

**‘Two Minds With but a Single Thought’: W. T. Stead, Henry James, and the Zancig
Controversy
Paul Horn**

This article examines the strange correspondences between the work of two writers, Henry James and W. T. Stead, whose authorial voices are ostensibly very distinct from each other. While Stead was the pugnacious purveyor of New Journalism and hugely influential in shaping public opinion, James wrote highbrow, complex, and ultimately poorly selling prose fiction. However, I find that when they converge on the topic of the psychical, a range of similitudes emerge with important implications both for James studies and scholarly work on the *fin de siècle* more generally. Firstly, James’s engagement with the very accessible and popular inflections of the psychical promoted by Stead belies contemporaneous criticism, such as H. G. Wells’s famous admonishment of James’s late novels for being ‘superficial’ ‘tales of nothingness’ which ‘omit everything [from life] that demands digressive treatment or collateral statement’.¹ Secondly, I find that in James’s writing, like Stead’s, psychical sensitivity is presented as an enhanced form of *bodily* consciousness. Reading the connections between James and popular discourse on the psychical also helps correct one of the old commonplaces of criticism: that the characters in his late novels are simply refined out of corporeal existence. This point of view is owing, perhaps, to the considerable critical hegemony exerted by influential characterizations such as Joseph Conrad’s description of James as a mere ‘historian of fine consciences’; and Virginia Woolf’s account of James’s characters in her review of *The Golden Bowl* as ‘so many distinguished ghosts’, equipped with ‘thoughts and emotions’, but not alive in a bodily sense.² Ultimately, the psychical emerges as central rather than marginal in James’s aesthetics, foreshadowing the ‘ghostridden’ methods and metaphors which Helen Sword has astutely identified as vitally important to understanding the work of later modernists.³ Whereas most extant criticism on the psychical in James tends to focus on his ghost stories, and especially on ‘The Turn of the Screw’ (1898), I elucidate, via Stead, its presence throughout a range of his *fin-de-siècle* works, including some of the intensely studied major novels on which his literary reputation as ‘the master’ rests.

The unlikely concord between James and Stead is focalized through their shared appreciation of the performances of the London telepathists Julius and Agnes Zancig. On New Year’s Day 1907 James wrote a letter to his friend Mary Frances Prothero, in which

he recalled a performance by the Zancigs. The Zancigs' show, entitled 'Two Minds With but a Single Thought', comprised a series of instances of Agnes apparently reading the mind of her husband. Their performances at music halls took the following form: the pair take the stage in front of a simple plain canvas drop scene, where, close to the footlights at centre stage, Madame Zancig takes her position, holding a piece of chalk by the side of a slate. After a few words of introduction, Mr Zancig appeals to anyone in the audience to give him any article, name, or number as he runs hither and thither about the hall, and Madame Zancig instantly describes or writes their responses on the slate.⁴ In his letter, James writes:

The Zanzig [*sic*] stuff in the newspaper strikes me as, in its cheap crudity, most unfortunately compromising to the theory of the *reality* of their performance (which it appeared to me, under that *1st* impression, the only one to be held.) But I wish you & Mr. George could go for a *second* impression — I wd. myself if I were remaining. Stuart Cumberland (the old conjurer & trickster) has written somewhere to *declare* it a trick — the result of a very wonderfully elaborated code of signalling them (& that he, — an arch-juggler — having seen them, judges this possible, is a little striking.) 'Why does he always wear a white coat? Why does she wear "telescopic eyeglasses" of great power?' I confess the sense of her glasses, — watched through an opera-glass, — did a little worry me. Yet their communication by word is almost nil, & in fine, the operation of their code becomes a greater marvel than the idea of their thought transference. Also Stead — John Hare told me last night at the Lewis's — had them at his own house, one upstairs & one down, & with an outsider making the signal (thump on the floor,) when he — the man, above, — had 'taken' the article, & another outsider recording in the room below the woman's infallible naming of it. No 'code' there if Stead's story be veracious. But I haven't seen it! They had at any rate better, the couple, stop 'writing.' And so had I!⁵

This is a remarkable letter. It shows James directly engaging with discourse on the psychical, a subject which other epistolary evidence shows he treated very cautiously. It equates the psychical gift of telepathy with the extension of bodily capability, specifically Agnes Zancig's vision, enhanced by her "'telescopic eyeglasses" of great power'. There is even, in James's statement that he, too, had better 'stop "writing"', a tacit admission that his own textual performance is analogous to the Zancigs'. In what follows, I will show that these emphases all offer routes to a deeper understanding of James's *fin-de-siècle* fiction, and especially those late novels in which unspoken communications dance between the author's highly sensitive characters. What links these points together is also suggested by the letter: the influence of Stead. James's impression of the 'reality' of the

Zancigs' performance is buttressed by the rumour, told to him at a party by the actor and theatre manager John Hare, that Stead has proved the Zancigs' telepathic powers during private tests at his own home: 'no "code" there if Stead's story be veracious', writes James. And, indeed, we find in the December 1906 issue of the *Review of Reviews* Stead's own defence of the Zancigs, entitled 'The Next Wonder of the World'. It covers in detail both their performance at the Alhambra Music Hall, and, indeed, some tests carried out at Stead's house, which seem likely to have been the subject of the gossip heard by James.

James's and Stead's concomitant engagement with the Zancigs' performance and the possibilities of thought transference more generally is played out against a backdrop of not only their ostensibly distinct writing styles and readerships, but also the significant divergence in terms of their approaches to the occult. While Stead became increasingly interested in Spiritualism from the 1890s onwards, founding the quarterly magazine *Borderland* in 1893 with the express ambition of bringing psychical research to the general public, James's endorsement of experimentation in this field is less fulsome. Though his letters confirm that he was acquainted with a number of the leading members of the Society for Psychical Research, they provide little conclusive evidence of his conscious engagement with their ideas, which is what makes his gossipy letter about the Zancigs so notable.⁶ He read his brother William's paper on the mediumship of a Mrs Piper at the Society for Psychical Research in 1890, but did so declaring 'my complete detachment from my brother's labour and pursuits, my *outsideness*, as it were to the S.P.R., my total ignorance of Mrs Piper and my general aversion to her species'.⁷ Though James experimented with traditional forms of supernatural writing in his early career, such as the ghost story and the gothic tale, as Martha Banta notes, in these cases, 'his artistic manipulation so transforms the basic notions that he no longer seems to be writing about the occult'.⁸ In the late novels, however, there are special characteristics present which make connections to the occult credible. Of primary interest is the shifting materiality described in these texts, which accounts for that strand of criticism, including the chapter on James in F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948), that prefers the works of his early and middle periods on the basis that they are more solidly real; and Bill Brown's more recent judgment that the material in James's late work is to be understood as 'a matter of aura'.⁹ I argue that the physical world of the late novels corresponds to the physics of the spiritual world imagined by Stead. Characteristic of James's late novels and their strange 'air of reality' is the ability shared by a number of his protagonists to communicate non-

verbally and by occult channels.¹⁰ This facility seems to realize the fantasy of telepathy interrogated by the Society for Psychical Research; there is even in the term telepathy's coinage as a paradoxical 'distant touch' a sign of its aptness as a tool via which to interrogate the ethereal world of the late novels. Frederic Myers, founder member and a leading researcher of the Society, glossed the coinage as 'feeling at a distance'; Roger Luckhurst asserts that 'the Victorian ear would hear distant yet *physical* touch in *tele* + *pathos* (sympathy had the same root in physiology)'.¹¹ I want to argue that James and Stead become closely imbricated as they converge on the topic of the phenomenon of thought transference, as it might be experienced by sensitive individuals.

One of the aspects that is striking about Stead's article on the Zancigs is that it shares with James's late novels a focus on the physical reality of telepathy, communicated through a linguistic tendency towards the vibratory. Stead states that the Zancigs 'had their respective mental batteries so perfectly adjusted, each to each, that the vibration of the thought-current of the man instantly registered itself upon the mind of the wife' ('Next Wonder of the World', p. 594). Similarly, in James's *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), for example, Fleda Vetch perceives that 'the very vibration of the air [...] told her that whatever Mrs. Brigstock's spirit might originally have been, it had been sharply affected by the sight of Owen'.¹² Stead borrows his vocabulary overtly from scientific discourse on wireless telegraphy, as developed by Guglielmo Marconi. Having delineated the achievements of the Zancigs, his article moves seamlessly on to discuss how Marconi's invention provides the template for telepathy. He cites scientific research which confirms that 'the human brain is based upon the same principle as the coherer and de-coherer of the Marconi instrument for receiving and transmitting messages', proclaims thought to be electricity, and brain cells to be 'storage batteries to store the electricity generated by the life processes' ('Next Wonder of the World', pp. 595–96). Stead writes that telepathy 'simply requires two minds very congenial thinking the same thought to the same metre — that is, whose electrical vibrations are the same as in the Marconi instruments — and then to generate a sufficient current to produce a conscious communication' ('Next Wonder of the World', p. 596). Two highly receptive minds, keyed to the same thought-vibration would be in conscious communication all the time. He argues that the fact that we have not had such conscious, continuous telepathy is proof that 'no two highly receptive minds in history have been in the same thought-vibration' (p. 596). Stead, of course, was not alone in linking telepathy ('distant touch') to telegraphy ('distant

writing'). As Luckhurst has noted, when *Borderland* was launched in 1893, with its plethora of promises regarding occult communications, Stead had only to collate and paraphrase the many articles from other publications exploring the imaginative possibilities opened up by the various nascent tele-technologies which appeared during the period, collapsing spatial and temporal distances (Luckhurst, pp. 137–38).

If the Zancigs' performance allows Stead to dream of the possibilities of organic wireless telegraphy, James's characters demonstrate the role this hitherto unharnessed mode of expression might play in negotiating the complex geometry of social life. A number of critics have drawn attention to how James's tale about an unnamed female telegraphist, 'In the Cage' (1898), establishes a continuum between consciousness in late James, 'the externalising impetus of new communication technologies, and the fantasies about communication that these technologies inspire at the turn of the century'.¹³ James's protagonist gains access to her customers' unspoken thoughts by decoding the messages hidden in their telegrams: visualizing the future movements of Captain Everard across London one evening, she contemplates that 'she had such things all on her fingers' ends'.¹⁴ James's subsequent novel-length works elucidate the development of this mode of perception by sensitive characters who do not have the direct aid of such technological prostheses. *The Golden Bowl* (1904), an exploration of marriage and adultery mapping out the intricate web of interrelationships between a father, Adam Verver, his daughter Maggie, and their spouses, Charlotte Stant and Prince Amerigo, contains a number of pertinent examples of communication by 'vibration'. In this text, sympathy is frequently couched in terms of reaching a certain pitch of reverberation, which is audible only by 'the mind's ear'.¹⁵ James's narrator describes the sympathetic vibration which, at a dinner party, helps form 'a mystic golden bridge' between Amerigo and his former lover, Charlotte, so that the two characters establish a mode of communion to which their friends, the Assinghams, are insensible, their isolation sounding as 'a false note in the concert' (*Golden Bowl*, pp. 246, 250). In accordance with the principles of wireless telegraphy, James's characters demonstrate the varying responses which different audible vibrations elicit in physical bodies. This responsiveness is shown in fine detail when, discussing their involvement in Charlotte and Amerigo's affair, Fanny Assingham picks up the auditory cues which give away her husband Bob's state of mind. She reflects: 'the beauty was that, as under a touch of one of the ivory notes at the left of the keyboard, he sounded out with the short sharpness of the dear fond stupid uneasy man' (p. 386). The

metaphor of the piano keyboard furnishes us with the idea of a gradation of psychic *frequencies*, from low to high, in tune with Stead's ideal of two minds 'thinking [...] to the same metre', and to which degrees of responsiveness may be attributed.

The surprising concord between the writing of James and Stead on the topic of vibrations and telepathy signals the culmination of half a century of speculation on nervous sensitivity. In the mid-1860s, the physicist John Tyndall (a scientific popularizer after Stead's own heart, but an avowed non-believer in spiritual phenomena) gave a series of public lectures at the Royal Institution on auditory phenomena, which were subsequently published as a tutorial book for non-specialists, entitled *Sound* (1867). In Tyndall's sixth lecture he demonstrated to his audience using a Bunsen burner a variety of flames that were supremely sensitive to auditory stimuli. The two-foot high 'vowel flame' was extremely sensitive to sound, even from distances of up to thirty feet. 'All sounds are not equally effective on the flame', he explained: 'The effectual periods are those which synchronise with the waves produced by the friction of the gas itself against the sides of its orifice.'¹⁶ He would sing and recite poetry to the flame to demonstrate the specific pitches to which it responded. Having made these demonstrations, he ventured that 'the flame behaves like a sentient and motor creature — bowing slightly to some tones, and curtsying deeply to others' (p. 262). Tyndall's former assistant, William Barrett, would go on to use the research on sensitive flames as the model for his theory of 'sympathetic vibrations', which posited that a vibration could be produced in one body by the vibrations of the same frequency in a neighbouring body.¹⁷ He saw the phenomenon as proof of the 'existence of spiritual laws in the natural world'.¹⁸ In 1883, he wrote in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* that

the brain might be regarded as the seat of radiant energy like a glowing or a sounding body [...] which, moreover, may be constituted like a sensitive flame, in a state of unstable equilibrium, so that a distant mental disturbance might suddenly and profoundly agitate particular minds, whilst others might remain quiescent.¹⁹

Annie Besant's article in the theosophical journal *Lucifer* in December 1892, recapitulated in Stead's *Review of Reviews*, shows the degree to which the phenomenon might be seen as conducive to occult communications. Stead notes her assertion that

our knowledge of the universe by the ordinary organs of sense is bounded by the power of those organs to vibrate by the vibrations set up outside of man [...]. If our senses could be evolved to more receptiveness, new avenues of

receptiveness would [...] reveal others upon a new plane other than physical. These keener and subtler senses she calls astral senses.²⁰

This body of work furnishes us with the idea of a scale of sensitivity into which hyperaesthesia and ultimately even telepathy can be inserted, and allows us to place the Zancigs (as Stead saw them) and the characters of James's late novels at the apex of this developmental curve. Instead of reading James's protagonists as lacking in corporeal vitality, as Conrad and Woolf do, their extraordinary nervous sensitivity encourages us to view their bodies as highly evolved.

Another of the supernatural modes of bodily consciousness explored by Stead with a special relevance for occult communications in James's writing was the so-called 'thought body'. During the *fin de siècle*, a number of commentators speculated on the material reality of the human soul. In 1902, Oliver Lodge used his inaugural address as president of the Society for Psychical Research to advance the idea that the trance-utterances of mediums could evidence the intervention of 'some other intelligence or living entity, not ordinarily manifest to our senses, though possibly already in constant touch with our physical universe by reason of possessing what may be called an ethereal body', and 'telepathy from, as well as to, a sub-conscious stratum'.²¹ In the theosophist Helena Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), the 'astral body' was developed as an equivalent term.²² In *Real Ghost Stories*, a special Christmas number of the *Review of Reviews*, Stead sought to engage the wider reading public on the topic. He records how his hostess at a small country house among the Surrey hills, a person devoted to 'the study of the occult side of Theosophy', explained to him that

'every person has, in addition to this natural body of flesh, bones, and blood, a Thought Body, the exact counterpart in every respect of this material frame. It is contained within the material body, as air is contained in the lungs and in the blood [...]. It is capable of motion with the rapidity of thought. The laws of space and time do not exist for the mind, and the Thought Envelope of which we are speaking moves with the swiftness of the mind.'²³

Stead's hostess has the faculty of going about in her 'thought body', all the while capable of seeing, hearing, and engaging in conversation with people at great distances from the location at which her physical body remains. I want to argue that the model of the 'thought body' offers value as a cultural analogue for those instances of intersubjectivity in James's late work facilitated by the 'disassociated voice', that substratum of 'vocal' communications which are perpetually situated at a remove from any strictly material

source, and pass through the consciousnesses of multiple characters. This analysis necessarily builds upon that of Sharon Cameron who, in *Thinking in Henry James*, asserts that consciousness becomes positional in the novels of James's major phase, attaching sometimes to speech as it claims the 'audibility of other's thoughts', and sometimes to meaning as it claims 'magical access to others' minds', but revealing finally the 'ventriloquism of thinking' as one mind manipulates another's thoughts to create meaning.²⁴ In her chapter on *The Golden Bowl*, she draws attention to such utterances where 'inferences enclosed in quotation marks bear all the signs of quotation except that they are never spoken, they have blurred the categorical distinction between thinking and speaking' (Cameron, p. 83). How thoroughly the disassociated voice is experienced as a phenomenon that is communicative is established in the passage in *The Golden Bowl* in which Charlotte, leading visitors through a gallery to show them her husband's treasures, is apprehended by the consciousnesses of the novel's other characters. As Charlotte is elaborating calmly on the history of the possessions to the spectators, who are absorbed by her words, James's narrator states,

Maggie meanwhile at the window knew the strangest thing to be happening: she had turned suddenly to crying, or was at least on the point of it — the lighted square before her all blurred and dim. The high voice went on; its quaver was doubtless for conscious ears only, but there were verily thirty seconds during which it sounded, for our young woman, like the shriek of a soul in pain. Kept up a minute longer it would break and collapse — so that Maggie felt herself the next thing turn with a start to her father. 'Can't she be stopped? Hasn't she done it *enough*?' — some such question as that she let herself ask him to suppose in her. (pp. 496–97, emphasis in original)

Charlotte's subliminal shriek is heard not only by the mind's ear of Maggie but also by Adam Verver and Amerigo, and their subsequent telepathic communications are predicated on this initial one, the perception of which is taken for granted. The correspondence between this phenomenon and that of the 'thought body' can be established if we consider more closely what it means for the characters in *The Golden Bowl* to hear each other's unspoken thoughts. As Steven Connor has it:

What a voice, any voice, always says, no matter what the particular local import may be of the words it emits, is this: this, here, this voice, is not merely *a* voice, a particular aggregation of tones and timbres; it is voice, or voicing itself. Listen, says a voice: some being is giving voice.²⁵

Voices stand for bodily identities; the voice must be produced by vocal apparatus, and is one of the subject's collection of identifying attributes (albeit one which does not merely

belong to a person, but is produced). Connor's theory of the 'vocalic body' suggests that any form of vocalization, even unspoken, can produce the hallucination of 'a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice' (*Dumbstruck*, p. 35). In fact, this voice then conjures for itself a different kind of body; an imaginary body which may contradict, compete with, replace, or even reshape the actual, visible body of the speaker. In *The Golden Bowl*, Charlotte's silent shriek sublimates her public 'swagger' with the impression, received by Maggie, of a person 'in pain' and about to 'break and collapse' (pp. 496–97). Read in juxtaposition with Stead's *Real Ghost Stories*, we are reminded that for James's original readers the phenomenological experience of the 'vocalic body' in the late novels was consistent with the construction of the phantasmal alter ego now available not only to the readers of psychical research periodicals, but to 'every common man and woman' (*Real Ghost Stories*, p. x).

The mobility of Charlotte's cry also corresponds to Stead's idea of the freedom of movement of the 'thought body', for which 'the laws of space and time do not exist' (*Real Ghost Stories*, p. 26). Connor asserts that the vocalic body requisitions a nebulous 'vocalic space', which it 'inhabits and occupies' but also actively procures for itself: 'The voice takes place in space, because the voice *is* space' (*Dumbstruck*, p.12, emphasis in original). The meaning of this space is 'changed drastically when it becomes possible to inhabit and command with one's voice an auditory range far larger than that prescribed the limits of the naturally audible', so that 'one might call such a conception of the body's relationship to its various environments a conception of "implicated space"' (p. 12). This formulation is consistent with the spatial and temporal diffusion of Charlotte's cry: Amerigo physically retreats from its sound, and even after Charlotte is no longer in her presence Maggie feels the cry is 'in her own ears still' and 'the wonder for her' becomes her husband's 'not feeling the need of wider intervals and thicker walls' (*Golden Bowl*, p. 514). In *Real Ghost Stories*, Stead notes, with reference to the 'thought body', that

there seems to be some faculty latent in the human mind, by which it can in some cases impress upon the eye and ear of a person at almost any distance the image and the voice. We may call it telepathy or what we please. It is a marvellous power, the mere hint of which indefinitely expands the horizon of the imagination. The telephone is but a mere child's toy compared with the gift to transmit not only the sound of the voice but the actual visible image of the speaker for hundreds of miles without any conductor known to man. (p. 47)

The distant communications facilitated by the ‘vocalic body’ in James’s late work read in relation to the postulated freedoms of Stead’s ‘thought body’ give expression to the array of complex and new social geometries which seemed to become available for exploration during the *fin de siècle*.

Stead categorized ‘thought bodies’ as ‘ghosts of the living’, and their scope for locomotion was therefore theoretically limitless, as he saw the spirit world as the gateway to further dimensions (*Real Ghost Stories*, p. 25). In ‘Through; or, On the Eve of the Fourth Dimension’, he wrote that the range of psychical phenomena were all ‘so many rifts in the limits of our three dimensional space through which the light of four dimensional space is pouring in upon us’.²⁶ This emphasis offers particular value to James’s late unfinished novel, *The Sense of the Past*, begun in 1900 but unpublished during his own lifetime despite an attempt at completion in 1914. The novel augments the complex social negotiations of the author’s ‘major phase’ novels, such as *The Golden Bowl*, with an eerie account of time travel. Its protagonist Ralph Pendrel inherits an eighteenth-century townhouse in London, and after stepping over the threshold, he finds himself slipping back in time, eventually trading places with an ancestor whose portrait he finds, inhabiting his world and meeting his relatives. In front of the portrait of his ancestor, Ralph speculates:

It was positively as if, with the cup so held to his lips, the taste of 1710 might prove too stiff a dose. He would judge, as it were, when he came back, as who should say also, from everywhere else. He could go of course everywhere else; intellectually now he could so well afford to. This would make all the general initiation that, as a preliminary, was indispensable: the series of scattered dashes and superficial dips. Strange his divination, or whatever one might call it, that from such a plunge at Number Nine as would thoroughly penetrate he might possibly not emerge undamaged or even, it was actually to be figured, not emerge at all. He might remain there below; remain in the quintessential depth that stood so ready for a real resident.²⁷

He conceives of becoming physically present in 1710 as moving in different, perpendicular directions — not only moving ‘back’ in time, but down (‘dips’, ‘a plunge’, ‘below’, ‘in the quintessential depth’), and also as being somehow omnipresent (‘everywhere’). Ralph avers that the coexistence of times within the house incorporates the future too — ‘everything still to come was then latent in that plot of space’ (p. 82), but this co-presence of times requires a revised idea of bodily presence, as dismembered (‘the series of scattered dashes’, the possibility he might ‘not emerge undamaged’) and even

entombed ('He might remain there below; remain in the quintessential depth that stood so ready for a real resident'). By positing this concatenation of potential locations for the body, Pendrel's speculation echoes contemporaneous discourse on the spatial proximity of the spirit world to the real world. As Connor notes, the 'supernatural' was no alternate or other realm, but rather an 'image, annex or extension' of the real world, and this is indicated by the vast range of prepositions that Spiritualists and occultists used to demarcate the relative location of the other world to this: 'the "other world" was envisaged as above, beyond, beneath, beside, alongside and even within this world.'²⁸ Stead himself asserted that

according to the evidence of those who have been there and described what they have seen of life on the Other Side — after all it is not another side or another world — but is in very truth a world existing in and alongside of the actual world of things which we see, hear, taste, smell and handle.²⁹

The orientational terms used here correspond closely to the indeterminacy that characterizes Pendrel's disturbed sense of bodily centre. Stead and James thus offer us relatable alternative models of embodiment through their depiction of the 'distant intimacy' achievable by occupying the spectral subject position. In the case of James, this supplies a valuable corrective to criticism. If the spectres of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint in 'The Turn of the Screw' can be interpreted as mere hallucinated 'ghosts of the mind', *The Sense of the Past* rotates this formulation so that thoughts themselves become incarnate spirits.³⁰ Stead's 'thought body' concept shows us that James's sensitive characters' apparent over-endowment with 'thoughts and feelings' does not detract from our sense of their corporeal existence; on the contrary, it contributes markedly to it in a manner which is in step with the latest projections from the fields of Spiritualism and psychical research as to the material constitution of the self in the spiritual world.

There is, moreover, in James's caveat to his assessment of the Zancigs' performance — 'They had at any rate better, the couple, stop "writing." And so had I!' — the suggestion of an occult alter ego for the author himself. James tacitly equates his own subject position as a writer with that of the performing telepathist. In fact, the ways in which both Stead and James delineate the act of authorship correspond to their descriptions of thought transference. Sympathetic vibration operates for both writers as a metaphor for the reception of literature. In James's critical work, popular literature is figured as producing a 'vibration' to which a significant number of readers are attuned.

For example, in his review of the work of the French poet, Edmond Rostand, reprinted in the *Review of Reviews*, James writes:

His freely figurative, his boldly macaronic style, his verbal gymnastics and pictorial somersaults, his general romp through the unexpected — which is largely his hunt for rhyme through not only the past and present but the future of the language — all represent the elements of toughness and good humour required for so much exposure and such a pitch of *reverberation*.³¹

James also uses the metaphor of vibration to describe the affective power of the press, especially the mode of investigative journalism practised by Stead. (Indeed, in the review from which the above quotation is taken, he is explicit about Rostand's stylistic debt to the latter mode of writing.) This trope is long standing in James's work. The publication which gives its name to James's 1888 novel, *The Reverberator*, is an American scandal sheet which spreads gossip about a Parisian family. The choice of name is apt; the word 'reverberation'³² can be used to denote the transmission of sound through multiple refractions, as in an echo chamber, and it could also signify the repeated iteration and circulation of a story or rumour. Richard Salmon notes of Matthew Arnold's remarks, aimed specifically at Stead's editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette*:

It is no coincidence [...] that *The Reverberator* was conceived in the same year that Matthew Arnold noted the appearance of a 'new journalism', and thus coined a phrase which gained wide currency in subsequent debates upon the changing form of the popular press. (Salmon, p. 117)

The existing connection between vibrations and telepathy in *fin-de-siècle* culture, encouraged by the popular writing on telegraphy and sympathetic flames mentioned above, meant that for James's readers, the affective power of James's fictional newspaper would be interpreted as a pervasive psychical concord with its readers. Stead's theory of journalism supports the idea of a connection between writing and thought transference: just as his theorizations of telepathy were upheld on nervous sensitivity, so were his journals figured as the 'centralisation of the nervous-system', and the journalist compelled to 'touch life at as many points as you can, [to] always touch so as to receive and retain its best impressions'.³³

Moreover, the 'thought body' becomes an important figure for the phenomenon of literature itself in the work of both Stead and James, as a further mode of embodied communication at a distance. Stead's vision of his *Daily Paper* appears to draw on the thought body's potential for spatial and temporal diffusion, which in this case is extended to suggest intercorporeality, being 'a living link between its subscribers, constantly

suggesting to them that they are all members one of another, and that great advantages are within their grasp if they would but realise the enormous possibilities of association'.³⁴ There is considerable evidence that James also saw writing as embodied thought. Salmon notes that James considered the publication of private texts to be a violation of the author himself:

The literary text, and its physical containers, retain the capacity to exude the 'personality' of the artist, even after death. It is this organic relationship between author and text which is specified by the term 'literary remains': the textual corpus is conceived as a residual extension of the authorial body. (p. 84)

Andrew Cutting has noted that in his final decade, James actively anticipated his death by burning personal papers, writing his autobiography, and creating the New York Edition, and that these are 'meta-level operations' on the authorial body; in *The American* (1877), *The Aspern Papers* (1888), and *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), letter burnings carried out by James's characters achieve similar ends.³⁵ In his essay 'Is There a Life After Death?' (1910), James speculates on the reception and future life which will be granted to his artistic consciousness which is embodied in his work, and describes a process 'which I can only describe as the accumulation of the very treasure of consciousness'.³⁶ The process is stimulated by negotiation with a plethora of other artistic statements, figured as vocal articulations by James. Their quantity is initially frightening — James writes that 'the universe, or all of it that I could make out, kept proclaiming in a myriad voices that I and my poor form of consciousness were a quantity it could at any moment perfectly do without' — but negotiation with them is a condition of the 'future life': 'the artist's surrender to invasive floods is accordingly nine-tenths of the matter that makes his consciousness, that makes mine, so persuasively interesting' ('Is There a Life after Death?', pp. 609, 610). This emphasis on art as being part of a process involving the interrelation of different 'voices' gathers pertinence from what we know of the disassociated voice as an embodied form of communication in James's late novels. The disassociated voice was shown, via Connor's concept of the 'vocalic body', to be analogous to the 'thought body' as conceived by Stead. Like the 'thought body', the embodied existence suggested by the disassociated voice in James's work is distinct from the existence of the physical body, and includes the potential for altered material existence beyond the conventional limits of time and space. As the 'thought body' is analogous to the multidimensional persistence of Charlotte Stant's vocal presence in *The Golden Bowl*,

so will it stand for the new existential possibilities which James envisages opening up for his body of work as a result of its literary reception:

It is in a word the artistic consciousness and privilege in itself that thus shines as from immersion in the fountain of being. Into that fountain, to depths immeasurable, our spirit dips — to the effect of feeling itself qua imagination and aspiration, all scented with universal sources. What is that but an adventure of our personality, and how can we after it hold complete disconnection likely? ('Is There a Life after Death?', p. 613)

It can therefore be averred that there is also something tangibly ghostly about the way in which James envisages discourse as working — that the mingling of his artistic voice with others following bodily death is in tune with the kind of somatic reconfigurations Stead held as feasible in the altered materiality of the spiritual world. In his review of James's second instalment of 'New York Revisited' in *Harper's Magazine*, Stead asserts that the appreciation of James's work depends on 'the *possession* of a Henry James mind'; and in view of 'Is There a Life After Death?' and its evocation of the 'thought body', the tenability of a literalist interpretation of its historical meaning is enhanced.³⁷

The dismissive tone of Stead's statement, however, reminds us that for all their theoretical concord, James and Stead remained self-consciously at a remove from each other stylistically. But even this seemingly insurmountable difference can be pared back to reveal correspondence. In 'The Poet of the "Cosmic Boom"', the article from the *Review of Reviews* containing the quotation from James on Rostand cited above, the ostensibly hostile attitudes of James to Stead's mode of writing, and vice versa, are drawn out. In it, Stead extracts (or at least attempts to extract) the salient points from James's review, originally published in the *Cornhill Magazine*. He highlights a passage in which James adjudges Rostand not to have fulfilled his literary potential, and lists his reasons. James writes that Rostand's work is comparable to Victor Hugo's, but is 'brought down to date' by its being attuned to 'the age of the interview, the automobile and the decennial exhibition, the age of the American campaign and Madame Sarah Bernhardt' ('The Poet of the "Cosmic Boom"', p. 506). The *coup de grâce* is supplied by a final alignment of Rostand's writing to 'contemporary journalism'. Stead mocks James's snobbishness, writing that 'Mr James's strictures tempt the question — Is it, after all, a literary misdemeanour to have the world for one's audience?' (p. 506). Stead's observation that one 'might as well try to print a square yard of pelting rain or a cube of chlorine gas' as cull extracts from James's prose suggests an appreciation of the reasons for the latter

writer's failure to produce a bestseller (p. 506). However, there is something in Stead's statement of James's inaccessibility which reveals the flavour of the unexpected sympathy we find between the two writers' work. In *Real Ghost Stories*, Stead writes of the difficulties of hunting a ghost:

It is true that he is a rather difficult phenomenon; [...] his substance is too shadowy to be handled, and he has avoided hitherto equally the obtrusive inquisitiveness of the microscope and telescope. [He is] a phenomenon which you can neither handle nor weigh, analyse nor dissect. (p. vii)

The act of ghost hunting (if not the act of reading about ghost hunting) was for 'the few who have leisure, culture, and the intellectual faculties indispensable for the profitable conduct of such investigations' (p. xi). For Stead, communion with both spirits and the meaning in James's prose is out of reach for all but a small number with expert knowledge. One wonders, if contextual material were not supplied, whether such statements could necessarily be matched to their correct subjects. Stead's assertions posit that 'successful' reading of late James constitutes a kind of psychical pliancy which, in the historical moment in which the novels were written, would have been considered analogous to that of the telepaths and psychics whose abilities he extolled.

In conclusion, and in view of these correspondences between two seemingly disparate literary figures, we are left to consider a remapping of the way in which *fin-de-siècle* texts relate to each other. If, as Derrida asserts, 'each text is a machine with multiple reading heads for other texts', what do James and Stead's writings read with their mechanical promontories?³⁸ Their shared propensity to figure thought transference as sympathetic vibration suggests that what Richard Noakes refers to as 'the bridge between physical and psychical research' during the period encompasses a range of high and low literary discourses.³⁹ Stead's 'thought body' model absorbs knowledge from the fields of theosophy and psychical research, and provides a framework via which we can measure the metaphysical ramifications of the disassociated voice in James's late work, as they may have appeared to his readers. Finally, by reading the 'thought body' against Stead's and James's theories of writing and literary reception, new avenues into influence and readerly agency in the period are opened up. Excavating the connections with Stead's writing on the occult reveals the immanence of a range of psychical emphases in James's writing (even that which deals does not ostensibly deal with the supernatural), and

conveys to us that in academic work on it, we should consider, as Stead puts it in the first issue of *Borderland*, ‘the application of the inquiring spirit to [...] hidden forces’.⁴⁰

¹ H. G. Wells, *Boon, The Mind of the Race; The Wild Asses of the Devil; And The Last Trump* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, 2007), pp. 315, 110, 107.

² Joseph Conrad, ‘Henry James: An Appreciation’, in *Notes on Life and Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 15–20, (p. 19); Virginia Woolf, ‘Mr James’s Latest Novel’, in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), pp. 22–24 (p. 23), cited in Gert Buelens and Celia Aijmer, ‘The Sense of the Past: History and Historical Criticism’, in *Henry James Studies*, ed. by Peter Rawlings, Palgrave Advances (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 192–211 (p. 204). Buelens and Aijmer cite such scholarly works as a possible reason why ‘[Collin] Meissner’s analysis of the significance of experience, for instance, focuses on hermeneutics and the formation of knowledge rather than on how experience in James is connected with sexuality, illness, ageing and death’ (p. 199); this testifies to the critical hegemony’s longevity.

³ Helen Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁴ For a description of the performance, see W. T. Stead, ‘The Next Wonder of the World’, *Review of Reviews*, December 1906, pp. 592–97.

⁵ Letter to Lady Mary Frances Prothero (1 January 1907), in *Dear Munificent Friends: Henry James’s Letters to Four Women*, ed. by Susan E. Gunter (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 197, emphasis in original.

⁶ For details of this correspondence, see Peter G. Beidler, *Ghosts, Demons, and Henry James: ‘The Turn of the Screw’ at the Turn of the Century* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989).

⁷ *Henry James: Letters*, ed. by Leon Edel, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974–84), III: 1883–1895 (1980), p. 302, emphasis in original.

⁸ Martha Banta, *Henry James and the Occult: The Great Extension* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 5–6.

⁹ *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (New York: New York University Press, 1948); Bill Brown, ‘A Thing About Things: The Art of Decoration in the Work of Henry James’, *Henry James Review*, 23 (2002), 222–32 (p. 226).

¹⁰ Henry James, ‘The Art of Fiction’, in *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*, ed. by James E. Miller (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), pp. 27–44 (p. 35).

¹¹ F. W. H. Myers, ‘Entry on Telepathy in the Glossary’, in *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, 1903), I, p. xxii, cited in Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 70, emphases in original.

¹² Henry James, *The Spoils of Poynton*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 149.

¹³ Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 97. See also Mark Seltzer, *Henry James & the Art of Power* (Ithaca: Cornell

University Press, 1984); Mark Goble, 'Wired Love: Pleasure at a Distance in Henry James and Others', *ELH*, 74 (2007), 397–427.

¹⁴ Henry James, 'In the Cage', in *Eight Tales from the Major Phase*, ed. by Morton Dauwen Zabel (New York: Norton, 1969), pp. 174–266 (p. 209).

¹⁵ Henry James, *The Golden Bowl* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 359.

¹⁶ John Tyndall, *Sound* (London: Longmans, 1867), p. 260.

¹⁷ William Barrett, 'Light and Sound: An Examination of Their Reputed Analogy', *Quarterly Journal of Science*, 25 (1870), 1–16 (p. 7).

¹⁸ William Barrett, 'The Spiritual Significance of Nature', *Contemporary Review*, January 1914, pp. 791–99 (p. 791).

¹⁹ William Barrett, 'Appendix to the Report on Thought-Reading', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1 (1882–83), 47–64 (p. 62).

²⁰ 'Ghosts and the Astral Plane', *Review of Reviews*, January 1892, p. 44.

²¹ Oliver Lodge, 'Address by the President, [Dr] Oliver Lodge, F.K.S', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 17 (1901), 38–58 (pp. 47, 50).

²² Helena Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1988), p. 78.

²³ W. T. Stead, *Real Ghost Stories: A Revised Reprint of the Christmas and New Year's Numbers* (London: Richards, 1897), p. 26.

²⁴ Sharon Cameron, *Thinking in Henry James* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 85.

²⁵ Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 3–4, emphasis in original.

²⁶ 'Throughth; or, On the Eve of the Fourth Dimension', *Review of Reviews*, April 1893, pp. 426–32 (p. 427).

²⁷ Henry James, *The Sense of the Past* (London: Collins, 1917), p. 89.

²⁸ Steven Connor, 'Afterword', in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell, *Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 258–77 (pp. 258–59).

²⁹ W. T. Stead, 'The Exploration of the Other World', *Fortnightly Review*, May 1909, pp. 850–61 (pp. 853–54).

³⁰ Virginia Woolf, 'The Supernatural in Fiction', in *Collected Essays*, 4 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), I, 293–96 (p. 294), cited in Sword, p. 82.

³¹ 'The Poet of the "Cosmic Boom"', *Review of Reviews*, November 1901, p. 506, emphasis added.

³² Richard Salmon, *Henry James and the Culture of Publicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 129.

³³ 'To Our Readers', *Link*, 2 February 1891, pp. 1–2 (p. 2); 'How to Become a Journalist', in *A Journalist on Journalism: Being a Series of Articles by W. T. Stead* (London: Haddon, 1892), pp. 22–23, cited in Luckhurst, pp. 133–34.

³⁴ ‘Our Aims’, *Daily Paper*, 4 January 1894, p. 6.

³⁵ Andrew Cutting, *Death in Henry James* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 134.

³⁶ ‘Is There a Life After Death?’, in *The James Family*, ed. by F. O. Matthiesson (New York: Knopf, 1961), pp. 602–14 (p. 610).

³⁷ ‘Harper’s Magazine’, *Review of Reviews*, March 1906, p. 300, emphasis added.

³⁸ Jacques Derrida, ‘Living On’, in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 64–142 (p. 107).

³⁹ Richard Noakes, ‘The “Bridge Which Is Between Physical and Psychical Research”: William Fletcher Barrett, Sensitive Flames and Spiritualism’, *History of Science*, 42 (2004), 419–64 (p. 419).

⁴⁰ ‘How We Intend to Study Borderland’, *Borderland*, July 1893, pp. 3–6 (p. 5).