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“A World of Abnormal Women”: The Queer Demography of Henry James’s *The Bostonians*

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<1>For Henry James, who was born in the United States but resided in England for most of his life, describing the average American signals a kind of gender trouble. In *The American Scene* (1907), written on his return to the US after twenty years’ absence, James describes a pattern of flattening individuating distinctions between things and people into repetition and genericity, what he calls “the common mean . . . the reduction of everything to an average of decent suitability” (*AS* 325).⁽¹⁾ Visiting Florida, he comments that “individuality and variety is attributed to ‘types,’ in America . . . so that what I was most conscious of, from aspect to aspect, from group to group, from sex to sex, from one presented border to another, was the continuity of the fusion, the dimness of the distinctions” (*AS* 333). These comments on American “types,” written at a point in his career when James thought of England as his home, might convince a contemporary reader, somewhat accurately, that he cared little for this American habit of blurring differences “from sex to sex.”

<2>Earlier in his career, however, this demographic leveling was precisely what James explored in his 1886 novel *The Bostonians*.⁽²⁾ In this earlier text, anxieties surrounding gender boundaries reveal the transformative force of the “common mean” in late-Victorian discourses on gender and sexual identities—especially, for James, the “type” of the American woman. The novel focuses on two rivals, Olive Chancellor, a radical Boston suffragist and social reformer, and Basil Ransom, a chauvinist Mississippi lawyer, who compete over the allegiance of Verena Tarrant, a talented young public speaker whom Olive wishes to cultivate as a public intellectual for the suffrage movement. Basil, by contrast, wishes to marry her, and confine her to a private, domestic life. In an oft-quoted letter to J. R. Osgood, James

writes that the novel was an attempt “to show that I can write an American story” (CN 19).⁽³⁾ He adds that the novel will be “a study of one of those friendships between women which are so common in New England,” and will be “as local, as American, as possible, and as full of Boston.” His “very national, very typical” subject is also, for James, “the most salient and peculiar point in our social life,” namely, “the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf” (CN 20). While these comments suggest James aimed at least in part to uphold the meaningfulness of “sex” and its “sentiment,” this “decline” may also slope into the flattening indeterminacy he would later attribute to the US’s averaging culture in *The American Scene*. Likewise, James’s novel of Boston has much to say about the “common denominator” that underwrites, yet also threatens, perhaps alluringly, to dissolve gender and sexual norms.

<3>The figure of the average, for James, warps identity so much that it threatens to skew the author’s own gendered and national affiliations across dividing lines between men and women, and between England and the US. This essay traces James’s interest in the identity-transforming effects of demography in *The Bostonians* and the surrounding historical context of social data-gathering in the nineteenth century. In the US, as James has it, individual experiences either become the “loud statistical shout” of “one’s record,” or they are reduced to “those shy things that speak, at the most . . . of the personal adventure,” splitting the self between social identity and subjective particularity (AS 219). Data about populations can thus shore up categories of self-definition, but it can also dissolve them. To James’s understanding of statistics as a “shout” that reduces particularity to indistinct types, we might counterpose an affirmational view of enumeration as naming and particularizing non-normative identities. Scholars like Kevin Guyan have highlighted these and other affordances of “queer data,” which he defines as a “tension” (1) that affects queer-identifying people “who stand to benefit from ‘being counted’” but thereby “also risk engaging with technologies that might normalize categories and practices that hamper rather than help” (3) those populations.⁽⁴⁾ As identity categories and modes of definition shift across time, queer and trans-identifying people often find their feelings at odds with demographic measurements, which aim to track discrete and consistent categories over time. In James’s novel, this “tension” involved in constructing identity categories as norms suffuses the narrative’s constructions of gender and sexuality.

<4>This publicity and sociality that James associates with statistics characterizes his narrator’s often abstracting descriptions of the characters, in whom identity and population often collapse together. In the very first chapter, told from Basil’s point of view, the narrator informs us that the character “is, as a representative of his sex,

the most important personage in my narrative” (B 804). Such exemplarity, delivered through the revelation of a subjective “I,” grammatically and conceptually splits off knowledge of the narrator’s own “sex” from “his sex,” or the population for which Basil stands in. What the narrator possesses, in the syntax, is not a sex, but rather a narrative. Nevertheless, for some contemporary critics, Basil was un compelling as a representative. One American reviewer, Frank Stockton, wrote that while “it seems possible to accept the apathetic Basil as representing some (hitherto unknown) type of the Southern gentleman . . . he is no better than the average hero of the woman novelists who evolve that personage from their own consciousness instead of from actual life” (qtd. in Gard 165).⁽⁵⁾ Noting Basil’s failure to represent this “type,” Stockton, by implication, attributes a kind of parallel gender failure to James. But more broadly, it was the problem of “representing” gendered American types in a transnational literary context that troubled James in the immediate reception of the novel. Similar suspicion was leveled at the novel’s feminists. Most suffragists had little to say about the book, but one reviewer, Lucia T. Ames, writing in the suffragist *Women’s Journal*, reproached James for creating what she called a “world of abnormal women” (qtd. in Petty 378).

<5>While these words are not James’s, they reveal one discourse through which James’s novel was read: the epistemic problem of defining gendered categories as measurable norms through population. In the next section, I discuss a critical habit of suspicion surrounding gendered rhetoric in James’s narration alongside the growing significance of social statistics in the late nineteenth century. From there, I show how the aesthetics of women counting, and being counted, surround this narrator’s descriptions of Olive Chancellor and other social reformers; aesthetics that, in turn, created risks for James’s professional identity in the US. In the final section, I compare these descriptions to those of Basil, who enforces male expert authority through gender essentialisms and transphobic anxieties surrounding the women’s reform movement. I conclude by tracing the narrator’s construction of Verena’s desire in this space of friction between categories and populations. Demography, which detaches identity categories from individual subjects, offers flexible languages through which James navigates the historicity of gender, and, at times, crosses boundaries, like those described in *The American Scene*, “from sex to sex.”

Narrating Abnormality

<6>For James, the problem of representing a population—of Boston, of the US, of feminists—is at once epistemic and stylistic: what kind of prose can speak objectively without annihilating subjectivity? In conveying all the compromising

details about the novel's central rivals, Olive and Basil, the narrator aspires toward neutrality and objectivity. James's narrator comments from the sidelines, often in ways that establish that narrator's voice through impersonal distance from the characters. Early on, the narrator indirectly reports Basil's appeal to Olive's sister, Luna, to forgive "his Bœotian ignorance (he was fond of an elegant phrase)" (B 806) for his unfamiliarity with her. When Olive arrives, the narrator observes, via Basil, that his Olive is "morbid" (B 810). The narrator distances himself from Basil(6) by borrowing his "elegant" adjective, pointing out that Basil "had never been so 'Bœotian' as at that moment" (810). Several critics have paused on this passage, where James's narrator repeats Basil's adjective multiple times, noting the problem of identity that emerges from the word's proximity to emerging languages for naming homosexuality.(7)Natasha Hurley reads this passage as concretizing, through Basil's repetitions, "the illusion of verification and statistical accumulation" that "calcifie[s]" the referent of the word as "evidence for [Olive's] lesbianism" (156).(8) By contrast, Madoka Kishi reads this word through the novel's trope of self-sacrifice, through which James denies Olive access to lesbian identification through her desire for martyrdom. Sacrifice, in the Swedenborgian thought of James's father, "requires the nullification of a firmly established subject that desires an object, urging instead the passional [*sic*] identification with the object at the cost of subjectivity" (109). Basil's category, "morbid,"as Hurley points out, invokes the language of types, which, unlike identity categories, are "not terms of self-reference" (164). Types, in *The Bostonians*, might also be contrasted with what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick refers to as "nonce taxonomies," self-referential modes of "making, testing, and using unrationalized and provisional hypotheses about what *kinds of people* there are to be found in one's world," a mode of which James's writing, she notes, is "exemplary" (23). Ironic distance from Basil's Bœotian ignorance" concretizes the narrator's authority to form and dissolve categories using the characters' own phrases. Such ambivalent shifting around the language of morbidity frames Olive's sacrificial self-negation as a subsumption of her own subjective experience under taxonomies of gender and sexual definition, here supplied by Basil, whom, the narrator concludes, "it must be repeated . . . was very provincial" (B 810). "Morbid" can be said to signal the disappearance of an affirmable non-normative identity, like "lesbian," within a matrix of taxonomic constructions.

<7>James's prose style, the circumlocutions of which avoid confirmation of an incipient sexological category, as Hurley describes, may in fact depend on self-sacrifice as its model, as the annihilation of the self was precisely the goal of nineteenth-century statisticians in their search for objectivity. As Theodore Porter points out, objectivity, particularly as it is tied to quantities, "implies the subordination of personal interests and prejudices to public standards" (74). The

narrator's preferred stylistic and rhetorical strategy for achieving objectivity is to distance themselves from any specified population or gender category. The narrator tells us, for example, that it is not in their "power to reproduce by any combination of characters [Basil's] charming dialect," but that "the reader will have no difficulty in evoking the sound" (B 804). A few paragraphs later, however, they observe that Basil pronounces the word "very" with "the curious feminine softness with which Southern gentlemen enunciate that verb": the narrator's refusal to "reproduce" dialect is then also a refusal of its gendered qualities (B 806). If objectivity demands surrendering subjectivity, with all its trappings of desire, the narrator's refusal allows an "I" to persist in the absence of identity. Diegetic authority is established at the characters' expense, even if, momentarily afterward, the narrator's queries suddenly appear to align them with Basil. They ask, "Why was she morbid, and why was her morbidness so typical?" (810). Such to gender legibility offers one means of protecting their authority from the biases and suspicions that might compromise their performance of objectivity.

<8>This slanted narration, which tends to refuse affiliation with gendered political positionalities, has rightly been regarded with suspicion. Alfred Habegger points out, in his well-known critique of the novel, that James's own views on women's rights most likely aligned closely with Basil's (190). The narration is commonly punctuated by parenthetical commentary, like the one that follows Basil's adjective, which "reduces itself to a kind of stylized (but elegant) nineteenth-century hand pointing in from the margin" (183). The novel's elevation of objectivity as a literary project, even, as Habegger would have it, a failed one, reveals much about the forms that knowledge about gender and sexuality take on in this period. In a brief digression from her reading of Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, Sedgwick observes that James's narrator uses this kind of discursive gesturing to police Basil and Olive's social errors, and in so doing, "succeeds for a long time in protecting himself from the contagion of wielding" accusations of provinciality "by so exacerbating and so promising to soothe in the reader the anxiety of the reader's own positioning in this projectile drama" (98). While, for Sedgwick, this narratorial control is more "definitive" in Melville than in James, its "drama of disorientation and tentative empowerment" creates an "equation between cognitive mastery of the world in general and mastery of the terms of homoerotic desire in particular" (98). Through this performance of epistemic omniscience and authority, James's (putatively male) narrator interpellates readers, Sedgwick argues, through masculine homosocial relationality. Objectivity and omniscience, instantiated through James's narratorial intrusions, can police gender boundaries.

<9>But the allegiances of this narrator may not be so clear-cut. Not in spite, but in part because of their self-renunciations, our storyteller may be surprisingly ineffective at reinforcing rigid, binary gender distinctions. Recently, Scarlet Luk has proposed moving away from the guiding presumption of James criticism that James uses a consistently masculine narratorial identity across all of his novels. Instead, in reading *Portrait of a Lady*, Luk traces what she calls “textual transempodiment” (120) in the narrator, who never fully inhabits the same position as that text’s protagonist, Isabel Archer, because “they are too *outré* for the specificities of gender that she personally suffers through” (121). Yet this condition of being out of place in relation to gender is “paradoxically and precisely what brings them together” (121). Unlike in *Portrait*, James’s narrator in *The Bostonians* often stops short of affirming a positionality that would place them within a matrix of normalizing meanings, preferring to reestablish narratorial impersonality at moments of possible sympathy with the characters. This impersonality provides a literary technology through which Jamesian style can run athwart identity at a moment when Victorian sexology was forging new languages to classify queer and trans people.

<10>Following Luk’s account of *Portrait*, it may be helpful to view the narrator of *The Bostonians* as in some sense trans, but doing so provides only a partial account of the political consequences of this positionality. As a caution, I note that it is also difficult to affirm these wayward movements of identity as examples of emergent late-nineteenth-century sexological concepts like the third sex or sexual inversion.⁽⁹⁾ James’s novel arrives at a historical moment when terms like lesbian, homosexual, and invert were only just entering public discourse in Europe, and had yet to be imported into the US. Peter Coviello points out that, through Olive, James is able to “anatomize the fate of a person made for love, but not heterosexuality, in the dwindling moment before new names for that queer love would achieve a definitive prominence” (179).⁽¹⁰⁾ To extend Coviello’s line of thinking, I would argue that Olive’s dilemma is even more stark, as heterosexuality would, itself, only reach the status of a normal sexual identity distinct from “love” only after the taxonomic invention of homosexuality, its putatively abnormal twin.⁽¹¹⁾ Olive’s (and James’s) dilemma surrounding gender definition is marked by a crisis of subjectivity in a moment where numbers were gaining new potency in the social sciences. In the novel, the aesthetics of women counting, and being counted, surround descriptions of Olive and other social reformers. But the text’s claims to knowledge about regional and gendered populations, and implied relationships between individuals and identity categories, created risks for James’s professional reputation in the US. Objectivity, propped up through the narrator’s impersonal mastery of population, becomes a sign for that most Jamesian of desires: the effacement of the author’s public identity in the impersonality of style.

Interpretations of this narrator as an invariably male-identified arbiter of gendered definition may not be incorrect, but may be incomplete. Rather than stabilize the novel's triangular plot, the averaging effects of this narrator's demographic aesthetics imagine, for James, modes of description that retain subjectivity without the trappings of regional, national—or, for that matter, gendered—identity.

<11>What Hurley calls the “illusion of . . . statistical accumulation” in James's description of Olive's “morbid” character signals a broader thematic interest in populations and enumerative thinking in literature of this period. Recently, critics have reevaluated whether Victorian statistical thought, as it influenced literature, was solely preoccupied with control and stricture, or whether it may have signaled new formal possibilities of openness and multiplicity. In Michel Foucault's terms, “biopolitics” involves the use of “statistical estimates, and overall measures,” in order to “maintain an average, establish a sort of homeostasis, and compensate for variations” at the level of a “general population” (246). “Life,” in this complex of quantitative discourses, becomes a statistical abstraction. But, as Emily Steinlight points out, biopower, for Foucault, understands “life” to contain “element of chance, of error” at odds with “subjectivization” (26). Instead of a “reified and dematerialized life principle at odds with specific forms of life,” the fictions of this period, like Foucault, narrated “life as the potential for new forms to emerge” (27). Coleby Emmerson Reid has linked these same statistical fascinations with James's interest in literary naturalism, particularly in his late work. Reid points out that, for James, statistics become “a form of impersonality attained not merely through identity-shattering, but through a correlating attachment of the self to a social body” (102–03). If statistical impersonality can inaugurate social identity, rather than only dissolve it, then James's narration often transforms that identity in the act of populating it. In other words: a category can be changed by measuring it. Statistics can define a population of which Olive is an exemplar, but, as I show below, it also offers James's narrator a way to fulfill Olive's fantasies of self-divestiture. While James does flirt with the deterministic and positivistic affordances of numerical forms, he ultimately suggests that statistics can also be very queer, particularly in ways that thwart the more deterministic varieties of naturalism in which characters behave mechanistically according to the dictates of genetics and social class.

<12>One can only speculate whether James might have seen Boston as a hotbed of American statistics. In 1839, the American Statistical Association was founded in Boston (Anderson 37). In the same decade the novel was published, Boston-born Francis Amasa Walker, director of the 1870 and 1880 US census counts, and eventual president of MIT, dramatically transformed the statistical wing of American government. Under Walker, the census expanded its questionnaire and

began to focus on “social statistics,” which in turn created “new constituencies for the data,” including “reformers,” for whom data could serve as a powerful rhetorical weapon (88). But this could cut both ways. In the sociological imaginaries of the nineteenth century, as Anita Levy reminds us, the normativity diagrammed by this quantitative apparatus of averages and deviations “benefitted from the vocabulary of perversions, disorders, conditions, and diseases supplied by the discourse on sexuality in legal, medical, and educational writing” (26). Late Victorian statistical aesthetics pose, for the novel’s suffragists, a parallel dilemma to the “tension” of queer data: numbers can create visibility, but they also abstract identity categories from subjectivity. Olive Chancellor, who imagines “facts and figures” as weapons, dramatizes the political and professional risks James attributes to these enumerative representations (934).

Olive Chancellor, Enumerator

<13>*The Bostonians* begins with a number: “about ten minutes” (B 803). That is how long it takes Olive Chancellor to arrive, and, as Mrs. Luna tells Basil, her cousin, it is characteristic: “about ten; that is exactly like Olive. Neither five nor fifteen, and yet not ten exactly, but either nine or eleven” (B 803). Such approximations are contingent markers at best. But amid this contingency, Olive becomes the novel’s most skilled wielder of numbers. Social measurement is woven into Olive’s characterization and her narrated feelings toward Verena, her protégé. When the characters first meet, Olive regards Verena as “a creature of unlimited generosity,” and the narrator is quick to confirm this, assuring us that “there is no doubt that in this respect she took Verena’s measure on the spot” (B 874). Imagining such quantifying precision as a mode of address, Olive later tells her, “I should like to be able to say that you are my form—my envelope,” adding, “but you are too beautiful for that!” (B 946). This penetrative fantasy morphs into an imagination of Verena as vehicle for both style and statistics:

the happy thing in [Verena’s] composition was that, after a short contact with the divine idea—Olive was always trying to flash it at her, like a jewel in an uncovered case—she kindled, flamed up, took the words from her friend’s less persuasive lips, resolved herself into a magical voice, became again the pure young sibyl. Then Olive perceived how fatally, without Verena’s tender notes, her crusade would lack sweetness, what the Catholics call unction; and on the other hand, how weak Verena would be on the statistical and logical side if she herself should not bring up the rear. (B 947)

Olive's fantasy concerning "statistical and logical" rhetoric imagines the disappearance of her body, so that she can circulate, through Verena, amid the mass public of women. The erotics of this description of Olive's pedagogy, with its flashes of Paterian burning, imagines quantitative arguments passing from Olive's "less persuasive lips" to Verena's, anointed and refashioned as style. Such indirect labial contact is perhaps where we see the novel brush up against the historical concreteness of lesbian sexuality through which Olive and Verena's relationship has been read.

<14>A genealogy of women's contact with numerical data emerges through the narrator's brief inhabitation in Olive's desire to speak the "statistical and logical" argument for suffrage in Verena's "tender notes." Yet Verena's stylistic and rhetorical genius also promises, for Olive, to transcend the average. Verena is "so strange, so different from the girls one usually met, seemed to belong to some queer gipsy-land or transcendental Bohemia," a quality that marks her as part of "'the people,' . . . the social dusk of that mysterious democracy which Miss Chancellor held that the fortunate classes know so little about, and which (in a future possibly very near) they will have to count" (*B* 873). In this "queer" and racialized fantasy, enumerative grammar blurs distinctions between narratorial impersonality and Olive's interiority. The language of enumeration, whereby the "fortunate classes . . . will have to count" the "mysterious democracy," imagines Verena's voice as a means of attaching gender to the act of counting. But that language also underscores the use of numbers in the nineteenth-century US to list and count the bodies of sexual and racial minorities in the post-Civil War context. On the US census, as Siobhan Somerville notes, "the racial categories measured . . . have regularly been revised to reflect the concurrent understandings of identity, but also, less intentionally, to enforce those dominant understandings" (167). The whiteness of the novel's characters, as well as their majoritarian fantasies, dramatize the biopolitical tension between publicity and surveillance created by the hypervisibility of social data. Olive's "mysterious democracy" marks the racialized meanings underlying James's identity-dissolving fiction of the average.

<15>Olive's vision also highlights the ways that enumeration, in this period, was rapidly becoming women's work, amid the need to produce and process reams of printed data. Beginning in 1860, the US Census began to count employed women by their occupation (though they did not, at that time, count housewives as gainfully employed).⁽¹²⁾ However, women's activist groups such as the New York-based Association for the Advancement of Women explicitly criticized the 1870 census for undercounting working women, arguing, as Folbre observes, that "the census could improve the quality of its statistics on women and children by hiring intelligent

women as enumerators” (477). As early as the 1880s, the census office began hiring both men and women to tabulate increasingly large volumes of raw data (Magnuson and King). By 1890, women were among those operating the new tabulation machines that rapidly filled census offices in the coming decade.⁽¹³⁾ These connections are merely contextual, but they are also illustrative of transformations of power relations involved in producing gender through data in the context in which James was writing. *The Bostonians* (which takes place in the 1870s) highlights the gendering of demographic data-gathering in the context of women’s reform discourse by repeatedly measuring Verena through the perspectives of the other characters, many of whom see her as an outlier. Olive is not the only character who speaks of Verena in this way: late in the novel, Mrs. Burrage says to Olive, of Verena: “Miss Tarrant . . . makes herself the standard by which you measure her; she makes her own position” (*B* 1084).

<16>As with Olive and Verena, the narrator’s descriptions of the suffragists who populate Boston’s feminist clubs are often associated with numbers. This is nowhere more apparent than in James’s descriptions of Miss Birdseye, the aging social reformer, whose depiction earned James some professional reproach in the US. James likely based the character on Elizabeth Peabody, whom he had met in his youth.⁽¹⁴⁾ Following the serialization of the first few chapters, William James wrote his brother objecting to the portrayal of Miss Birdseye, calling it “really a pretty bad business” (qtd. in James, *SL* 203). In his reply, James denies the accusation, writing, as if in response to Peabody, “that an old survivor of the New England Reform period was an indispensable personage in my story, that my paucity of data and not my repletion is the faulty side of the whole picture . . . and that in short I have the vanity to claim that Miss Birdseye is a creation” (*SL* 202). In this response, James attributes the too-close resemblance to a sampling error, a “paucity” of available examples. Two years prior, in “The Art of Fiction,” James urged critics not to compromise the novelist’s premise, likening writers to data-gatherers. He claims, as he ventriloquizes the imaginary critic, that “it isn’t till I have accepted your data that I can begin to measure you” (*LCI* 57). The language of measurement enacts what Mark Seltzer has described as the essay’s “radical break between subject and technique,” just as, in James’s novel, measurement forms the language of the narrator’s social world (16).⁽¹⁵⁾ But in his reply to William, James also acknowledges Miss Birdseye as the “faulty side” of his “data,” even as he reproaches William for tampering with his observational instrument.

<17>The problems posed by James’s “data” persist in the narrator’s descriptions of both Miss Birdseye and Olive. Early on, when Olive first takes Basil to Miss Birdseye’s home, the narrator marks Basil’s response to “the mansion, which had a

salient front, an enormous and very high number—756—painted in gilt on the glass light above the door.” The two adjectives clarify that while the number itself is quite high, “enormous” refers not to its value, but the size of the gilt numerals themselves. The same word, “enormous,” is repeated later in the same paragraph in the long, ungenerous description of Miss Birdseye: “she was a little old lady, with an enormous head; that was the first thing Ransom noticed” (B 824). Basil’s subjectivity is tacked on, here, as a kind of screen for the narrator that preserves impersonality in the description of Miss Birdseye’s “vast, fair, protuberant, candid, ungarnished brow,” which deviates (*enormous*) in the same fashion as her address. Yet Miss Birdseye is also freighted with representing a norm of the “old survivor of the New England Reform period.” Her face forms a kind of composite photograph, looking as if it had been “soaked, blurred, and made vague by exposure to some slow dissolvent,” with a “mere sketch of a smile, a kind of instalment [*sic*], or payment on account; it seemed to say that she would smile more if she had time” (B 824). As a representation of the “data” to which James appeals in his defense of the character as “creation,” Miss Birdseye’s body, a blurry image of gender non-normativity, becomes a figure for the risks of statistical abstraction. As Elaine Freedgood explains, Victorian statistical discourse is marked by “the possibility of an infinite semantic proliferation, a situation definitively resistant to theoretical control” (27). James’s example blurs the boundary between the target population and the representative sample. The narrator aspires, but fails, to maintain the bird’s-eye view of statistical visuality when representing a non-normative subject. At their most subjective moments, they instead disappear, revealing James, the author, tampering with a narratorial instrument.

<18>If biography is any evidence, James’s comment about his “paucity” of “data” about “an old survivor of the New England Reform period” was accurate. The novel was composed following a short visit to Boston in 1881, during which James, in Leon Edel’s words, felt much like “an expatriate in his own land” (20). During this period, James complained in his notebooks that his “impressions here are what I expected they would be, and I scarcely see the place” (Edel 21). He then reflects, in a much-read passage, that his “burden” is to represent both a European and an American tradition. This is because the “American . . . must deal, more or less, even if only by implication, with Europe; whereas no European is obliged to deal in the least with America” (21). No writer, James continues, “dreams of calling [the European writer] incomplete for not doing so” (dealing with America, that is). Yet he recognizes that “fifty years hence, perhaps—he will doubtless be accounted so” (21). At this point in his life, James expressed mixed emotions about the expectations of an American writer to “deal with” American national identity, and to gather “data” (to borrow his phrase from *The Art of Fiction*) about the particularities of America

and Boston as his premise.⁽¹⁶⁾ As James's reflections on Miss Birdseye suggest, the novel depicts American women through the competing logics of demography and type. The two rival characters in *The Bostonians* are rendered as exemplars, not just of gendered and regional types, but of identity categories defined through the language of data. James casts these binary gender positions in terms of sectional politics signaled through attitudes toward the transatlantic. In the very first scene, Basil tells Miss Luna that "he lived in a part of the country where they didn't think much about Europe" (*B* 806). Olive, meanwhile, according to her sister, has visited Europe, but "stayed only an hour or two," and that "she hates it; she would like to abolish it." This sharp contrast—Basil's indifference, and Olive's prejudice—represent two versions of the position in which James imagines the transatlantic writer. Basil's "Bœotian ignorance" regarding Europe, to which the narrator later ascribes his observation that Olive is "morbid," articulates James's own ambivalence over identity. As I have argued, gender norms, in these scenes, circumscribe the construction of a narratorial identity grounded in detached representations of Boston and the US as "data." Much like statistical objectivity, the transatlantic displaces the writer demographically from region and population.

<19>The thematic recurrence of numbered domiciles like Miss Birdseye's highlights the biopolitical aim of measuring and accounting for the household as an index of national health. But James also sees the household as a space of chance and possibility. Addresses, which include the speeches Olive wishes Verena to deliver to the American public, are central to the novel's construction of the social. It is likewise women's agency of address that Basil seeks to return to the private, domestic sphere, where Verena will address only him. Street addresses become numbers that index the numerical rewriting of the domestic in the conceptual space of statistical publicity. When Olive and Verena first meet, Verena asks where Olive lives, and Olive, the narrator reports, "syllable[s] the address" (*B* 862) to her. Later, during their visit to New York, the narrator explains Olive's anxious revelation to Basil of the address where they are staying, when the two women happen to run into him at Mrs. Burrage's apartment. Unlike Miss Birdseye's address, here, the numbers are not specified in the diegesis, much like Olive's own residence on Beacon Street: "We are in West Tenth Street," Olive said; and she gave the number. "Of course you are free to come" (*B* 1056). The opaque "number" is given with some hesitancy. Olive has only given Basil the address because she feels secure in her "prevision" of a future, designed by her, in which Basil and Verena will never meet again. She plans to arrange it so that, when Basil calls, Verena will instead go to dinner with Mr. Burrage, another potential suitor. Here, the narrator intervenes: "it had been only this prevision," they explain, "that sustained her when she gave Mr. Ransom their number" (1064). What "sustain[s]" Olive is the hope that Verena will never see

Basil, a “belief that they might easily spend four days in a city of more than a million of inhabitants without that disagreeable incident. But it had occurred.” Through the large numbers of urban populations, Olive appears to bring order out of random chance—at least at first. Later, the narrator reveals, that, in fact, the meeting was entirely by design, as Verena and Basil have been seeing each other without Olive’s knowledge, prompting Olive’s immediate question: “How did you know his address?” (*B* 1067). The delivering of addresses and the transmission of numbers threaten the dissolution between public and private, and the gendered spheres they maintain, by crossing the directionalities of desire involved in the hail of enumeration.

<20>James’s novel registers, in these chance encounters, the increasing need to predict the behavior of populations, and alongside this behavior, the surveying of domestic interiors as spaces marked by public records. As Verena is approached by several gentlemen callers, namely Matthias Pardon and Henry Burrage, Olive tries to “allow for such aberrations, as a phase of youth and suburban culture” (*B* 937). The problem, for the narrator, is that Verena’s desires are understood as categorically different from Olive’s. Verena’s response raises the possibility of erotic feelings towards men when Olive tells her “I am not the least afraid of your marrying a repulsive man; your danger would come from an attractive one,” to which Verena says, “I’m glad to hear you admit that some *are* attractive!” (*B* 930). James’s narration, here delivered through Olive’s point of view, reveals Verena’s misrecognition of her mentor’s disinterested aesthetics of male attractiveness as an admission that she, like Verena, desires men. But Olive instead imagines scenes of women wielding numbers as an alternative to the dyadic division of gender and the narratives of desire that prop it up. When Mathias Pardon, a newspaper writer, visits Olive in her home to inquire when she will make Verena available, Olive rebukes him and envisions Verena heroically, “armed at all points, like Joan of arc (this analogy had lodged itself in Olive’s imagination); she should have facts and figures; she should meet men on their own ground” (*B* 934–35). In this passage, the narrator intrudes with extradiegetic comment that provides detail about Olive’s interior, seemingly in order to insist on their separation. In these descriptions, Olive’s numerical visions are mediated through narratorial commentary that rewrites public “facts” within characters’ interiorities. The narrator subsumes Olive’s identification with women, constructed through the armature of “figures,” under the impersonality of a putatively objective style.

<21>The problem, for this narrator, is that aesthetics of “facts and figures” must be both subjective and objective at once. For Olive, numbers become a shield for Verena, through whom Olive addresses women as the statistical other, listed and

diagrammed via social enumeration. This vision, as suggested by the intrusive parenthetical comments, is, paradoxically, too gendered to achieve the putative objectivity of Jamesian style. At one point, the narrator ropes the reader into their attributions of prejudice to Olive, explaining, “we know that her own mind had long since been made up in regard to the quantity of esteem due to almost any member of the other sex” (*B* 937). “We,” of course, only know this insofar as the narrator reports this “quantity” extradiegetically. Social enumeration also operates, for Olive, within the frameworks of US governmentality, and affirms marital institutions and contracts. Like many suffragists in the nineteenth century, as Brook Thomas points out, Olive does not reject the marriage contract (730). The narrator tells us that she has “no views about the marriage-tie except that she should hate it for herself,” and that abolishing it is a “reform she did not propose to consider” (*B* 878). Early on, Verena tells Olive that she prefers “free unions,” a revelation Olive finds “so disagreeable” (*B* 878) she has to hold her breath. Verena, much like the narrator, appears as a free agent on the border between the private and the public. Her position highlights the friction created by demographic data, in which being counted can either affirm an identity centered around the struggle for the franchise, or efface that identity to objectively represent a population.

<22>But Verena’s dilemma is also at odds with the narrator’s impersonality, because she must choose: either abandon her task of lending “unction” to Olive’s “statistics” and “figures” if she is to marry Basil; or, should she choose Olive, she must “promise . . . not to marry” (*B* 926). Unlike the narrator, who can remain distant from gender definition, Verena must choose between two models for constructing womanhood defined by marital domesticity and demographic measurement. Verena’s eventual decision to marry Basil concretizes the novel’s tension—the way in which data can provide a means of either claiming, or dissolving an identity—by foreclosing that tension. Verena’s interiority, and its narratorial representation, is at the center of the novel’s anxieties around gender indeterminacy. To understand how, we must turn to the novel’s demographic alternative to Olive’s enumerative desires: Basil Ransom.

Positivism and Aberrance

<23>James’s narratorial style sustains its impersonality by enacting, but refusing to identify within a binary model of demographic gender parity based on contract and apportionment, where Olive and Basil appear to compete as free and equal individuals for Verena’s affection and for segments of a narratorial voice. At the same time, the narrator fractures that imagined parity through their construction of Verena’s desire (or acquiescence) to marry Basil and cease her activism. It is in this

context that I want to suggest Basil's connection to a strain of positivist thinking that James counterpoises to Olive's statistical argument for women's enfranchisement. Basil upholds a binary gender system in which social categories are determined by a (male) scientific authority. Positivism, a philosophical school that elevates empirical knowledge and rejects introspection and metaphysics, sustains Basil's conceptions of gender. His intellectual influences, as they appear in the text, point to the kind of empiricism often privileged in numerical inquiry. However contradictory, the thinkers he lionizes nevertheless tended to reject statistical arguments for social reforms—surprising, as the term positivism would later become synonymous with statistics. As Ian Hacking notes, “positive science meant numerical science,” though this association would only emerge after the 1840s, when “the practice of measurement bec[a]me fully established” (5). The very term positivism was invented by Comte, though he “despised merely statistical inquiries.” We are told, early on, in one of James's free indirect descriptions, that Basil “had read Comte, he had read everything—[Olive] would never understand him” (B 818). It seems likely that Basil has absorbed, more than other aspects of positivism, Comte's views on gender. Comte outlines, in his 1851 text, *A General View of Positivism*, a social triad of intellect, affection, and action; these terms he associates, respectively, with philosophers, women, and the working class (218–20). In this triangular structure, Comte aligns women with the “domestic” and men with the “public,” defining the former as the “subjective” and the latter as the “objective basis” of a positive philosophy (226). Basil articulates a model of gendered spheres that fits within this bifurcated science of society, in which gender distinctions are rewritten as epistemic differences.

<24> Basil, taking after Comte, excludes women from access to the forms of address and objectivity enabled by statistical demography. He tells Verena that these “convictions exist in a vague, unformulated state in the minds of a great many of my fellow-citizens” (B 1107). “Fellow-citizen” is meant to exclude: the fourteenth amendment to the US Constitution granted citizenship to anyone born or naturalized in the US, but Basil is not using the word in this way. Rather, he aspires to “put into shape the slumbering instincts of an important minority” (B 1107). The identity of this minority is not specified so much as hinted at through Basil's rejections of feminism and his reactionary sectionalism. His fantasy of the consolidation of minority power—presumably of Southern white men—rejects demographic and indeed the democratic rhetorics of parity achieved through counting, rhetorics that populate Olive's visions of “meet[ing] men on their own ground.” Numbers, for Basil, affirm the cognitive mastery of the male observer, rather than serve as tools for self-negation.

<25>Basil's other favored thinker, Thomas Carlyle, also rejected statistics in his writings, and likewise elevates the presumptively male observing intellect above the uncertainty signaled by numbers. During Verena's trip to New York, Basil quotes Carlyle when she tries to "assure" him that "this is an age of conscience," to which he replies, "That's part of your cant. It's an age of unspeakable shams, as Carlyle says" (*B* 1112). When Verena retorts, he calls her "perverted" (*B* 1112). Statistics may be one such "sham"; in his essay on "Chartism," Carlyle dismisses statistics as a source of threatening indeterminacy, arguing that "statistics is a science which ought to be honorable . . . but it is not to be carried on by steam" (124). Instead, expert authority must be concentrated in the persona of the scientist: "conclusive facts are inseparable from inconclusive except by a head that already understands and knows." Habegger observes that James may have been influenced directly by readings from Carlyle when constructing the novel, and that Basil's character is likely modeled on him, in part.⁽¹⁷⁾ These intertexts highlight the deterministic and authoritarian epistemologies underlying Basil's gender essentialisms. From this limited slice of sociological writing, Basil extracts a binary model of gender in which numerical data only matters within the narrow subjective authority of an already-existing male intellectual mastery and political power. Carlyle's tautological description of facts as products of a mind that already recognizes them as factual underscores the narrator's own fraught objectivity, established through impersonal distance from Basil, whose philosophy also rejects objectivity in favor of expert judgment.

<26>Women's access to the numerical, for Basil, threatens to subvert male authority over the social. Through the course of the narrative, as Basil courts Verena, he defends a separate-spheres model of the marital dyad—though he, like Olive, seems indifferent to the marriage contract.⁽¹⁸⁾ His comments articulate transphobic anxieties over the dissolution of gendered spaces as the ultimate consequence of extending the franchise to women. Basil tells Verena, "my interest is in my own sex . . . that's what I want to save" (*B* 1111). When Verena asks, "to save it from what?" he answers, "from the most damnable feminisation." Such feminization is Basil's alarm bell that "the masculine tone is passing out of the world; it's a feminine, a nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age, an age of hollow phrases and false delicacy and exaggerated solicitude and coddled sensibilities," one that, "if we don't soon look out, will usher in the reign of mediocrity" (*B* 1111). Feminism, as Basil would have it, collapses the gender binary into an emasculating "mediocrity" of flattened gender indistinction, resonating with James's later language of the "common mean" in *The American Scene*. Rather than enabling visibility and identity, for Basil, feminism's numerical aesthetics dissolve gender difference into a troublingly feminized average.

<27>Basil's gender essentialisms often magnetize the narrator's sympathy, even as the narrator archly reveals Basil's ignorance through their impersonal rejections of this antifeminist deployment of positivist thinking. When the narrator lays out the multi-paragraph description of Basil's intellectual roots, their first-person parenthetical commentary intrudes once more to protest the ignorance of Basil's prejudice:

I know not how these queer heresies had planted themselves, but he had a longish pedigree (it had flowered at one time with English royalists and cavalier), and he seemed at moments to be inhabited by some transmitted spirit of a robust but narrow ancestor, some broad-faced wig-wearer or sword-bearer, with a more primitive conception of manhood than our modern temperament appears to require, and a programme of human felicity much less varied. (*B* 975)

James stages a rhetorical encounter in which "our" shared historical distance from Basil's ancestor assures the reader that the narrator speaks from the position of a nonspecific population of uncertain gender, for which they act as representative. But describing Basil's reactionary politics as "queer heresies" and denying knowledge of their origin is beguiling: as an address, it both estranges and affirms gendered boundaries attributed to Basil's model of male expertise, in which "know[ing]" would be premised on the same "queer heresies" that the narrator describes from outside. In this passage, much as in the "The Art of Fiction," James's narrator aspires to the status of an instrument; objectivity obtains from refusal of omniscience, as if the admission of not-knowing preserves impersonality of style. That this narrator should so often appear to take Basil's side, despite their attempts at distance, is then hardly surprising. In refusing Basil's essentialisms, the narrator must, themselves, essentialize a the "broad-faced" ancestor to establish their very distance from him. Basil's binary and "primitive" conception of gender cultivates a coherent narratorial subject who can dispense with the "queer" specificity of identity.

<28>These frictions between identity and gender James explores are bound by place and region. Hurley reminds us that James's characters stop short of claiming an "autochthonous identity" rooted in regional or sexological affirmation out of their sense of "interior belonging" (164). Succinctly: James's "project . . . was never to write a lesbian novel . . . his goal is to prove he can write an American novel" (164). Though American by birth, James writes American identity aslant from a transatlantic vantage, aggregating "data" of regional and national populations. Anxious narratorial deflections highlight the force of demographic thinking in late-Victorian, social-scientific constructions of public and private. If critics have

understood Olive as aligned with what has come to be called lesbian identity, they have also sometimes rightly highlighted the embeddedness of the novel's models of gender in the history of sexuality. James's style signals the rise of a narrative mode well-suited to navigating a social world in which the concepts of identity and type were increasingly being mapped.

<29>Verena's narrative confronts the question of what kinds of identification are required to preserve distinctions between public and private, as she begins to fall for Basil. Both Olive and Basil desire Verena's "genius," but whereas Basil wants to contain it within marital domesticity, Olive imagines it as a vehicle for numerical discourse in the public sphere (876). Victoria Olwell points out that *The Bostonians* "not only stages the collapse of the private sphere into the public but also apprehends as private—and therefore as dangerous to the public—the mode of genius that had historically served to create scenes of public life" (76). Such genius—itsself the subject of obsessive social-scientific measurement, in this period, for figures like Francis Galton, Havelock Ellis, and Cesare Lombroso—marks a moment when abnormal minds became an object of study through putatively objective procedures. For the narrator, Olive's desire to arm Verena's genius with data may signal a useful form of objectivity. However, publicity is also a problem for the narrator, as it requires identity. Olive's quantifying vision offers a public alternative to Basil's positivist, anti-quantitative masculinity, the latter of which would preserve the distinction of traditional gendered spheres along public/private lines. In Olive's measure, Verena's genius for public address creates quantitative forms that may open queer possibilities—if only temporarily—and even if only because they are marked as perverse by the narrator.

<30>The self-renunciations of the narrator—through which they paradoxically affirm their subjectivity—produce divergent, uneven models of gender difference within a field defined by measurable norms. These models, enumeration and masculine expertise, emerge on both sides of the gap James creates between Basil and Olive. While each character invokes a social-scientific rhetoric of gender and sexuality, Olive's model of gender is demographic, based in an aesthetic of counting and being counted, while Basil's is taxonomic, and relies on a normal-abnormal binary.⁽¹⁹⁾ This is where a problem emerges. The fiction James's narrator struggles to uphold, at the novel's conclusion, is that these perspectives represent opposing, but symmetrical, and equal narratorial options in the political context of the US. The weight of Verena's desire exerts the lopsided pressure of identity categorization on the narrative's division. In a remarkable scene near the novel's conclusion, the narrator's attempts to preserve this undecided neutrality suddenly collapses. On the "the saddest, most wounding day of her life," as Olive waits on the Boston shore for

Verena to return from her promised final meeting with Basil, her interiority is rendered speculatively through narratorial refusal:

Did Verena's strange aberration, on this particular day, suggest to Olive that it was no use striving, that the world was all a great trap or trick, or which women were ever the punctual dupes, so that it was the worst of the curse that rested upon them that they must most humiliate those who had most their cause at heart? . . . Did she ask herself why she should give up her life to save a sex which after all, didn't wish to be saved, and which rejected the truth even after it had bathed them with its auroral light and they had pretended to be fed and fortified? These are mysteries into which I shall not attempt to enter, speculations with which I have no concern; it is sufficient for us to know that all human effort had never seemed to her so barren and thankless as on that fatal afternoon (*B* 1180).

In these sentences, the narrator speaks with increasing distance from the objectivity and impersonality they claim to maintain, raising the possibility of sympathy and affiliation with women, only to foreclose it, in the end, in the name of negating "speculation." But it is within the particularity of Olive's demographic visions that the problem of the narrator's sympathy suddenly disrupts this commitment to absolute impersonality, for which no gender is necessary.

<31>James repeatedly uses "aberration" (one of Olive's words, which the narrator borrows) to describe Verena's desire. For the narrator, Olive's desire and heartbreak become markers of subjectivity that can be temporarily inhabited, but eventually refused. Much like their ignorance of Ransom's "queer heresies," the irony of the passage is in reluctance to explain, the acknowledgement of which affirms the narrator's speculation in the refusal to speculate. But what kind of norm renders Verena's "aberration" intelligible in the absence of knowledge about Olive's interiority? If the pathos of the passage relies on recognition Olive's desire for and identification with women, it also signals Verena's induction into a field of sexual identity defined by a normal-abnormal binary. At the end of the novel, the narrator's affective shift to resignation toward Verena's choice, and Olive's "fatal" loss, works to construct normal womanhood in a space defined by taxonomic and demographic distinctions between measurable populations. Gender normality emerges through the continuous movement of the narrator's intimacy with, and distance from, Olive's estrangement from the "women" who "humiliate those who had most their cause at heart." In this moment of sympathy, the narrator dissimulates the meaning of Olive's identifications, reifying statements about the norms of a population "which . . .

[does]n't wish to be saved." What the narrator marks as the overdetermining force emerges in tension with the character's interior estrangement from that normality.

<32>The novel's final scene, in which Basil and Verena exit the public sphere and retreat into a space defined through the marital dyad, dramatizes Olive's desire to merge with the impersonal crowd to whom she has, thus far, only spoken using Verena's voice. Just before Basil physically seizes her, Verena pleads with him to allow her to speak, not for herself, but as a reward to both Olive and the crowd, who has just quieted down in expectation for her speech. We are told that "nothing could have been more tender, more exquisite, than the way [Verena] put her appeal upon the ground of simple charity, kindness to the great good-natured, childish public" (B 1212–13). The narrator charges Olive with caring for that infantilized the public (whom Verena's parents attempt, with little success, to "pacify" [B 1213]), reconstructing public address as domestic labor, a mirror of the private sphere into which Ransom pulls Verena. Basil does not see Olive as she steps out onto the stage to solicit "the fierce expiation she sought for in exposure to the thousands she had disappointed and deceived" (B 1217). The moment is narrated outside Basil's point of view. The last image we see of Olive, not seen, but rather recounted in the subjective through Basil's perspective, is of the stage and "Boston audience," whom Basil is relieved to know "is not ungenerous" (B 1218). As Olive disappears into a world of normality, James imagines her in a position resembling that in which he placed the American author when confronted with "data" in "The Art of Fiction": the frayed connections between identities and populations. James's American novel concludes with two images of disappearing feminine subjectivity, as Olive speaks to a crowd, and Verena retreats into privacy.

Populating Queerness

<33>In *The Bostonians*, narratorial style plays out an uneven discursive process of grafting normative gender differences onto populations defined by measurement. While it may seem counterintuitive that the "queer heresies" to Basil's anti-quantitative politics occupy the same figurative space as Olive's affinity with counting women, James frames these two poles as possibilities for gendered experience that the narrator can equally refuse. However, this refusal is also circumscribed by attachments to the binary divisions of public and private, to which James opposes the gender-flattening potential of the average, which Basil wields as the threat of a feminizing "mediocrity." Thus, while James's novel imagines a fantasy in which gender-neutrality could lead to objectivity, the binary he constructs is skewed; to enact the forms of self-renunciation seen in Olive's fantasy, would require the narrator to abandon the subjective "I" that grounds their authority. The

narrator's refusal of gender-legibility highlights the central epistemic dilemma of Basil and Olive's positions within a field of gender definition newly problematized by objectivity and the measurement of populations. James positions Olive and Basil as two answers to the question of who counts, positions whose competition is to be partly constitutive of the normative structure of US politics, as Verena's decision is overdetermined. Verena's "aberration" *toward*, rather than away from binary heterosexuality serves to project and naturalize a transphobic foreclosure of the narrator's possible sympathies with Olive's fantasies of self-annihilation. The narrative suggests that Basil and Verena's marriage upholds Olive's self-effacement, as it subordinates the procedures of measuring norms to the gendered scripts that determine who is being measured.

<34>In the aftermath of *The Bostonians*'s critical reception, James once again reflected on the problem of exemplarity, and the challenges of joining individuals to regional populations. Writing to William following the novel's final serial installments, (Henry) James graciously accepts his brother's apology for criticizing the novel earlier:

Let me also say that if I have displeased people, as I hear, by calling the book *The Bostonians*—this was done wholly without invidious intention. I hadn't a dream of generalizing—but thought the title simple and handy, and meant only to designate Olive and Verena by it, as they appeared to the mind of Ransom, the southerner and outsider looking at them from New York. (Gard 161)

Just as Miss Birdseye is an "invention" who designates no real-life personage, so, according to James, are Verena and Olive to be understood as the titular *Bostonians*, rather than the population of the actual city that he earlier set out to represent in all of its particularity. The tension between Bostonian and (unspoken) lesbian identity is constituted through the demographic discourse that would later name them together.

<35>Perhaps "generalizing" is precisely what opens James's style to the queer possibilities of gender nonspecificity. Late in *The American Scene*, James provides a hint of what he might mean in describing the dissolution of gendered distinctions into sameness and mediocrity when he observes that what "may easily become, for a spectator, the sentence written largest in the American sky," namely, "the woman," is now "two thirds of the apparent life—which means she is absolutely all of the social" (AS 255). This sentence, like the two women of *The Bostonians*, is also imagined from the position of an outsider, looking in. In Europe, James tells us, "of

conditions in which men have actively participated and to which, throughout, they personally contribute, [the woman] has only one story to tell, and she keeps telling it after her fashion” (255). By contrast, “the woman produced by a woman-made society has obviously quite a new story” (256). American womanhood, James suggests, is a social quantity that inaugurates a potentially desirable erasure of rigid boundaries “from sex to sex.” Circumscribing the gendered possibilities that comprise “all of the social,” James’s prose aspires to master the field of the measurable. Rather than determine gendered meaning, *The Bostonians* disarticulates it, as well as its political and gendered affiliations, within the impersonality of style.

Notes

(1)Because I cite several works by James, I use the following system of abbreviation: *AS* for *The American Scene*; *B* for *The Bostonians*, in *Novels: 1881–1886*; *CN* for *Complete Notebooks*; and *LC1* for *Literary Criticism*, vol 1.(^)

(2)The complete novel was published in London in 1886 by MacMillan & Co. following a serial run in *The Century Magazine* from 1885 to 1886 (*B* 1240).(^)

(3)I quote from James’s transcription of this letter in his notebooks.(^)

(4)Bo Ruberg and Spencer Ruelos’s concept of “data for queer lives” (the name mirrors the advocacy group, “Data for Black Lives”) describes similar data justice practices that work within the “friction between how demographic data is traditionally conceptualized and collected and the realities of queer lives” (10).(^)

(5)This review was originally published in *Literary World*, June 1886, and is reprinted in Gard.(^)

(6)I use they/them pronouns to describe this narrator, whose gender is unclear, though I do not use the terms nonbinary or agender to describe them. Rather, I follow Luk’s account of James’s narrator as genderqueer or genderfluid.(^)

(7)This word has a history in sexological degeneration discourse that indicates homosexuality obliquely, much in the same way that Hugh Stevens observes with respect to the word “vicious” (11). Physician B. A. Morel, for example, defined the term “degeneration” (an influential concept for later sexologists like Richard Von Krafft-Ebing) as a “morbid deviation from an original type” (qtd. in Seidler 61).(^)

(8)Hurley argues that James’s writing “has been mistakenly associated with the rise of identitarian social categories that come into being after *The Bostonians* is

published and seem far more focused on individual self-reference” (164). Instead, his novel “understands [James’s] characters not in the register of sexuality in which they have come to be most widely known but as characters defined by place” (164-165).(^)

(9)In her account of what she calls the trans feminine allegory in modernism, Emma Heaney points out that the sexologists “gathered trans feminine self-descriptions from which they distilled the singular figure of the extreme invert as a type of person distinct from cis women and gay men” (7). The apparent extremity of this aided in the construction of these categories as separate types. However, this separation does not imply a pre-twentieth-century equivalent to a split between categories we would now refer to as gay and trans. (^)

(10)For more on the debates surrounding Olive’s lesbian identity, see Stevens, especially Chapter 5.(^)

(11)Jonathan Ned Katz has written about the transformation of love into heterosexuality in the Victorian period. The word heterosexual entered the American context in print for the first time in 1892, with the publication of medical texts by James G. Kiernan and Richard Von Krafft-Ebing. See Katz 20–21. Heterosexuality was originally a medical term, and it did not become associated with the concept of normal sexuality until well into the twentieth century.(^)

(12)See Folbre 175. The 1870 and 1880 census counts likely underrepresented employed women due to surveyors’ assumptions about gender and domesticity.(^)

(13)For more on the census office’s employment of women in this period, see Anderson, especially 102–08.(^)

(14)See especially Edel 142–43.(^)

(15)Seltzer also points out that James dissimulates this very distinction by the end of his own essay. For more on the concept of mechanical objectivity, see Daston and Galison, chapter three.(^)

(16)In his notebook he adds, “my impressions of America, I shall, after all, not write here. I don’t need to write them (at least not *apropos* of Boston); I know too well what they are” (qtd. in Edel 22).(^)

(17)For a fuller exploration of this line of influence, see Habegger 193–97.(^)

(18) Basil tells Verena that he is “perfectly ready to advocate a man’s having half a dozen wives” (*B* 1113).(^)

(19) As Levy points out, the English sociological tradition, exemplified by scientists like Peter Gaskell and James Kay Shuttleworth, posed the separation of both home and factory into gender-marked spaces as a solution for the moral deviance represented by the family-annihilating potentials of industrialization. See Levy 32–33.(^)

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