as such is not banally vocational or necessitated by remuneration. Rather, he seems to suggest it is borne out of sheer intimacy with the objects themselves: "It wasn't that she looked as if you could have given her shillings—it was impossible to look less so" (222). This immediate separation of Bartram from any kind of acquisitive culture stands in stark contrast to the description of Marcher just a few lines earlier. Simone Francescato describes the Jamesian collector's relation to her things as "selection, appropriation, classification, and display of refined art objects [not as] the sign of a disinterested love for art but a means to maintain or achieve a high social status *through* art" (146). Bartram is neither the owner of the house nor its things. Her relation to them can't be explained in Francescato's acquisitive or proprietary terms.

Instead, her intimacy with the nonhuman registers as deeply *personal* and as at least equivalent to her relations to people. In fact, she seems "more or less part of the establishment"—she seems to belong among the things. This is not to say she herself presents as an object. Rather, James articulates it as an openness to the dynamics of a vibrant network of nonhuman and human actants. To use Bennett's parlance, objects within this network become "things in excess of their association with human meanings, habits, or projects," and it's in light of that excess that the signification of the ghostly in the passage quoted above ("favourite haunts of the ghost") comes into play (4). On the one hand, the juxtaposition of the ghostly against the human immediately situates her affinity on the side of the nonhuman as well as emphasizes the degree of her familiarity with and openness to it. On the other, it seems incongruous to invoke the paranormal at the end of a list of material objects. The move coheres, though, when considered in light of James's earlier suggestion of the permeating excess of the allure of the object: haunted houses and possessed objects are suffused with ethereal life and thereby granted operational possibilities that exceed their utility and design.[8]

The idea of ghostly materiality is an apt metaphor for the way things transcend their own object-bodies and operate within phenomenological spaces that exceed the subjects and societies that produce them: think the uncanny painting with roving eyes; the murderous, obscene doll; the haunted VHS tape. The idea of ghostliness, of haunted things, is a convenient way to conceptualize these sorts of possibilities. The ghostly figures as a kind of atmospheric, spiritual presence that is both bound to specific physical spaces and things and yet necessarily exterior to the physical limitations of space, the object-body, and/or the senses. Bartram's intimacy with the ghostly, then, signals both her familiarity with the nonhuman and her understanding of the kind of objecthood James is elaborating through the story. She understands space and the way the object-body inhabits it as the locus of the object—she knows its physical dimensions—but she still recognizes that the thing's effect, its allure, might be ethereal and extrabodily.

Her knowledge of non-ghostly things also seems to be of a kind that exceeds the moment of immediate experience and the physical property of the object. She knows "the dates of the building, the styles of the furniture, the authorship of the pictures." In other words, she encounters the object as a threefold thing: as something with an individual history ("dates"); that relates to other things ("styles"); and that relates to people ("authorship"). She is also equipped to use this knowledge in a way that can bring the guests of the house into relation with them, to impart her own intimacy and familiarity to them. In this sense she operates as an intermediary between the human and the nonhuman in her role as a kind of historian or biographer of things.[9] If some human subjects achieve their thing-facilitated conjunction through "mingling" in a union of ecstatic noise, while others "melt" into more lateral, silent relations, Bartram becomes a third component in that process of human-object conjunction. She essentially introduces the objects to the guests they lure. She's a vector for the human and the thing in the way she resolves a perceived ontological gap between them by initiating moments of relation.[10] She's open to a "vital materialism" in which "there is no point of pure stillness" (Bennett 57). The axis of relation between humans and objects is reoriented—horizontality replaces verticality.

At this point, a Deleuzian might say we've found ourselves in a rhizome. Composed of a series of interconnected fibers, "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (Deleuze and Guattari 7). Deleuze and Guattari introduce the rhizome as a way of modeling not only an understanding of subjectivity predicated on multiplicity and laterality but also of actual, material relationality. It's not just about the way the subject conceptualizes the self. It's about the way subjects (and objects) relate to and constitute one another on an immediate, material level.

The kind of subjectivity modeled by Bartram is similarly diffuse and non-hierarchical. In facilitating relations of subjects and objects, she draws them into a state of becoming-like reminiscent of the "aparallel evolution" of Deleuze and Guattari's orchid and wasp (10). In their account, the orchid and wasp evolved to resemble and attract one another in a rhizomic relation, but this doesn't mean that one "imitated" the other. Rather, it's "an increase in valence, a veritable becoming" (7). It's a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, of displacements and new trajectories: the orchid decenters (without forsaking) its florality and decreases the distinguishability between itself and the wasp, just as the wasp becomes less and less distinguishable from the orchid. In the same way, an open relation to things means a becoming-object that irrupts subjecthood and an identical reorientation of the thing as a subject—"an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying" (10). Here we see the shades of James's phrase "melt[ing] into silences of deeper import," of Ian Hodder's "entanglement." Jane Bennett puts it in simple terms: "human being and thinghood overlap . . . the us and the it slip-slide into each other" (4). In her status as an intermediary between people and things, Bartram initiates them into moments of rhizomic relation, enabling and establishing nodes of fibrous concretion in which each element is connected to and becomes like the other in a continuous a-parallel evolution. They realize their interconnectedness and interdependence. It's perhaps not always radically lateral, but it's at least what Brown characterizes as an "indeterminate ontology where things seem slightly human and humans seem slightly thing-like" (*Sense* 13). Bartram embraces the idea that matter is vibrant stuff—and that it's the vibrant stuff humans and nonhumans have in common.

Marcher struggles to recognize the possibilities of that openness and to expand his horizon of conscious relationality to include the nonhuman world. The years and emotional work Bartram devotes to remaining by Marcher's side as he increasingly isolates himself ultimately manifest in a decay that begins to overtake Bartram from the inside out, the slow drain of life from her vibrant body. She "fear[s] of a deep disorder in her blood," which eventually snuffs her "mystical irresistible light" (242). When Marcher comes to visit her in the furthest space to which she can venture—her antechamber—she is "almost as white as wax, with the marks and signs in her face as numerous and as fine as if they had been etched by a needle" (244). "She was a sphinx"—invoking at once a mysterious mystical creature and the material, archaeological remnant of a long-dead power (244). As the life drains from her, James increasingly evokes her physicality, her material presence, wax and stone at once intricate and beautiful and inert. She barely moves; she is taciturn. She increasingly resembles the fine objects with which she is so familiar: vibrant, yet without human life. Her ironically well-appointed antechamber becomes the house of decay, a liminal space within which life and death converge—Marcher's still-vital body meets Bartram's drained, "lacerated" one. Bartram herself presents as both dead and living, a bloodless, wax-like body still, however faintly, possessed of its locomotive and vocative energies (242).[11]

In this, her final moment in the text, she makes a last-ditch effort to initiate Marcher into an open relation to the nonhuman world. Since he can't (or won't) relate to the objects around him, Bartram assumes the role of a kind of vector between him and the objects that populate her antechamber. Grown old and frail after a lifetime of waiting for Marcher to break (or be broken) free of his arborescent inertia, she responds to his desperate question—"What do you regard as the very worst that . . . *can* happen to me?"—with a startling moment of invigoration:

> She had, with her gliding step, diminished the distance between them, and she stood near him . . . as if charged with the unspoken. . . . He had been standing by the chimney-piece, fireless and sparsely adorned, a small perfect old French clock and two morsels of rosy Dresden constituting all its furniture; and her hand grasped the shelf . . . as for support and encouragement. . . . She had something more to give him; her wasted face

> delicately shone with it—it glittered almost as with the white lustre of silver in her expression. (249)

Suddenly, she glides from her chair to the chimney-piece, her bodily decay momentarily suspended through interaction with the nonhuman world, drawn to the shelf as to a magnet. As he despairs that his arborescent apprehension hasn't been realized, she makes her boldest move yet, declaring that "The door's open" before melting into silence (249). She alters the geometry of the arrangement, diminishing the space between not just Marcher and herself but between herself and the previously unacknowledged object world, drawing it into their moment of interaction.

Her sudden movement toward the effusive and conspicuous things on the chimney-piece recalls the function of the thing as effusive. At Weatherend, though, the ethereal pull of the old object pervaded every room, emanating from a host of fine furniture and art and craftsmanship. Weatherend itself functions as the site of attraction, a vast body pervaded by a legion of things, possessed by the erotics of the physical object. It is itself the thing. But on Bartram's shelf, there are only two small things: the old French clock, the Dresden. And yet they erupt into the narrative with a vividness and force unmatched by the indistinct objects of Weatherend, which attract the guests even as they elude distinct narrative identification or description. The clock, the porcelain, and the shelf call to Bartram both as material bodies that can be touched, that can "support" her, and as companions that can "encourage," and they do so as particular, conspicuous entities.

Dresden porcelain dinnerware is famously made for display, not for use at mealtime; the hearth beneath the mantle harbors no flame; the clock is perfect—but does it even keep time? These objects inhabit their space for reasons that go beyond the implications of their bodies. They inspire misuse, organize new possibilities of interaction: the "morsels of rosy Dresden" practically beg to be handled, engaged with, sensed. They literally look delicious. As was the case with the objects of Weatherend, here things once again manifest in ways that defy monosensory description, with the distinction being that here the particularity of the object is spotlighted. The porcelain is "rosy"—James conjures it as an object of flesh and blood, liminal and indeterminate in the same way Bartram transformed into a bloodless, waxen human thing. What's more, they are "morsels." The beauty of the Dresden is something that seems to require *taste, to inspire a mode of engagement incongruent with the implications of a dishware body*. It's a particularly interesting sense for James to draw on given his earlier invocation of scent and the way smell and taste are so interrelated, to the point that they are at times almost indistinguishable. Just as in Weatherend, the allure of the Dresden isn't satisfied by the pleasure of seeing. It's somehow in excess of sight, with the suggestion being that a true experience of them involves a sort of consumption, an act that in a literal sense internalizes the object. By looking fit to eat, the Dresden morsels literally tempt organic bodies to take objects into themselves, to include the inorganic in one of the very processes of organic life. To incorporate porcelain into flesh and blood and vice versa.

In a similar sense, the allure of the clock exceeds its immediate form and utility. Its conspicuous qualities are its age and its origin, its status as something of a different time and place. What stands out about the clock is precisely its implication of a life, a biography that exceeds telling time, exceeds its physical composition. It is "perfect" in its status as an instantiation of a particular confluence of time, place, matter: it is old and French, at once reaching across time to the distant moment of its assembly from wood and glass and metal, and across the English Channel all the way to France, to the vessels that delivered it, the hands that touched it and eyes that saw it.[12] And while the clock isn't "rosy," clocks certainly are corporeal in their own right, with their hands, their faces, with their guts grinding and circulating to the swing of the pendulum or the stretch of the spring like blood to a heartbeat.

These excessive objects energize Bartram's withering body. Once she ushers them into the interaction, she is "support[ed] and encourage[d]"; "her wasted face delicately [shines]—it glitter[s] almost as with the white lustre of silver in her expression." She is still "wasted" as before, a bloodless body that plays along the divide between human and nonhuman. But now, empowered by her physical relation to effusive things, her physical body is animated with an excessive vibrance, a Bennettian "lustre": no longer lacerated wax or sphinxlike stone, but glittering silver. Her open and conspicuous relation to the nonhuman world imbues her decaying body with the energy she needs to confront Marcher.

This vibration persists as she "[stands] near him . . . as if charged with the unspoken": charged by her contact with the nonhuman. She presents as a mute body imbued with dynamic energy, an expressiveness that defies speech. In this moment, Marcher seems almost to experience Bartram's conjunction with the material world as a sort of allure, the likes of which drew the guests of Weatherend into moments of relation and engagement with things and each other. Ultimately, though, he fails to see the implications of her silent ethereality. For him, the fantastic glitter of her face is simply a sign of something more to come. "It had become suddenly, from her movement and attitude, beautiful and vivid to him that she had something more to give him," James writes (249). Empowered by her contact with the things around them, she herself begins to permeate the space with the ethereal allure of the nonhuman. In other words, she becomes like the haunted objects and spaces with which she is so familiar: a material thing suffused with fantastic life. James gives us a glimpse both of Bartram's wondrous capacity to act as a vector between the human and nonhuman and also of Marcher's stubborn refusal to realize the beautiful ways in which a network of material things converged in the moment. Instead, he waits for a single, transformative thing that is always to come, always exterior.

To read Bartram as becoming-like a haunted site is not to say she is literally objectified. Rather, it's to appreciate her as the character in the story that models radical openness to the potential of the nonhuman environment and the importance of opening oneself to it. And indeed, as James's passing comment on her intimacy with the ghosts of Weatherend implies, her openness to things signals something broader, something that exceeds more than just the object-body. It's true that things populate the story with some conspicuousness, but their role is not simply to assert the presence and excess of objects tout court. The introduction of the ghost suggests that the thing here names a kind of agent of that which is external, alien, and other to the human. It stands for an entire dynamic nonhuman network, crackling with its own energies and temporalities, its own vantages and needs. In this sense, James's invocation of the ghostly registers not just as a metaphor for thingliness but as an admission of the circulation of immaterial nonhuman forces on the margins of the text. To be opened to things is thus to be ripped out of anthropocentric or anthropomorphic economies of affordance and to be penetrated by the forces, existences, and effects of nonhuman entities of all scales and velocities of becoming: violent deterritorialization.

The violence, the darkness that implies, only creeps into the story obliquely. Through the gradual introduction of macabre imagery, objects, and environments the text slowly descends deeper into the register of horror, thereby smuggling in ghastly markers that irrupt into the primary narrative arc in the waning moments of the text. Identifying the object world of "The Beast in the Jungle" as that which stands for and prefigures the circulation of those (ultimately antagonistic) forces pushes the stakes of Marcher's crisis into eerie new territory: if it's the nonhuman (tout court) that's truly at play, then the story opens onto new implications. Marcher's paralyzing paranoia metastasizes from the fear that, at some point, the immaterial—the dark, ahuman energy of the unrealized—will make itself known.

Bartram reads as a deterritorialized subject, one that is open (or has been opened to) the outside, to the potential of the nonhuman, who participates in and fosters its circulation. In that light, Marcher's crippling anxiety might be framed in terms of abjection, Julia Kristeva's name for the dissolution of the distinction between self and other. Her iconic work *Powers of Horror* opens:

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside . . . it lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. . . . What is abject is not my correlative . . . [it is] the jettisoned object, [which] is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. (1–2)

Proceeding from this frame, we arrive at the crux of Marcher's angst: an exterior threat, a looming presence, an incomprehensible not-I lurking just over the temporal horizon. He is doomed to redouble his closedness ad infinitum precisely because openness to the outside, pervasion by a nonhuman other, is the horror he withdraws from. Suddenly, the ghosts mentioned only in passing earlier in "The Beast in the Jungle" loom a bit larger. Reading from abjection pushes valences of the text that otherwise lurk on the margins to the forefront.

Marcher is unable to perform what Brad Evans sees as the hallmark of Jamesian relationality: the way the individual character "knows what she knows by the slow process of tracing the connections between things she sees and hears" (4). Bartram's attempts to guide Marcher into opening himself even slightly to the outside fall short precisely because of the paranoiac rigor with which he has enclosed himself within an isolated delusion of molarity and singularity. But this isolation is apparent from the outset. The turn toward the violent consequences of that closedness begins with foreshadowing that manifests in the form of the sites within which he seals himself ever more tightly from the outside. Marcher's earlier recounting of the memory of meeting Bartram in Rome coheres. Think of James's earlier work, "Daisy Miller," in which "Roman Fever" (malaria) is a fatal emanation of the ancient and alien stones, structures, and passions of the great city itself. The revelation of his horror takes place in a space animated and permeated by a dark, ahuman energy. As we build toward the violent coda, Marcher's crisis increasingly coheres as it is articulated in the register of horror.

The beautiful harmony of Bartram's rhizomatic openness overshadows a peripheral accumulation throughout the text of imagery and ideas that operate in the dialect of horror and prefigure the violent irruption of the nonhuman at the story's close. This is to say that James smuggles in harbingers of the near-fatal deterritorialization that awaits Marcher—there is something darker at play just beneath the surface. Marcher's paranoid closedness ultimately functions in ways that exceed the neutral liminality implied by Plotz's notion of semi-detachment, manifesting as a terror of the unknown, a paralyzing fear of the unarticulable, an anxiety of the influence of the other. It festers in sites of death slowly and subtly introduced over the course of the story, ironic environments of ornate surfaces that obscure putrefaction and decomposition: garish sepulchers, the corrupting air of Rome, gravestones, the well-appointed antechamber of a woman whose body is riddled with a nameless decay. Revising our reading such that it tracks a sort of shadow-arc of the story, a descent into the registers of horror and death, a new reading begins to take shape and substance. Specters of radical openness and violent deterritorialization proliferate and lurk in the story's succession of quiet moments, ultimately exploding in a phantasmatic irruption in the ominous closing passage.

"The Beast, at its hour," Marcher realizes in the finale, "had sprung in the twilight of that cold April when . . . she had risen from her chair to stand before him and let him imaginably guess" (262). It dawns on him at last that his passivity has been his undoing, but by the time he realizes this, he is too late. The specters of the nonhuman that had been circulating at the margins of the text suddenly emerge in a terrifying visitation as though his continued resistance to their presence only increased their potency. The lurking horror of the sepulchers, the ghosts, the gravestones, and the corrupted air takes its terrible form in the morbid quiet of the graveyard:

> He saw the Jungle of his life and saw the lurking Beast; then, while he looked, perceived it, as by a stir of the air, rise, huge and hideous, for the leap that was to settle him. His eyes darkened—it was close; and, instinctively turning, in his hallucination, to avoid it, he flung himself, face down, on the tomb. (262)

The Beast is set in motion by the graveyard itself ("a stir of the air"): Bartram's final warning takes place at the margin of life and death; in this last moment there is no such liminality.

The catalyst that explodes him into "this horror of waking" is the sight of a man whose grief is so materially obvious as to have nearly transubstantiated him (262). "Neither his dress, his age, nor his presumable character and class; nothing lived but the deep ravage of the features he showed"; he has "[bled] and yet live[d]" (260). Like Bartram in her antechamber, the stranger intensifies into a bloodless, ravaged body, a singular material presence, an "image" "conscious" of something lurking, "something that profaned the air" (261). Marcher, moved by this body of grief, perhaps even by its echo of Bartram, is overwhelmed by the audacious irreverence of his presence—a person, closed off and dislocated from their environment, in a space in which relations are so often traumatically transformed and bloodless bodies diffuse into the earth. Confronted in a literal zone of death by his utmost horror, Marcher's instinct, his only response, is to strike a death-pose—to become like the corpse that is transformed by the grave.

In contrasting this violent encounter, articulated in the register of horror, with Bartram's serene, open interactions with her environment, one is struck by the irony of the apparent placidity of the nonhuman. What had appeared to be the allure of passive objects permeating space, inviting human connection, reveals itself suddenly as a latent, potent force that proliferates and compounds as it is ignored, exploited, or frustrated. In other words, Marcher's failure to open himself resonates as obstinacy with terrible environmental consequences. One might read "The Beast in the Jungle" as Henry James's oblique foray into eco-horror. Archetypally-Jamesian sitting rooms, mantlepieces, portraits, and furniture take on new valences, becoming something akin to Timothy Morton's notion of the hyperobject—individual elements in an assemblage massively in excess of human understanding that vibrate with ominous implications.

It's precisely in the scope of those implications that the significance of the object world in "The Beast in the Jungle" differentiates itself from that of James's other works. On Brown's exemplary reading, texts like *The Spoils of Poynton* see things shift from a "*metonymic* relation to characters . . . in the novel [in which things] are legible as indications of character" to a "*metaphorical* relation: they don't express characters, they substitute for them, they translate them into something visible, valuable, potentially possessible" (*Sense* 161). This is a subtle shift, from things as constituent to things as constitutive—but it remains a shift, in Brown's account of Jamesian object value, within which things, defined by "the sociality, the history and habits congealed [in them]," cry out for the "aura of history, 'the shimmer of association'" (186). In "The Beast in the Jungle," however, this demand for sociality takes on a new tone, is colored with new implications. When furniture, pictures, chimney-pieces, Dresden, and clocks give way to ghosts, gravestones, sepulchers, and beasts, we glimpse a nonhuman world not content simply to ask "to lead the life it has begun" but one possessed of a dark and violent potential, an ahuman vitalism (186). We see, once again, that James's object-dramas play out in many different registers, that the excessive thing resonates with a myriad of implications and compulsions across a variety of moments and contexts. We go beyond *The Spoils of Poynton*, beyond metonym and metaphor, and beyond literary implications of character and enter into a space of violent insurgence, a sort of ominous warning of the cost of marginalizing and ignoring the nonhuman world.

So Marcher's crisis and his final act both gesture toward not just the importance of understanding and enacting the materiality of social relations but also toward the inclusion of the nonhuman in those relations. Benjamin Bateman sees the final sections of the story as tracking the way Marcher grows "unsettlingly preoccupied with the absence of things left to him . . . not because he is greedy but because he longs for objects that might materialize his connection to May" (94). Bateman sees the lack of materiality as problematic in the sense that the society in which the pair lives refuses to recognize forms of intimacy that can't be quantified through common possessions. The coda of "The Beast in the Jungle," on this reading, is an elegy for an intense but unmarried and platonic intimacy. Marcher's hallucinatory turn to the gravestone becomes an expression of his deep regret for not marrying Bartram and thereby making their intimacy material.

But such a reading elides the fact that Marcher's detachment isn't only problematic in terms of his relation to Bartram. His conspicuous detachment and inability to engage with his environment in a direct way is on display even at Weatherend in the opening sections of the story. Bateman suggests marrying Bartram would have been a way for him finally to have some claim to the material world, but in doing so he takes materiality to be predicated on a legal relation that only allocates objects through abstraction and that relegates the excess of the thing to an intangible possessive or sentimental value. Such a reading doesn't take into account the possibility that the thing stands for something in excess of the object world and in excess of human relations and that what's at stake might be environmental in its scale and scope. The final encounter with Bartram in the antechamber points precisely to the overlooked presence of the object world in the story: her final, desperate act is energized and intensified by conspicuous conjunction with and proximity to a cluster of things whose effect and allure go beyond any banal conception of materiality or possession or sentimentality. Marcher's failure isn't simply a romantic or sexual crisis, a failure to enter into some sort of legal or romantic relation with Bartram, but is also a conspicuous failure to relate to those effusive things alongside her. His failure to connect with Bartram is, in that sense, a failure to respond as she shows him what it looks like to open yourself to interpenetration by, awareness of, and attention to the nonhuman, to inhabit a state of always-becoming-like: fluidity over paralysis, both/and instead of either/or.

So Marcher's crisis is an ethical matter. Karen Barad frames the ethical implications of materiality beautifully: "Ethics is about mattering, about taking account of the entangled materializations of which we are a part, including new configurations, new subjectivities, new possibilities. . . . Responsibility, then, is a matter of the ability to respond" (69). To trace out the networks of material relation between the self and the world is an ethical exercise. To explore the rhizomes along which the self slip-slides is to enter into a space of ethical relation to the world—a space within which one can "be responsive to the other, who is not entirely separate from what we call the self." Tracing out the rhizome means recognizing that this other need not only be human: the horizon of alterity—and thus the ethical horizon—expands in all directions.

What James's novella does is dramatize, on a small scale, the ultimate implications of failing to respond to the nonhuman world. The consequences of Marcher's failure are not only romantic, sexual, or acquisitive—it's not just about being doomed to bachelorhood, or about male homosexual panic, or about his inability to secure heritable goods. The consequence of failing to respond to the nonhuman is the violent and potentially fatal accumulation and irruption of nonhuman forces into and against humanity. The stakes, ultimately, are environmental: the proverbial end of the world—by which we so often mean the end of the world *as we know it* or *as we need it*; the end of the world *for us*. Reading "The Beast in the Jungle" this way, we can locate an exhortation that goes beyond Bartram's silent glide: open yourself to that of which you are constituted, that which holds everything together, that which is not just *for you*; learn to respond to your environment. Writing some forty years after "The Beast in the Jungle" was published, Wallace Stevens summed it up: "The greatest poverty," he wrote, "is not to live / In a physical world" (503).

NOTES

[1]Consider that, just in recent years, it's been read productively from the perspectives of queer theory and pedagogical studies (see Looby).

[2]While "The Beast in the Jungle" hasn't been included in the Jamesian turn to the object world, much of the rest of James's oeuvre has. Scholars like Otten and Hughes, however, often lapse into an anthropocentrism this reading argues against in favor of a Deleuzian, Latourian perspective. At the same

time, the material turn in Jamesian scholarship has largely avoided the potholes of so-called object-oriented ontology (OOO), which awards objects and humans equivalent amplitude of being. This flat ontology seems problematically to elide the extreme variation in velocities of becoming, linguistic capacities, and ethical culpabilities between various organic and/or inorganic actants. Further, OOO locates the excess of the object in its infinite withdrawal into itself, whereas I will attempt to locate it precisely in the scope of the object's relations. In writing about James, critics like Otten, Hughes, and Brown (particularly in his *A Sense of Things* and "Jamesian Matter") follow suit by focusing on the conspicuous position objects occupy in systems of relation, their status as material externalizations of characters' selves, and their enigmatic excessiveness. In those broad respects, my own analysis is indebted to their work, although I intend to take this a step further and read the thing as a particular instantiation of the nonhuman Other. For a more detailed description of OOO, see Harman. For particularly incisive critiques of OOO that do not dismiss its productive contributions, see Hayles and Shaviro.

[3]Most of the critical conversation around "The Beast in the Jungle" can trace its lineage back to Sedgwick's queer reading, "The Beast in the Closet." While Sedgwick's treatment reads Marcher's secrecy and reticence as code for the liminal presence of an "embodied male-homosexual thematics" (201), it's subtle enough to remain anti-essentialist. Many of the "queer" readings that followed her reduce the story solely to closeted homosexuality (see Looby's reading for a prime example). What the queer readings get absolutely right is their diagnosis of Marcher's crisis as one of relationality. What my own reading hopes to do is broaden the stakes of that crisis by paying attention to the conspicuous absence of the object world in Marcher's meager network of relation and to more carefully explore the significance and centrality of Bartram. For exemplary queer readings of "The Beast in the Jungle," see Sedgwick, Bateman, and Tate. Tate's reading, in particular, reevaluates the implications of Bartram's character.

[4]The idea that "things are attractions" has some theoretical precedent (for example, see Lingis 74). The specific term I'm using ("sites of attraction"), though, is most commonly used in the physical sciences to refer to the spread of disease (often to or between vegetal organisms) or certain stages of mammalian reproduction. It serves as an interesting way to conceptualize the particular allure of the object as generative or epidemiological.

[5]The word "thing" itself has its etymological roots in notions of conjunctivity—the Old English and Icelandic *þing* as well as the Old High German *Thing* originally meant "assembly" before evolving to become associated with objects (see Olsen 109).

[6]For example, Hughes writes about Jamesian things as conjunctive ("the gloves seem to connect gentlemen to ladies and connect ladies to their umbrellas" ["Sex in the Chapeau" 242]) but seems to understand that mediation in physical, non-agential terms that privilege the human subject in the relation, which I will argue is precisely the position "The Beast" remonstrates.

[7]James took great care in naming his characters (his notebooks are filled with lists of potential character names), so it's noteworthy that Marcher's surname invokes a verb that typically has no object—one doesn't "march" something. One simply "marches."

[8]Any engagement with the ghostly as a metaphor must necessarily position itself against Derrida's hauntology in *Specters of Marx*, but insofar as Derrida's treatment of the ghostly is concerned with Marx, futurity, and the end of history it functions at a level far removed from my own usage of it.

There is also a substantial track record of scholarship on ghosts and haunting in James's oeuvre. Miller has said "all James's stories are ghost stories" (135). While that may be arguable, the point remains that the ghostly comes up often in his stories and in scholarly readings thereof. Just the past two decades have seen articles reading Jamesian ghosts through their clothes and accessories from the perspective of William James's psychology, through the lens of queer theory, and many others (see Hughes [*Art of Dress*], Lewis, and Fletcher, respectively). Of those in that small sample, Miller's essay treads closest to my own reading, articulating a way in which Jamesian ghosts figure as "the wholly other" (121), but his reading is based upon an interaction with Derridean speech acts, with the ghostly as mediated (or even summoned) by language.

[9]I'm using this idea of the biography of a thing differently than Kopytoff in that he theorizes from the perspective of the commodity. His anthropological-sociological approach to these biographies and the questions he says they must be founded on are quite interesting, though (see 66).

[10]It's especially useful to think of Bartram in terms of vectors given the epidemiological implications (see note 4) of conceptualizing things as "sites of attraction."

[11]These are the energies that were implied earlier in "The Beast in the Jungle" to differentiate the human from the object (221).

[12]Latour illustrates this sort of instantiation with a hammer in "Morality and Technology": "[The hammer] keeps folded heterogenous temporalities, one of which has the antiquity of the planet, because of the mineral from which it has been moulded, while another has that of the age of the oak which provided the handle. . . . What is true of time holds for space as well, for this humble hammer holds in place quite heterogenous spaces that nothing, before the technical action, could gather together: the forests of the Ardennes, the mines of the Ruhr, the German factory" (249).

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