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American Literature, Lynching, and the Spectator in the Crowd: Spectacular Violence examines spectatorship in American literature at the turn of the twentieth century, focusing on texts by Theodore Dreiser, Miriam Michelson, Irvin S. Cobb, and Paul Laurence Dunbar.

Nietzsche recommended Wagner not because he endorsed the rebirth of national spirit or *geist*, but because Wagner so clearly expressed the rotten nationalist consciousness of the Germans who enjoyed his music. After listening to Wagner, Nietzsche had to open the windows yelling, "bad air! Like Nietzsche, too, many writers of the late nineteenth century tended to have a skeptical opinion of the democratic potential of crowd consciousness in American life. An elitist disdain for the crowded agora has been a staple of western philosophy and literature since Plato. She asks why crowds keep uncannily reappearing in American literature, and what kinds political commitments those representations entail. She argues that crowds or at least the images of crowds in late nineteenth century U. Most of the evidence Esteve cites are negative examples 3. She argues that crowds gesture toward the political ideal of a rational, deliberative, individual citizen because most crowds do not act in that way. For Esteve, the crowd that behaves like a great hypnotized monster obliges observers to imagine its alternative: So, in other words, anonymous crowds teach that the "loss of personhood" is not a good thing Rather than bewailing the modern age, however, Esteve studies how these paradoxical, two-faced images of crowds keep reappearing in nineteenth and twentieth century literature. For Esteve, literary representations of the crowd always generate a dialectic between responsible individuality and anonymous aggregation. To make her case, Esteve focuses on what she calls "unmotivated crowds," crowds that are not bent on collective action. With the exception of her Du Bois chapter, her study does not focus on angry or celebratory crowds seeking some sort of social justice—the "mob. Even if we ignore what purpose they have in congregating, Esteve argues that these non-political bodies make the political visible. Esteve states that she thinks abstraction and rationality are essential parts of any political program worthy of the name. She laments a tendency in scholars as varied as Michael Warner, Wai Chee Dimock, and Philip Gould to fetishize popular resistance and difference at the expense of justice 14; To be fair to these scholars, none of these scholars advocates irrationality per se, even though they are concerned that the voices of the underclass get heard. Esteve openly applauds the Kantian definition of moral conduct: She is also a defender of the democratic ideals of Jurgen Habermas. Her very convincing discussion of several Stephen Crane short stories forms the centerpiece of her book. She frames her reading of Du Bois in the context of black protest about their exclusion from the Chicago Columbian Exhibition, and she argues that Du Bois ironically aestheticizes the lynch mob to demonstrate its bankrupt politics. As Esteve moves into her theoretical argument, however, her language becomes hard to follow. If I get her right, Esteve seems to agree that Kant inaugurated a big problem in aesthetics that concerns teleology. Kant seems to reply: Kant famously defined beauty as "purposiveness without any representation of a purpose" Critique 1. On one hand, it sounds like Kant is claiming that art stands independent from society—it follows its own rules, which never need express a specific purpose in life. This claim gestures toward the idea that art contains abstract universals, either given by God, or granted as part of our perceptual machinery. People who talk about the magical aura of a piece of art disciples of Heidegger often unconsciously invoke this "purposiveness without purpose," a neo-Kantian moment of aesthetic wonder. But on the other hand, Kant held that the capacity and inclination to discuss taste as if it could be shared was also universal among men. This second claim suggests that beauty is somehow connected to society, not simply privately intuited. But Esteve wants to say that the aesthetics of the moment of beholding the crowd involves a different kind of collective feeling than the way in which ideals of taste are shared. She feels that the moment of contemplation of the "sublime" crowd is thus political in a different way than the claim to the universality of claims to taste Now if all this makes your eyes cross, it should. The question is where the "social" part of beauty comes from, and it is a notoriously tricky issue. She apologizes that she does not have room to fully explain herself. At this crucial point in her introduction, she footnotes several recent major studies of Kant and the sublime, but she does not adopt or advance their arguments. In the

end, I am not sure why she needs a new reading of Kant to do the kind of analysis that appears in her literary readings. It seems to me that the aesthetic problems posed by "the crowd" invoke fairly conventional Kantian paradoxes of individual judgement and social connection. On the level of literary explication, I found Esteve to provide stronger overall interpretations in the second half of her book. To her credit, she tends to discuss passages from less-well-known works. I was grateful for her unorthodox choices. In all, I found this to be a very rich study of the aesthetics of the crowd in American culture, and very sensitive to questions of gender and race. One of the big questions that Esteve raises toward the end of her book is what kinds of popular aggregation are valuable for identity politics. Although I found her theoretical claims murky at times, Esteve tackles the difficult work of articulating ideals of collective, responsible citizenship in an age of political fragmentation.

2: Review of The Aesthetics and Politics of the Crowd by Mary Esteve

An appendix, "The Crowd in American Painting," is thematically relevant, but it shows little effort to relate the art of Mills's four artists to the literature. Consequently, it is a tangential essay that complements but does not help develop.

There are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told. Men die nightly in their beds, wringing the hands of ghostly confessors, and looking them piteously in the eyes--die with despair of heart and convulsion of throat, on account of the hideousness of mysteries which will not suffer themselves to be revealed. Now and then, alas, the conscience of man takes up a burden so heavy in horror that it can be thrown down only into the grave. And thus the essence of all crime is undivulged. Not long ago, about the closing in of an evening in autumn, I sat at the large bow-window of the D-- Coffee-House in London. For some months I had been ill in health, but was now convalescent, and, with returning strength, found myself in one of those happy moods which are so precisely the converse of ennui--moods of the keenest appetency, when the film from the mental vision departs--achlus os prin epeen--and the intellect, electrified, surpasses as greatly its everyday condition, as does the vivid yet candid reason of Leibnitz, the mad and flimsy rhetoric of Gorgias. Merely to breathe was enjoyment; and I derived positive pleasure even from many of the legitimate sources of pain. I felt a calm but inquisitive interest in every thing. With a cigar in my mouth and a newspaper in my lap, I had been amusing myself for the greater part of the afternoon, now in poring over advertisements, now in observing the promiscuous company in the room, and now in peering through the smoky panes into the street. This latter is one of the principal thoroughfares of the city, and had been very much crowded during the whole day. But, as the darkness came on, the throng momentarily increased; and, by the time the lamps were well lighted, two dense and continuous tides of population were rushing past the door. At this particular period of the evening I had never before been in a similar situation, and the tumultuous sea of human heads filled me, therefore, with a delicious novelty of emotion. I gave up, at length, all care of things within the hotel, and became absorbed in contemplation of the scene without. At first my observations took an abstract and generalizing turn. I looked at the passengers in masses, and thought of them in their aggregate relations. Soon, however, I descended to details, and regarded with minute interest the innumerable varieties of figure, dress, air, gait, visage, and expression of countenance. By far the greater number of those who went by had a satisfied, business-like demeanor, and seemed to be thinking only of making their way through the press. Their brows were knit, and their eyes rolled quickly; when pushed against by fellow-wayfarers they evinced no symptom of impatience, but adjusted their clothes and hurried on. Others, still a numerous class, were restless in their movements, had flushed faces, and talked and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company around. When impeded in their progress, these people suddenly ceased muttering; but redoubled their gesticulations, and awaited, with an absent and overdone smile upon their lips, the course of the persons impeding them. If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers, and appeared overwhelmed with confusion. There was nothing very distinctive about these two large classes beyond what I have noted. Their habiliments belonged to that order which is pointedly termed the decent. They were undoubtedly noblemen, merchants, attorneys, tradesmen, stock-jobbers--the Eupatrids and the common-places of society--men of leisure and men actively engaged in affairs of their own--conducting business upon their own responsibility. They did not greatly excite my attention. The tribe of clerks was an obvious one; and here I discerned two remarkable divisions. There were the junior clerks of flash houses--young gentlemen with tight coats, bright boots, well-oiled hair, and supercilious lips. Setting aside a certain dapperness of carriage, which may be termed deskism for want of a better word, the manner of these persons seemed to be an exact facsimile of what had been the perfection of bon ton about twelve or eighteen months before. They wore the castoff graces of the gentry;--and this, I believe, involves the best definition of the class. The division of the upper clerks of staunch firms, or of the "steady old fellows," it was not possible to mistake. These were known by their coats and pantaloons of black or brown, made to sit comfortably, with white cravats and waistcoats, broad solid-looking shoes, and thick hose or gaiters. They had all slightly bald heads, from which the right ears, long used to pen-holding, had an odd habit of standing off on end. I observed that they always removed or settled

their hats with both bands, and wore watches, with short gold chains of a substantial and ancient pattern. Theirs was the affectation of respectability--if indeed there be an affectation so honorable. There were many individuals of dashing appearance, whom I easily understood as belonging to the race of swell pick-pockets, with which all great cities are infested. I watched these gentry with much inquisitiveness, and found it difficult to imagine how they should ever be mistaken for gentlemen by gentlemen themselves. Their voluminousness of wristband, with an air of excessive frankness, should betray them at once. The gamblers, of whom I descried not a few, were still more easily recognizable. They wore every variety of dress, from that of the desperate thimble-rig bully, with velvet waistcoat, fancy neckerchief, gilt chains, and filagree buttons, to that of the scrupulously inornate clergyman, than which nothing could be less liable to suspicion. Still all were distinguished by a certain sodden swarthiness of complexion, a filmy dimness of eye, and pallor and compression of lip. There were two other traits, moreover, by which I could always detect them: Very often, in company with these sharpers, I observed an order of men somewhat different in habits, but still birds of a kindred feather. They may be defined as the gentlemen who live by their wits. They seem to prey upon the public in two battalions--that of the dandies and that of the military men. Of the first grade the leading features are long locks and smiles; of the second, frogged coats and frowns. Descending in the scale of what is termed gentility, I found darker and deeper themes for speculation. As the night deepened, so deepened to me the interest of the scene; for not only did the general character of the crowd materially alter its gentler features retiring in the gradual withdrawal of the more orderly portion of the people, and its harsher ones coming out into bolder relief, as the late hour brought forth every species of infamy from its den, but the rays of the gas-lamps, feeble at first in their struggle with the dying day, had now at length gained ascendancy, and threw over every thing a fitful and garish lustre. All was dark yet splendid--as that ebony to which has been likened the style of Tertullian. The wild effects of the light enchained me to an examination of individual faces; and although the rapidity with which the world of light flitted before the window prevented me from casting more than a glance upon each visage, still it seemed that, in my then peculiar mental state, I could frequently read, even in that brief interval of a glance, the history of long years. With my brow to the glass, I was thus occupied in scrutinizing the mob, when suddenly there came into view a countenance that of a decrepit old man, some sixty-five or seventy years of age --a countenance which at once arrested and absorbed my whole attention, on account of the absolute idiosyncrasy of its expression. Any thing even remotely resembling that expression I had never seen before. I well remember that my first thought, upon beholding it, was that Retsch, had he viewed it, would have greatly preferred it to his own pictural incarnations of the fiend. As I endeavored, during the brief minute of my original survey, to form some analysis of the meaning conveyed, there arose confusedly and paradoxically within my mind, the ideas of vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense--of supreme despair. I felt singularly aroused, startled, fascinated. Hurriedly putting on an overcoat, and seizing my hat and cane, I made my way into the street, and pushed through the crowd in the direction which I had seen him take; for he had already disappeared. With some little difficulty I at length came within sight of him, approached, and followed him closely, yet cautiously, so as not to attract his attention. I had now a good opportunity of examining his person. He was short in stature, very thin, and apparently very feeble. His clothes, generally, were filthy and ragged; but as he came, now and then, within the strong glare of a lamp, I perceived that his linen, although dirty, was of beautiful texture; and my vision deceived me, or, through a rent in a closely buttoned and evidently second-handed roquelaire which enveloped him, I caught a glimpse both of a diamond and of a dagger. These observations heightened my curiosity, and I resolved to follow the stranger whithersoever he should go. It was now fully night-fall, and a thick humid fog hung over the city, soon ending in a settled and heavy rain. This change of weather had an odd effect upon the crowd, the whole of which was at once put into new commotion, and overshadowed by a world of umbrellas. The waver, the jostle, and the hum increased in a tenfold degree. For my own part I did not much regard the rain--the lurking of an old fever in my system rendering the moisture somewhat too dangerously pleasant. Tying a handkerchief about my mouth, I kept on. For half an hour the old man held his way with difficulty along the great thoroughfare; and I here walked close at his elbow through fear of losing sight of him. Never

once turning his head to look back, he did not observe me. By and by he passed into a cross street, which, although densely filled with people, was not quite so much thronged as the main one he had quitted. Here a change in his demeanor became evident. He walked more slowly and with less object than before--more hesitatingly. He crossed and re-crossed the way repeatedly, without apparent aim; and the press was still so thick, that, at every such movement, I was obliged to follow him closely. The street was a narrow and long one, and his course lay within it for nearly an hour, during which the passengers had gradually diminished to about that number which is ordinarily seen at noon in Broadway near the park--so vast a difference is there between a London populace and that of the most frequented American city. A second turn brought us into a square, brilliantly lighted, and overflowing with life. The old manner of the stranger reappeared. His chin fell upon his breast, while his eyes rolled wildly from under his knit brows, in every direction, upon those who hemmed him in. He urged his way steadily and perseveringly. I was surprised, however, to find, upon his having made the circuit of the square, that he turned and retraced his steps. Still more was I astonished to see him repeat the same walk several times--once nearly detecting me as he came around with a sudden movement. In this exercise he spent another hour, at the end of which we met with far less interruption from passengers than at first. The rain fell fast, the air grew cool; and the people were retiring to their homes. With a gesture of impatience, the wanderer passed into a by-street comparatively deserted. Down this, some quarter of a mile long, he rushed with an activity I could not have dreamed of seeing in one so aged, and which put me to much trouble in pursuit. A few minutes brought us to a large and busy bazaar, with the localities of which the stranger appeared well acquainted, and where his original demeanor again became apparent, as he forced his way to and fro, without aim, among the host of buyers and sellers. During the hour and a half, or thereabouts, which we passed in this place, it required much caution on my part to keep him within reach without attracting his observation. Luckily I wore a pair of caoutchouc overshoes, and could move about in perfect silence. At no moment did he see that I watched him. He entered shop after shop, priced nothing, spoke no word, and looked at all objects with a wild and vacant stare. I was now utterly amazed at his behavior, and firmly resolved that we should not part until I had satisfied myself in some measure respecting him. A loud-toned clock struck eleven, and the company were fast deserting the bazaar. A shop-keeper, in putting up a shutter, jostled the old man, and at the instant I saw a strong shudder come over his frame. He hurried into the street, looked anxiously around him for an instant, and then ran with incredible swiftness through many crooked and peopleless lanes, until we emerged once more upon the great thoroughfare whence we had started--the street of the DHotel. It no longer wore, however, the same aspect. It was still brilliant with gas; but the rain fell fiercely, and there were few persons to be seen. The stranger grew pale. He walked moodily some paces up the once populous avenue, then, with a heavy sigh, turned in the direction of the river, and, plunging through a great variety of devious ways, came out, at length, in view of one of the principal theatres. It was about being closed, and the audience were thronging from the doors. I saw the old man gasp as if for breath while he threw himself amid the crowd; but I thought that the intense agony of his countenance had, in some measure, abated. His head again fell upon his breast; he appeared as I had seen him at first. I observed that he now took the course in which had gone the greater number of the audience but, upon the whole, I was at a loss to comprehend the waywardness of his actions.

3: Debbie Lelekis (Author of American Literature, Lynching, and the Spectator in the Crowd)

In employing spectatorship as a lens, Lelekis draws together critical work on the history of American vigilantism, the crowd in American literature, and journalism's influence on American letters.

Poe pioneered many of the most enduring forms of American popular culture, including the detective story, science fiction, and the gothic or sensational tale; yet he also exerted a profound influence on Modernism through the enthusiasm of Charles Baudelaire and the French Symbolist poets. Auguste Dupin, and the inability of philosophy to account for the perverse. He suffered the early death of his parents, disinheritance by his foster father, poverty, anonymity, and a series of professional failures, but he also enjoyed some notable successes: One of the first American writers to attempt to support himself by writing for a popular audience, Poe remains a cultural icon for the risks and rewards of aesthetic engagement. Born in Boston on July 19, 1809, Edgar Poe was the second child of Elizabeth and David Poe, itinerant actors who performed in theaters in eastern seaboard cities from Massachusetts to South Carolina. David Poe abandoned the family while Poe was still an infant. When his mother died in December while appearing at the Richmond Theater, Poe was taken in by a prosperous Virginia merchant and his wife, John and Frances Allan. An exporter of tobacco and importer of a variety of merchandise, John Allan moved his family to England in 1815 to set up a branch of his firm in London. There, Poe attended boarding school until he was eleven, when Allan moved the family back to Richmond on account of business failures. Poe completed school in Richmond, entering the newly opened University of Virginia in 1819. He excelled at ancient and modern languages, but incurred large gambling debts that Allan refused to pay. Poe got himself dismissed from West Point by deliberately disobeying orders; then he set out for New York City, where he published Poems on the strength of a subscription list generated by his fellow cadets. Poe struggled in the following years to support himself by his writing, moving to Baltimore to live with his grandmother, his aunt, and his young cousin Virginia Clemm, and submitting stories for newspaper prize competitions. Early in 1827, he began to publish tales and book reviews in a newly established Richmond magazine, the Southern Literary Messenger. Clemm and thirteen-year-old Virginia, whom he married in the spring of 1825, Not for the last time, Poe turned to literary hack work to support himself. In 1828, the Harper Brothers, an increasingly prominent New York publishing firm, brought out his partially serialized adventure novel The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, but it sold poorly in the United States despite being enthusiastically reviewed and pirated in England. His first collection of fiction, Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, was published in Philadelphia later that year, but reviewers found the tales extravagant and mystical and the book sold poorly. In January 1829, Virginia Poe burst a blood vessel while singing, almost died, and never fully recovered her health. After experimenting with the lecture circuit, Poe moved his family to New York in 1831. Poe gradually assumed editorship and part ownership of the Broadway Journal, using it as a vehicle for printing revised versions of tales that had been scattered among a variety of newspapers and magazines. Just as Poe seemed to be gaining a measure of control over his career and his literary corpus, however, his personal and professional life began to unravel. In the last years of his life, Poe wrote poems, tales, and criticism and lectured on poetry and poetic theory, devoting considerable energy to Eureka, a book-length prose poem detailing his theory of the universe. Reviving his plan to found an elite literary magazine, Poe traveled to Richmond to seek southern support in the summer of 1836. There he took the temperance pledge and became engaged to his boyhood sweetheart before returning north on literary business. Stopping in Baltimore, he apparently broke his pledge, became drunk and disoriented, and was found unconscious outside a polling station on Election Day.

4: The Man of the Crowd

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5: The Aesthetics and Politics of the Crowd in American Literature by Mary Esteve

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