Monster Hotels, Elastic Men, and the Bourgeois Age

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Henry James's fiction contains a hidden genealogy of male characters with "long legs": from George Fenton in *Watch and Ward* to Christopher Newman, Mr. Ruck from "The Pension Beaurepas," Ralph Touchett, Basil Ransom, Hyacinth Robinson, Tony Bream, Mr. Waymarsh, Merton Densher, and Newton Winch from "A Round of Visits" (along with a handful of other examples). Some of these bodies have been analyzed individually—notably the amply symbolic body of Christopher Newman (Clymer 127–45; Haralson 475–95). Isolated bodily characteristics in James's fiction, such as corpulence, have also been productively discussed in the context of a single work (Hannah 460–87). Here, however, I begin with the premise that James's long-legged men are a loosely related family or species, reading across multiple novels and stories to piece together their collective attributes, their habits (lounging, stretching, smoking, spitting), and, most important, their intimate affiliation with architectural haunts, in particular, the oversized lobbies of modern hotels. Assembling a sociological portrait of a Jamesian body type makes visible the way bodies and built environments work in alliance in James's fiction and the way such alliances can alternatively reproduce or revolutionize the social order. Concentrating on a constellation of long bodies in James's early fiction also shows James testing out, and then moving to moderate and contain, a threatening form of masculine physicality.

This focus on ordinary habits and haunts is informed by the sociology of everyday life—a much-theorized yet slippery object of analysis in recent decades. The "everyday" has usually been located in the social practices, the routines, and the half-distracted interactions with material culture of ordinary citizens. Classically, the everyday has been defined as a domain antithetical to those official, specialist, and high cultural discourses that are discourses of power and abstraction. Michel de Certeau's dual images of high and low—of the geometric, panoramic view of the skyscraper-dweller and the wandering, indefinite view of the pedestrian—encapsulates

his bifurcation of spatial practices between the dominant and the resistant, between those who strategically administer space and those who tactically "make do" within administered spaces (91–110). These classic accounts of everyday life are useful in establishing the way that power relations play out in social space and in revealing the fluidity and ingenuity of people's daily practices, working within or against those matrices of power. Yet grounding a definition of the everyday in the distinction between high and low is ill-suited to the largely bourgeois and aristocratic worlds of James's fiction, where the social spectrum is generally narrow and the boundaries between dominant and resistant are murky. Moving beyond high and low, I locate Jamesian "everyday life" in the iterative relationships between bodies and spaces, or, following the architectural historian and theorist Dell Upton, in the "nexus of spaces and times that repeatedly trigger bodily habits and cultural memories" (719).

Upton's model of everyday life provides an alternative way of reading the social practices represented in James's fiction that are often arranged under the heading of "manners." In contrast to manners, a concept with a similarly slippery history (O'Farrell 192–202), "everyday life" has no connotations of ossified rules or mores. While the everyday is a domain of routine (of activities "half-conscious and half-rote"), Upton suggests that such patterns can be disrupted and transformed through the contingency of events or through conflicts between different codes of "posture, movement, and space-holding" (719). His model proposes a flexible relationship between individual bodies and the social body that "allow[s] one to act in a way that is at once habitual *and* improvisatory, rote *and* novel" (720). I argue that James, too, conceived of the relationship between bodies and spaces as fluid, generating new forms of social manners in competition with the prevailing social regime. This dynamism prevents the social world of James's fiction from hardening into an artefact. His social world is fluid not just because of the play of nationalities, sexualities, and subjectivities within it but because of the vitality of Jamesian "everyday life" and the unsettling influence of the different architectures and bodily habits from which it is composed.

The Bourgeois Lounger

James could not count himself amongst the long-legged and lanky, being (like Lambert Strether) of middle height and with the propensity for episodic portliness.[1] "I am as broad as I am long," he wrote in a letter in June 1879 during one such episode; "as fat as a butter-tub & as red as a British materfamilias" (*LL* 107–08). If, as William Veeder diagnoses, James was keeping the world at a distance with his round, androgynous body, the long-legged men of James's fiction represent a more aggressive form of bodily excess (221). Already in his first novel, *Watch and Ward*, the long male body is a species apart and an object of fascination and rivalry, desire and disgust. Richard Lawrence, the "compact and sturdy" (*NO1* 3), soft-featured and overtly feminized hero of the novel, finds a challenger to the hand of Nora Lambert in the "tall and lean" (45) villain, George Fenton. Fenton, with his "long legs" (and strangely disproportionate feet), makes Lawrence "feel like a small boy" in his presence; he "sapped the roots of the poor fellow's comfortable consciousness of being a man of the world" (45). The leg is here overtly deployed as a displaced phallic symbol—a displacement with a long pedigree in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century culture (Campbell 84; Frank 26–28). All of Fenton's looseness and excessiveness, his

financial wiles and his abject sexuality, become attached to and symbolized through those ill-disciplined phallic legs. As he attempts to con Nora in his city office, Fenton sits "on the edge of his desk, swinging his leg" (133). Earlier, Lawrence watches Fenton through a window as he

> lounge[s] along by Nora's side, with his hands in his pockets, a cigar in his mouth, his shoulders raised to his ears, and a pair of tattered slippers on his absurdly diminutive feet. Not only had Nora forgiven him this last breach of civility, but she had forthwith begun to work him a new pair of slippers. (*NO1* 49–50)

Fenton's is the prototypical ill-mannered body in James's fiction: a body that can't keep to itself, that lounges even while walking, that extends itself with prosthetic objects and with clouds of smoke and ash, and whose loose, disproportioned limbs are always threatening to stretch out, grasp, or otherwise invade the space of others. If the ideal of the well-mannered body was self-control and self-possession, James's lounging men breach that genteel code. Their elasticity confounds the margin between self and other. And by melding into accessories and furniture and architectural structures, their bodies also confound the margin between human and object. These men challenge social as well as novelistic good manners, refusing to be deeply conscious, individuated characters, presenting instead a blank physicality that proves both dangerous and alluring.

James uses long-leggedness in his fiction as a way of suggesting a subtle dissonance between the male body and society, with characters who don't realize how much space they take up, who compulsively pace and stretch or else sprawl themselves over furniture: like the insidious attorney Mr. Striker in *Roderick Hudson* who is found "on the sofa, half sitting, half lounging, in the attitude of a visitor outstaying ceremony, with one long leg flung over the other and a large foot in a clumsy boot swinging to and fro continually" (*NO1* 200). In "The Pension Beaurepas," Mrs. and Miss Ruck rest in the garden of the pension "side by side, with folded hands, contemplating material objects," but Mr. Ruck cannot be contained, sitting "with a roll of American newspapers in his lap and his high hat pushed back, swinging one of his long legs and reading the *New York Herald*" (*CS* 413). Restless and out of place, these men are on a perpetual search for comfort. The fustier chambers of private society are too cramped for their restless size.

James's long-legged men prefer airier, modern spaces and modern furniture, such as the simple yet commodious cane chairs that were enjoying a production boom and a new peak of popularity in America (Johnson 159). The long-legged Basil Ransom from *The Bostonians*, like Christopher Newman from *The American*, has simple tastes, acquired beyond the metropolitan centers of America's northeast. Having little time for Victorian clutter, his conception of material comfort "consisted mainly of the vision of plenty of cigars and brandy and water and newspapers, and a cane-bottomed arm-chair of the right inclination, from which he could stretch his legs" (*NO2* 814). Ralph Touchett, too, retreats to a "great cane chair" to sit with his "long legs extended" (541). Gilbert Osmond (not himself described as long-legged) has a living space whose modernity is linked to its accommodation of this new male physiology. In the New York Edition revision of *The Portrait of a Lady*, Osmond's

Florentine villa mixes tasteful antiques with "modern furniture in which large allowance had been made for a lounging generation; it was to be noticed that all the chairs were deep and well padded" (*PL* 257).

James is here implicitly historicizing the lounger. Long legs belong to a recognizable, emergent generation with new habits, new needs, and a new sense of design. What binds James's lounging men together is class. His "lounging generation" is simply another name for the new bourgeois leisure class—ranging from those living comfortably on white-collar incomes, to those described by the *New York Times* in 1885 as a growing "club-lounging class" of "'income' men"—a mix of businessmen and gentlemen who "indulge more or less in stock speculation" ("Club Life" 6). Most, though not all, of James's long-legged men are bourgeois professionals: Mr. Striker, Waymarsh, and Ransom are lawyers; Densher is a journalist; Mr. Ruck, Christopher Newman, and Newton Winch have won and lost in business and finance; Tony Bream is a banker; and Ralph Touchett briefly worked in his father's bank (where he was given a stool too short for his legs—he preferred to stand). Fenton, finally, is a bourgeois imposter: a penniless con-artist who nonetheless keeps an office in the city. By figuring the leisured bourgeoisie through their long legs, James is signaling that they possess not only a distinct mindset but a new kind of body and an altered relationship with the spaces through which they move. Evoking a form of social evolutionism, James foregrounds the place of the human body in the historical process. The body is both an expression and an agent of history. The long-legged bourgeois is an adaptation to the capitalist economy: primed, like Christopher Newman, to "stretch out and haul in" (*NO1* 545). But long legs also change history: the desire for more stretching-room drives a quiet revolution in manners, furniture, and architecture, soon to make redundant the "agoraphobic Victorian town-houses of the old leisure class" (188).

"To inhabit very large rooms"

The new bourgeois man needed leg room, and hotels could provide it. George Fenton, staking out his rival in the public area of a New York hotel, "stretched his long legs awhile on one of the divans in the hall" (*NO1* 138) and became the first in a long line of Jamesian hotel loungers. Hotels represented a new kind of space for a new kind of body.

The urban commercial hotel was, as A. K. Sandoval-Strausz argues, a distinctly American innovation (9). Taking hold in the Jacksonian era along with newspapers and the railways, the hotel exercized an increasing influence on American social and economic life throughout the nineteenth century. Encoded with the values of American public culture and with American ideas of management, service, and scale, the American hotel model would be exported globally—as James himself attests—influencing hospitality cultures in London and Paris, Rome and Vevey. "[T]he present is more and more the day of the hotel," James writes in *The American Scene*, summarizing the achievements of the American hotel over his lifetime (*CTW* 440). "[W]e have all more or less been educated to [that truth], the world over, by the fruit-bearing action of the American example: in consequence of which it has been opened to us to see still other societies moved by the same irresistible spring and trying, with whatever grace and ease they may bring to the business, to unlearn as many as possible of their old social canons" (440–41). The defining feature of America's urban commercial

hotels—those flagship institutions that "developers and civic leaders parlayed into a story of urban and national progress" (Berger 3)—was their monstrous scale. They were a different organism altogether from older, family-run institutions like inns, taverns, and *pensioni*, which in architectural terms were mere variations on the domestic vernacular (Sandoval-Strausz 20). The commercial hotel's different order of magnitude is what made it, in a very real sense, modern. To build something as big as a hotel necessitated the backing of financiers or joint-stock companies. The management of its multifarious spaces was aided by a rationalized, cellular architectural plan, optimized for profit and control. Its many floors spurred the development of new infrastructure and technologies and the many services offered to guests required a large and hierarchized wage labor force. The commercial hotel's scale, finally, cultivated an impersonal social scene of gazers, loungers, and flirts, of publicity and pecuniary emulation. The result was revolutionary: a corporate enterprise housing and orchestrating a mass spectacle. As James describes New York's old Waldorf-Astoria in *The American Scene*: "here was a conception of publicity *as* the vital medium organized with the authority with which the American genius for organization, put on its mettle, alone could organize it" (*CTW* 43). James recognized in this late work of cultural criticism that size was determinative, that the hotel's atmosphere of immense social possibility was made possible by its immense technical and managerial machinery. He apprehended the hotel as a metaphor for industrial America.

Men flocked to hotels, to their relatively affordable bars and dining halls and to the free lounging zones in their lobbies, piazzas, parlors, and corridors. Implicit and explicit screening by management, especially before the turn of the twentieth century, helped to encode these public areas of hotels as male. The gender disparity was noted by Dickens, Trollope, and the travel writer Isabella Bird during their tours of the country. Indeed, men lounging in hotels were something of a cultural trope. Touring New York's hotels in 1854, Bird notes that "Groups of extraordinary-looking human beings" from "all nations" are "always lounging on the door-steps, smoking, whittling, and reading newspapers" (342). Hotels "are always built on a plan which to a European seems to be most unnecessarily extravagant in space," Trollope writes of his 1861 tour (287). "The visitor enters a great hall by the front door, and almost invariably finds it full of men who are idling about, sitting round on stationary seats, talking in a listless manner, and getting through their time as though the place were a public lounging-room. And so it is. The chances are that not half the crowd are guests at the hotel." When Dickens sent Martin Chuzzlewit to America, he took the opportunity to describe the "immense white edifice" of an American hotel, filled with lounging men:

> There was a wooden gallery or verandah in front, in which it was rather startling, when the train stopped, to behold a great many pairs of boots and shoes, and the smoke of a great many cigars, but no other evidences of human habitation. By slow degrees, however, some heads and shoulders appeared, and connecting themselves with the boots and shoes, led to the discovery that certain gentlemen boarders, who had a fancy for putting their heels where the gentlemen boarders in other countries usually put their heads, were enjoying themselves after their own manner, in the cool of the evening. (349)

As Carolyn Brucken documents, this soft boundary between the lobby and the street intimidated and unsettled some guests. Some worried about propriety. An 1857 editorial in *Harper's Weekly* complained of the "loathsome and contemptible . . . creatures" who "hang about hotel doors and stare at passers-by" (qtd. in Brucken 209). Most large hotels tried to circumvent the threat of lounging men by constructing separate, side ladies' entrances or family entrances, effectively displacing women from the scene (211; Sandoval-Strausz 168). Lounging men in hotels were therefore a known and somewhat suspect phenomena before James began to interrogate their meaning in his work.

James's defining experiences of hotel lounging were in the summer of 1870 when he was commissioned to write sketches on travel and hotel life for the *Nation*. In a piece titled "Saratoga," James discussed the goings-on at Saratoga's "monster" Grand Union Hotel (*CTW* 750), hinting at its strangeness as well as its revolutionary potential. The hotel was encircled by a mile of piazzas—covered veranda-like spaces where chairs were freely arranged and entertainments were organized. This was, apparently, the largest such piazza in the world. It was not picturesque, James writes, but it served its purpose: "that of affording sitting-space in the open air to an immense number of persons" (751). Between the piazza and the street was a "'stoop' of mighty area, which, at most hours of the day and evening, [was] a favoured lounging-place of men" (752). With these gigantic interfaces between civic space and the spaces of private commerce, Saratoga adopted a more democratic model of resort architecture than the increasingly privatized resort of Newport, whose hotels were being pulled down and replaced by villas and cottages. "Throughout the late nineteenth century," writes Jon Sterngass in his study of resort culture, "Americans viewed Saratoga and Newport as archetypes representing conflicting ideals of social life" (182). So James could very easily frame the lounging men as the perfect products of this democratic architecture:

> They suggest to my fancy the swarming vastness—the multifarious possibilities and activities—of our young civilisation. . . . As they sit with their white hats tilted forward, and their chairs tilted back, and their feet tilted up, and their cigars and toothpicks forming various angles with these various lines, I seem to see in their faces a tacit reference to the affairs of a continent. (752)

James signals that he is amongst but apart from the hotel crowd—"I have found, at any rate, a great deal of entertainment in watching them"—while his tone drifts toward irony and gentle disparagement. But as in his fiction, James has to admit that there is something large and compelling in the figure of the American bourgeois who struggles so ferociously for a place in society and who lounges so expansively when that place is won. These are "persons of experience—of a somewhat narrow and monotonous experience certainly, . . . but, at any rate, they have *lived*, in every fibre of the will" (753).

Though James cannot personally identify with the bourgeois world of business, he senses in the scene some momentary fluidity in social relations and a realignment of social manners. The open, horizontal piazza space serves in a limited way to dissolve difference and hierarchy. The burden of class has been loosened here: the

moneyed guests are "lounging with the negro waiters, and the boot-blacks, and the news-vendors" (*CTW* 753), a multi-racial alliance of proletariat and business class, united in leisure rather than work. The moment shows how fragile and fleeting moments of solidarity can emerge from within the everyday. How the everyday "seems, in the diffuseness of its ineffability, to erase difference" (Taussig 259). "This apparent erasure," Michael Taussig writes,

> suggests the trace of a diffuse commonality in the commonweal so otherwise deeply divided, a commonality that is no doubt used to manipulate consensus but also promises the possibility of other sorts of nonexploitative solidarities which, in order to exist at all, will have to at some point be based on a common sense of the everyday and, what is more, the ability to sense other everydaynesses. (259)

For James, the capacity for this kind of interpersonal mingling, anonymous and *en bloc*, is the central innovation of hotel space.

James's description of hotel lounging in "Saratoga" dissolves the difference between person and object, as well as between person and person. The "various lines" of bent limbs mold together with the "various angles" of the stoop, and with the men's tilting toothpicks, hats, and chairs. The men become one with the jagged matter that clutters up the piazza. James built this observation into his fiction. In *The Bostonians*, the "elbowing loungers" in a Boston hotel lobby are wedged into a crowded paragraph—crammed "amid the piled-up luggage" and "the convenient spittoons" (*NO2* 897). The luggage and spittoons are not merely clutter, but are integral to the loungers' identity. They are vessels that contain material signs (precious or abject) of selfhood, in the process of being intermingled—or in the case of luggage, of being piled-up, shuffled, and confused—with the selfhood of others. Identity in the lobby is not contained within the human vessel but is diffused outward into stuff.

The lounging men's relationship to things is, to use Victoria Coulson's word, "sticky." "While women fear and loathe the sticky touch of the abject," argues Coulson, "Jamesian men may find it delightful" (118). Jamesian women "tend to prefer the material culture of the eighteenth century in general and of *Ancien Regime* France in particular," because it "encodes ideas of clarity and control. It speaks of order and hierarchy, of secure structures of meaning in which physical objects loyally serve their human masters" (117). James's men, on the other hand, will often seek out contaminating objects. They flock to furniture that is "soft, padded, absorbing, a great enfolding substantial form whose materiality is inescapable" (122). Lounging, then, is the "archetypal scene of . . . abject masculine sensibility" (118) in James, where men wallow in each other's company while sinking into soft upholstery and a haze of spittle and smoke.

The hotel lounger's relationship to objects and furniture could be described, following Thomas Otten's reading of the Jamesian body, as prosthetic. The lounger's body "clusters accessories around itself and . . . flows into them in a seemingly unbroken continuum of physiology and artifice" (24). The prosthetic, Otten writes, was an important trope for Henry and William James, not only because of its place in American literature and culture (not least Ahab) but because their father had suffered a childhood accident that had left him with an amputated leg and a wooden replace-

ment. Through the trope of the prosthetic, Otten argues, the James brothers began to think about the intimate relationship between the self and the artefact, about how the body can be remade and remodeled and about how the periphery of the body, and the objects it presses against, become tingling extensions or expressions of consciousness. Henry's long-legged lounging men, by stretching themselves out into the world of matter, are manifestations of this prosthetic thinking. Their legs, at the extremity of the self, are both artefactual and sensual. Their legs are bulky, obvious, awkward, wooden, but they also feel, and in some sense think. One late example is Densher in *The Wings of the Dove*, who is said to appear "vague without looking weak—idle without looking empty," attributes that are "the accident, possibly, of his long legs, which were apt to stretch themselves" (*NO3* 248). These are strange qualities to blame on one's legs, but the oddness of the description captures the contradiction of the Jamesian body—in which body parts can be completely disconnected from consciousness, behaving like automated attachments, as well as being entirely central to one's affective makeup. Densher is an "interesting mixture," a "fusion" of biological and industrial metaphors: "He suggested above all, however, that wondrous state of youth in which the elements, the metals more or less precious, are so in fusion and fermentation that the question of the final stamp, the pressure that fixes the value, must wait for comparative coolness." The long-legged man was not the only body type in James that confounded the line between consciousness, corporeality, and the material world. But long-legs help to make visible James's conception of the body's entangled relationship with matter by hyperbolizing that relationship, by making it oversized and dissonant and comic.

Christopher Newman, the eponymous hero of *The American*, represents James's fullest deployment of the American bourgeois body he found in Saratoga. Newman is the corporeal center of *The American*, rather than its central consciousness. His body is constantly on display, outstretched: "[L]ong, lean, and muscular" (*NO1* 515). Newman is first introduced to us "reclining at his ease on the great circular divan" in the Louvre, "with his head thrown back and his legs outstretched" (515). The novel describes, no fewer than ten times, his practice of sticking his hands in his pockets and "stretch[ing] his long legs" (138). James frames this habit as a manifestation of interiority: "He performed the movement which was so frequent with him, and which was always a sort of symbol of his taking mental possession of a scene—he extended his legs" (593). But in this early novel, it is the body that elaborately speaks and symbolizes, while the interior remains quiet and inaccessible.

James sets Newman's malleable body against the solid habits and habitats of a dying French regime. Newman looks incredulously at the houses of the Faubourg St. Germain with their front elevations "as impassive and as suggestive of the concentration of privacy within as the blank walls of Eastern seraglios" (*NO1* 555). He prefers an American "ideal of grandeur" exemplified by "a splendid façade diffusing its brilliancy outward too, irradiating hospitality." Newman's ideal is the commercial hotel. If Newman squirms in drawing-rooms, he is at ease in lobbies. He "lounged through Belgium and Holland and the Rhineland" and finds himself "addicted to standing about in the vestibules and porticos of inns" (575). Once in Paris, Newman takes pleasure sitting "in the court of the Grand Hotel . . . until two o'clock in the morning, watching the coming and going, and the people knocking about" (531). Newman's architectural ideal is explained in a section dealing with the purchase of his apartment in Paris:

> He possessed a talent for stretching his legs which quite dispensed with
> adventitious facilities. His idea of comfort was to inhabit very large rooms,
> have a great many of them, and be conscious of their possessing a number
> of patented mechanical devices—half of which he should never have oc-
> casion to use. The apartments should be light and brilliant and lofty; he
> had once said that he liked rooms in which you wanted to keep your hat
> on. (*NO1* 588)

What Newman is looking for is an apartment that functions like an American hotel:
uncluttered with personal effects and wired up with technological novelties, an event-
space as well as a living-space, as big and anonymous as a lobby. Newman likes these
kinds of spaces because they are open and light but also because they subtly loosen the
influence of the conventions he finds so oppressive in Parisian society. In their large-
ness and emptiness, these spaces lack the familiar signals and structures (vestibules,
nooks, internal doors) that served to determine and solidify Victorian manners. In
making you feel like "you wanted to keep your hat on" indoors, they denaturalize
the relationship between established codes of behavior and the built environment.

In a more sophisticated pairing of two body types than the pasteboard hero
and villain of *Watch and Ward*, Newman gradually forms a bond with the faded
aristocrat Valentin de Bellegarde, who has, compared to Newman's elongated form,
an outdated kind of body: "He was below the middle height, and robust and agile
in figure" (602). Furthermore, Bellegarde's body seems doomed to be treated badly
by the advance of time. He "had a mortal dread of the robustness overtaking the
agility; he was afraid of growing stout; he was too short, as he said, to afford a
belly" (602–03). When the French aristocrat visits Newman's lobby-like apartment
on Boulevard Haussmann, he is hesitant and overawed, chortling nervously at his
surroundings and uncertain about whether or not he can smoke: "Surely, I may not
smoke here. . . . It is too large. It is like smoking in a ball-room, or a church" (601).
It's a scene of the old order encountering the new: an aristocrat inside the bourgeois
architecture of Haussmann's Paris. Newman insists that Bellegarde must smoke and
insists that he make as much noise as he likes: "Laugh as loud as you please; I like
to see my visitors cheerful" (602). He demonstrates the proper way to inhabit a
cavernous room in his typical style: "'Well, here I am as large as life,' said Newman,
extending his legs." For James, such modern bourgeois interiors may be a little crass
(Newman's apartment is "gilded from floor to ceiling a foot thick" [588][2]) but they
are also intriguing: allowing masculinity to uncoil, to fill the void left by tradition
and manners with tobacco vapors, long legs, and laughter.

If Newman's body suits the new age, how did he come to possess it? Is his body
manufactured—a by-product of, or adaptation to, American capitalism? Or is it a
natural, inherited, instinctual American body (the "lean, sallow, angular Yankee of
tradition" [*CTW* 752]), suggestive of America's natural advantage in commercial
affairs? The metaphor of rubber and elasticity that James associates with Newman's
stretching body suggests both possibilities. Rubber, writes David Trotter, was a sub-
stance "at once ancient and modern, exotic and mundane" (150), a natural plastic
from the Brazilian and African tropics that, through chemical alteration and industrial
manufacture, "variously coated, supported, and interlined the miracles of modern
engineering" in the nineteenth century (151). The hybridity of rubber—"the combina-

tion it encodes of the raw and the chemically cooked"—made it, Trotter argues, "the focus of a compelling techno-primitivism" in Modernist culture. In *The American*'s pre-Modernist moment at the beginning of the second industrial revolution, Newman stands as neither natural nor manufactured but as a techno-primitive hybrid. Newman is said to have emerged from "the elastic soil of the West" (*NO1* 532), and it is in this mythical American "West" where the natural and industrial connotations of rubber become confused. Trying to impress the Bellegarde family, assembled to assess his suitability as a marriage prospect, Newman begins an ill-fated story about his sister:

> "One of them is married to the owner of the largest india-rubber house in the West."
>
> "Ah, you make houses also of india-rubber?" inquired the marquise.
>
> "You can stretch them as your family increases," said young Madame de Bellegarde, who was muffling herself in a long white shawl.
>
> Newman indulged in a burst of hilarity, and explained that the house in which his brother-in-law lived was a large wooden structure, but that he manufactured and sold india-rubber on a colossal scale. (646)

The Bellegardes, adopting a tone of "vague urbanity," treat Newman as at once an exotic colonial subject, building strange little houses out of strange little materials, and a hyper-modern American capitalist. Their moment of willful cultural confusion conjures the image of a high-tech western homestead, encoded simultaneously with the tropics and with the factory, constructed with natural materials yet capable of synthetic transformations. The moment reveals how Newman is doubly dubious for the Bellegardes, both for his primitivism and for his technologies. Yet the marquise's vision of an *unheimlich* rubberized log cabin strangely befits the eponymous American, whose elastic form is so often in conflict with the inelastic House of Bellegarde and the inelastic domestic architecture of Europe. Through the surreal juxtapositions of joke-logic or dream-logic, the Bellegardes find a way to comprehend Newman's hybrid, prostheticized body.

"I am not a courier"

The leg-stretching hotel lounger played an equally interesting role at the margins of James's early fiction. In "An International Episode," the traveling Englishmen at the center of the tale peer curiously into a hotel lobby and see "a couple of hundred men sitting on divans along a great marble-paved corridor, with their legs stretched out" (*CS* 329). *The Bostonians* is rife with anonymous loungers, including those in Ransom's little Cape Cod hotel ("Local worthies, of a vague identity, used to lounge there. . . . They tipped back their chairs against the wall, seldom spoke" [*NO2* 1122]), and in a large Boston hotel, seen at twilight ("Behind great plates of glass the interior of the hotels became visible, with marble-paved lobbies, white with electric lamps, and columns, and Westerners on divans stretching their legs" [1197]). But it is the lounger as choric background figure in "Daisy Miller" that demonstrates why James began to consider this body type to be disruptive to novelistic form, as well as to the social scene. The lounger's very anonymity turns out to be contaminative, threatening to collapse the boundary between the peripheral and the central in his text.

James shifted his emphasis from the masculine toward feminine subjectivity after *Roderick Hudson* and *The American*. Even before this shift, however, James was sketching out a future novel with a heroine at its center and the lounger as her backdrop. When James considered the lounger in his ethnography of Newport and Saratoga, and "dream[ed] momentarily of a great American novel," he doubted such an indistinct figure could sustain a narrative on his own (*CTW* 762–63). Narrative would emerge instead from the singular and the self-contained. Women, who James considered to be the socially and aesthetically dominant force in hotel space, assumed that role:

> You are struck, to begin with, at the hotels, by the numerical superiority of the women; then, I think, by their personal superiority. It is incontestably the case that in appearance, in manner, in grace, and completeness of aspect, American women surpass their husbands and brothers; the relation being reversed among some of the nations of Europe. (752)

In their "superiority" and "completeness," the women stand detached from the crowd: resplendent, iconographic, and alone.[3] In his account, James separates women by consigning them to a separate paragraph of analysis. Once introduced, the magnificent singularity of feminine self-fashioning begins to corrode the masculine performance of collective ease:

> She walks more or less of a queen, however, each uninitiated nobody. She often has, in dress, an admirable instinct of elegance and even of what the French call "chic." The instinct occasionally amounts to a sort of passion; the result then is wonderful. You look at the coarse brick walls, the rusty iron posts of the piazza, at the shuffling negro waiters, the great tawdry steamboat-cabin of a drawing-room—you see the tilted ill-dressed loungers on the steps—and you finally regret that a figure so exquisite should have so vulgar a setting. (753)

It's as if storm clouds have shrouded the piazza and everything is seen through murky light: the open spaces have been hemmed with coarse brick walls, the piazza has rusted, the waiters are once again burdened by work, the drawing-room is seasickly, and the loungers have grown more disheveled. When set in relief against the charismatic presence of hotel women, the lounger abruptly becomes a vulgar presence. Lounging men and striding women here represent two directly opposed forms of subjectivity. Where loungers foster interpersonal identities, hotel women, James suggests, are not contaminated by the crowd, despite being comfortable with crowds. Their aspiration, their expression of freedom, is to rise above the mess of the merely common: a "democratisation of elegance" for those who have enjoyed "neither the advantages of a careful education nor the privileges of an introduction to society." They seek to break out of their constrictive class position through the performance of a grander self. A heroine such as this, James decided—"infinitely realistic and yet neither a schoolmistress nor an outcast" (763)—could galvanize a great social novel, a new kind of social novel:

You feel the impertinence of your old reminiscences of English and French novels, and of the dreary social order in which privacy was the presiding genius and women arrayed themselves for the appreciation of the few. The crowd, the tavern-loungers, the surrounding ugliness and tumult and license, constitute the social medium of the young lady you are so inconsistent as to admire; she is dressed for publicity. (753–54)

James sketches out the gendered roots of an archetypal narrative of consumer capitalism that will persist beyond Greta Garbo's star turn in *Grand Hotel* (1932). At its heart is an encounter between figure and setting, individual and crowd, stars and bit players, where the background is defined by masculine tumult and the foreground by feminine staginess in a dialectic of watching and being watched. This dynamic became the basis for "Daisy Miller," which plays out an unspoken conflict between anonymous loungers and singular women in a Swiss hotel.

"Daisy Miller" opens in Vevey on Lake Geneva, but the resort town is undergoing a transformation, and the rise of a flashy hotel culture and the decline of the Swiss *pension* are presented as a kind of American conquest: "it may be said, indeed, that Vevey assumes at this period some of the characteristics of an American watering place. There are sights and sounds which evoke a vision, an echo, of Newport and Saratoga" (*CT* 141). Daisy Miller and Frederick Winterbourne, two Americans staying in the same hotel, have arranged a flirtatious (and, according to the rules of the game in Europe, frankly improper) outing to the Castle of Chillon, a popular tourist spot across the lake. The Castle reverberates in the text as a symbol of democratic rebellion, recalling Byron's "The Prisoner of Chillon." Daisy appears to be the embodiment of these democratic energies: she is keen on the public steamer, for instance, while Winterbourne is the kind of man who prefers to travel by private carriage. Before their journey, Winterbourne waits for Daisy in their hotel lobby. This scene is important precisely because it is brief and interstitial. Nothing of narrative consequence happens, leaving room for the interstitial practices or "distracted vision" (Taussig 261) of everyday life—waiting, lounging, watching.[4] The scene stages a triangular encounter between Winterbourne, Daisy, and the lobby loungers, each with their own forms of "posture, movement, and space-holding" (Upton 719). The scene defines the central conflict of the tale as a struggle between three forms of everydayness—each inflected with gender and class—played out in shared public space:

He waited for her in the large hall of the hotel, where the couriers, the servants, the foreign tourists, were lounging about and staring. It was not the place he would have chosen, but she had appointed it. She came tripping downstairs, buttoning her long gloves, squeezing her folded parasol against her pretty figure, dressed in the perfection of a soberly elegant travelling-costume. Winterbourne was a man of imagination and, as our ancestors used to say, of sensibility; as he looked at her dress and, on the great staircase, her little rapid, confiding step, he felt as if there were something romantic going forward. He could have believed he was going to elope with her. He passed out with her among all the idle people that were assembled there; they were all looking at her very hard; she had begun to chatter as soon as she joined him. (*CT* 167)

For John Carlos Rowe, Daisy's "openness and social gregariousness have a democratic aura," and her ease amongst the loungers hints at her "identification with some sort of populist solidarity, albeit left undeveloped in 'Daisy Miller'" (524). The scene, he argues, unites a bourgeois woman with proletarian servants and bourgeois foreigners, suggesting "one way James imagined how groups differently marginalized in different eras might take a historically long view that would allow them to build effective coalitions." The key to Rowe's argument is that Daisy forges an unconscious bond with the easy-going loungers—that she, in effect, "fraternizes with people from the working class" (523). Daisy, however, merely performs in front of the gathered crowd, using their anonymity as a mirror for her own star status. While the diverse men have formed a temporary coalition through their everyday habits, Daisy is not part of it. In a novella dotted with images of encirclement and closed social circles, and culminating in a scene in the Roman Colosseum, Daisy finds herself persistently surrounded by an amorphous network of lounging men, whose voyeurism and fantasizing begin to circulate in the form of malicious gossip. By the end of the novella in Daisy's hotel in Rome, "everyone is talking about her" (*CT* 186), there is an "exchange of jokes" about her "between the porter and the cab-driver" (204), and "a smile goes round among all the servants when a gentleman comes and asks for Miss Miller" (186). The figure of Daisy activates a caustic misogyny always implicit in the exclusive circle of male loungers.

What actually seems to be happening in the lobby is a conflict between the anonymous and the named. As in "Saratoga," James's idea of a hotel general public is male. Between their "lounging" and "staring" and Daisy's "tripping" and "chatter[ing]" stands Winterbourne (167). Blank and formless, Winterbourne is a mediating figure through which the events are focalized. His eyes scan Daisy with desire ("squeezing her folded parasol against her pretty figure") while glancing with revulsion at the loungers ("they were all looking at her very hard"). The reason the loungers seem so much less exuberant and more threatening than elsewhere in James (their aimless "lounging about" and blank "staring" suggesting impassivity, boredom, and judgment) is that Winterbourne is actively trying to repel them, to distinguish his own lustful stare from the lustful stare of the loungers, and to elevate himself above the status of *just another man*. This problem of good manners or good form becomes a more general problem of novelistic form. Winterbourne's self-proclaimed innocence regarding his relations with Daisy relies on him playing the part of a major character, and not just one more "gentleman" who "comes and asks for Miss Miller" (186). The presence of the blank loungers—a promiscuous mix of workers and foreigners like Winterbourne—threatens to drag Winterbourne to the bottom of a murky pond of anonymity.

Winterbourne's fear of becoming a minor character is amplified by the significant presence of "couriers" (167), as well as servants and tourists, in the crowd of loungers in the lobby. These couriers are the unnamed doubles of a more significant courier in the novella: Eugenio, who works for the Miller family. Eugenio, wielding a proper name, "superb whiskers," "a velvet morning-coat," "a brilliant watch-chain" (153), and an insufficiently deferential attitude, is an unusual kind of servant. More potently for Winterbourne, Eugenio is "tall" and sizes up Winterbourne "from head to foot." Eugenio not only organizes the Millers' itinerary and luggage but effectively assumes the role of patriarch over a fatherless family. He uses hotel space to fashion

himself as a major character. Mrs. Costello, Winterbourne's aunt, disparages Eugenio for his presumption:

> They treat the courier like a familiar friend—like a gentleman. I shouldn't wonder if he dines with them. Very likely they have never seen a man with such good manners, such fine clothes, so like a gentleman. He probably corresponds to the young lady's idea of a Count. He sits with them in the garden, in the evening. I think he smokes. (156)

"Eugenio" nonetheless still bears the anonymous designation of "the courier." He is both a character and a reproducible, exchangeable embodiment of a social and narrative function. His subjectivity is that of the lounger: mutable, intermingled, and socially indistinct. Yet, for all his magnificence and handsomeness, there are numerous men in "Daisy Miller" who look and act like him. There is Giovanelli, Daisy's Roman admirer, who is significant enough to be given a name, yet who also seems like a replication: "He smiled and bowed and showed his white teeth, he curled his moustaches and rolled his eyes, and performed all the proper functions of a handsome Italian at an evening party" (189). There are several other nameless admirers, such that every time Daisy attends a party she seems to bring along a different "gentleman with a good deal of manner and a wonderful moustache" (172). (Winterbourne imagines Daisy permanently "surrounded by half-a-dozen wonderful moustaches.") Given the absence of Mr. Miller and the removal of any natural claim to patriarchal authority, the men of "Daisy Miller" are constantly trying out and exchanging roles, performing more or less plausible impersonations of a patriarch. Accordingly, the multitude of suitors begin to blur together with Eugenio, not only because Giovanelli and the courier are financially interlinked (Eugenio introduced Giovanelli to Daisy, and if they marry "the courier will come in for a magnificent commission" [194]) but also because "the courier continues to be the most *intime*" (171) of all of Daisy's intimate acquaintances: the moustache she loves best. Mrs. Costello is insistent on this point, and her insinuations of scandal go beyond the suggestion that common men should know their place. The subtext of her horror is that at any time any of the bewhiskered men could stand in as Daisy's father, servant, or lover.

These men are dangerous for Winterbourne because they embody a flexible, comingled form of male subjectivity through which servants, bourgeois gentlemen or Counts, minor characters or major characters, all look the same: an identity that is anonymous and interchangeable yet also charismatic and scene-stealing. Winterbourne, on the other hand, lacks a compelling identity or the ability to replicate one. He has no self-fashioned magnificence, as Eugenio and Giovanelli and Daisy do. He is barely even described, appearing as a blind spot in a text overflowing with descriptive, ethnographic details. He moves, too, differently than others in the text. Where other men lounge and lean (we first see Giovanelli leaning in a louche manner against a tree; he is said to harbour "far-stretching intentions" [181]), and Daisy appears in perpetual motion with a rapid, tripping step ("If I didn't walk I should expire," she says [183]), Winterbourne is repeatedly accused by Daisy of being "stiff": "I noticed you were as stiff as an umbrella the first time I saw you" (199). The phallic image (in the New York Edition, Daisy's line is changed to "I noticed you've no more 'give' than a ramrod the first time ever I saw you" [*ST* 68]) represents Winterbourne's masculin-

ity as complete, self-contained, and inelastic. His is a body stiffened by manners, a body that appears "formal" (*CT* 165) and "quaint" (176), resisting the untidiness and looseness of human instinct. Winterbourne is an aristocratic idler rather than a bourgeois lounger, more aligned with Valentin de Bellegarde than his compatriot Christopher Newman. He "linger[s]" (167) rather than lounges. He does not mingle, or sink into deep couches. He does not wish to immerse himself, or become contaminated by Europe. His rhetoric of innocence regarding his relations with Daisy is a rejection of the stickiness of social relations.

It is Winterbourne's umbrella-like stiffness or lack of "give" that puts him at risk of erasure. It reduces him to a flat plane or a black line on a page. Paradoxically, the character with whom we spend the most time is somehow also the most invisible and the most two-dimensional. The stretchable male body of the lounger, meanwhile, is able to stride into the center of the text—his occupation of space suggesting mass and density and dimensionality, even if his personality doesn't appear properly three-dimensional. Like Valentin de Bellegarde, Winterbourne risks becoming corporeally outdated and being overtaken by the elastic bourgeois body. Observe, for instance, how passive Winterbourne becomes, how he seems to disappear, while in the company of Daisy and while encircled by loungers:

> As the day was splendid, however, and the concourse of vehicles, walkers, and loungers numerous, the young Americans found their progress much delayed. This fact was highly agreeable to Winterbourne, in spite of his consciousness of his singular situation. The slow-moving, idly-gazing Roman crowd bestowed much attention upon the extremely pretty young foreign lady who was passing through it upon his arm; and he wondered what on earth had been in Daisy's mind when she proposed to expose herself, unattended, to its appreciation. (178)

Winterbourne finds himself in a "singular situation" that in this context seems like a diminution, a realization that he is single and apart. Unlike Daisy, he is unwilling and unable to play the role of the splendid grandee for the crowd, while his efforts at playing the splendid suitor to Daisy have also failed. He is, in this scene, reduced to a courier, a minor character: "His own mission, to her sense, apparently, was to consign her to the hands of Mr. Giovanelli" (178). Winterbourne complacently acquiesces. He fades—a mere arm to thread a hand through—while Daisy (the star) and the crowd (her audience) visually expand, filled out with strings of adjectives and adverbs (the "slow-moving, idly-gazing Roman crowd," and the "extremely pretty young foreign lady") that delay the forward movement of the sentence, just as the crowd delays their stroll. Even Winterbourne's narrative authority—his control over the movement and tempo of the story—must yield to the tempo created by the abundant physicality of Daisy and the loungers of Rome.

It is Eugenio, the self-made major character, who delivers the strongest attack not only on Winterbourne's presumption of innocence but on his presumption of centrality: "The courier stood looking at Winterbourne, offensively. The young man, at least, thought his manner of looking an offense to Miss Miller; it conveyed an imputation that she "'picked up' acquaintances" (154). The meaning that Winterbourne chooses to take from the incident is that Eugenio believes him to be another of Daisy's

acquaintances—a minor player. This supposed insult informs the later scene in the lobby, where a whole group of lounging couriers stare at Winterbourne and Daisy. The lobby scene becomes an echo chamber of Eugenio's rebuke and Winterbourne's guilt. In the way it mirrors, duplicates, and disembodies Eugenio's stare, it is also a reminder of how individuality is created and dissipated amongst the loungers, of the way couriers can become Eugenios, and Winterbournes can become "acquaintances" in a hotel crowd. "Daisy Miller" asks us to question the difference between the major and the minor in a world where authority is an effect produced by those with a brilliant mimetic capacity and a few material trinkets. "I am not a courier" (156), Winterbourne oddly protests to his aunt, yet this is a tale where men, like hotel rooms, are indistinguishable and interchangeable. The monstrous commercial hotel and the elastic male body confound the stable hierarchies upon which Winterbourne relies.

"Daisy Miller" appears to mark a shift in James's work away from the paradigmatic long male body of Christopher Newman toward the feminine. Yet by dislodging the lounger from the center of his work, James paradoxically reaffirms his interest in this body type and this form of everydayness. That interest always lay in the long male body's anonymity, in its entangled relations with other bodies and other objects, and in "Daisy Miller" this anonymity is more pronounced and more dangerous than ever. James introduces the inelastic Winterbourne as an agent of containment, yet his capacity to stand apart and stand firm is strongly called into question as the tale unfolds. Indeed, what "Daisy Miller" points to is the slow yet inevitable defeat of Winterbourne and his kind: the decline of the rigid aristocratic idler and his rhetoric of innocence and the irrepressibility of the elastic bourgeois lounger, who—no matter how minor he appears in James's fiction—will nonetheless find a way to reclaim its center.

NOTES

[1]In *A Small Boy and Others*, James recalls donning an outfit inherited from his older cousin, Johnny, for a fancy-dress party. He is too small for the costume—a silk, beribboned version of a French stevedore's outfit. He stood "short of my proper form by no less than half a leg" and feels he has "sadly dishonoured, or at least abbreviated, my model." It "would have seemed, I conceive, a less monstrous act to attempt to lengthen my legs than to shorten Johnny's *culotte*" (*SB* 191).

[2]James also described the Paris Opéra as "gilded all over a foot thick" (*PS* 11). Newman's apartment is clearly meant to typify Second Empire bourgeois architecture.

[3]Women were perceived as "objects within the panorama, framed by the hotel setting" and "an essential element of the luxury promised by these first-class hotels" (Brucken 218).

[4]Taussig makes a connection between Walter Benjamin's discussion of distracted vision and the concept of everyday life. The everyday, Taussig writes, "includes much that is not sense so much as sensuousness, an embodied and somewhat automatic 'knowledge' that functions like peripheral vision, not studied contemplation, a knowledge that is imageric and sensate rather than ideational" (259).

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