BRITISH ART STUDIES
Issue 23 – August 2022 – July 2022

Capturing Futurity: The Artistic Exchange of Alvin Langdon Coburn and H. G. Wells

Article by **Margaret J. Schmitz**

Abstract
During the first decade of the twentieth century, the American-born British photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn renounced pictorialism as he documented New York City's unprecedented architecture. Scholars have suggested that Coburn's shift from pictorialism occurred after 1910 when his awareness of modern art movements solidified. However, this article demonstrates that Coburn's experimentation with radical aesthetics began earlier and was instigated by his friendship with English science fiction writer H. G. Wells. Coburn formulated a visual language of futurity as he interpreted Wells's fantastical texts in his photographs of New York. In doing so, he captured the modern metropolis's inherent abstraction and explored how a photographed moment could be temporally estranged from the present by infusing it with a sense of the future. While Coburn's friendship with Wells had a significant impact on his maturation as an artist, their artistic exchange has not been given adequate scholarly attention until now.

From 1903 to 1912, during a period of dual residency in England and the United States, the photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn turned his lens on London and New York City. Coburn's photographs of London deploy a soft-focused pictorialist aesthetic to emphasize the city's ethereal fogs and picturesque antiquity. Meanwhile, his New York images betray an interest in hard-edged spatial relationships and avant-garde photographic techniques. As Coburn's career progressed, he abandoned pictorialism altogether, gravitating to a straight-shot approach and a purified, modernist style. Scholars have suggested that Coburn's renouncement of pictorialism was related to his growing awareness of modern art movements and occurred only after meeting the American cubist Max Weber in 1910.[1] Others have revealed how Coburn's modernist inclinations culminated during his 1916 collaboration with Ezra Pound, which produced the startlingly abstract vorticist-inspired vortographs.[2] While Coburn's interactions with Weber and Pound were impactful, his increasingly radical aesthetic choices had begun years before their meetings and stemmed from transatlantic encounters made earlier in his career. This article focuses on the aesthetic of futurity that Coburn cultivated in his photographs of New York, which was largely instigated by his friendship with English science fiction writer H. G. Wells. Coburn was an eccentric mystic who sought to imbue his photographs with metaphoric meanings that

were often tied to his various interests in literature, esoteric thought, and comparative religion.[3] Naturally, Coburn was attracted to Wells's prognosticatory writing and many of his most well-known photographs were inspired by passages from the author's texts. This artistic exchange helped Coburn defamiliarize New York and present it as an otherworldly fantasy.

Throughout his career, Coburn supplied several famous authors with images to accompany their written work, including Henry James, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Wells. Wells was the most encouraging of Coburn's experimental inclinations and, accordingly, had a greater impact on his artistic development.[4] Coburn's appreciation of modern architecture also helped foster an especially close friendship with the writer, who was equally fascinated by American technological growth. Consequently, this article begins by assessing how Coburn's first images of New York inspired Wells's celebration of Manhattan's topography in his 1906 cultural analysis of the United States, *The Future in America: A Search After Realities*.[5] I then discuss how Wells motivated Coburn's dislocation from pictorialism to a more radical style later in the decade. Throughout, I track Wells and Coburn's artistic exchange and demonstrate how transnational studies, along with archival research, intertextual analysis, and critical visual analysis can expand our understanding of Coburn's artistic development.

A photographed moment, like the fantastic worlds described in Wells's stories, can never be cleanly divorced from the present. The concept of futurity in a science fiction context involves critiquing the present's social or political conditions from the vantage point of a fictional future time. The genre reflects on the reader's or writer's circumstances and the future impact of science and technology through the lenses of utopian longing or prophetic warning. Coburn's enthusiasm for the advanced technologies and speculative futures in Wells's writing presented him, therefore, with a pressing media-specific challenge: How might photography, which portrays a static instant in time, also represent the future?

Coburn deployed several tactics to achieve this end—all of which are found, for instance, in his 1909 photograph *The Octopus* (fig. 1). Like many artists working during the first decades of the twentieth century, he emphasized the dynamism, movement, and constant construction of the metropolis.[6] In *The Octopus*, the recently constructed Metropolitan Tower's shadow looms across the snow-laden turf. Widely recognized as the world's tallest building at the time, the tower served as a metaphor for the city's ever-changing landscape. Coburn also abstracted his subjects using a complex procedure that combined extreme cropping techniques and unique perspectives. The main focal point in *The Octopus* is Madison Square Park's walkways, which have been converted into an abstract linear pattern via his view from the Metropolitan Tower. These processes transformed the city and its new skyscrapers into something altogether alien and foreign to most audiences, which helped estrange his photographs from the present and imbue them with a sense of futurity. While he was prompted by science fiction's world-building competencies, Coburn was not attempting to compete with the growing number of science fiction illustrators at the turn of the century or to provide a literal interpretation of Wells's texts. Rather, he was compelled by the writer to reify the metropolis into a transforming world whose final concrete form was suggested, but seductively out of reach.

The conceptual motivations behind Coburn's New York cityscapes set them apart from those made by later modernists, such as Joseph Stella or Georgia O'Keeffe, who mainly aimed to highlight the city's innate abstract and formal qualities. The photographer's most radical images, which abstracted and defamiliarized Manhattan, appear to take on some of the formal characteristics of avant-garde painting, but this article demonstrates that Coburn's manipulation of the city's structures was tied to an ideology of American exceptionalism and inspired by

Wells's texts. Ultimately, Coburn responded to the geometric spectacle of Manhattan's skyscrapers by developing artistic solutions outside of the emerging European avant-garde. Nonetheless, the aesthetic of futurity he devised in his photographs relates to broader modernist ideals and goals. Merrill Schleier has argued that, compared to other modern urban structures, the American skyscraper's "inimitable character inspired a particular iconography all its own" in modernism.[7] Manhattan's architecture offered a new kind of spectacle for the modern world, one that was ideologically linked with ideas of progress in subjective ways. Like Coburn, later modernists were fixated on using these features of modernity to break away from or reject the past. It could be argued that Coburn's interest in Wellsian utopian thought and science fiction peripherally impacted modernism's depiction of such themes. The unfamiliar, abstracted aerial views and hard-edged, tonal patterns found in his futuristic cityscape photographs are precursors to later artists' and photographers' interest in these stylistic qualities and subjects. Because Wells significantly provoked Coburn's maturation as an artist at a key turning point in the photographer's career, their relationship warrants further scholarly attention.[8] This article supplies this much-needed perspective and in doing so it alters our existing conception of Coburn's creative growth and his proximity to an emergent modernism.

The Future in America

In 1903, on his yearly sojourn back to the United States, Coburn took his first photographs of New York City. In his soft-focused picture *Brooklyn Bridge* (fig. 2), the structure's Gothic Revival architecture rises out of a heavy fog and looms darkly against the sky. The image is predominantly pictorialist in that it mimics Whistler's Thames nocturnes and the American Tonalists' moody painted surfaces.[9] The photograph also conforms to the developing genre of the technological sublime, which transposed Romantic tropes of awe-inspiring natural vistas and their climatic effects onto technological wonders like the modern metropolis.[10] Edward Steichen's 1904 portrayal of the Flatiron Building, Alfred Steiglitz's snowy Manhattan nocturnes, and Paul Martin's *Cleopatra's Needle and the Thames Embankment by Gas-Light* are contemporaneous examples that relate to Coburn's photograph and adhere to this popular pictorialist theme. Its romantic interpretation of modern New York differs drastically from his later, hard-edged portrayals. His departure from these brooding scenes began after meeting Wells.

Coburn's talent, connections, and amiable—occasionally sycophantic—personality permitted him to exhibit widely and establish long-lasting relationships with fellow photographers and patrons early in his career. In addition to cityscapes, Coburn was actively making portraits of the most revered writers, artists, and intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic, including George Bernard Shaw who Coburn met and photographed in August of 1904 upon his return to London. Coburn and Shaw grew close after this meeting and the photographer called on his new friend to organize portrait sittings with other prominent figures.[11] This resulted in Coburn and Wells meeting in November 1905. They went on to maintain a decade-long friendship, which involved the exchange of aesthetic ideas, philosophical beliefs, books, and photographs. After Shaw, Wells's letters to Coburn form the largest cache of correspondence from any one contact in Coburn's archive at George Eastman House.[12]

Before photographing authors, Coburn's usual practice was to immerse himself in his sitter's literary work and he had undoubtedly read Wells's scientific romances, such as *The Time Machine* (1895), *War of the Worlds* (1897), and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901).[13] Wells's distinction as an author came to him through his ability to merge accessible science fiction

narratives with relevant social issues. His work reflects the widespread volunteerism adopted by the upper classes, who endeavored to solve society's social ills during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Coburn's 1905 portraits of Wells, the writer appears to be concentrating deeply, as if devising his next great contribution to societal betterment. He is seen with his head cocked to one side with a finger trailing up to his temple (fig. 3) or holding a book and staring melodramatically at something in the far distance (fig. 4). It is conceivable that Wells told his new American friend of his upcoming trip to the United States, which would become the subject of a book published in October the following year, titled *The Future in America: A Search After Realities*. Wells's book attempted to gauge what the United States would become in the subsequent thirty years and asked whether the country could represent the coming of a new social order. The idea for the book had come to him after seeing images of skyscrapers and reading of the now "universally acknowledged invigoration of the American atmosphere" in an essay by Edgar Saltus published in *Munsey's Magazine*.[14] Wells was also inspired by Henry James's question directed to the United States in *The American Scene*: "What are you going to make your future of, for all your airs?"[15]

Before his departure in March 1906, Wells had several opportunities to see Coburn's recent New York cityscapes, which impacted the way he conceptualized modern America in his book. First, the photographs were shown in Coburn's well-received solo exhibition at the Royal Photographic Society, which ran from 5 February to 31 March. Eleven cityscapes were hung in the show, including one noteworthy image of Williamsburg Bridge (fig. 5).[16] The structure had opened just three years prior and was then the longest suspension bridge on earth. By excluding the bridge's beginning and end, the picture exaggerates its length, forcing viewers to guess its limits. Construction workers, naked steel beams, and scaffolding in the picture's foreground allude to New York's perpetual becoming and echo the harsh angularity of the bridge's cable system. Coburn's early cityscapes were also printed in *Metropolitan Magazine* in February 1906, which included his first, now lost, image of the Flatiron Building (fig. 6).[17] The photograph's compositional concision would have shocked Wells. In the picture, the Flatiron appears to be backlit by moonlight, throwing the skyscraper and clouds behind it into silhouette. Like his earlier image of the Brooklyn Bridge, Coburn preserved pictorialism's soft focus while celebrating the Flatiron's pure shape and form.[18] In addition to publications and exhibitions, Wells had opportunities to see Coburn's work more intimately. The two men wrote to each other frequently during this period with Wells's wife Jane—herself an amateur photographer—sometimes mediating between the two. Coburn even sent Wells a selection of proof prints of New York and Boston. The two discussed the idea of including the photographs in *The Future in America*, but due to scheduling issues this collaboration did not occur.[19] Nonetheless, Coburn's photographs populated Wells's mind as he completed his book.

In *The Future in America*, Wells examined the United States' social and political milieus to meditate on what the country might become. He deduced that there was a connection between Manhattan's revolutionary topography and the United States' utopic potential. However, Wells's examination of contemporary American society was quite ambivalent. On one hand, his attitude towards mass immigration was extremely bigoted and parallels James's xenophobia in *The American Scene*. Wells doubted whether the United States could properly Americanize the growing number of immigrants flocking to the New World. On the other hand, he espoused a broadly progressive critique. He expressed shock at the country's widespread racial intolerance and political corruption; likewise, he was bitter towards Americans' treatment and fear of Marxist revolutionaries, especially Maxim Gorky and English anarchist William MacQueen.

Despite these convoluted ruminations, his anticipations for the country's future were hopeful. He was amused by the American fascination with "Material Progress", which he felt was visualized by the "towering, shining, clamorous climax" of Manhattan.[20] He predicted that Americans were becoming "hot with an unwonted fever for reform and constructive effort" and claimed immigration numbers would eventually become more regulated and schools would improve their assimilation tactics.[21] Wells's optimism was a direct result of how he came to view the American cityscape. While he was ambivalent about the trajectory of the United States, he documented that Americans saw a potent breeding ground for an ideal future society within Manhattan's architecture. He evidenced this by detailing the relationship between Manhattan's topography and the future cosmic American man, quoting Saltus verbatim in *The Future in America*:

> *If humanity sprang from gorillas, from humanity gods shall proceed … It is demonstrable that small rooms breed small thoughts. It will be demonstrable that, as buildings ascend, so do ideas. It is mental progress that sky-scrapers engender. From these parturitions gods may really proceed—beings, that is, who, could we remain long enough to see them, would regard us as we regard the apes.*[22]

Using this quote, Wells celebrated the gusto of American life by linking the intellectual capacity of the god-like inhabitants from New York's future society with the vertical ascendency of the cityscape itself.

Wells's portensions in *The Future in America* contain several indirect and more overt allusions to Coburn's photographs. With regard to New York and the United States at large, Wells referenced Greek philosopher Heraclitus' notion that "[t]here is no Being but Becoming".[23] This resonates with the constant metamorphosis of New York City's structures, which Coburn was attempting to document. While Wells described European cities like Paris and London as finished, New York is glorified as incomplete, "inhuman", and comprised "irregular crenellations".[24] "New York's achievement", wrote Wells, "is a threatening promise, growth going on under a pressure that increases, and amidst a hungry uproar of effort".[25] Wells predicted that the city's older buildings "of grimy stone and peeling paint" would give way "to white marble and spotless surfaces, and a shining order, of everything wider, taller, cleaner, better".[26] Coburn's image of the Park Row Building's unornamented back façade, taken the year prior, seems likely to have inspired this description (fig. 7). Coburn was particularly proud of this photograph and it surely would have been among those shown to Wells prior to his trip. The Park Row was the tallest building in the world and the implications of this architectural and engineering feat would not have been lost on Wells. The building's clean white walls pierced with regimented rows of windows seem to anticipate Wells's future city. Wells also directly referred to Coburn's New York cityscapes in *The Future in America* to underscore Manhattan's modernity against a quaint American past. In this section, Wells describes the city of Boston's decision to illuminate the Massachusetts State House's old Federal-style dome with electric light:

> *That electric glitter breaks the spell; it is the admission of the present, of the twentieth century … It shocked me—much as it would have shocked me to see … one of the colonial portraits … replaced, let us say, by one of Mr. Alvin Coburn's wonderfully beautiful photographs of modern New York.*[27]

While Wells struggled between savoring the aesthetic tradition of a bygone era and celebrating the twentieth century's literal glaring light, he uses Coburn's photographs as an optimistic visualization of futurity.

Matthew Beaumont has proposed that an effect of "estrangement" occurs in Wells's writing, which acknowledges a present charged with a sense of the future.[28] This conflict of estrangement

is also visualized in Coburn's New York photographs. As Coburn documented the city's growth by photographing its newest buildings and bridges, sometimes even photographing them under construction, he illustrated the city's contingency by suggesting its development beyond the photographed moment. Because of New York's never-ending cycle of destruction and reconstruction, critics at the time saw it as a space of temporal limbo. In a 1905 *Scribner's* article, journalist H. G. Dwight described New York as "a place to which Time has not come … New York has no yesterday … It forces the observer to see in modernity … its own value as the factory of the future and the past in embryo".[29] Coburn's photographs visualize the imbrication of present and future states. The future of New York is alluded to in his images of construction and new buildings, but impossible to pin down. The photographs connect with Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist perception that a city "must remain open to knowing that it does not yet know what it will be".[30] According to Derrida, the reconstruction and revitalization of a city—like the rapid development of New York during this period—are attempts to rid it of its past. Yet, the present simply embodies an endless cycle of modern improvements that point to a future ideal, which is perpetually just out of reach.

Coburn was one of many artists who registered New York's unique temporality by visualizing its constant reconstruction at the turn of the century. This subject is also found in Joseph Pennell's many illustrations of Manhattan's skyscrapers under construction as well as George Bellows's Pennsylvania Station excavation series (1907–1909). The theme is even found in populist newsreels like F. S. Armitage's *Star Theatre* (1901), which used time-lapsed photography to show the demolition and building up of Manhattan's Star Theatre. Coburn's photographs, however, were uniquely prognostigatory. Photography's ability to document true change over time, combined with Coburn's cropping capabilities and distinctive skills in the art of photogravure defamiliarized views of well-known New York landmarks like the Park Row Building by giving them an enigmatic and otherworldly atmosphere. These traits made Coburn's prints extremely attractive to Wells. Looking at Coburn's photographs in these terms and in the context of Wells's rhetoric from *The Future in America* provides them with layers of metaphoric meaning about New York's unsettled future. On his return vessel, as it floated in New York Harbor, Wells again imagined the United States's future society. Some of Coburn's early images of the harbor, such as *New York Ferries, The Battery* (fig. 8), evince Wells's parting sentiments:

> *as I looked back at the skyscrapers of lower New York a queer fancy sprang into my head. They reminded me quite irresistibly of piled-up packing cases outside a warehouse … presently out of these would come the real thing, palaces and noble places, free, high circumstances, and space and leisure, light and fine living for the sons of men.*[31]

Wells's sense of man's potential in an incalculable future is mixed with the techno-euphoria surrounding the city. Not only does this excerpt point to Manhattan as a spectacle of fantasy, but the skyscrapers imagined as suitcases signify the arrival of the unprecedented number of immigrants who worked to physically build the future cosmopolis he envisioned.

In the summer of 1906, Coburn wrote to Wells upon his return about being "very anxious to talk with him about America".[32] He sent Wells and Jane complimentary tickets to the Royal Photographic Society Salon and invited them to tea so that they could view prints in his studio. Although *The Future in America* was not published until October 1906, it was serialized in *Harper's Weekly* from July to October and Coburn had obviously been reading it. When he exhibited two photographs of New York in the Linked Ring Brotherhood's Annual Salon that year, he labeled one *New York—An Impression*, while the other quoted a passage from *The Future in America*: "'*The strangest crown that ever a city wore*'", referencing the evolving

irregular shape of the Manhattan skyline.[33] Coburn's influence on Wells's conception of Manhattan had come full circle. In the coming years, inspired by Wells, Coburn devised new ways to communicate the city's futurity.

Interpreting Wells's Texts

Before leaving London for New York in February 1907, Coburn was quoted in a *Photographic News* article connecting his austere photograph of the Park Row Building with the architecture described in Wells's book *A Modern Utopia*. He asserted about his photograph:

> *If I have made the observer feel the dignity of the architecture with its straight lines practically unornamented and with only the proportions to give it charm … I am satisfied, for I feel that the architects of the future, artists all of them (such as the architects of Wells in his "Modern Utopia"), will do wonderful things with steel and stone—like this building, only much finer—towering to the clouds.*[34]

In *A Modern Utopia*, Wells argued that cities of the future would require architects to double as both artists and engineers.[35] He described their buildings as simply furnished with self-cleaning rooms, while domes of glass and metalwork encased the city whose "pinnacles and towers and parapets … laced the sky".[36] Both Coburn's photograph and Wells's novel had been produced two years prior, so it is possible he had this passage in mind when he made the image. However, Coburn denied that his aim was to "tell a story" with *The Park Row Building*. Rather, he admitted trying "to invent a 'literary' reason for the existence" of the image, because he wished to "ensnar[e] … [the] illusive visions of things, only half felt and hardly realised".[37] For Coburn, Wells's story added literary clout to his increasing use of purified formal elements—an aesthetic that worked to link the construction of present-day New York with Wells's utopia of "steel and stone". In this way, Wells reinforced both Coburn's interest in the technological sublime and his departure from pictorialism.

Inspired by Wells's text, throughout 1907, Coburn continued to photograph Manhattan and emphasize its "practically unornamented" linear structures. In his photograph of the unfinished Manhattan Bridge, the structure's suspension cables hang straight down in front of the city's skyline (fig. 9). Apart from a tugboat's pluming steam, the picture is made up entirely of rigid linear shapes. This orderly aesthetic extended to his photographs of industrial labor. That summer, *Metropolitan Magazine* published Coburn's photographs of laborers building subway tunnels and excavating the new Pennsylvania Station Terminal.[38] In Coburn's photographs, such as *At Work on the MacAdoo Tunnel Terminal*, gigantic machines and faceless construction workers are fixated upon creating complex volumes and planes of tone (fig. 10). Rather than calling attention to the alienated working class—as Ashcan School painter George Bellows often did by making his urban laborers unidentifiable—Coburn's images used anonymity to pay homage to the worker's task. Mechanized man and Progressive Era urban efficiency reforms are celebrated by the captions that accompanied the photographs.[39] The melodramatically titled *Privates in the Army of Progress* (fig. 11) shows three men pushing a huge wheelbarrow up a ramp, while *The Stone Crusher* (fig. 12) depicts a man bent, staring into the abyss of a circular machine attached to a chute. Finally, in *Boring in the Pennsylvania Terminal Excavation*, a worker with a shrouded face stands triumphantly aloft a rock drill (fig. 13). Coburn used anonymity to praise labor underpinned by technology, and created hard-edged planes of tone, as if capturing the unknown "architects of the future" at work in Wells's *A Modern Utopia*. Due to his friendships with numerous members of the Fabian Society, including Wells, Coburn was likely politically aligned with the society's ideology of aristocratic socialism and their doctrine of

slow and measured social change from the top down.[40] Coburn's photographs of New York and its industrial laborers should be seen as products of a progressivist cultural atmosphere in which science and technology were celebrated as the potential answer to society's shortcomings. Coburn's captivation with technological progress, coupled with Wells's inspiring texts, compelled him to push the limits of his medium. After travelling back to London, in December 1907, he invited Wells to his studio to be photographed in autochrome.[41] Hoping the innovative new color process would appeal to Wells's scientific interests, he wrote to him, "I have always thought that your air ships would come before real colour photography, but there it is 'as large as life and twice as natural'".[42] Unfortunately, the autochrome portraits of Wells do not survive, but this anecdote further details the ways in which Coburn was provoked by Wells's writing to push the boundaries of photography. The following year, Wells asked Coburn to contribute a set of photographs for his book of short stories titled, *The Door in the Wall and Other Stories*.[43] Wells gave Coburn free rein over the subject matter, location, and execution of his photographs pending only his final approval. To make each of the ten photographs comply with Wells's narratives, Coburn refined and expanded his production methods. Most of the series is stereotypically pictorialist. Soft-focused photographs depicting misty landscapes, quiet streets, and a nocturne of the River Thames reflect their corresponding narratives. However, two exceptions, both of which illustrate stories centered on industrial technology, are among Coburn's most technically complex images. The first, titled *The Edge of the Black Country*, complements the 1895 story "The Cone", a tale about an ironworks factory manager who finds beauty in the "contrasts of flame and shadow" among his machines (fig. 14).[44] The photograph, taken in Birmingham, depicts a gnarled body of equipment used for coal refinery. This metallic structure frames a smoggy view of chimneys in the background like a window to a strange mechanical landscape. Coburn described his mysterious shooting technique for this work to Alfred Stieglitz as "a combination of daylight and firelight and flashlight", almost echoing the words of Wells's protagonist.[45] This unorthodox method produced enough contrast to blacken the pulleys and steel parts in the photograph's foreground, transforming them into dark silhouettes.

The second image is a composite of two different negatives and illustrates a story titled "The Lord of the Dynamos" (fig. 15). In the photograph, a piteous-looking man at lower left appears to gaze at a set of massive, circulating gears. This figure was plucked from a photograph Coburn took on a trip to Algeria in 1901 (fig. 16). For the final image, Coburn flipped his negative during exposure, so the figure faced in the opposite direction, toward the machinery. This figure undoubtedly represents Azuma-zi, the essentialized servant character in Wells's story who came "out of the mysterious east" and worked for a cruel overseer of three "dynamo" machines that converted energy into electric power for a futuristic London.[46] In the original negative of the machine, a man in a cloth cap stands in the background revealing that the gears are not as imposing as Coburn's final image suggests, in which Azuma-zi appears small and emaciated by comparison (fig. 17).

Following the completion of his *The Door in the Wall* commission, Coburn's desire to present modernity as abstracted and segregated from pictorialist ethereality culminated in his next set of New York photographs produced in early 1909. Coburn was among the first to manipulate and exploit the inherent abstraction of skyscraper imagery and the city's disorienting vantages. Hot air ballooning had first sparked interest in aerial perspectives in the eighteenth century, but when the Wright brothers completed their first flights in France in 1908, the popularity of aerial photographs increased. Artists and photographers were tempted to climb higher to gain a new

vantage point on their lived reality.[47] Furthermore, Wells's enigmatic descriptions of technology's potential to shape the future continued to foment Coburn's imagination and encouraged radical formal experimentation. That year, Coburn photographed the undulating pathways of Madison Square Park from atop the Metropolitan Tower, creating one of his most celebrated works: *The Octopus* (see fig. 1).[48] The skyscraper had been recently completed and was then the latest tallest building in the world. The image's focal points are the park's dark walkways shown in sharp contrast against a layer of white snow and the Metropolitan Tower's looming shadow. Four versions of the photograph exist. A second version, even more precariously shot, excludes the top of the skyscraper's shadow—only its flank juts diagonally across the lower right corner of the picture plane (fig. 18). Because the shadow's position changes in each photograph, the series appears to mimic the protean nature of New York's landscape.

The Octopus's revolutionary contribution to the development of modernist photography is its reconciliation of reality with nonrepresentational forms. The walkways in *The Octopus* are unfamiliar from Coburn's aerial vantage and read as a simple two-dimensional pattern. Coburn's efforts pre-date other modernist photographers' attempts at similar formal experiments. The patterns of shadow and light found in Paul Strand's photographs of porch railings (1916) and Stieglitz's *Equivalents* (1922), which offer the directional antithesis to Coburn's *The Octopus*, are just two later examples. Strand and Stieglitz, however, had a solid understanding of modernist painting by the time they created their studies in abstraction. In 1909, Coburn was inspired by something else. As he converted the city's paved paths into abstract shapes and forms, they were curiously reified into tentacle-like arms. Stretching from the circular fountain at the photograph's center, the walkways are eerily reminiscent of the wriggling appendages of Wells's Martians and alien spacecraft illustrated in the original 1897 *Pearson's Magazine* serialization of *The War of the Worlds* (fig. 19) and in 1906 French editions of the novel (fig. 20).[49] In his book, Wells writes that as the Martians emerge from their crashed spaceship,

> *a leach of thin black whips, like the arms of an octopus, flashed across the sunset and was immediately withdrawn, and afterwards a thin rod rose up, joint by joint, bearing at its apex a circular disc that spun with a wobbling motion.*[50]

The park's abstract presentation causes it to become "the octopus", much like the creatures in the novel's illustrations: an unexpected, alien thing, a mutating harbinger of the future hiding in the shadow of the world's tallest building.

Because *The Octopus* celebrates the city's new vantages and their creative potential while alluding to a more sinister view of technology as invader, it successfully visualizes the period's oscillating opinion of modernity's positive and negative connotations. At the time, octopuses were often used by journalists and cartoonists as a symbol of American big business and technological advancements. Udo J. Keppler's cartoon *Next!*, published in *Pluck* in 1904, depicts John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil as an octopus who grips governmental buildings in Washington DC, signifying the company's hold over the American economy and the country's political system (fig. 21). Similarly, in his 1905 *Scribner's* article, Dwight described New York's expanding elevated train system as a "monstrous octopus, fastened upon the city and destroying wherever its tentacles reach".[51] This symbol of a greedy capitalist sea monster was probably known to Coburn, but his viewpoint of the city and its technological ambitions was wholly enthusiastic. Coburn was more interested in establishing metaphoric connections with Wells's stories than in making political statements. His photographs *The Lord of the Dynamos* and *The Edge of the Black Country* are also methodologically and compositionally radical examples from

this period that portray an ambivalent reading of modernity, as inspired by Wells's more cautionary tales.

The New York Portfolio

After Coburn returned to London in 1909, Wells gave him a copy of his book, *First and Last Things: A Confession of Faith and the Rule of Life*. On the title page of *First and Last Things*, Wells drew caricatures of Coburn, his head hidden, stuck behind a folding camera and hood, and of himself sporting a walrus moustache, sitting behind a desk piled with papers (fig. 22). Below Wells's caricatures is a note to Coburn: "[o]ur business is to see what we can and render it". This quotation prefaced the broader content of the book, whose topics ranged from aesthetic musings to the politics of the future.[52] In the chapter "Of General Conduct", which takes up much of *First and Last Things*, Wells argued that the United States had radical potential for social reform. He believed that its diverse population and "material preoccupations" would cause "new Brotherhoods and new creeds [to] continue to appear".[53] According to Wells, this was distinct from England's future, which, because of a relatively stable social structure and less immigration, had limited capacity for sweeping social change. While Coburn might not have concerned himself with the details of Wells's sociological analysis, he did wish to "render" the future of the United States in his photographs.

In July 1909, an extract from *First and Last Things* was published in *Camera Work*, likely at Coburn's suggestion to Stieglitz. Its inclusion in the magazine solidified Wells's status as an ally of the Photo Secession. The quotation was from Wells's chapter, "On Belief", under the heading "The Mystic Element", which he defined as beauty:

> *I use the word Beauty therefore in its widest possible sense, ranging far beyond the special beauties that art discovers and develops … It is light, I fall back upon that image, it is all things that light can be, beacon, elucidation, pleasure, comfort and consolation, promise, warning, the vision of reality.*[54]

This text was appropriate for *Camera Work* because light was the lifeblood of a photographer's work and set the medium apart from the "special beauties" of other art forms. The selection and curation of this excerpt also evokes visions of developing urban environs quickly being filled with artificial illumination—a subject that fascinated Stieglitz and his cohort*.* However, Coburn's photographs of the city go a step beyond the Photo Secession's romantic depictions of nocturnal New York. Wells's description of light as a beacon of "promise" and "warning" coalesced with Coburn's view that photography could reveal the future of New York by documenting its fast-paced present.

These passages from *First and Last Things* foreshadow Wells and Coburn's final collaborative project. Published in October the following year, Coburn's limited-edition *New York* album contained twenty photogravures of the city taken during the seven years prior and a foreword by Wells.[55] The album was advertised in *Camera Work* alongside a reproduction of Coburn's *Broadway and the Singer Building by Night* (fig. 23). The photograph appears to visualize Wells's description of beauty as light in *First and Last Things* and in his *Camera Work* quotation published the year before. In the image, buildings circumvent each other and generate a cubist city in silhouette, with lights that seep and spread horizontally to illustrate the quick passage of time in the modern metropolis.

Coburn's photographs in *New York* visualize the bizarre reality of a constantly regenerating city, an environment where time and space were continually reconfigured as old buildings were destroyed, and new ones were placed in their stead. Wells celebrated this in his foreword. While

discussing Coburn's *The Flatiron Building, New York*, Wells claimed to have visited the structure several times during his stay so that he could witness its "mood" transform, depending on the time of day (fig. 24).[56] Compared to the "soft profundity" and "gentle grey kindliness" of Coburn's *London* portfolio, published the year prior, Wells described Manhattan as "hard" and "clear" and associated these features with the city's energetic, accelerated temporal state.[57] Nothing exemplified these attributes more than Coburn's photographs of newer skyscrapers, such as *The Metropolitan Tower* (fig. 25). The image effectively illustrates Wells's point about New York's unusual temporal conditions and physicality. The building is shown in mid-construction with cranes and steel I-beams visible at the very top of the tower. Additionally, the skyscraper's clock had not yet been installed, leaving only a blank circle. These signs of construction, most explicitly the hollow cavity of the missing clock, capture New York's temporal "estrangement" by alluding to the building's future completion. The appeal of Coburn's cityscapes for Wells was their homage to a materializing city, whatever it may become.

Wells's descriptions of the *New York* photographs are often fantastical, in keeping with the science fiction discourse found in many of his novels. The skyline "spurts up", and the Park Row Building, the Singer Building, and the Metropolitan Tower are characterized as "splendid fountains" and "sharp jets".[58] Just as he had done in *The Future in America* and *First and Last Things*, Wells speculated about the country's destiny by way of Coburn's photographs. His language in the foreword quickly gives way to full-on augury: "It grows not only high, but orderly; limestone gives way to glass and marble, and its lights increase and multiply until they blind the stars".[59] This quotation almost mirrors passages from *The Future in America* telling of a future "of grimy stone and peeling paint giving way everywhere to white marble and spotless surfaces".[60] Wells had also described the New York skyline as possessing an "effect of immense incompleteness", as though it were still in the "process of eruption".[61] *New York*'s photogravures depicting Manhattan's growth since the writer's 1906 visit appeared to validate his forecast set out in *The Future in America*.

In November 1910, Coburn returned to the United States for a final two-year visit. Wells's descriptions of New York's futuristic ethos charged his imagination as he compared the city's technological wonders to the scientific properties of photography in an article published in *Harper's Weekly*:

> *Photography is a medium of expression that requires a dual sort of mentality; it is a marriage of science and art … As I steamed up New York harbor the other day on the liner that brought me home from abroad I felt the kinship of the mind that could produce those magnificent Martian-like monsters, the suspension bridges, with that of the photographer of the New School. The one uses his brain to fashion a thing of steel girders, a spider's web of beauty to glisten in the sun, the other blends chemistry and optics with personality in such a way as to produce a lasting impression of a beautiful fragment of nature. The work of both, the bridge-builder and the photographer, owes its existence to man's conquest over nature.*[62]

Coburn's impressions recycle Wells's sensationalist statements about the city. His "Martian-like monsters" are reminiscent of the writer's description of the Brooklyn Bridge as a Cyclopean "monster" surrounded by a "jungle growth of business" in *The Future in America*.[63] Acting out Wells's instruction to him on his gifted copy of *First and Last Things*—"[o]ur business is to see what we can and render it"—over the next two years, Coburn refined his aesthetic to appropriately express New York's singular temporality.

Melding Time and Space

Writing from London in February 1910, Coburn confessed to Stieglitz, who had recently opened 291 Gallery in New York, of his yearning to speak in person with his American friends:

> *I often wish I might drop in to 291 for a chat. What an infernal bother distance is, and time is nearly as bad. Did you ever read Wells's story of the man who got a kink in space so that he saw things on the other side of the globe?*[64]

The short story Coburn referred to was *The Remarkable Case of Davidson's Eyes*, published in 1895.[65] In the story, Davidson, a laboratory scientist in London, is struck by lightning, which allows him to see, but not feel or hear, an island eight thousand miles away. The novel's use of "the Fourth Dimension, and … theoretical kinds of space" allowed Coburn to fantasize about a world in which it was possible for him, like the novel's protagonist, to "live visually in one part" of the world, while living "bodily in another".[66] In other words, Coburn repurposed Wells's conception of the fourth dimension to express the social quandaries that accompany a complex transatlantic lifestyle. Coburn's letter also suggests he desired the power to manipulate not only space, but time as well.

The fourth dimension was embraced by a number of modern artists at the turn of the century, but Coburn was particularly interested in exploring the temporal aspects of this theory. Mathematicians in the nineteenth century had used non-Euclidean geometry to discover that a fourth dimension existed alongside the perceivable three-dimensional world.[67] The theory's concept of curved space comprised geometric facets that helped artists question the structure of their world. The fourth dimension offered modern artists, especially the cubists, a convenient theoretical basis for visual experimentation, and their artworks presented a new kind of space that did not depend on a traditional three-dimensional perspective. The Stieglitz circle looked to New York's geometric environment, where space was constantly refashioned by architectural development, for a fitting visual symbol of the theory's spatial associations.[68] While theories of the fourth dimension saturated avant-garde circles from Paris to New York, Coburn, inspired by Wells's understanding of the theory as both a spatial and temporal phenomenon, strengthened his efforts to visualize futurity by converging time and space in his photographs of New York taken from 1910 to 1912.

Most scholars point to this period as the moment in which Coburn shifted to a modernist aesthetic. These assertions usually highlight his new friendship with the American cubist Max Weber who Coburn met while hanging *The International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography* in 1910 at the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York with Stieglitz, the Photo Secessionists, and other 291 artists. While the two respectively painted and photographed the cityscape, and certainly impacted each other's work, Coburn had been abstracting modernity for years prior while interpreting Wells's texts. Furthermore, Weber's understanding of the fourth dimension excluded Coburn's emphasis on futurity. Before he left Paris and joined Stieglitz at 291 in 1910, Weber had written an article titled "The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View". The fourth dimension was defined by Weber "as the consciousness of a great and overwhelming sense of space-magnitude in all directions at one time … brought into existence through the three known measurements … It is the immensity of all things … the dimension of infinity".[69] It was a "plastic" thing that could be perceived just as the objects it "envelope[d]" could be seen: "tunnels, bridges, and towers; these are all of matter in space—both one and inseparable".[70] The article appears to deal explicitly with a spatial interpretation of the fourth dimension. Wells, on the other hand, understood that the fourth dimension encompassed both time and space and

popularized this idea in his writing, most notably, in *The Time Machine*.[71] In the novel, Wells's "Time Traveller" explained that the fourth dimension was "'only another way of looking at Time. There is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along it … Time is only a kind of Space'".[72] Wells extended this commentary in his introduction to Coburn's *New York* album, in which he extensively discusses the confluence of time and space in the city. Coburn's Wellsian interpretation of the fourth dimension is likely what spurred him to investigate the advantages photography had over painted depictions of the metropolis, and how time could be better visualized with his medium.

In his article "The Relation of Time to Art", published in *Camera Work* in October 1911, Coburn echoed some of Wells's excerpts from the *New York* foreword by expounding on the temporal differences between his two homes. He compared the "quiet and seclusion" of London to "the rush and turmoil of New York, where time and space are of more value than in any other part of our world".[73] Coburn explained he had been "forced" to consider "the relation of time to art" because of these contrasts. This was also the reason, he claimed, that he printed his New York negatives in London, because the city granted him room for "quiet contemplation, time, in fact".[74] Coburn saw photography as the quintessential medium for dealing with the metropolis's growth and speed, writing that "[p]hotography born of this age of steel seems to have naturally adapted itself" to the city because photography was an "art that must live in skyscrapers, and … gigantic structures".[75] He was fully aware of the symbolic connotations of photography; advances in the medium's technological processes at the turn of the century were so revolutionary, it was associated with science and futurity in a way that other media were not. Photography's new and unique qualities—its cropping abilities and power to capture truthful chronological change of an environment over time—also helped celebrate urban progress in a way no artist or photographer had done before. Coburn did not claim painting to be an inferior art form, but its "slow, gradual, usual building up" did not possess the necessary aptitude to congress with the speed of the city that a camera could provide.[76] He argued that, because of this harmony between medium and subject, Americans were the leaders of photography and claimed the new artistic demands of skyscrapers could determine a unique American aesthetic. This is certainly evident in his development; as the city changed so too did Coburn's photographs, which increasingly focused on the scene's inherent speed, geometry, and futurity.

In his article, Coburn expressed his anxiety to record the city before it changed again: "hurry has for its object my burning desire to record, translate, create, if you like, these visions of mine before they fade".[77] Paradoxically, as he defended photography's ability to document a moment in time, he also sought to capture a sense of the future in his photographs. He struggled to negate the fact that, from the second it was taken, a photograph depicts a static past moment. For years, Coburn had been attempting to suppress this issue by accentuating temporality in his New York pictures in two key respects. First, he illustrated the city's unique physicality—its geometry and height—as otherworldly compared to older, European cities. To achieve this effect, he abstracted familiar or new views of New York to disorient his viewer, as evidenced in the alien world portrayed in *The Octopus*. Second, he consistently played up the city's temporal "estrangement". In other words, his work expressed that a sense of the future was somehow gestating in the photographic moment—a notion visualized in his photographs of skyscrapers under construction. By 1910, Coburn was challenging his medium to depict futurity through more explicit visual cues that merged time and space. While photographing *The Flatiron Building, Evening*, he intentionally rocked his tripod, blurring the crowd of pedestrians at the building's base (fig. 26). Consequently, the crowd is in motion, as they are captured stepping both forward and backward

while swaying from side to side. The fragmentation of the image suggests that multiple temporal states are being depicted. Simultaneously, the blurred figures appear to merge with the architecture and space surrounding them—as if articulating the assertion of *TheTime Machine*'s protagonist that space and time are interwoven.

Throughout the autumn of 1912, Coburn created his last New York images from the pinnacles of the city's skyscrapers. Coburn's *The Thousand Windows, New York* (fig. 27) and Weber's *New York* (*Liberty Tower from the Singer Building*) (fig. 28) were made in conjunction with one another at this time.[78] The plunging perspectives in both works appear to stretch the Liberty Tower, conveying Weber's theory of the fourth dimension as a "form at its extremity", which reaches "into space [as] if it is imbued with intensity or energy".[79] This artistic exchange between photographer and painter is also evident in Weber's 1913 work on paper, *Abstraction* (fig. 29). The piece is a twisting, dynamic take on the Woolworth Building from the side, likely inspired by Coburn's 1912 photograph of the unfinished building with swirling steam below it (fig. 30). In Weber's paintings, the city's plastic forms are melded in a more extreme way through his vibrational, painterly brushstrokes and fractured shapes. In contrast, Coburn's late cityscapes go beyond any overtly literal attempt at communicating the fourth dimension's fragmentation of space. Shot and printed in a manner that is reminiscent of *The Octopus*, Coburn's fresh, straight-shot approach in this series created a hard-edged interpretation of the metropolis, which formally and methodologically diverged from the way he had articulated the convergence of time and space in *The Flatiron Building, Evening*, made only a year prior. *The Thousand Windows, New York*, for example, shows the Liberty Tower from above as a solid, immobile mass inset with a series of black squares. These features were accentuated by Coburn cropping much of the tower's decorative roofline. While the photograph is completely devoid of the city's kinetic energy, it is a sophisticated culmination of Coburn's attempts to capture a sense of the city's future in its present. Through Coburn's photographic idiom of concision, the image visualizes Wells's many descriptions about a future city comprising unornamented façades, and pure linear elements made from glass and steel.

Coburn also emphasized the city's futuristic ethos through creative curatorial decisions. He made his final New York images in succession with a set of photographs depicting the American West's ancient, rugged cliffs and exhibited both series together in his 1913 *Camera Pictures* exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in London. The same way he had destabilized the city's skyscrapers by exploiting their abstract tones and patterns from an aerial view in images such as *The Thousand Windows, New York*,s and *Woolworth Building*, Coburn had photographed Yosemite (fig. 31) and the Grand Canyon from precipitous heights. When the cityscapes are compared to the ancient arcadia present in Coburn's pictures of the American West, nature's craggy and unpredictable cliffs appear to have been tamed and transformed into geometric solids. By exhibiting both photographic groups together, Coburn created a temporal juxtaposition between the two divergent subjects. The city's skyscrapers are presented as mechanical artifacts of the future, emblematic of the fantastic cityscapes described in Wells's novels. Meanwhile, visible I-beams at the pinnacle of Coburn's *Woolworth Building* continue to allude to the city's perpetual growth. The photograph's temporal estrangement and straight-shot approach recalls Coburn's 1907 proposition that his photograph *The Park Row Building* was a preview of the city in Wells's *A Modern Utopia*, and the visualization of a future "only half felt and hardly realized".[80] Coached by Wells's descriptions of the fourth dimension and fantastical worlds, Coburn captured illusions of the future American metropolis.

Coburn's Impact

Coburn left New York for London in November 1912. He had made eleven transatlantic crossings throughout his life, but this would be his last. The following year, his *Camera Pictures* exhibition at the Goupil Gallery took place, which displayed his Yosemite Valley and Grand Canyon prints as well as five bromide enlargements from his *New York from its Pinnacles* series, which consisted of *The Octopus* and his latest cityscapes. The show was preceded by Roger Fry's influential postimpressionist exhibitions at the Grafton Galleries in 1910 and 1912, and the first Futurist exhibition at the Sackville Gallery in March 1912. Consequently, Coburn's New York photographs, particularly *The Octopus*, were associated with developments in European modernism by the press:

> *Another subject which shows the possibilities of the camera as a medium for Futurist impressions is a picture of a public park in New York, taken from a tower of a very high building and looking down as if from an airplane or balloon. The effect is very weird and fantastic but that it is the result of a vivid and original conception there can be no doubt.*[81]

Coburn exploited the apparent associations between his work and recent avant-garde artistic developments and promoted his unique photographic techniques in the exhibition catalogue by describing his image *The Thousand Windows, New York*, as a "cubist fantasy". He also asked, "why should not the camera artist break away from worn out conventions [that] have begun to cramp and restrict his medium, and claim the freedom of expression which any art must have to be alive?"[82] Clearly, Coburn embraced avant-garde trends in contemporaneous painting, but this fact has distracted scholars from the impetus behind his first forays into radical aesthetics. His New York cityscapes' dizzying vantage points, stark contrast, and hard-edged spatial relationships, distorted reality to visualize Wells's texts.

Armed with Wells's evocative descriptions of future worlds and the optimism of the Progressive Era, Coburn formulated a pictorial language of futurity that American cityscape photographers would use to picture the transitory and abstract nature of the metropolis for years to come. For example, his images and methods inspired various scenes of New York in Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand's city symphony film *Manhatta* made nearly a decade later.[83] *Manhatta* boasts lively scenes that feature the city's inhabitants, but the film sequences shot from above, a vantage point that minimized human figures and accentuated the city's perpetual growth, were generally popularized by Coburn. These themes also inspired Sheeler as he created his first precisionist paintings of the city. Coburn's choice to photograph the Park Row's pared-down, unpopulated, and unornamented back façade in 1905 preceded Sheeler's 1922 painting of the building, simply titled *Skyscrapers*, and its source photograph taken from a similar angle (figs. 32 and 33). Seen in sequence, Sheeler's photograph and painting portray a city in the process of becoming. In *Skyscrapers*, Sheeler removed obvious signs of humanity found throughout *Manhatta* and his source photograph by doing away with whole rows of windows, a crane, and the plumes of steam emanating from a chimney at upper left. By removing the crane and fine details from his painted version of the building, he also removed any allusion to construction so that the structure is presented as pristine and complete—akin to the clean and sparse city described by Wells in *A Modern Utopia*, which Coburn had attempted to capture in his version of the subject. Sheeler was certainly unaware of Coburn's interest in Wells's writing, but the aesthetic of futurity devised by Coburn permeates throughout *Manhatta* and Sheeler's painted depictions of the city. While a more extensive study must be done on the subject, it is important to acknowledge Coburn's impact on and his convergence with broader avant-garde principles. For certain

European modernists who experienced New York through Coburn's photographs, the city became a stimulus for abstraction and its symbolic associations with futurity and renewal catered to their ideas for societal betterment and progress in subjective ways. As artists began to take advantage of New York's inherent abstraction, they often captured something beyond the metropolis's physical reality. From a conceptual standpoint, images like *The Octopus* prefigure Rodchenko's views from high vantage points in the 1920s and Malevich's stimulus of aerial photographs, which spurred him to create his suprematist objectless paintings after 1915.[84] And perhaps more than any other photographer, Coburn was responsible for introducing photographic depictions of New York to the English avant-garde. His influence is particularly evident in Wyndham Lewis's usage of American metropolitan iconography in his vorticist artwork made between 1914 and 1915.[85] Many of Lewis's most vibrant sketches and larger oil paintings from this period contain squares, zigzags, and diagonal rectangular planes of color that resemble abstract buildings, I-beams, and scaffolding.[86] The construction of heavier bottom floors, topped by levels of a decreased width, was the standard weight-bearing technique for tall New York buildings at the time, and such forms are apparent in Lewis's well-known painting *The Crowd* (fig. 34). Coburn's photograph *New York from its Pinnacles*, exhibited at his 1913 *Camera Pictures* show, is a potential catalyst for the work (fig. 35). Like Coburn's photograph, *The Crowd* showcases a diagonal progression of forms, which originate at lower left and gradually grow higher toward the right. In *The Crowd*, this evolving mass culminates when a skyscraper, capped with an ochre rectangular spire, merges with the right edge of the canvas. This skyscraper corresponds with the white building at the right side in Coburn's photograph, but Lewis has stripped it of its superfluous ornamentation.

Coburn's artistic nexus with the vorticists eventually led to the photographer's 1916 collaboration with Ezra Pound, which resulted in the well-known vortographs (fig. 36). Only a few months before he and Coburn made the vortographs, Pound reported to the vorticists' American patron John Quinn that Lewis's work attempted to "show the beauty of the colour one actually sees in a modern brick, iron, sooty, railroad yarded smoked modern city".[87] Coburn had seen these works, which provided the abstract cues for his vortograph experiments. The startling diagonals and multifaceted shapes of the vortographs resemble similar configurations found in Lewis's most abstract vorticist sketches. Following his experiences grappling with New York City's crystalline structures and unprecedented aesthetic possibilities, the semi-abstract vortographs were a natural progression of Coburn's growing enthusiasm for abstraction and unorthodox photographic techniques. The series marks an important turning point in this history of modernist photography that preceded similar photographic studies in abstraction such as Man Ray's rayographs, László Moholy-Nagy's photograms, or Stieglitz's *Equivalents*.

Conclusion

While Coburn's fascination with abstraction and machine-age iconographies brought him closer to the vorticists, his increasing interest in spirituality is likely what caused his eventual parting. He was also politically aligned with Wells's aristocratic socialism and the Fabian Society's doctrine of slow and measured social change. This contrasted with Lewis's increasingly dogmatic and apocalyptic ideas about the deconstruction and reconstruction of art and life. After a failed vortographs show in February 1917, which resulted in Pound's dismissal of photography as "below the other vorticist arts", Coburn gradually excused himself from his avant-garde social circle in London to explore his inner spirit.[88]

By the 1920s, Coburn was increasingly spending time in Harlech, Wales, where he was eventually inducted as a Druid and became involved in the esoteric religious group, the Universal Order. Although he would continue photographing throughout his life, he abandoned it as a profession. In his 1966 autobiography, published shortly before his death, Coburn reflected on New York's future one last time:

> *The sky-line of New York is very different now from what it was in 1909 … I wonder if I shall ever go over again to see what has happened to this fantastic city? … I sometimes wonder what H. G. Wells would think of it now? He saw in his imagination many visions of things to come, and what will another fifty or a hundred years bring us? We can look back to the past, but only in our inner vision can we imagine the future.*[89]

Wells's impulse to reflect upon the modern world's unknowable future evidently resonated with Coburn throughout his life. Decades prior, Wells had ended his foreword for the *New York* portfolio in equally poignant terms: "I fancy these records of atmosphere and effect will gleam, extremely welcome jewels, amidst the dust-heaps of carelessly accumulated fact with which the historian will struggle".[90] Just as Wells recognized a sense of the future in Coburn's photographs, he also acknowledged a time in which even they would be considered artifacts of a distant past. In his pictures of New York, Coburn provided a glimmer of a world in the process of becoming. In so doing, he formulated an inspirational aesthetic based on the city's futurity.

Acknowledgements

This article is the product of labor supported by several individuals and organizations. First and foremost, this work would not have been possible without a generous Research Support Grant from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, which made archival material on both sides of the Atlantic accessible. Additionally, I would like to thank Martin Hammer, Jonathan Friday, and Grant Gosizk for their feedback on earlier drafts. My gratitude also goes out to all who had a hand in producing this article at *British Art Studies*. I am especially thankful for the warm guidance of Baillie Card and Sarah Victoria Turner.

About the author

Margaret J. Schmitz is a Milwaukee-based art and design historian, researcher, and educator. Her work focuses on intertextual exchange and theories of temporality in visual culture from the turn of the century to now. Her research has been published in *Tate Papers* and is forthcoming in *Panorama*. She is currently a faculty member at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design. Schmitz holds a BFA from Aquinas College, an MA from Sotheby's Institute of Art London, and a PhD from the University of Kent.

Footnotes

1. See Anna Gruetzner Robins, "The Company of Strangers: Max Weber and the First Grafton Group Exhibition", in *Max Weber: An American Cubist in Paris and London 1905–1915*, ed. Sarah MacDougall (London: Ben Uri Gallery, 2014), 59; Pamela Glasson Roberts, *Alvin Langdon Coburn* (Madrid: Fundación Mapfre, 2014), 42–43; and Percy North, "Max Weber:

The Cubist Decade", in *Max Weber: The Cubist Decade 1910–1920* (Atlanta, GA: High Museum of Art, 1991), 31.

2. See Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, Vol. 2 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 495–507; Tom Normand, "Alvin Langdon Coburn and the Vortographs", in *The Vorticists: Manifesto for a Modern World*, ed. Mark Antliff and Vivien Greene (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), 85–91; Anne McCauley, "Witch Work, Art Work, and Abstraction", *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, ed. Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 156–174; and Reinhold MiBelbeck, "Alvin Langdon Coburn's Vorticist Experiments", in *Alvin Langdon Coburn: Photographs 1900–1924*, ed. Karl Steinorth (Zurich: Edition Stemmle, 1998), 177–179.
3. For an excellent study on Coburn's symbolist tendencies, see Michael Weaver, *Alvin Langdon Coburn: Symbolist Photographer 1882–1966* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 1986).
4. Scholarship devoted to Coburn's projects with James reveals that the writer was extremely dictatorial about his preference for picturesque subjects and pictorialism's soft focus. Coburn placated both men, but his relationship with James was less collaborative than his collegial friendship with Wells. The latter offered room for Coburn to interpret his texts. Perhaps past scholarship has focused on the James–Coburn relationship since there is a greater cache of archival material attesting to James's more pointed instructions. See Charles Higgins, "Photographic Aperture: Coburn's Frontispieces to James's New York Edition", *American Literature* 53, no. 4 (1982): 661–675; Ralph F. Bogardus, *Pictures and Texts: Henry James, A.L. Coburn, and New Ways of Seeing in Literary Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press, 1984); Carol Shloss, "Henry James and Alvin Langdon Coburn, The Frame of Prevision", in *In Visible Light: Photography and the American Writer: 1840–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 55–89; Stuart Culver, "How Photographs Mean: Literature and the Camera in American Studies", *American Literary History* 1, no. 1 (1989): 190–205; and Ira B. Nadel, "Visual Culture: The Photo Frontispieces to the New York Edition", in *Henry James New York Edition: The Construction of Authorship*, ed. David McWhirter (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 90–108.
5. H. G. Wells, *The Future in America: A Search After Realities* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1906). For a summary of *The Future in America*, see Robert Perry Frankel, "The Promise of America: H. G. Wells and the Progressive Era", in *Observing America: The Commentary of British Visitors to the United States, 1890–1950* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 78–110.
6. For an iconic study of modernists' interest in New York City, see Wanda Corn, "The New New York", *Art in America* 61 (July–August 1973): 58–65. For a broader reflection on American modernists' preoccupation with cityscape imagery, see Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).
7. Merrill Schleier, *The Skyscraper in American Art, 1890–1931* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), 1.
8. Pamela Glasson Robert's monograph on the photographer briefly mentions the Coburn–Wells relationship. See Roberts, *Alvin Langdon Coburn*, 32 and 41. Additionally, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's 1997 exhibition catalogue on Wells and Coburn helpfully reproduced facsimiles of Coburn's letters to Wells. See Maarten van de Guchte, and others, *Alvin Langdon Coburn: The Photographer and the Novelist* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)/University Library and Krannert Art Museum, 1997).

Neither of these important publications detail the immense impact Wells had on Coburn's oeuvre.

9. Coburn also took inspiration from contemporaneous illustrators, such as Joseph Pennell, who was likewise attempting to make sense of the new urban space by referencing Whistlerian themes.
10. For an excellent synopsis of this genre and its uniqueness in the American context, see David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994).
11. Many of these portraits were published in Alvin Langdon Coburn, *Men of Mark* (London: Duckworth, 1913). Shaw's introductions also allowed Coburn to gather portraits for the intended, though never published, book of portraits titled *Women of Mark*.
12. See Wells to Coburn, George Eastman House Library, Alvin Langdon Coburn Archive, box 10, 880–896.
13. Coburn attests to this in the preface of *Men of Mark*: "I have studied my men and their works with enthusiasm". Coburn, *Men of Mark*, n.p.
14. Edgar Saltus, "New York From the Flatiron", *Munsey's Magazine* 33, no. 4 (July 1905): 381–390; mentioned in Wells, *The Future in America*, 5.
15. Henry James, *The American Scene* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907), 160; quoted in Wells, *The Future in America*, 5. *The American Scene* was not published as a book until 1907, but Wells likely read it when it was serialized in *Harper's*, *Fortnightly Review*, and the *North American Review* in 1905–1906.
16. For a list of the works shown, see Alvin Langdon Coburn, *Alvin Langdon Coburn* (London: Royal Photographic Society, 1906).
17. Alvin Langdon Coburn, "Some Photographic Impressions of New York by Alvin Langdon Coburn", *Metropolitan Magazine* 23 (February 1906): 537–544.
18. Even those familiar with Manhattan's topography were taken aback when Coburn introduced the image: a jealous Edward Steichen wrote to Stieglitz that the image was "simply a black mass—meaningless + badly composed". Steichen to Stieglitz, July 1904, Alfred Stieglitz / Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, box 46, fol. 1092. This quote is also mentioned in Joel Smith, *Edward Steichen: The Early Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 24. Smith, having not seen the 1904 Flatiron picture, mistakenly assumes it resembles Coburn's later versions of the building, which are clearer than the 1904 picture.
19. Coburn to Jane Wells, 24 July 1906, "Letters by Alvin Langdon Coburn to Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Wells: July, 1906, to October, 1910", in *Alvin Langdon Coburn: The Photographer and the Novelist* (Champaign, IL: UIUC/University Library and Krannert Art Museum, 1997), 66. In the summer of 1906, Coburn was travelling in Europe. Wells was due to publish an edited version of the book in *Harper's Weekly*, and Coburn's unavailability forced him to use the illustrator Vernon Howe Bailey instead.
20. Wells, *The Future in America*, 42.
21. Wells, *The Future in America*, 146.
22. Saltus, "New York From the Flatiron", 387–389; quoted in Wells, *The Future in America*, 30–32.
23. Wells, *The Future in America*, 3.
24. Wells, *The Future in America*, 35.
25. Wells, *The Future in America*, 36.
26. Wells, *The Future in America*, 43.

27. Wells, *The Future in America*, 227.
28. Beaumont writes that this phenomenon is especially effective when Wells indicates that "capitalist society will be different, at some more or less imaginable time in the future". Matthew Beaumont, *The Spectre of Utopia: Utopian and Science Fictions at the Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012), 221–222.
29. H. G. Dwight, "An Impressionist's New York", *Scribner's* 38, no. 5 (November 1905): 553–554.
30. Jacques Derrida, "Generations of a City: Memory, Prophecy, Responsibilities", in *Open City: Alphabet City 6*, trans. Rebecca Comay, ed. John Knechtel (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1998), 16.
31. Wells, *The Future in America*, 258.
32. Coburn to Wells, late August or early September 1906, *Alvin Langdon Coburn: The Photographer and the Novelist*, 67.
33. *Catalogue of the Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of the Photographic Salon* (London: Gallery of the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours/Dudley Gallery, 1906), 17. See also Wells, *The Future in America*, 35. The Linked Ring Brotherhood was a renowned English photography club interested in the artistic capabilities of photography. It had seceded from the more conservative Royal Photographic Society in 1892. In many respects, it was the English equivalent to Stieglitz's Photo Secession. Coburn was a member of all three clubs. This contributed to his success—he exhibited widely despite ideological rifts between photographic factions.
34. Francis James Mortimer quoting Alvin Langdon Coburn, "Is the Photographer the Best Judge of His Own Work?", *Photographic News* 51 (1 February 1907): 84.
35. H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1905), 235.
36. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*, 210–211, 237, and 300.
37. Coburn, "Is the Photographer the Best Judge of His Own Work?", 84.
38. Jackson Cross, "The Passing of the Ferries", *Metropolitan Magazine* 28, no. 4 (July 1908): 386–399.
39. The United States' Progressive Era began in the 1890s and ended with the onset of World War One. This period is marked by several progressivist movements promoting government accountability, improving urban infrastructure, education reform, and more.
40. In addition to Wells and Shaw, Coburn's Fabian friends included Edward Carpenter, Arthur Symons, and Frank Brangwyn.
41. After returning to London in the summer of 1907, Coburn traveled to Paris in September and learned autochrome from Edward Steichen. Steichen had seen Auguste Marie Nicolas and Louis Jean Lumière's slide presentation in Paris on 10 June 1907, which had first introduced autochrome photography. Roberts, *Alvin Langdon Coburn*, 33.
42. Coburn to Wells, 3 December 1907, *Alvin Langdon Coburn: The Photographer and the Novelist*, 67.
43. H. G. Wells, *The Door in the Wall and Other Stories* (London: Grant Richards, 1911). For more information on the logistics behind this project, see Nancy Romero and George Hendrick, "A Door in Their Wall: The Coburn–Wells Connection", in *Alvin Langdon Coburn: The Photographer and the Novelist* (Champaign, IL: UIUC/University Library and Krannert Art Museum, 1997), 11–15.
44. Wells, *The Door in the Wall and Other Stories*, 77–78.

45. Coburn to Stieglitz, 5 October 1907, Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, series 1, box 10, fol. 237. There are several references in "The Cone" to contrasting atmospheric conditions and fire as a light source. For instance, in addition to the factory manager's attraction to "contrasts of flame and shadow", the factory's atmosphere is described as "pillars of cloud by day, red and black smoke, and pillars of fire by night". Wells, *The Door in the Wall and Other Stories*, 77 and 83.
46. Wells, *The Door in the Wall and Other Stories*, 111.
47. For example, Leon Gimpel took photographs during an aviation show in Béthany in August 1909 that were disseminated around the world after being published in "La grande semaine de Champagne", *L'Illustration* 3471 (4 September 1909): 153–164. See Nathalie Roseau, "The City Seen from the Aeroplane", in *Seeing from Above: The Aerial View in Visual Culture*, ed. Mark Dorrian and Frédéric Pousin (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 210–226.
48. *The Octopus* is often incorrectly dated 1912; it is in fact 1909. A version was published under the title *The Giant Shadow on Madison Square* in *Metropolitan Magazine* in June 1909. Roberts, *Alvin Langdon Coburn*, 37.
49. Coburn had consulted illustrations before. His 1904 photographs of Edinburgh are an obvious homage to Robert Louis Stevenson's 1878 book *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* and its original Victorian illustrations by Scottish artist, William Ewart Lockhart. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* (London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1879).
50. H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (London: William Heinemann, 1898), 31.
51. Dwight, "An Impressionist's New York", 546. Dwight was likely connecting the elevated railway to an analogy Frank Norris made in his 1901 book *The Octopus*, about the Central Pacific Railroad Company taking land from California wheat growers. Norris probably took his title from an 1882 cartoon by George Frederick Keller depicting a monstrous octopus grabbing frightened farmers, their livestock, and American stocks and bonds. The cartoon was published in George Frederick Keller, "The Curse of California", *The Wasp* 9, no. 316 (19 August 1882): 520–521.
52. Wells developed many of the ideas for this book from conversations he had with a group of students at the Cambridge University Fabian Society about an array of topics including sex, religion, aesthetics, and socio-political issues. One of these students was Coburn's family friend, the socialist and feminist writer Amber Reeves, who became Wells's mistress and inspired several passages in the book. For examples of Reeves's influence in the book, see H. G. Wells, *First and Last Things: A Confession of Faith and the Rule of Life* (New York: G.P. Putman's and Sons, 1908), 1, 167–169, 190, and 211–212. Weaver has suggested that Reeves was Coburn's cousin, but I have found no source to confirm this. Weaver, *Alvin Langdon Coburn: Symbolist Photographer 1882–1966*, 42. For further information on Reeves's life, see Ruth Fry, *Maud & Amber: A New Zealand Mother and Daughter and the Women's Cause, 1865–1981* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1992).
53. Wells, *First and Last Things*, 191.
54. Wells, *First and Last Things*, 106. Reprinted in H. G. Wells, "On Beauty", *Camera Work* 27 (July 1909): 17.
55. Alvin Langdon Coburn and H. G. Wells, *New York* (London: Duckworth & Co.; New York: Brentano's, 1910).
56. In May 1910, Coburn sent a selection of the book's photogravures to Wells, which he hung in his dining room. These are likely the eighteen photogravures of New York in Wells's archive

at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. A photogravure of the Flatiron Building at night in this collection is unique. Coburn manipulated the plate to reflect the writer's preferred time of day for viewing the building: "in the pellucid evening time, when the warm reflections of the sundown mingle with the onset of the livid lights within". Coburn and Wells, *New York*, 10.

57. Coburn and Wells, *New York*, 9.
58. Coburn and Wells, *New York*, 9.
59. Coburn and Wells, *New York*, 10.
60. Wells, *The Future in America*, 43.
61. Wells, *The Future in America*, 35.
62. Alvin Langdon Coburn, "Artists of the Lens: The International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography in Buffalo", *Harper's Weekly* 54 (26 November 1910): 10–11.
63. Wells, *The Future in America*, 38.
64. Coburn to Stieglitz, 16 February 1910, Alfred Stieglitz / Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, series 1, box 10, fol. 240.
65. H. G. Wells, "The Remarkable Case of Davidson's Eyes", in *The Stolen Bacillus and Other Incidents* (London: Methuen, 1895), 168–191.
66. Wells, "The Curious Case of Davidson's Eyes", 190–191.
67. The geometric methods of visualizing the fourth dimension published by British mathematician Charles Howard Hinton had a profound influence on the way artists interpreted the concept. See Charles Howard Hinton, *The Fourth Dimension* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co.; New York: John Lane, 1904). For an excellent explanation of the fourth dimension's origins and its various artistic uses since the nineteenth century, see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).
68. Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art*, 179–181.
69. Max Weber, "The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View", *Camera Work* 31 (July 1910): 25.
70. Weber, "The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View", 25.
71. According to Henderson, Wells was responsible for the popularization of the fourth dimension and for associating it with temporality. After 1900, articles on the fourth dimension were increasingly available in the United States in popular magazines, such as *Harper's Monthly*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Current Literature*, *McClure's Magazine*, and *Forum* as well as scientific magazines like *Scientific American*, *The Popular Science Monthly*, and *The New Science Review*. The fourth dimension's attachment to time also gained more scientific traction after Hermann Minkowski published a paper on time and the fourth dimension based on Einstein's concepts of special and general relativity in 1908 titled *Raum and Zeit* (*Space and Time*)—it was originally a lecture given at the 80th Meeting of the Natural Scientists in Cologne on 21 September 1908*.* See Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art*, 25.
72. H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (New York: Henry Holt, 1922 [1895]), 8, 10.
73. Alvin Langdon Coburn, "The Relation of Time to Art", *Camera Work* 36 (October 1911): 72.
74. Coburn, "The Relation of Time to Art", 72.
75. Coburn, "The Relation of Time to Art", 72.
76. Coburn, "The Relation of Time to Art", 72.

77. Coburn, "The Relation of Time to Art", 72.
78. This story is confirmed in Coburn to Weber, 9 November 1912, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Max Weber papers, reel N/69-85, 268; and Coburn to Weber, 18 November 1912, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Max Weber papers, reel N/69-85, 270. Cited in North, "Max Weber: The Cubist Decade", 46.
79. Weber, "The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View", 25.
80. Mortimer and Coburn, "Is the Photographer the Best Judge of His Own Work?", 84.
81. "Photographic Notes", *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, 11 October 1913, George Eastman House Library, Alvin Langdon Coburn Archive, box 21, press cuttings scrapbook 1911–1917.
82. Alvin Langdon Coburn, *Camera Pictures* (London: Goupil Gallery, 1913), n.p.
83. Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand, *Manhatta* (1921) from the Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Aperture Foundation Inc., Paul Strand Archive, 7:27, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuuZS2phD10.
84. See Christina Lodder, "Transfiguring Reality", in *Seeing from Above: The Aerial View in Visual Culture*, ed. Mark Dorrian and Frédéric Pousin (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 95–117.
85. See Mark Antliff, "Alvin Langdon Coburn among the Vorticists: Studio Photographs and Lost Works by Epstein, Lewis and Wadsworth", *The Burlington Magazine* 152 (September 2010): 583; Gruetzner Robins, "The Company of Strangers", 96; and Richard Cork, *Art Beyond the Gallery in Early 20th Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 227.
86. Many of these sketches are listed in Anthony d'Offay, *Abstract Art in England, 1913–1915*, exhibition catalogue (London: d'Offay Couper Gallery, 1969), 53–56. The sketches can be found in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and at Cornell University.
87. Pound to Quinn, 13 July 1916, cited in *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts*, ed. Harriet Zinnes (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1980), 238.
88. Ezra Pound, *Vortographs and Paintings by Alvin Langdon Coburn* (London: The Camera Club, 1917), 3.
89. Alvin Langdon Coburn, *Alvin Langdon Coburn: Photographer: An Autobiography*, ed. Helmut Gernsheim and Alison Gernsheim (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), 86.
90. Coburn and Wells, *New York*, 9.

Bibliography

Antliff, Mark. "Alvin Langdon Coburn among the Vorticists: Studio Photographs and Lost Works by Epstein, Lewis and Wadsworth". *The Burlington Magazine* 152 (September 2010): 580–589.

Antliff, Mark, and Vivien Greene, eds. *The Vorticists: Manifesto for a Modern World. *London: Tate Publishing, 2010.

Antliff, Mark, and Scott W. Klein, eds. *Vorticism: New Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Beaumont, Matthew. *The Spectre of Utopia: Utopian and Science Fictions at the Fin de Siècle*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012. DOI:10.3726/978-3-0353-0206-6.

Bogardus, Ralph F. *Pictures and Texts: Henry James, A.L. Coburn, and New Ways of Seeing in Literary Culture*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press, 1984.

Catalogue of the Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of the Photographic Salon. London: Gallery of the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours/Dudley Gallery, 1906.

Coburn, Alvin Langdon.* Alvin Langdon Coburn*. London: Royal Photographic Society, 1906.

Coburn, Alvin Langdon.* Alvin Langdon Coburn: Photographer: An Autobiography*, edited by Helmut Gernsheim and Alison Gernsheim. London: Faber & Faber, 1966.
Coburn, Alvin Langdon. "Artists of the Lens: The International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography in Buffalo". *Harper's Weekly *54 (26 November 1910): 10–11.
Coburn, Alvin Langdon. *Camera Pictures*. London: Goupil Gallery, 1913.
Coburn, Alvin Langdon. Correspondence to Alfred Stieglitz, Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
Coburn, Alvin Langdon. Correspondence to Max Weber, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Max Weber papers.
Coburn, Alvin Langdon*. Men of Mark*. London: Duckworth, 1913.
Coburn, Alvin Langdon. "The Relation of Time to Art". *Camera Work* 36 (October 1911): 72.
Coburn, Alvin Langdon*.* 'Some Photographic Impressions of New York by Alvin Langdon Coburn', *Metropolitan Magazine* 23 (February 1906): 537–544.
Coburn, Alvin Langdon, and H. G. Wells. *New York*. London: Duckworth & Co.; New York: Brentano's, 1910.
Corn, Wanda. *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999.
Corn, Wanda. "The New New York". *Art in America* 61 (July–August 1973): 58–65.
Cork, Richard.* Art Beyond the Gallery in Early 20th Century England*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985.
Cork, Richard.* Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, 2 vols. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976.
Cross, Jackson. "The Passing of the Ferries". *Metropolitan Magazine* 28, no. 4 (July 1908): 386–399.
Culver, Stuart. "How Photographs Mean: Literature and the Camera in American Studies". *American Literary History* 1, no. 1 (1989): 190–205. DOI:10.1093/alh/1.1.190.
Derrida, Jacques. "Generations of a City: Memory, Prophecy, Responsibilities". In *Open City: Alphabet City 6*, translated by Rebecca Comay, edited by John Knechtel, 12–27. Toronto: House of Anansi, 1998.
D'Offay, Anthony. *Abstract Art in England, 1913–1915*. London: d'Offay Couper Gallery, 1969.
Dwight, H. G. "An Impressionist's New York". *Scribner's* 38, no. 5 (November 1905): 544–554.
Frankel, Robert Perry. *Observing America: The Commentary of British Visitors to the United States, 1890–1950*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007.
Frankel, Robert Perry. "The Promise of America: H. G. Wells and the Progressive Era". In *Observing America: The Commentary of British Visitors to the United States, 1890–1950*, 78–110. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007.
Fry, Ruth.* Maud & Amber: A New Zealand Mother and Daughter and the Women's Cause*, *1865–1981*. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1992.
Gimpel, Leon. "La grande semaine de Champagne". *L'Illustration* 3471 (4 September 1909): 153–164.
Gruetzner Robins, Anna. "The Company of Strangers: Max Weber and the First Grafton Group Exhibition". In *Max Weber: An American Cubist in Paris and London 1905–1915*, edited by Sarah MacDougall, 58–106. London: Ben Uri Gallery, 2014.
Henderson, Linda Dalrymple. *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art. *Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983. DOI:[10.2307/1575193](https://doi.org/

Higgins, Charles. “Photographic Aperture: Coburn’s Frontispieces to James’s New York Edition”. *American Literature* 53, no. 4 (1982): 661–675. DOI:[10.2307/2925650] (https://doi.org/
Hinton, Charles Howard. *The Fourth Dimension*. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co.; New York: John Lane, 1904.
James, Henry. *The American Scene*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1907.
Keller, George Frederick. “The Curse of California”. *The Wasp* 9, no. 316 (19 August 1882): 520–521.
Lodder, Christina. “Transfiguring Reality”. In *Seeing from Above: The Aerial View in Visual Culture*, edited by Mark Dorrian and Frédéric Pousin, 95–117. London: I.B. Tauris, 2013. DOI:10.5040/9780755603527.ch-006.
McCauley, Anne. “Witch Work, Art Work, and Abstraction”. *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, edited by Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein, 156–174. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
MacDougall, Sarah, ed.* Max Weber: An American Cubist in Paris and London 1905–1915*. London: Ben Uri Gallery, 2014.
MiBelbeck, Reinhold. “Alvin Langdon Coburn’s Vorticist Experiments”. In *Alvin Langdon Coburn: Photographs 1900–1924*, edited by Karl Steinorth, 177–179. Zurich: Edition Stemmle, 1998.
Mortimer, Francis James, and Alvin Langdon Coburn. “Is the Photographer the Best Judge of His Own Work?” *Photographic News* 51 (1 February 1907): 83–84.
Nadel, Ira B., “Visual Culture: The Photo Frontispieces to the New York Edition”. In *Henry James New York Edition: The Construction of Authorship*, edited by David McWhirter, 90–108. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995.
Normand, Tom. “Alvin Langdon Coburn and the Vortographs”. In *The Vorticists: Manifesto for a Modern World*, edited by Mark Antliff and Vivien Greene, 85–91. London: Tate Publishing, 2010.
North, Percy. *Max Weber: The Cubist Decade 1910–1920*. Atlanta, GA: High Museum of Art, 1991.
Nye, David E. *American Technological Sublime*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994.
“Photographic Notes”. *Glasgow Weekly Herald* (11 October 1913), George Eastman House Library, Alvin Langdon Coburn Archive, box 21, press cuttings scrapbook 1911–1917.
Pound, Ezra.* Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts*, edited by Harriet Zinnes. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1980.
Pound, Ezra. *Vortographs and Paintings by Alvin Langdon Coburn*. London: The Camera Club, 1917.
Roberts, Pamela Glasson. *Alvin Langdon Coburn*. Madrid: Fundación Mapfre, 2014.
Romero, Nancy, and George Hendrick. “A Door in Their Wall: The Coburn-Wells Connection”. In *Alvin Langdon Coburn: The Photographer and the Novelist*, 11–15. Champaign, IL: UIUC/University Library and Krannert Art Museum, 1997.
Roseau, Nathalie. “The City Seen from the Aeroplane”. In *Seeing from Above: The Aerial View in Visual Culture*, edited by Mark Dorrian and Frédéric Pousin, 210–226. London: I.B. Tauris, 2013. DOI:10.5040/9780755603527.ch-012.
Saltus, Edgar. “New York From the Flatiron”. *Munsey’s Magazine* 33, no. 4 (July 1905): 381–390.
Schleier, Merrill. *The Skyscraper in American Art, 1890–1931*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1986.

Sheeler, Charles, and Paul Strand, directors. *Manhatta*. United States, 1921. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuuZS2phD10.
Shloss, Carol. "Henry James and Alvin Langdon Coburn, The Frame of Prevision". In *In Visible Light: Photography and the American Writer: 1840–1940*, 55–89. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
Shloss, Carol. *In Visible Light: Photography and the American Writer: 1840–1940*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
Smith, Joel. *Edward Steichen: The Early Years*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
Steichen, Edward, Correspondence to Alfred Stieglitz. Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
Steinorth, Karl, ed. *Alvin Langdon Coburn*. Zurich: Edition Stemmle, 1998.
Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes*. London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1879.
Van de Guchte, Maarten. *Alvin Langdon Coburn: The Photographer and the Novelist*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)/University Library and Krannert Art Museum, 1997.
Weaver, Michael. *Alvin Langdon Coburn: Symbolist Photographer 1882–1966*. New York: Aperture Foundation, 1986.
Weber, Max. "The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View". *Camera Work* 31 (July 1910): 25.
Wells, H. G. Correspondence to Alvin Langdon Coburn, George Eastman House Library, Alvin Langdon Coburn Archive.
Wells, H. G. "The Curious Case of Davidson's Eyes". In *The Stolen Bacillus and Other Incidents*, 168–191. London: Methuen, 1895.
Wells, H. G. *The Door in the Wall and Other Stories*. London: Grant Richards, 1911.
Wells, H. G. *First and Last Things: A Confession of Faith and the Rule of Life*. New York: G.P. Putman's and Sons, 1908.
Wells, H. G. *The Future in America: A Search After Realities*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1906.
Wells, H. G. *A Modern Utopia*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1905.
Wells, H. G. "On Beauty". *Camera Work* 27 (July 1909): 17.
Wells, H. G. *The Time Machine*. New York: Henry Holt, 1922 (1895).
Wells, H. G. *The War of the Worlds*. London: William Heinemann, 1898.

Imprint

Author	Margaret J. Schmitz
Date	27 July 2022
Category	Article
Review status	Peer Reviewed (Double Blind)
License	Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0)
Downloads	PDF format
Article DOI	https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-23/mjschmitz
Cite as	Schmitz, Margaret J. "Capturing Futurity: The Artistic Exchange of Alvin Langdon Coburn and H. G. Wells." In *British Art Studies*. London and New Haven: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Yale Center for British Art, 2022. https://britishartstudies-23.netlify.app/the-artistic-exchange-of-alvin-langdon-coburn-and-h-g-wells/.