Failed to Feel It: Stoniness in Henry James's The Wings of the Dove

By Diana Leca

Kate Croy is hard to like. In critical appraisals of The Wings of the Dove, she has been called dreadful, diabolical, vindictive (James's own contribution), an avaricious vampire, and--from Michael Wood's Schadenfreude-inspiring list--"greedy, ghoulish, shabby, disgrace, and swindling" (33). As one early reader of the novel asked: "Who could feel any desire for even a fictional acquaintance with such persons?" (Cornelius 6). The dream of sympathetic attachment, after all, remains alluring. While it is unlikely that many novel theorists today would crusade for its centrality, most continue to operate quietly under its assumptions. In my reading, Kate Croy elicits such a strong response from readers not because she has too many--or the bad sort--of feelings but because she has too few. E. M. Forster famously condemned James's method of "pruning" emotion in Aspects of the Novel: "[James's] characters, beside being few in number, are constructed on very stingy lines. They are incapable of fun, of rapid motion, of carnality, and of nine-tenths of heroism. [. . .] Even their sensations are limited" (143). For many of James's contemporaries, his late novels were not simply shy or reticent--affective states with a scintilla of charm--but emotionally stony.

We would do well not to shelve these complaints too swiftly. How supple, in fact, are our theories of reading when faced with figures who are not only inscrutable but also indifferent or hard of heart? Can thinking more carefully about stoniness as a literary and aesthetic property intervene in current debates about styles of reading? My conviction that it ought to is reinforced by a small but emerging set of critics investigating diminished or flat affect in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction. In her study on insensibility, Wendy Anne Lee argues that "failures of feeling" are bound up with, rather than incidental to, the historical development of the novel as a discrete genre, persistently testing its limit points. As she puts it in relation to figures like Fanny Price in Mansfield Park: "Characters who cannot or will not generate the feelings demanded of them (in stories oriented towards, but not restricted to, conjugality) upset the terms of subjectivity offered by the novel and its ontological design of investigating feelings" ("Feeling" 6).[1]

But does hardness offer any analytical purchase on The Wings of the Dove? On first blush, it appears to be an unpromising category for a discussion of the types of feelings and formal properties particular to James's late period. That stoniness tends to jar with contemporary interpretations of the novel, however, is part of the reason I am inclined to explore

it here. This is less from an impish will to upend the received narrative and more from a sense that current figurations of The Wings of the Dove continue to miss something of its unsettling rigidity and coolness.[2] James's novel is invested not so much in the sentimental nuances of specific subjects than in exploring what Rei Terada calls the "opalescent end" of feeling (14, emphasis mine). Stoniness is not a quirky or ancillary feature of James's late novel; rather, it is integral to its structural shape, affective texture, character investigations, and plot construction. In what follows, I attempt to show that rather than stymying creativity, states of unfeeling and associated lapidary elements like imperviousness and fixity are built into The Wings of the Dove at various levels of its compositional process.

The Wings of the Dove opens with a bitter pas-de-deux. Kate Croy and her father, Lionel, fume, plead, stare hard at the street below, stare hard at each other. When her father displays a rare sliver of sentiment, Kate is described as being left cold: "she cared, however, not a straw for his embarrassment--feeling how little, on her own part, she was moved by charity" (7). To be unmoved has of course more than one sense: literally, it means to be inert. Catherine Malabou's definition here is instructive: "Inertia names the resistance of heavy objects to any movement imposed on them" (177). This sense can take on a

moral tinge--namely, to be “magnificently firm” in the face of one’s purpose, as Wood judges Kate to be (21). In this regard, even the ropey Lionel Croy has the “sense that she was not to be hustled” (WD 16)--a word meaning both to be pushed, jostled, knocked about, and, even in James’s time, to be “sold to aggressively.” Kate Croy, in other words, is fixed in place, unbending.

On the other hand, to be unmoved suggests partial or complete insensibility. In the Oxford English Dictionary, we find that to be insensible is to be “incapable or destitute of feeling or emotion; emotionless, callous, apathetic.” With regard to the most obdurate figure in American letters, Melville’s scrivener Bartleby, Lee argues that such a stance often elicits readerly contempt. The general critical consensus, she writes, is that “[i]f an object fails to move someone, it is the fault of the unmoved someone. To be unaffected by an object turns out to be against it, to be full of hard feelings and not just empty of all feelings” (Insensibility 15). When, in the opening scene, Kate fails to be touched by her father’s emotional vulnerability--“caring not a straw for his embarrassment”--her firmness prompts Lionel Croy to proclaim exactly this: that his daughter is one of a new breed of “hard, hollow people” (12).

In The Wings of the Dove, the epithet “hard” is applied to

Kate with Homeric insistence. Here is a select list:

She stared into the tarnished glass too hard indeed to be staring at her beauty alone. (WD 2)

she saw herself as handsome, no doubt, but as hard, and felt herself as clever but as cold. . . . (42)

the signs of her clear self-consciousness, were all in the line of her slightly hard, but scarce the less graceful extravagance. (200)

Kate looked at him hard again, disappointed at his want of consistency. (232)

He was to bury Kate's so signal snub, and also the hard law she had now laid on him. . . . (392)

she had turned her hard fine eyes from one to the other. . . . (457)

Given the adhesive quality of this attribute, it is not surprising that Kate emerges from the 1907 preface as a “block.” Her hardness suggests to James a metaphor for characterization more generally, whereby literary figures are conceived as “solid blocks of wrought material, squared to the sharp edge, as to have weight and mass and carrying power” (WD xxxviii). The preface describes the process of gradually building up Kate’s consciousness brick-by-brick “for the load little by little to be laid upon it” (xxxix). J. P. Mowbray, an early critic, found this method appalling:

> This is the true test of Mr. James's progeny. Do they indeed live and move and have their being? Nothing can be more beautiful or more wondrous in the experience of literary genius than that first throb of independence in his assembled vessels of clay. They begin to palpitate and assert themselves. (Gard 330)

But this never occurs in late James, Mowbray argues, because the people are so insensible they might as well be dead. If such inert characters are so alarming, it is partly because emotion itself has long been wedded to movement. Since antiquity, as Terada affirms, the prevailing trope organizing our understanding of emotion has been expression: "something lifted from a depth to the surface" (11). She cites James R. Averill's useful etymological note: "The term 'emotion' stems from the Latin e + movere, which originally meant 'to move out,' 'to migrate,' or 'to transport an object.'" But in Wings, feelings are more apt to get stuck, refusing to surface and circulate, thereby retaining a disquieting illegibility.

Exempting a glimpse into her grief--"Sometimes, alone, I've to smother my shrieks when I think of my poor mother"--Kate remains hard to read (WD 51). With her sister, she is "civil, but mechanical" (28). With her father, she is "absent, distant"--a picture of "detachment" (15, 16). Early in their friendship, Milly Theale, Kate's friend and later mark, muses:

She should never know how Kate truly felt about anything such a one as Milly Theale should give her to feel. Kate would never--and not from ill-will, nor from duplicity, but from a sort of failure of common terms--reduce it to such a one's comprehension or put it within her convenience. (136)

The meaning seems relatively straightforward: Milly doesn't know how Kate feels. And yet the prose is heaped with negations--"never," "not," "nor"--as well as with words connoting negative psychic experience: "ill-will," "duplicity," "failure." The effect of such insistent negation--along with the use of a periodic sentence that repeats the problem of Kate's obstinacy for good measure ("Kate would never . . . reduce it to [Milly's] comprehension or put it within her convenience")--reveals a tactfully masked irritation. The tone, in other words, pushes against the exposition. Although Milly asserts that it is not from ill-will or duplicity that Kate "failed to feel it," the passage--a free indirect-ish amalgam of Milly and James--slyly suggests the challenge posed by the subject who keeps mum. It is not simply that Kate lacks private feeling--whatever that might be--but also that she seems to show little fellow-feeling.

In contemporary parlance, we might say that she has an attitude problem. James's notebooks testify that as early as 1894 he conceived of Densher's response to Kate's "whole attitude in the matter"--of swindling Milly--to be "revolt[ing]" (CN 106,

emphasis mine). Other critics seem to agree. Here is Robert Pippin: “I don’t think there is any question that James is treating Kate’s attitude as wrong” (177). For I. A. Richards, “attitude” was a key component of the literary category he called “feeling.” A cousin of “tone,” which Richards describes as a speaker’s “attitude to his listener” (182), feeling is a more general orientation toward a state of affairs: “We have an attitude towards it, some special direction, bias, or accentuation of interest towards it, some personal flavour” (181). As Sianne Ngai points out in her discussion of Richards, in contemporary common speech we often use expressions such as “That kind of [insert unstated but implied emotional quality] attitude will get you nowhere” (42).[3] Ngai’s square brackets do useful analytical work; as a literary category, “attitude” can hardly be divorced from feeling, but what exactly that “unstated but implied emotional quality” is is more difficult to isolate with accuracy.

This inscrutability interests me here. Over the course of James’s novel, a series of putatively related inscriptions circle Kate Croy: she is “firm” (WD 200), “clear” (10), “prodigious” (209), “strong” (229), “straight” (211), “merciless” (197), “subtle” (221), and “sharp” [“my cleverness, I assure you, has grown infernal” (225)]. Despite seeming to acquire an associative logic when catalogued, such descriptors

do not quite accrete into a coherent psychological profile. Kate is “sharp,” but is she angry? She is “merciless,” but is she bitter? In fact, these “bricks” don’t really “build up” to anything. This failure to mineralize, so to speak, suggests that aside from being both inscrutable and impervious at the level of the story, Kate Croy may also be “compositionally vulnerable.” I borrow this term from Alex Woloch to evoke a certain susceptibility at the level of narrative figuration (252).

As early as October 1903, in fact, critics caught a glitch in Kate’s rendering. Oliver Elton argued that the reader has to work too hard to “reconcile” the early picture of Kate--a woman “of sympathy, full of heart”--with the “later piracies and perversities” of a “predatory creature” (Gard 354). According to Elton, James’s efforts to “cover any violence in the transition” through a shift in perspective to Densher is unsuccessful. The 1907 preface seems to address this criticism by claiming that Kate-as-block should be approached as multisided. James contends that he carefully positions his characters in order to “assert their fullness and roundness, their power to revolve, so that they have sides and backs, parts in the shade as true as parts in the sun” (WD xxxviii). Despite the many “bricks” James used to make her character cohere and his insistence of her 3-D nature, Kate’s firmness risks a bathetic fall into flatness. From my perspective, however, her compositional vulnerability

has less to do with a lack of multi-dimensionality, and still less with James's supposed failure to "reconcile" the two pictures of Kate. Instead, it is constitutive of a generative hardness in late-Jamesian characterisation--one that both beckons and blocks the reader's curiosity for contact.

Stoniness, however, seems ipso facto un-generative. It threatens the novel's capacity to create fellow feeling and sympathetic attachments, as we saw in the Milly episode above. At the risk of hyperbole, it appears to threaten the whole social order, too. Two years before the publication of The Wings of the Dove, Henri Bergson made this point in an essay on laughter. To be rigid in body and mind for Bergson is not merely funny, at least not in a banal way. Rather, a tendency to associate rigidity with "eccentricity" bespeaks how perturbing "inelasticity of character" can be for both individuals and institutional forces (19). Laughter, as he understands it, is the "corrective" to a fixity in thought and feeling, the disciplinary means by which a society "obtain[s] from its members the greatest possible degree of elasticity and sociability" (20). By its means, hard, stiff subjects are put back into the orbit of social recognition. (Or so the story goes.)

Kate's rigidity doesn't strike me as funny, or not exactly, but her stoniness does place her in a precarious position. Milly

Theale is perhaps the only character in Wings to posit a link between Kate's unfeelingness and what we might call the novel's social frame. Qualifying the suspicion that Kate is "brutal" (adj. "inhuman; coarsely cruel"), Milly considers that:

> Kate wasn't brutally brutal--which Milly had hitherto benightedly supposed the only way; she wasn't even aggressively so, but rather indifferently, defensively and, as might be said, by the habit of anticipation. [. . .] [A]nd Milly could quite see, after a little, how such instincts might become usual in a world in which dangers abounded. There were more dangers, clearly, round about Lancaster Gate than one suspected in New York or could dream of in Boston (WD 130).

Here, as elsewhere in the novel, Lancaster Gate acts as a metonym for a milieu promoting risky ambition and fast-paced upward mobility. It is not insignificant that Milly understands the state of being "indifferently" hard-hearted as the appropriate response to the dangers attending London bourgeois life at the cusp of the new century. More usually, this period is associated with states of nervous sensitivity, or what Richards calls "touchiness of the feelings" (258). Sianne Ngai and Tom Lutz have done convincing work on how affects such as anxiety and neurasthenia, respectively, index the cataclysmic pressures on subjects during millennial transition. Recall, in

fact, that Lutz pinpoints 1903 as “the year the modern world began” (18).[4] As James’s novel makes clear, however, the fin-de-siècle middle classes were equally beset by states of unfeeling (apathy, hardness, bitterness). That is, rather than being too keyed up, many were in fact “nerveless,” as one of James’s reviewers put it (Gard 322). Capturing this struggle between feeling and unfeeling, The Wings of the Dove might be said to anticipate by some years avant-garde modernism’s fascination with depersonalization and with the hard, cold, and machinic.[5]

Though I might be close to it, I am not quite suggesting that characters in Wings are besieged by material conditions to the point of near-automaticity. Indeed, if a character for James is a stone block, it is also what the novel calls a “plastic substance” (240). To understand the aptness of James’s metaphor--plastic, after all, is a mouldable material that solidifies and hardens--we might recall a dinner party held at Lancaster Gate in the sixth book, mid-way through the novel. Upon her entry, Kate gives Densher her signature “straight look, not exactly loving” (240). In the scene, she puts on a “disciplined face,” and her performance is likened to that of a “faultless soldier on parade.” Densher finds something of an “artistic idea” behind Kate’s capacity to turn herself into a character, in her self-theatricalization. But it troubles him, too:

in spite of the fact that the disciplined face did offer him

over the footlights, as he believed, the small gleam, fine faint but exquisite, of a special intelligence. So might a practiced performer, even when raked by double-barrelled glasses, seem to be all in her part and yet convey a sign to the person in the house she loved best (241).

Sensing for an instant that there might be no “Kate” under this “plastic” version--or, perhaps worse, that even if there were, that she might be unresponsive to him--Densher is filled with “sickness.” We might take Kate’s militaristic performance as a literal enactment of what David Kurnick calls “actorly purposiveness” (216). Kurnick explains: “whatever role they occupy in the story (villain, ingénue, ficelle), Jamesian characters are always haunted by an extra-diegetic consciousness of themselves as engaged in precisely those roles and thus in a larger fictional project.” But why is Merton made sick by his vision? Partly it is because he cannot read with full assurance the meaning of Kate’s tough exterior, her “disciplined face.” Is she even feeling anything? The stylistic tics of the passage--an overabundance of sibilance and fricatives (“fact,” “face,” footlights,” “fine,” “faint”)--give the writing itself a hard, shiny surface. Neither Kate’s face nor prose style here succeed in acting as “superconductors” for the transmission of emotion, to borrow Terada’s phrase (12). Kate may indeed remain in some devastating way illegible behind her “plastic” social mask, but

Kurnick's separation of narrative levels is useful. It helps us to posit that, both intra- and extra-diegetically, an affectless Kate might be actively participating in her own construction, steering the process of her own self-hardening.

While she is not usually felt to be one of James's surrogates, like Maisie or In the Cage's telegraphist--figures who "read" their worlds and act as stand-ins for the artistic process, if not for the author himself--Kate Croy is, in both the lay and the literary sense, a plotter. Peter Brooks usefully reminds us that, aside from a shaping narrative force, one of the central definitions of "plot" is "a secret plan to accomplish a hostile or illegal purpose; [a] scheme" (WD 12). Plots, according to Brooks, are often about "investments of desire" and thus correspond nicely with "narratives thematically oriented toward ambition, possession, mastery of the erotic object and of the world" (143). At the level of the story, Kate is described as "a creature of alarms and precautions" (WD 218)--always on the look-out for any threats to her set course. Faced with Merton's demurrals, Kate responds with an icy: "I assure you I see my way--so don't spoil it" (229). There are many such descriptions, often focalized through Densher, of Kate's rigorous handling of the love plot, pre- and post-swindle, but the most delicious is Densher's near-parable: "You keep the key of the cupboard, and I foresee that when we're married, you'll

dole me out my sugar by lumps" (227). Kate runs a tight ship, and her control of the plot's shape and structure is contrasted explicitly with Merton Densher's more elastic "line of muddle" (225).

In the preface, James lifts exactly these terms to outline his own writing practice. Defending himself against criticism (both real and perceived) that his "deviation" in the first book from Kate to Densher's point-of-view creates a "muddle," James presents evidence and ultimately concludes that the "constructional 'block'" that forms the first two books is perfectly firm and "compact," nestling nicely against the third book, which is "all of the squarest and not a little of the smoothest" (WD xlvi). In the notebooks, too, this stress on the novel's solidity and on James's own rigor reappears. In preliminary sketches for Wings, he refers to the novel's ideal form as a "strong, firm, artistic ossature" (CN 115). Over Densher's "muddle," then, James aligns himself with what the novel calls Kate's "hard law" (382).

Stoniness and, in a different way, plasticity might thus offer assistive metaphors for how narrative process can be at once unfeeling, rigid, hard, and generative. And, yet, seen from another angle, such an exacting method might appear unyielding and rote, if not compulsive. The novel's insistence on the word "set" is suggestive. The most relevant definitions of this

small, yet capacious word include: “to place or cause to be in a position, condition, relation, or connection”; “to make up (a scene) on the stage”; “to arrange, fix, adjust”; and “to cause to take a certain direction.” Freud used it in his study of psychic rigidity--a phenomenon he described as being of “set purpose” (394). My sense is that with his interest in emotional and narrative intransigence, James antedates Freud’s theorizations of inelastic psychic life. In “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” Freud argues that there are two types of individuals: a “mobile” type, who picks up new love objects quite easily, and an inflexible type who exhibits an “adhesiveness of the libido,” remaining attached to its object with “cathectic fidelity.” In keeping with the spirit of James’s preface, Freud goes on to compare these two types, “soft clay” and “hard stone.” The latter, worries Freud, exhibits an “immutable, fixed and rigid” mental state that makes a patient not only “resistant” but also “impervious” to treatment. As in Bergson, the inflexible subject, fixated on her libidinal objects, is understood in Freud’s essay to be psychically compromised, contemptuously if not childishly unfeeling, and barely human.

James tracks Kate’s plot arrangements using comparable terms to suggest her unwavering focus, often turning to metaphors that subjugate feeling to necessity: the animalistic

("creature," "brute," "panther") and the machinic. Eve Kosofky Sedgwick isolates one of these "curious" images in Tendencies: The spring (a wellspring, a panther's spring) is associated with Kate's dangerousness and her coiled-up store of reserve energy, but at the same time (as the spring of a trap or switchblade) with her sometimes mechanicalness, with her way of being "sharp" and "ironic." (I think, also, we are meant to hear the metallic of "iron" in Kate's "irony.") (93-94) Without wishing to diagnose Kate Croy--though the temptation is admittedly strong!--we might observe in her a certain bent toward the idée fixe. In Console and Classify, Jan E. Goldstein recounts that the term, medicalized in early nineteenth-century France, refers to "a single pathological preoccupation in an otherwise sound mind" (155-56). From the outset, the idée fixe was tied, if not indistinguishable from, another nineteenth-century medical label, namely "monomania." Goldstein notes that despite the swift adoption of the term into popular culture, including as a synonym for a recurring musical phrase, the idée fixe is not simply a "benign quirk." Accordingly, some critics, including Sedgwick, have designated Kate's plot an "obsession," pointing to her "unflagging intentness" and the "fierceness of her focus on maintaining the triangular choreographies involving Maud and Milly" (92). But if Kate is a stand-in for the process of aesthetic production, then what kind of vision of the artist

are we left with? One who is rigidly fixed, if not fixated, on her task?

In an even-handed reading of the swindling plot of Wings, Wood suggests that this might not be far off the mark. Suspending moral approbation, Wood argues that it is possible to understand the "ruthlessness" Kate displays in the novel as "a kind of probity." In its clarity and bravery, Wood claims, it "may even generate more tenderness than honour is likely to" (29). Without delving into the details, it is worth noting that the subtext to Wood's provocation is that states of fixation might be aesthetically fruitful, yielding something new, perhaps even something pleasant.[6] James's working papers testify to precisely this pairing between enjoyment and the idée fixe. Entries he made in his notebooks show him fully alive to writing as a process that is at once lapidary, rigorous, and recursive--pleasurably so. At the end of 1895, when he was working out the storyline of Wings (then called: La Mourante), he reminded himself that the "very essence" of his "job" was to ensure that his stories "consist each, substantially, of a single incident, an incident definite, limited, sharp. I must cultivate the vision, the observation and notation of that--just as I must sternly master the faire, the little hard, fine, repeated process" (CN 146). Such testimony suggests that recursive insistence is not merely thematic for James; rather, as we have

seen, the hard logic of the idée fixe shapes the very structure of The Wings of the Dove, regulates its character formulation, and fixes its plot. If we zoom in a little closer, it also drives the novel at the level of style. The use of double-negation, circumlocution, abstraction, and other occluding techniques have received their due attention in the criticism.[7] Here, I'd like to put forward an admittedly minute typographical mark that James returns to with a regularity that is, depending on your mood, either maddening or charming: namely, the dash, which in The Wings of the Dove is positively Dickinsonian. An unsigned reviewer of Wings in 1903 admitted to being "curious to know the average number of dashes" in the novel but found "the calculation entirely beyond our powers. Suffice it to say it is enormous" (Gard 322). And with a total, at least by my count, of 3,255 dashes, it is rather large. As a point of comparison, on either side of the millennium, Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier (1915) contains 731, while Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim (1899), nearly the same length as Wings, comes in at 1,481. In a short study of punctuation, Theodor Adorno argues that a "serious," as opposed to a "dilettantish," use of the dash leaves the text in a state of suspension. With it, the speaker's voice "falls into an uneasy silence" (302). Might the dash serve as a typographical emblem of the stony subjectivity investigated in the novel? Perhaps. For my more local argument, it at least

helps us see how a certain recursion and rigidity touches even the most miniscule compositional level of Wings.

I wonder if it is going too far to call this pleasure. Returning one final time to the 1907 preface, we find James himself admitting to having “fun” while setting his stony characters in place—“fixing them so exactly” (WD xxxviii). Linking hardness with pleasure, he offers another metaphor for the unyielding nature of his novel--that of “thick ice.” James observes that we enjoy aesthetic artefacts most not “when the work asks for as little attention as possible” but rather when “we feel the surface, like the thick ice of the skater’s pond, bear without cracking the strongest pressure we throw on it” (ibid). Stoniness, iciness, gleaming plastic surfaces: these are the novel’s “compositional keys” (xxxvi). As I have suggested, such a generative rigidity is built into various levels of aesthetic construction: structural shape, characterization, plot, and stylistic peculiarities. Appeals to James’s “aloof” temperament, or the suggestion that his stylistic opacity grew in inverse proportion to his dwindling market value, seem to me insufficient explanations for the strange--and strangely pleasurable--emphasis on hardness in his late period.

I don’t wish to duck the objection that firmness and fixation are not always desirous situations to occupy (for either character, book, or subject). Insensibility, as portrayed

in the novel, is disquieting. It obstructs both the circulation of feelings among characters and the generation of attunement--not to say sympathy--upon which the compact between text and reader is thought to rely. And yet the capacity of stoniness to upset the normal order and to compel a recalibration of our reading methods is precisely why it merits more critical attention within James studies. Characters who "failed to feel it"--as Milly says of Kate--are figures of refusal who lift their hats to the oncoming of modernism, who leave us, as Kate does in the novel's last lines, with a simple "headshake" (WD 509). And, like James, we might even find a little fun in that.

NOTES

[1]Although Lee's study does not venture past the mid-nineteenth century, the questions it raises have been highly instructive for my thinking around emotional stoniness.

[2]The category of "opacity" is perhaps the closest critics tend to come to what I discuss here as emotional stoniness, but it lacks some of the constitutive features of stoniness on which my argument relies, such as rigidity. Other adjacent terms include John Plotz's "semi-detachment" and Samuel Cross's "calculated reticence," which he calls "tact."

[3]The sense of "aggressive or uncooperative behaviour; a resentful or antagonistic manner" is attached to the word

“attitude” only in the 1960s as a form of American slang. However, even in its appropriate historical frame--as a “disposition” or “manner of acting”--the word allows for negative inflections.

[4]Both critics note that anxiety and neurasthenia carried social capital. Lutz calls neurasthenia “a mark of distinction, of class, of status, of refinement” (6), while Ngai argues that by the end of the eighteenth century, anxiety was “a generally recognized token of genteel literary culture” (214). Insensibility, on the other hand, has not generally been perceived to hold the same prestige.

[5]A passage in Clark’s Farewell to an Idea is apt here: “Modernism, I am convinced, would not anger its opponents in the way it seems to if it did not so flagrantly assert the beautiful as its ultimate commitment. And if it did not repeatedly discover the beautiful as nothing but mechanism” (167).

[6]In a similar vein, Fleissner argues with respect to the fin-de-siècle that we need “a construal of compulsive behaviour, available within the period itself, in which it ceases to appear in its common guise--as merely the stagnant, repetitive opposite of the will to act--and becomes inextricable from creative potentiality” (39).

[7]A particularly vivid and technically adept account is provided by Ohi at the beginning of Henry James and the Queerness of Style.

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